



**On the Right Track?**  
Challenges and Dilemmas to  
EU Peacebuilding in the Middle East

By Sarah Anne Rennick

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## Challenges and Dilemmas to EU Peacebuilding in the Middle East

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# 1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the Middle East has emerged as one of the key targets of EU foreign policy and peacebuilding efforts. With the development of external policy tools and instruments<sup>1</sup> as well as the emergence of a new era of international peacebuilding following the end of the Cold War, the Union was able to develop a specific framework for the Middle East and thereby solidify its position as key third-party player in regional politics. Yet the Union's approach does not coincide with what would be the assumed understanding of peacebuilding efforts in the region: the EU does not focus its efforts on the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict via bilateral negotiations and a final status settlement. Instead, the European strategy aims to create a zone of peace and stability through the transformation of relations between actors and through the development of democratic, liberal states. In this sense, the approach focuses on creating long-term conditions that will prevent the outbreak of future conflicts, rather than focusing on the resolution of the existing conflict. This peacebuilding framework is manifested through two separate tracks, one working at the regional level (as embodied through the Barcelona Process and the European Neighbourhood Policy) and one specifically geared towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. While there are indeed differences between the two tracks, they both work largely along the same lines: use of multilateralism and regional integration to encourage cooperative relations between states, emphasis on democratic reform as per the liberal peacebuilding tradition, and efforts to stimulate local economies in order to address what are seen as "root causes of conflict," namely poverty and lack of opportunity.

Yet while there are certain merits to this approach, how successful has the EU been in achieving its various long-term goals in the region? Is the EU's peacebuilding framework towards the Middle East an effective strategy? Evaluating to what extent the Union has been able to implement its policies and programmes, and to what extent they have produced the desired outcomes, reveals inherent challenges and dilemmas in the EU's peacebuilding approach. In the specific case of the Middle East, the various efforts at region-building and liberal state-building have been largely thwarted by the continued existence of the regional conflict. Indeed, there is a glaring conundrum in the approach to the region: a number of the Union's goals can only be realised once the conflict itself is resolved, rendering the approach somewhat moot in the realm of peacebuilding. Beyond the specific context of the Middle East, however, this case study also reveals more global challenges to peacebuilding in general. The EU's approach towards the region provides insight into the question of sequencing and the need for different approaches during different stages of a conflict. It also reveals the dilemmas associated with use of liberal state-building as a tool for peacebuilding, and the trade-offs that arise between achieving stability and security vs. democratisation and liberalism. In this sense, an analysis of the EU's

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<sup>1</sup> See the Common Foreign and Security Policy:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/cfsp/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/cfsp/index_en.htm)

peacebuilding framework towards the Middle East is useful not only for understanding the regional conflict dynamics but also broader challenges to the EU as a peacebuilding actor in general.

## 2. Defining and Assessing the Peacebuilding Framework

The European Union over the past two decades has developed an extensive and diverse set of foreign policy programmes for the Middle East region, reflecting a large spectrum of relations and degrees of cooperation. While the specific forms of intervention vary between each individual state, they all fall under the larger umbrella of a formalised peacebuilding framework that guides all interactions with the region. Because of its proximity and the potential spill over effect over regional conflicts, the EU's primary foreign policy objective in the Middle East is to promote peace and stability as a means of guaranteeing the internal economic, political, and human security of the Union. To achieve this, the framework aims to fulfil two objectives: 1) to build the long-term intrastate conditions for durable peace by creating social, economic, and political structures that eliminate grievances; and 2) to fundamentally transform interstate relations in the region. With these objectives in mind, the EU's peacebuilding approach seeks to address what are identified as root causes of conflict through liberal state-building, and to develop a shared culture of conflict prevention and cooperative security through multilateralism and regional integration.

To a large extent, this specific peacebuilding approach is based on the ideological foundations of the liberal peace thesis, which advocates the promotion of democratic state-building, along with the development of the rule of law and human rights protection, as well as economic growth through the liberal market model as the most effective means of preventing the emergence of conflict. Such measures are designed to address sources of strife, including poverty and inequality, as well as erect political structures that are considered by nature conciliatory. The EU's approach is thus similar to that employed by the international community in virtually all major peacebuilding operations in the post-Cold War era.<sup>2</sup> However, the EU distinguishes itself in this field through an additional ideological foundation based on its own experience, namely the success of the Union itself in achieving durable peace in Europe. In this vein, the EU's peacebuilding framework also involves the process of externalising its own model, namely through the promotion of a region-building process as a means of rendering relations between states cooperative rather than conflictual. This framework has been carried out through a variety of policies and actions within two separate tracks, one aimed at the region as a whole and one focusing specifically on the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Despite the apparent differences between the two tracks, the EU uses quite similar strategies and activities within each to achieve the goals of its framework.

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<sup>2</sup> Turner, Mandy. "Building Democracy in Palestine: Liberal Peace Theory and the Election of Hamas." *Democratization* 13:5 (2006): 739-755.

## *2.1. Track One: The Barcelona Process and the ENP*

The first track of the EU's strategy towards the Middle East does not strictly concern itself with the resolution of the existing regional conflict but rather aims to build pre-conditions for long-term peace. This track has been formalised through two large-scale policy programmes, the 1995 Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, also known as the Barcelona Process, and the complimentary 2003 European Neighbourhood Policy. One of the Union's most comprehensive and ambitious foreign policy programmes, the Barcelona Process embodies the guiding strategic principles of the European Union's peacebuilding framework towards the region: building durable peace and stability through the creation of liberal states with a high emphasis on human security, applying effective multilateralism to promote a region-building process, and ensuring local ownership of a culture of conflict prevention. The Barcelona Process comprises three "pillars" or "baskets" that direct activity programming: a political basket that promotes dialogue on political and security issues; an economic basket that aims to stimulate economic growth and create a free trade zone between the EU and Middle East partner states; and a social basket that seeks cultural exchange and the development of civil society. These various baskets are intended to translate into a series of actions that should encourage and facilitate a wide range of reform and development processes. The policy programme seeks the democratisation of Middle Eastern countries as well as increased respect for human rights and pushes for freer markets through economic reform in order to increase the flow of goods and foreign investments into Middle Eastern states. In addition, social projects are designed with the intention of promulgating a specifically "Mediterranean" identity and understanding of shared history and culture.

At the conceptual level, the Barcelona Process intends to create conditions for long-term peace through the realisation of three main outcomes. First, by stimulating economic development as well as political reform, the policy is intended to address the identified root causes of conflict including poverty, lack of opportunity, and social injustice: economic growth allowing for improved quality of life and diminished gaps between rich and poor, democratisation and human rights protection serving as social protection. The Barcelona Process thus aims to build peace through what is understood to be "structural stability."<sup>3</sup> Second, the policy is supposed to contribute to overall peace by transforming the relations between actors, ultimately replacing conflict with cooperation. By establishing diplomatic space through various forums of dialogue and through the demonstrated benefits of collaboration, the Barcelona Process was envisioned as a means to develop cooperation through a logic of mutual benefit between the region's states and the EU. Third, the Barcelona Process intended to develop a culture of cooperative security and, eventually, develop a formalised mechanism for regional security.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Aliboni, Roberto and Yasar Qatarnah. "The Future of the EMP in a Changing Context of Transatlantic and Regional Relations." EuroMeSCo Paper 46 (2005).

<sup>4</sup> Aliboni, Roberto, Mohamed Salman Tayle, Reinhardt Rummel, Gunilla Herolf, and Yasar Qatarnah. "Ownership and Co-Ownership in Conflict Prevention in the Framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership." EuroMeSCo Paper 54 (2006).

The specific methodology used to implement the Barcelona Process was conceived as a key element in achieving the EU's peacebuilding framework for the region. Although quite complicated at the institutional level, the Barcelona Process makes use of both multilateral and bilateral tracks to achieve its goals. The multilateral track, with its various conferences, programmes, and confidence-building measures, was designed to encourage regular dialogue and cooperation. The bilateral track, which called for the establishment of individual Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements between the Union and each Middle Eastern state, would be the venue for specific reform efforts.<sup>5</sup> The Barcelona Process was also touted as a partnership based on mutual interests and shared values as a means of guaranteeing full adherence through a sense of co-ownership. Finally, to ensure implementation of reforms, a form of negative conditionality (a suspension of agreements or aid) in cases of non-compliance was to be used. The strategy of the Barcelona Process, thus, is largely based on the assumption that liberal peace can be achieved by applying and demonstrating the benefits of cooperation as opposed to conflict. Likewise, the strategy assumes that shared cultural values regarding peace and security can be developed and guaranteed through institutional structures.

The second major policy programme within this first track was to a certain extent created as a response to the shortcomings of the Barcelona Process. Despite some successes, the policy had failed to make significant progress in political reform as the economic basket took precedence over other programme domains.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the concepts of partnership and co-ownership were never fully realised as a result of both the power asymmetries between the EU and the Middle Eastern states as well as the implied donor-grantee relationship that the policy's activities engender.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the EU's threat to use negative conditionality as a pressure tool for compliance was never actually applied, disempowering the tactic. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was thus implemented partially as a response to these obstacles. The ENP was designed not to replace the previous policy but rather to compliment it; nonetheless, the new approach marked a distinct shift in the strategy of the Union towards achieving the goals of durable peace in the region.

The ENP was specifically designed to promote reform and bilateral cooperation in six domains<sup>8</sup> and shares much of its activity programming with the Barcelona Process, seeking to build peace through increased emphasis on liberal state-building. Nonetheless, it differs from its predecessor in terms of both institutional set-up as well as methodology. Perhaps the most significant

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<sup>5</sup> More information regarding the institutional framework of the EMP can be found in: Erwan Lannon and Peter Van Elsuwege. "The EU's Northern Dimension and the EMP-ENP: Institutional Frameworks and Decision-Making Processes Compared" in *The European Union and the Mediterranean: The Mediterranean's European Challenge*, vol. V. ed. Peter G. Xuereb. University of Malta: European Documentation and Research Centre (2004).

<sup>6</sup> Brach, Juliane "Ten Years After: Achievements and Challenges of the Euro-Mediterranean Economic and Financial Partnership." German Institute of Global and Area Studies Working Paper 36 (2006).

<sup>7</sup> For more information on institutional asymmetries of the Barcelona Process, see: Gavin, Brigid. "The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: An Experiment in North-South-South Integration." *Intereconomics* (November/December 2005).

<sup>8</sup> These are: political reform; economic and social reform; trade, market, and regulatory reform; cooperation in justice and home affairs; transport, energy, information society, environment, science and technology; and people-to-people contacts.

difference is the absence of a multilateral track: the ENP is a purely bilateral policy programme focusing specifically on reform and cooperation, placing emphasis at the individual state rather than regional level. In addition, the ENP makes use of incentives and benefits as a form of positive conditionality, offering upgraded relations with the Union in return for positive results in terms of reform.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the ENP employs a "step-by-step" approach to political reform, designed to allow for flexibility and in order to take into account realities on the ground. Besides the process of liberal state-building, the policy programme also saw the increase in importance of internal European security as a key issue in bilateral relations. Security cooperation has been directed in particular towards two domains, immigration and Islamist movements. Ideas of a regional security apparatus have thus been supplanted by specific cooperation on European security interests.

## *2.2. Track Two: Support to the Middle East Peace Process*

The second track of the EU's peacebuilding framework towards the region involves specific support to the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), concerning the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although the Union does participate as a mediator to the conflict through the Quartet, its primary intervention does not involve negotiations or the attempt to enforce a settlement; rather, the EU's approach seeks to promote a process of conflict transformation<sup>10</sup> by changing relations between actors and addressing causes of conflict, thereby creating the necessary conditions for successful resolution and long-term peace. To achieve this, the EU relies on various multilateral forums established specifically within the peace process as well as a high degree of financial support for liberal state-building of the Palestinian Authority (PA). As such this second track fits clearly within the overall peacebuilding framework towards the region in terms of objectives and strategies for achieving them.

Although the EU had been providing various forms of support to the MEPP since the 1970s, it was during the 1990s that the Union emerged as a major third-party actor to the conflict. Throughout the decade, the EU's approach largely focused on normalising relations between Israel and Arab states and the socio-economic development of the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). The launch of the peace process through the 1991 Madrid Conference saw the establishment of both multilateral and bilateral tracks working towards lasting agreements between Israel and the Arab states. The multilateral track, established as a means of achieving regional co-development and improved relations, became a primary domain for EU intervention. The Union assumed the chairmanship of the Regional Economic Development Working Group (REDWG), the largest of the multilateral forums, in addition to participation in other

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<sup>9</sup> Sabiha Senyucel, Sanem Guner, Sigrid Faath, and Hanspeter Mattes. "Factors and Perceptions Influencing the Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Selected Southern Mediterranean Partner Countries." EuroMeSCo Paper 49 (October 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Diez, Thomas and Michelle Pace. "Normative Power Europe and Conflict Transformation," Paper for Presentation at the 2007 EUSA Conference, Montreal, 17-19 May 2007.

working groups.<sup>11</sup> These forums would eventually run side-by-side with the multilateral activities of the Barcelona Process and though not designed within the same context, the two would overlap.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the functionalist goal of normalising relations and building cooperation through networks and mutual interests was virtually the same in both.

In addition, the decade saw Europe emerge as the chief financial supporter of both the Palestinian people as well as the PA.<sup>13</sup> Although the EU had been providing aid to Palestinians for several decades, the 1990s saw this financial assistance move from an objective of emergency and refugee relief to broader forms of social, economic, and political development. The objective was to create positive conditions for pushing the MEPP forward by improving the quality of life of Palestinians and demonstrating concrete, positive results of the peace process.<sup>14</sup> In addition, aid was intended to help the PA lay foundations to become a future independent state. Financial aid was thus geared towards four key sectors: infrastructure development, institution-building, social and human resource development, and growth of the economic sector.

In the following decade, the dramatic collapse of the peace process led the EU to redefine its strategy towards the conflict. While region-building and the normalisation of Palestinian life continued to be important elements in the conflict transformation approach, new emphasis was placed on the political reform of the PA. Indeed, liberal state-building became the central theme of peacebuilding efforts as the Arafat presidency and corruption came to be viewed as key reasons for the breakdown in the process.<sup>15</sup> Within this modified strategy, the EU placed its peacebuilding efforts on the establishment of a "viable Palestinian state," meaning one with democracy and an absence of corruption as well as a stable economy. In addition, the question of Israeli security and the repression of Palestinian violence increased in importance; though always an important element in the peace process, security in the past decade has become a part of the final status issues.<sup>16</sup> To achieve the viable state vision and improved security, the EU instituted several modifications to its strategy towards the PA. The Union began using for the first time conditionality and various forms of financial and diplomatic pressure to enforce political reform as well pressure to achieve greater financial transparency as a means of fighting corruption. In addition, various forms of security sector reform were carried out, including assistance in the establishment of the PA police force through the EUPOL COPPS mission.<sup>17</sup> Thus although the EU's overall goals remained the same and in-line with its peacebuilding framework, democratic state-building and the guarantee of security increased in importance within the Union's approach. In this sense,

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<sup>11</sup> Kaye, Dalia Dassa. *Beyond the Handshake: Multilateral Cooperation in the Arab-Palestinian Peace Process, 1991-1996*. Columbia University Press: New York, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Peters, Joel. "Can the Multilateral Middle East Talks be Revived?" *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 3:4 (1999).

<sup>13</sup> "EC Support to the Middle East Peace Process" Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. COM (93) 458 final, 29 September 1993.

<sup>14</sup> Le More, Anne. "Killing with Kindness: Funding the Demise of the Palestinian State." *International Affairs* 81:5 (2005): 981-999.

<sup>15</sup> Turner.

<sup>16</sup> European Union. "EU Positions on the Middle East Peace Process."

[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/mepp/eu-positions/eu\\_positions\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/mepp/eu-positions/eu_positions_en.html)

<sup>17</sup> European Union. "External Relations: EU Practical and Financial Support for the Middle East Peace Process." [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/mepp/practical/practical\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/mepp/practical/practical_en.htm)

the shifts in strategy witnessed within the EU's track for the MEPP during the past decade were similar to those between the Barcelona Process and the ENP.

### *2.3. The Peacebuilding Framework: Putting the Cart Before the Horse?*

Evaluating the effectiveness of this peacebuilding framework towards the Middle East involves examining the success of activity implementation and to what extent the overall objectives have been meant. In this vein, evaluations are less concerned with whether or not the Union has achieved conflict resolution and immediate peace in the region but rather if region-building and liberal state reform have been successful. Various evaluations of the EU's different policy programmes towards the Middle East point to different degrees of success and certain failures, resulting from a variety of causes. Nonetheless, one of the larger obstacles to the peacebuilding framework is in fact the regional conflict itself, indicating an inherent conundrum in the EU's approach.

Within the first track of the framework, the strategies put into place to transform relations and develop a shared culture of conflict prevention and cooperative security have faced considerable stalls and blocks. The Barcelona Process' multilateral dialogues and regional cooperation schemes have been either limited or only cursory in nature. While the EU has accomplished much by way of North-South economic ties, it has not successfully recreated its region-building model through sufficient economic integration. The creation of a free trade zone is still pending and no economic relations exist between Israel and the majority of Arab states. This has been largely caused by the unresolved regional conflict that prevents states from entering into trade agreements; indeed, even states that are formally at peace such as Jordan and Israel have only limited economic ties as a result of internal pressures against cooperation. Moreover, the various multilateral forums and dialogues have failed to successfully promote the normalisation of Arab-Israeli relations. While the committees and conferences organised under the multilateral tracks do indeed represent the only venue in which Israel and Arab states, including Syria and Lebanon, meet regularly, they have explicitly been undertaken outside the context of normalisation.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the Arab states have issued statements clarifying that a process of normalisation cannot occur without a withdrawal of Israel from all territories occupied since 1967. In other words, resolution of certain grievances of the conflict is a precondition for the process of normalisation, which can only then be achieved by bilateral negotiations. The same is true for the development of cooperative security models. Stalls in progress of the peace process during the 1990s led Syria and Lebanon to refuse any discussion on security in an institutional setting where Israel was present; meaning that advancement on cooperation in political and security affairs is nearly impossible.<sup>19</sup> This has manifested itself most clearly in the incapacity to put into place the Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability. While the EU can attest to certain successes within the framework of its Barcelona Process

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<sup>18</sup> Asseburg, Muriel. "The EU and the Middle East Conflict: Tackling the Main Obstacles to Euro-Mediterranean Partnership." *Mediterranean Politics* 8:2 (2003): 174-193.

<sup>19</sup> Altunisik, Meliha Benli. "EU Foreign Policy and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: How much of an Actor." *European Security* 17:1 (2008): 105-121.

multilateral track, it has not been able to prevent the outbreak of violence between participating states, as the July 2006 war between Lebanon and Israel demonstrated.

Likewise, efforts to address root causes of conflict through liberal-state building have had limited success. Despite numerous programmes and attempts to liberalise economic policies, growth in the Middle East has remained quite low with increasing poverty levels and deteriorating states of human security.<sup>20</sup> Such problems have been particularly exacerbated in countries where continual warfare has led to both a collapse in infrastructure and destruction of local economies, such as Lebanon. As a result, economic development programmes have often been replaced by emergency aid in order to avert humanitarian disasters. While such measures are indeed important, they are also by nature short-term and thus do not allow for longer-term processes to improve the lives of average people. As such, the countries where peacebuilding through economic development is most needed are the ones least likely to achieve it. In addition, the EU's ability to promote democratisation and other forms of political reform has been uneven at best; instead, a situation of "reverse conditionality"<sup>21</sup> has arisen whereby the EU inclines towards tacit acceptance of practices outside its own liberal peacebuilding model as opposed to successfully imposing its values.

Similarly, the second track of the peacebuilding framework towards the region faces difficulty in implementation to a great extent because of the obstacles that the continuation of the conflict imposes. The multilateral forums within the MEPP were blocked largely because of the break-down in the bilateral talks between Israel and the PA; indeed, as these were seen as complimentary but less essential elements of the peace process, they came to be dependent on the success of the MEPP. Even more dramatically, the EU's various efforts to build a liberal state from the PA proved to be nearly impossible under a context defined by lack of sovereignty and gross power asymmetries with Israel. The constraints on the PA in terms of economic policy and decision-making have meant that economic reform efforts can only have a limited impact. Corruption and poor public spending aside, the PA as a non-sovereign state does not have the policy space necessary to develop a sound economy: the 1994 Protocol on Economic Relations (also known as the Paris Protocol), which created a customs union between the PA and Israel and, in effect, an absence of economic borders, entrenched asymmetries between Israel and the PA.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, the mandate of the PA – an institution never intended to act as or resemble a sovereign state actor - did not lay proper foundations for the creation of a strong institution with sound governance.<sup>23</sup> By the time the EU became serious about reform and democratic state-building, the Palestinian Authority was already in a huge state of crisis, further compounded by its lack of sovereignty, rendering the possibility of creating a viable state nearly impossible.

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<sup>20</sup> United Nations Development Program, Arab Human Development Report 2009: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries.

<sup>21</sup> Amirah Fernandez, Haizam and Richard Youngs. "The Barcelona Process: An Assessment of a Decade of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership." Real Instituto Elcano de Estudios Internacionales y Estrategicos, ARI 137 (2005).

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Report on UNCTAD Assistance to the Palestinian People. UNCTAD (2008).

<sup>23</sup> Turner.

Thus to a large extent, the peacebuilding framework has been thwarted by an inherent Catch-22 that the regional situation entails. While the various policies and programmes put into place have been carried out with the aim of producing the necessary conditions for long-term, structural peace, the fact that the major regional conflict has not been resolved hinders their ability to be carried out. Indeed, the protracted Arab-Israeli conflict is among the key obstacles to the EU's successful implementation of its peacebuilding framework. Region-building and developing mechanisms for cooperation cannot be fully implemented until the conflict is resolved via bilateral talks, implying that the transformation of relations between actors through EU models is currently impossible. Similarly, addressing root causes of conflict such as poverty and lack of opportunity is extremely difficult in countries that are still affected by war. While the peacebuilding framework may aim to build durable peace and conditions for future conflict prevention, the lack of emphasis on the resolution of the current conflict prevents the EU strategies from having the desired impact. Beyond this specific obstacle, the case study of the EU's framework towards the Middle East points to larger challenges and dilemmas for the Union as a peacebuilding actor in general.

### 3. Challenges and Dilemmas for EU Peacebuilding

Although the framework has not achieved its main goals, the policies and activities put into place have proven to be effective in promoting short-term stability. Indeed, the changes in EU strategy between the 1990s and first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to an extent marked a favouring of immediate stability and security over the slower and more arduous processes of liberal peacebuilding.<sup>24</sup> This shift in priority was in part the result of the evolving global context. European thought during the 1990s was largely influenced by the end of the Cold War, the belief in the triumph of liberalism, and the confidence that peace could be achieved through specific institutional models. Even the Arab-Israeli conflict at that time was viewed with a degree of optimism that a lasting solution was not only within reach but also well on the way. By the following decade, however, not only was the conflict sinking into an ever-deeper quagmire but also specific security threats emanating from the Middle East into the Union became far too visible. Terror incidents in European capitals combined with increasing hostility towards migration<sup>25</sup> instigated a reprioritisation of EU strategic interests towards the region. The ENP, thus, emerged in this new context and reflected this shift in priorities: the policy's bilateral agreements have tended to favour stability over reform and specific security cooperation over regional conflict prevention.<sup>26</sup> The use of the step-by-step approach, for example, encourages regime stability, accepting as a hard reality the authoritarian nature of Middle Eastern regimes and placing no real deadlines for achieving political reform along liberal lines. Middle Eastern states are able to achieve only partial reforms that provide a semblance of liberalisation without jeopardising the status quo or current power structures. Positive conditionality also leaves aside the logic of shared values and allows Middle Eastern states to enact reform only where they see fit.<sup>27</sup> Instead of pushing significant reform, the EU focuses on building bilateral cooperation on specific security issues. Pressure is placed on Middle Eastern states to reduce immigration towards Europe and curb the rise of Islamist movements;<sup>28</sup> while such efforts respond to security issues for the Union, they are not particularly concerned with liberal peacebuilding.

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<sup>24</sup> Seeberg, Peter. "European Neighbourhood Policy, Post-Normativity, and Legitimacy. EU Policies towards Jordan, Lebanon and Syria." Centre for Contemporary Middle East Studies, University of Southern Denmark. Working Paper Series, no.14 (2008).

<sup>25</sup> Galli, Francesca. The Legal and Political Implications of the Securitisation of Counter-Terrorism Measures across the Mediterranean. EuroMeSCo Paper 71 (2008).

<sup>26</sup> Seeberg,

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, EU statements issued from the Association Council meetings in 2000, 2005, and 2007.

While short-term stability is perhaps a desirable outcome, the means used to achieve it has also had unintended consequences. Authoritarian regimes are in fact bolstered by the primacy placed on bilateral security cooperation that requires heavy-handed government practices. Placing emphasis on these specific security interests has led to a rapprochement of EU and Middle Eastern thought regarding definitions of threat and risk, and to a shared interest in internal regime stability: as opposed to promoting reform and pluralism, the EU's priorities have contributed to reinforcing the current authoritarian regimes as a means of eliminating other threats.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, stricter control of illegal immigration towards Europe and harsh repression of Islamist groups in the name of security have led to human rights abuses as well as set-backs with regards to individual liberty amongst Middle Eastern states. While the EU does not outwardly accept such consequences, they are to an extent ignored. This situation points to one of the largest dilemmas the Union faces as a peacebuilding actor, namely the tension that arises between promoting a certain vision and set of norms and responding to internal interests. The contradiction between meeting perceived security needs and building liberal peace through democratisation and human rights protection are amongst the largest challenges in the EU's approach, especially in the post-9/11 era. Moreover, this tension does not just create dilemmas but also has implications on the perception of the EU and its policies in the region. Placing the Union's interests at the fore fuels distrust of intentions among Middle Eastern regimes and citizens; this in turn leads to a suspicion that EU policies do not represent balanced efforts towards peacebuilding, region-building, or co-development but are rather designed with ulterior motives.

Another major challenge the EU faces in its specific peacebuilding approach regards the ability to effectively replicate internal structures to outlying regions. One of the key principles behind the Union's approach is the externalisation of internal institutional structures that are designed to transform relations and put into place systems for durable peace. The success of this externalisation, however, depends greatly on the level of adherence of other actors to the Union's values and institutional model. The EU, thus, must be able to exert influence either by its example or other incentives. With regards to the Middle East, the ability to disseminate such structures has proven to be limited. On one hand, the degree to which Middle Eastern countries subscribe to the political and social values instilled in the peacebuilding framework is debatable. These countries may agree to take part in policy programmes in order to benefit from financial packages without the intention of adopting the intended reforms or model of regionalisation. On the other hand, the EU's ability to use various incentive and pressure tactics to exert influence has been uneven, which in certain cases has actually exacerbated regional tensions rather than assuaging them. Claims of bias regarding the EU's treatment of Israel, for example, incense Arab states. This has the effect of discrediting the Union's efforts, thereby rendering strategies even harder to implement.

On a broader level, the EU's peacebuilding framework towards the region points to other challenges that arise from the liberal peace model. Liberal

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<sup>29</sup> Haddadi, Said. "Political Securitisation and Democratisation in the Maghreb: Ambiguous Discourses and Fine-tuning Practices for a Security Partnership" Institute of European Studies Paper 040323. Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, 2004.

peacebuilding essentially places two key set of activities – conflict management and state-building - in the same basket; however, it fails to adjust for the wide-ranging and flexible nature of state-building and instead focuses almost exclusively on the "blueprint" of the liberal democratic state.<sup>30</sup> Best practices by the development community engaged in state-building have evolved to include a wide variety of political systems with the ultimate goal of gaining local traction and legitimacy. Indeed, legitimacy is seen as a critical factor in stabilisation. As such, state-building is concerned with promoting an institutional layout that responds to local perceptions of legitimacy and developing strong governance within the particular system. In the realm of peacebuilding, however, the liberal democratic model is virtually always employed, regardless of its compatibility with local power norms. As the process of negotiating power arrangements and an appropriate institutional framework is bypassed in favour of imposing the pre-existing democratic model, there is less possibility to ensure either the buy-in of various stakeholders or of the local population. The democratic process thus is no guarantee of either legitimacy or stability. On the contrary, the imposition of a Western-style democracy has in numerous cases led to destabilisation in post-conflict societies.<sup>31</sup> In the Middle East, EU attempts to impose democratic models have been met with reticence or at times hostility, coming across as undesired forms of interventionism or neo-colonialism. Moreover, democratisation as a key element in peacebuilding has yet to be confirmed in the region, as the experience of Algeria in the 1990s demonstrated. On the contrary, the example of Lebanon's peace agreement following the country's civil war, based on renegotiated power-sharing within a consociational system, indicates the importance of flexibility within peacebuilding efforts.

In addition, the experience of the EU in the Middle East reveals other tensions arising from the liberal peace model, specifically with regards to centralisation vs. plurality and the incorporation of opposition groups. The ability to push peace forward and maintain stability – often prerequisites for successful democratisation<sup>32</sup> – can in cases require a strong central authority with the ability to monopolise the control of violence. At the same time, however, the process of democratisation can require the decentralisation of authority in order to avoid authoritarianism and create participatory politics. The tension between the two can be clearly seen with respect to "spoiler" or opposition groups.<sup>33</sup> Excluding certain groups from either a peace negotiation or the state-building process can lead to spoiling tactics, either as a means to vie for further representation or to protest the terms of agreements. At the same time, however, the goal of the EU's peacebuilding approach is not to meet all demands and incorporate all groups but rather to create longer-term conditions for durable peace. The process of quick and externally-imposed democratisation can

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<sup>30</sup> Gravingholt, Jorn, Stefan Ganzle, and Sebastian Ziaja. "The Convergence of Peacebuilding and State Building: Addressing a Common Purpose from Different Perspectives." German Development Institute (DIE) Briefing Paper (2009).

<sup>31</sup> Paris, Roland. "Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism" *International Security* 22:2 (1997): 54-89.

<sup>32</sup> Call, Charles T. and Susan E. Cook. "On Democratization and Peacebuilding" *Global Governance* 9:2 (2003): 233-246.

<sup>33</sup> Newman, Edward and Oliver Richmond. "The Impact of Spoilers on Peace Processes and Peacebuilding" United Nations University, Policy Brief no.2 (2006).

exacerbate these already existing dilemmas by allowing groups inherently opposed to a peace process to legitimately become part of the political system. This can have the effect of both disrupting the peacebuilding activities as well as jeopardising internal stability and the new governance structures. Such a dilemma is clearly visible in the case of the Palestinian Authority. Pressures to control internal dissent and guarantee Israel's security pushed the PA to develop repressive tactics to control opposition groups, as opposed to undertaking a broader process of consensus-building and demilitarisation. Such tactics not only prevented democratisation but also contributed to a widespread lack of legitimacy for the government. However, the ensuing attempt to enforce democratic practice during the 2006 legislative elections led to the fair election of Hamas to power – a situation that has proven highly problematic to the peace process.

Finally, this case study points to larger challenges when the process of conflict resolution and liberal peacebuilding occur at the same time, as opposed to being sequenced in the conflict and post-conflict phases. Mainstream thought in both peacebuilding and democratisation literatures indicate that peace and stability are necessary preconditions for successful democratisation, and not vice versa.<sup>34</sup> Because, the process of moving a country towards a democratic system of government and a liberal market economy is inherently unstable and can lead to renewed social tension or violence, a stable base is considered a pre-requisite. Thus attempting to carry out conflict resolution and democratisation at the same time can create a situation an inherent conundrum. Likewise, the role of external actors in achieving conflict resolution and democratisation are quite different. While third parties can play a very real and present role as mediators or intermediaries while a conflict is ongoing, the post-conflict state-building process should be driven by local agency.<sup>35</sup> By carrying out both activities at the same time, the level of involvement of a third-party actor can prove either insufficient in certain domains or detrimentally present in others.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> See for example the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development "Concepts and Dilemmas of State-Building in Fragile States" *Journal on Development* 9:3 (2008).

## 4. Conclusion

The European Union's peacebuilding framework towards the Middle East contains a number of components that will almost certainly prove to be necessary for guaranteeing long-term stability in the region once a resolution to the regional conflict is achieved. Economic reform and various efforts towards market integration will have far reaching benefits both for establishing a regional economic framework as well as improving living standards and battling the rising poverty and unemployment levels. Likewise, the process of normalising Israel's relations with its neighbours and improving regional cooperation and security will be greatly facilitated by the European policies and mechanisms already in place since the 1990s. In the meantime, however, the EU's actions should not be carried out in lieu of shorter-term conflict resolution. The peacebuilding framework may be useful to supporting the overall environment of long-term peace and conflict prevention, but cannot substitute a political process of negotiation towards a settlement. Focusing efforts on the resolution of the existing conflict would not only provide the Union's peacebuilding framework with the necessary context for fuller implementation but would also strengthen the legitimacy of the EU in the Middle East – something that would contribute positively to the process of externalising the EU's institutional models and norms. In addition, placing a larger emphasis on resolution might alleviate some of the challenges associated with sequencing mentioned above. The EU has proven itself over the past few decades to be useful counterweight to American hegemony as a third-party actor in the region and has demonstrated its ability to be quite forward thinking in the field of peacebuilding in the Middle East; however, for the goals of its framework to be achieved, the EU must play a more direct role in the current process of conflict resolution.

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## What is Just and Durable Peace?

The research project Just and Durable Peace by Piece (JAD-PbP 217488) is funded by the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Commission. It aims to shed new theoretical and conceptual light on the *problematique* of building just and durable peace. It examines the effectiveness of general peacebuilding strategies and evaluates to what extent they enhance self-sustainable peace. In addition, it analyses and compares EU's peacebuilding strategies in the Western Balkans and the Middle East. JAD-PbP applies an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on insights in peace and conflict research, international law, political science and international relations in order to make contributions to science, policy-making and the causes of just and durable peace.

The project comprises seven partners: Lund University (coordinator), Bath University, Hebrew University, Jordan Institute of Diplomacy, University of St Andrews, University of East London, Uppsala University.

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