
The Atkin Paper Series

The Euro Med partnership and the Arab Israeli conflict

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Introduction

Any talk about a just and lasting peace, any step to guarantee our living together in this part of the world in peace and security, while you occupy Arab lands by armed forces would be meaningless; there can be no peace built on the occupation of the land of the others.

President Mohamed Anwar El Sadat
Addressing the Knesset, 20 November 1977

This paper investigates the role of the Euro Mediterranean Partnership in giving momentum to the peace process in the Middle East and the difficulties it has encountered in doing so. The Euro Med Partnership (EMP) is a regional project which aims to increase cooperation between the European Union and its southern and eastern Mediterranean neighbours in the political, economic and cultural fields. The EMP gives Israel and the Arab Mediterranean countries the opportunity to engage in several trilateral projects with the EU, in the hopes of furthering the main objective of the EMP: a peaceful and prosperous Mediterranean region.

The EU has been attempting to politically mediate the Middle East conflict since the early 1970s but – as an economically-oriented forum – it focused its efforts mainly on the economic aspects of the conflict. The United States and Israel, along with some Arab countries such as Egypt, always preferred that the United States rather than Europe act as Middle East peace broker. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, balance-of-power and Cold War sensitivities were no longer obstacles for Europe to design an ambitious programme of cooperation with its Mediterranean neighbours. As it could not compete with the United States in political mediation of the conflict, the EU established a regional forum where political issues are tackled but through indirect channels of economic and socio-cultural projects.

The first form of Euro Med Partnership was in 1994, when what became known as the Barcelona Process brought together the EU member states with Israel and nine Arab states for the first time in a partnership with ambitious economic, sociocultural and political objectives based on regional cooperation. The second form was the Union for the Mediterranean, which was launched with the same EMP partners in 2008.

The Euro Med Partnership represented the first regional consortium to bring together Arabs and Israelis to cooperate through political dialogue, mutual economic interests and socio-cultural projects despite the taboos and stony narratives of each side.

The Arab partners (Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine) of the EMP used to refuse any normalisation of their relations with Israel at either the official or civil-society levels. However, these countries could not afford to reject the EMP and miss the economic and commercial benefits it

would bring, including tax and customs-free exports to the EU, loans and grants for local infrastructure projects, technical and professional training in industrial sectors, financial and economic reform aid, and funding in the cultural sectors of cinema, media and fine arts.

This paper analyses the attempts made by the EU to politically mediate the Middle East conflict as an organisation of European countries, rather than assessing the efforts made by individual European countries, and focuses on the economic mediation provided by the Euro Mediterranean Partnership in its evolving forms. The EU's socio-cultural mediation is examined in a case study of the Anna Lindh Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures.

EU political mediation of the Arab-Israeli conflict

The Euro Arab Dialogue

Europe realised that it had an inevitable role to play in finding a just and peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict following the successful oil embargo imposed by Arab oil-producing countries in 1973, which caused a serious crisis in the West. It was an important turning point, as economic interests – specifically, those related to Arab oil – became instrumental in the conflict.¹

In Copenhagen, on 6 November 1973, the nine member states of the European Community (EC) established in 1958 and developed into the EU after the Maastricht treaty of 1992) released a joint statement:

While emphasizing that the views set out below are only a first contribution on their part to the search for a comprehensive solution to the problem, they have agreed on the following.... They have the firm hope that, following the adoption by the Security Council of Resolution No. 338 of 22 October, negotiations will at last begin for the restoration in the Middle East of a just and lasting peace through the application of Security Council Resolution No. 242 in all of its parts. They declare themselves ready to do all in their power to contribute to that peace. They believe that those negotiations must take place in the framework of the United Nations.....²

It was the first time the EC had called for direct negotiations to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on Resolution 242. The sudden cut in oil supplies threatened European industrial interests and pushed the EC to break its long silence and enter a playing field that had been considered an American domain.

The following year marked the start of the Euro-Arab Dialogue, a bilateral forum made up of several committees through which the Arab League of States and the EC met to discuss several issues relevant to Euro-Arab relations. Each committee was primarily designed to have thematically chosen experts, diplomats and politicians representing Arab states as well as the nine EC states.

The new project faced two crucial problems. The first was the Arab insistence on the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as a representative of the Palestinian people in the Arab League, which was representing the Arab side of the dialogue. The second problem was the European insistence on restricting the

1 The West suffered two extreme crises in securing oil supplies from the Middle East. The first was in 1973, during the Arab-Israeli war in October, and the second during the Iranian revolution of 1979.

2 Joint statement by the Governments of the EEC, 6 November 1973 (European navigator project), http://www.ena.lu/joint_statement_governments_eec_november_1973-020002394.html

dialogue to economic issues, which was not accepted by the Arab side as it tried to convince the EC members of the importance of the Palestinian cause and show that it is more than just a political dispute to all Arab peoples.

Eventually, the Arab side forced their point of view on the first matter, although a compromise was reached by forming a collective Arab delegation, with no national identities, to negotiate with an EC team of the same nature. Moreover, the Arab side appointed Ahmad Sidqi Al-Dajani, the PLO representative, as the head of the Arab delegation. While it was not easy to directly accept the PLO, due to international opinion against its terrorist activities during the 1970s, after PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat was invited to address the UN General Assembly in November 1974 there was no room for overt exclusion of the PLO from any political activity regarding the Middle East.³ As for the second problem, Europe managed to restrict the Dialogue to economic issues only as they wished.

The United States started to interfere in the course of Euro-Arab relations after the EC released its joint statement. It was obvious that under the pressure of securing its crude oil resources, Europe was going to do whatever it took to enhance its economic ties with the Arab world. Instead of the Dialogue, the US invited the oil crisis parties – both producers and consumers to a confrontation meeting in Washington DC on February 11th 1974. France withdrew from the conference after rejecting its notion to form a permanent committee of coordination that would be developed afterwards as a permanent institution; this led to an indefinite postponement of the next meeting.

The then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger warned the EC against sharing a table with the twenty-two Arab states as one bloc, as it would give them a sense of achievement with regards to their oil embargo and therefore they would start negotiations from a strong position. When the EC continued to pursue the Dialogue, Kissinger insisted on two restrictions: no energy and no political issues.⁴ He managed to convince the new UK government, led by Harold Wilson, to deliver a message to the EC states that they would have to consult on all matters with their Western bloc allies (i.e., the US) before taking decisions or making pledges. The EC took a pragmatic stance and decided that interfering politically in the Middle East conflict against American wishes would lead to serious tensions with Washington. They could not afford to sabotage the coherence of the bloc for the sake of the Middle East conflict. This pragmatism led the EC members to pursue a compromised course of action, which was accepting the presence of the PLO while refraining from political discussions.

Despite the fact that the EC refused political discussions during the early phase of the Dialogue, it was obvious that many of the salient economic problems were linked to political issues, such as freedom of transport of goods and individuals, political participation, the Palestinian refugees and their living conditions, and

3 On the Euro-Arab Dialogue, see: Ahmad Sidqi Al-Dajani, 'The PLO and the Euro Arab Dialogue', *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Spring 1980), p. 81– 98.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 84- 88.

issues relevant to tourism, reconstruction and multinational investments. Due to this refrain of political issues, the Dialogue formally adopted a new committee at the ambassadorial level to discuss political aspects of Euro-Arab cooperation. These 'Luxembourg meetings' started in May 1976.

Political issues were not limited to the Arab-Israeli conflict, as the EC also wanted to discuss issues such as political reform, human and minority rights, and freedom of expression in the Arab world. Although the Arab delegation insisted on introducing political issues to the Dialogue, they were only ready to discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict and considered the other issues to be of secondary importance or even as interference in their domestic politics.

The Dialogue meeting held in Tunis in February 1977 witnessed a crisis. The Arab delegation put political issues on the table and turned most of the meeting into a discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict, highlighting the Israeli settlement policy in the West Bank and the maltreatment of Arabs living inside Israel. The Arab delegation said that Europe had failed to translate its principles into practice and was not taking any significant action to pressure Israel on these issues. The European delegation answered this accusation by highlighting EC actions regarding the conflict, such as the joint statement of 1973 and the humanitarian aid efforts that it was heavily involved in along with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East – UNRWA and other efforts to help the Palestinian refugees. The EC also pointed out that they could not permit others to decide what its relations with Israel should be.⁵ The Arab delegation tried to extend the discussion and reactionary comments further but the EC delegation closed the discussion by saying that they would carry on diplomatic efforts to align the principles of EC foreign policy to all issues of importance in the region. The EC ended the political discussion and diverted most of the Dialogue towards economic, cultural and educational projects.⁶

The historic visit of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Israel in 1977 to launch his peace initiative caused an intra-Arab rift, which was then worsened by the Egyptian-Israeli peace talks and 1979 treaty. The Arab states rejected and condemned the Egyptian recognition of Israel and its readiness to abandon armed violence against Israel.⁷ The headquarters of the Arab League was moved from Cairo to Tunis, under the banner of an Arab boycott of Egypt. The intra-Arab problems and the split in the Arab League's delegation to the Dialogue, along with other political tensions in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, prevented the Dialogue from continuing with the same seriousness, and it was completely suspended in 1980.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 89- 90.

6 *Ibid.*

7 On the Arab boycott of Egypt after the 1979 peace treaty with Israel, see: E. Podesh and O. Winckler, 'The boycott that never was: Egypt and the Arab system, 1979-1989', Working Paper, University of Durham, Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (20020, <http://dro.dur.ac.uk/5056/1/72DMEP.pdf?DDD35>

The Venice Declaration

EC member states held a summit in Venice on 13 June 1980, and subsequently issued the Venice Declaration. This is considered to be one of the most important documents showing the European perspective on the issue of Palestinian national rights. The Venice declaration called for the Palestinian right of self-determination and their right of self-government, and also criticised illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and any unilateral steps taken to change the facts on the ground in East Jerusalem. Israel and the United States tried to brush off the declaration, considering it biased and only adopting the Arab point of view.

The 11th article of the Venice Declaration stated that:

*The Nine have decided to make the necessary contacts with all the parties concerned. The objective of these contacts would be to ascertain the position of the various parties with respect to the principles set out in this declaration and in the light of the results of this consultation process to determine the form which such an initiative on their part could take.*⁸

With the Declaration Europe made its stance clear, but it was never able to take it as far as the promises of Article 11. The United States and Egypt favoured the Camp David Accords as the foundation of any peace negotiations between the Arabs and Israel.

The Camp David Accords⁹, which were signed between President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin on 17 September 1978, included a framework for peace in three parts. The first was about the West Bank and Gaza, the second focused on Egypt and Israel, and the third was dedicated to associated principles, with a roadmap for future possible settlements with Israel's Arab Neighbours (Jordan, Syria and Lebanon). Article 1: Egypt and Israel state that the principles and provisions below should apply to peace treaties between Israel and each of its neighbours – Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.¹⁰

It was not acceptable to the US, Israel or Egypt that Europe would interrupt the Accords by the strategy suggested in the Venice Declaration.

The Declaration ended up simply being a declaration of principles that the EC saw as important for Middle East peace. Article 11 was abandoned and the EC was not granted a chance to implement a political effort towards bringing the parties to negotiations. The Israel-Lebanon war in 1982 and the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem put the Venice Declaration off and it was not returned to until the Madrid conference in 1991.

8 'The Venice Declaration (Text of Declaration)', *The Palestine Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and culture*, Vol.6, No.2 (1999).

9 Walter Laqueur, *The Arab-Israel Reader*, 'Camp David Summit Meeting: Framework for peace (September 17, 1978)', (New York: Penguin), p. 222 – 227.

10 Op.cit, p226

From Madrid to Oslo

The fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War ended decades of competition within international politics between the United States and the USSR. The Europeans no longer felt that they had to coordinate their activities and decisions with the Americans in order to avoid a split within the Western bloc.¹¹

The Madrid conference held on 30 October 1991 was attended by Syria, Lebanon, a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation, and Israel. The conference was hosted under the joint chairmanship of American President George Bush and Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev (although the extensive efforts by Secretary of State James Baker after the 1991 Gulf War were a key driver of the conference).¹² Both the UN and the EC were only invited as observers, not participants, at the conference. Hosted by Spain, the Arabs were saved the feeling of being pressured by the Americans in favour of Israel, which they had refused at Camp David in 1978. However, the Madrid conference cannot be described as a purely European-oriented initiative, more an American initiative taking place in Europe.

Even the Oslo Accords, which were considered the basic principles for the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, were negotiated in secret away from the delegations, media and pressure of public opinion, between January and September 1993. So despite the European nature of the Oslo Accords, they could not have been accepted or signed by the PLO and Israel until the Americans gave them international clout, as seen by the official signing ceremonies that took place in the White House on 13 September 1993.

The promising peace process of the 1990s was attached to the names of two major European capitals: Madrid and Oslo. The two major developments of Madrid 1991 and Oslo 1993 were based on European initiatives, but they were in fact sponsored by the United States. Although the two initiatives took place on European lands, the American presence in both was very obvious in terms of coordination, support and pushing developments further. Both Madrid and Oslo had some involvement of individual European countries but the EC was not at all involved in Oslo and attended the Madrid conference as a silent observer.

11 Mohamed El-Sayed Selim, 'The European Union and the Arab-Israeli conflict: In search of a new approach', *Al-Siyassa Al-Dawliya Quarterly* (Cairo: Al Ahrum Foundation), October 2010, p. 17– 28.

12 William B. Quandt, *Peace process: American diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1967*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

The Mediterranean that unites us: Economic co-operation plans for EU, Arabs and Israel

The Madrid conference of 1991 was a dramatic moment of change, hope and a vision for a new Middle East. What started in Madrid peaked with Oslo1 and Oslo2. While Madrid was mainly a political forum, the Oslo Accords included Annexes 3 and 4 dedicated to economic cooperation. Annex 3 proposed an Israeli-Palestinian Continuing Committee for economic cooperation, focusing on many issues (including cooperation in water, electricity, energy, finance, transport, communications, trade and commerce, industry, labour relations, and environmental protection). Annex 4 aimed at a regional development plan, where the two sides would cooperate in the context of multilateral peace efforts in promoting a development program for the region, including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, to be initiated by the G7.

The main parties of the conflict had met the EU wish of focusing efforts on economic plans. As regional economic plans were mentioned in the Accords, the EU responded with the Barcelona Declaration and the EMP.

The Euro Med Partnership and Barcelona Process

The Euro Med Partnership (EMP) is a multilateral initiative of the EU aimed at connecting all members with its southern and eastern neighbours in the Mediterranean through political, economic and socio-cultural relations, in the hopes of bringing stability, peace, coexistence and prosperity to the region.

The Barcelona Declaration was made when the EU decided to establish a new framework for its relations with the countries of the Mediterranean basis by establishing a political, economic and socio cultural partnership. This partnership became a reality at the Barcelona Conference of 27 and 28 November 1995, which brought together the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the 15 EU Member States and the 12 Mediterranean non-member countries to sign together the declaration that aimed to create the Mediterranean of Peace, coexistence and prosperity for all its peoples.¹³

Three main factors have led the Arab world to be sceptical of the EMP and accuse it of playing a role for the integration of Israel in the region without achieving any real progress on the road for peace. The first was the Shimon Peres plan for the New Middle East, the second was the Casablanca economic summit, and the third was the Essen declaration.

13 Barcelona ~Decalaration and Barcelona Process, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/mediterranean_partner_countries/r15001_en.htm, 12/3/2011

First, in his book, *The New Middle East*,¹⁴ Shimon Peres (the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs in Yitzhak Rabin's government (1992–1995) and current President) states that 'the anticipated peace would come with a smiling future to the region represented in a formula where all Arab states and Israel are cooperating to combat hunger and poverty in the same way that they defeated conflict and hatred'. Peres talks about a new peaceful Middle East region of co-existence, where all people live in harmony and cooperation with Israel. This project was considered naive and unfeasible even in Israel itself, and was believed to be one of the reasons that Peres was defeated in the 1996 election.¹⁵ However, although described as over-optimistic, the book was praised by many Western commentators as a sign of good intentions from an important Israeli political figure.¹⁶

In his review of the book, Patrick Clawson wrote:

*"...He (Peres) performs a valuable service by projecting a vision of cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbours. This is especially helpful at a time when some Israeli politicians, seemingly full of rancour and suspension towards Arabs show little interest in developing a broad range of ties with their neighbours...."*¹⁷

Reactions to the book were the complete opposite in the Arab world. Many Arab commentators and analysts said: 'Here is the catch: now we know why Israel is looking for peace'. They believe Israel has a new vision: to replace its military plans in the region with a new economic and financial invasion. However, not all Arab reactions were pessimistic or sceptical. Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan – driven by the 1994 accomplishment of the Wadi Araba peace agreement with Israel - said that a free trade zone across the Middle East could be an ultimate goal, starting with a sub-regional agreement that brings together Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis.

Second, the United States called for an economic summit for development in the Middle East and North Africa, which took place in Casablanca on 30 October 1994. to celebrate the first anniversary of the Madrid conference.¹⁸ The summit had a large number of participants, representing sixty states from the Mediterranean and other regions. The Israeli delegation was made up of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and nine ministers of his cabinet. King Hassan of Morocco announced that, by holding such summits, the Arab boycott on Israel was over. Many of the anti-normalisation Arab groups (trade unions, syndicates, intellectuals, journalists, and university professors) perceived that not only the doors of Casablanca but all of the

14 Shimon Peres with Arye Naor, *The New Middle East*, (Dorset: Element Books, 1993).

15 Jacob Shamir and Khalil Shikaki, *Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion, The Public Imperative in the Second Intifada*, (Indiana University Press, 2010).

16 See, for example, Patrick Clawson's review in *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1994.

17 Clawson, Patrick, a review of "The New Middle East" by Shimon Peres and Arye Naor, *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1994, <http://meforum.org/146/the-new-middle-east>, 19/3/2011

18 Ghazy, Hussin, Economic and security summits and conferences from normalization to domination (in Arabic), Arab writers league, 1997, <http://www.awu-dam.org/book/98/study98/124-g-h/book98-sd002.htm>, 1/5/2011

Arab world was open to Israel. The summit was covered in the Arab press in a way that showed it to be part of a bigger plan to give Israel an easy end to the boycott without any real achievements in the peace process or an end to the occupation of three Arab countries. The American insistence on bringing Israel to the summit was linked to the European insistence on bringing Israel to the EMP; both were linked to a conspiracy of deceiving the Arab world before achieving peace.

The Essen declaration occurred at the European Union Council meeting held in Essen, Germany on 9–10 December 1994, the meeting dealt with many issues of European interest such as the Yugoslavia conflict, the enlargement of the EU membership and the Mediterranean policy.

A final statement was issued that highlighted the importance of the Mediterranean for the European Union and called for peace and stability in the region. It also encouraged the development of the Euro Mediterranean Partnership, with pledges of financial support from the EU. The Essen Declaration was a source of joy in Israel, and a source of resentment and controversy in the Arab world, because of one specific paragraph:

*The European Council considers that Israel, on account of its high level of economic development, should enjoy special status in its relations with the European Union on the basis of reciprocity and common interests.*¹⁹

Many non-biased commentators from outside the region took that part of the declaration as an indirect justification from the EU for not granting Israel as much financial aid and in-kind donations in comparison to other partners, given its already developed economy and scientific infrastructure. However, the Arab media saw in the declaration unconditional economic support to Israel, in addition to the political support it was already enjoying.

The Israeli media highlighted the same lines to show European support of Israel and the possible fruits of peace.

Neither the Israeli nor the Arab media mentioned the rest of the paragraph of the declaration:

*In the process, regional economic development in the Middle East including in the Palestinian areas will also be boosted. The European Council requests the Council and the Commission to report to it at its next meeting on action taken. The European Council agreed that, as the largest international donor, the European Union should continue to make a significant economic and political contribution in support of the Middle East peace process, in particular in the reconstruction of the Palestinian areas.*²⁰

19 EU council meeting, Essen Presidency conclusion, <http://www2.dpt.gov.tr/abigm/abtb/Zirveler/1994%20Essen%20209-10%20Aralik.htm>

20 Ibid.

These three factors together caused a great level of tension, resentment and suspicion against the EMP. The Arab media and anti-normalisation groups framed it as neo-liberalism, neo-zionism and neo-orientalism trying to reoccupy the Arab world through economic plans.

Nevertheless, the Barcelona Process was launched in November 1995 by fifteen EU member states²¹ and fifteen Mediterranean neighbour states.²² The main objective of the process was to form a regional alliance through dialogue and cooperation, and create a Mediterranean region of peace, security and shared prosperity.²³ It was launched at the Barcelona Conference of 27– 28 November 1995, after which participants signed the Barcelona Declaration.

The process was organised through three main dimensions:

- the political and security dimension, aimed at establishing a common area of peace and stability
- the economic and financial dimension, aimed at creating an area of shared prosperity
- the social, cultural and human dimension, aimed at developing human resources and promoting understanding between cultures and exchanges between civil societies

The EMP tried to establish multilateral projects and programmes among EU organisations and counterpart local organisations in the partner states to implement the objectives within these three dimensions. Multilateral projects that brought together partners from all around the Mediterranean, including Israel and the Arab nations, worked in a relatively efficient manner between 1995 and the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2000/2001. Many of these projects succeeded in bringing Arabs and Israel together and offered them a platform for tackling issues of common interest in many areas. (After the second Intifada, however, most of the successful projects of the EMP were bilateral projects.)

Some of these multilateral good practices, where the EU worked with both Arab and Israeli partners according to the three Barcelona Process dimensions, can be highlighted. Most of these good practices depended on establishing networks around the Mediterranean to introduce the partners to working together.

Within the first dimension of the EMP – the political and security dialogue – wthe official website of the EMP states that ‘so-called partnership-building measures (political confidence and security-building) have not progressed very far due to the situation in the Middle East Peace Process’.²⁴ Yet there are a few good practices,

21 Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom

22 Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine (the Palestinian Occupied territories), Syria, Tunisia and Turkey

23 The Barcelona Process, EEAS (European External Action Service), http://eeas.europa/Barcelona_en.htm

24 EMP multilateral relations and regional cooperation, http://collections.europarchive.org/dnb/20070702132831/http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/multilateral_relations.htm

including the network of foreign policy institutes and think tanks known as the Euro Mediterranean Study Commission (EuroMeSCo), founded in June 1996.²⁵

EuroMeSCo has been adopted by the EMP as an official project for confidence-building measures. It receives financial support from the EMP and has two main areas of work. First, it operates as a network of fifty-eight member institutes, thirty observer institutes and two international associate members from around the Mediterranean, engaging in debates, policy and academic research papers, and report writing on different political issues of the Mediterranean. Second, the network member institutes and EuroMeSCo board undertake regular meetings with senior officials of the EMP member states and EMP ministerial meetings to discuss policy and security matters and maintain close contacts with the European Commission and the Council of Ministers of the EU to advise on political developments in the Mediterranean region. The EuroMeSCo network has members from all EU member states, the Arab partners (except for Mauritania) and also member institutes from Israel as the following²⁶:

Country	Algeria	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	Palestine	Syria	Tunisia	Israel
EuroMeSCo institutes	1	4	2	1	4	2	2	3	5

Within the second dimension of the EMP – economic and financial cooperation – there is another good practice of networking: the Euro Mediterranean Forum for Economic Science Institutes (FEMISE).²⁷ It was established in Paris in 1997 under the EMP as a Euro Mediterranean network comprising eighty members from thirty-seven EMP states (including Arab states and Israel). It is coordinated by the Institut de la Méditerranée (France) and the Economic Research Forum (Egypt), and headquartered in Marseille, France. It has three objectives:

- To conduct policy research and make recommendations with respect to economic relations between Europe and their Mediterranean partners;
- To publish and disseminate this research for the benefit of public and private, national and multilateral institutions;
- To work for the broadest possible dissemination by the most appropriate means.

The FEMISE network has three types of membership; the founding members who cooperated together to set the network at the very beginning, the active members who joined the FEMISE after the founding and the observers. The

25 EuroMeSCo is headquartered in Portugal, with a secretariat hosted by the Portuguese Institute for Strategic and International Studies in Lisbon. EuroMeSCo website: www.euromesco.net

26 EuroMeSCo members, http://www.euromesco.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=75&Itemid=39&lang=en, 14/5/2011

27 FEMISE website: www.femise.org

membership of FEMISE brings together members from 37 EMP countries including Arab members and Israel as the following:²⁸

Country	Algeria	Egypt	Jordan	Lebanon	Morocco	Palestine	Syria	Tunisia	Israel
Founding members	1	2	1	2	4	2	1	2	4
Active members	1	3	3	–	3	1	1	4	–
Total number of members	2	5	4	2	7	3	2	6	4

Within the third dimension of the EMP – socio-cultural and human cooperation – we can highlight another important network: the Euro Med Youth Exchange. The Barcelona Declaration stated that 'youth exchanges should be the means to prepare future generations for a closer cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean partners. A Euro-Mediterranean youth exchange cooperation programme should therefore be established based on experience acquired in Europe and taking account of the partners' needs'.²⁹

In 1998, a training strategy for the EMP partners youth programme was developed by the French YOUTH National Agency to start the first phase in 1999. The objectives of the EMP youth training and exchange programmes were based on targeted areas such as the fight against racism, discrimination and xenophobia; dialogue with other cultures; and the promotion of a greater mutual understanding between European countries and the rest of the world. All the EMP Eastern and Southern partners participated in phase one of the project (1999-2001) and the following phases until 2011 (except for Syria).

One of the best programmes implemented in phase one, targeting the Arab-Israeli conflict, was 'Minorities and Democracy in Europe and Israel', which brought together forty-five young people from Italy, Germany, Palestine and Israel to discuss various aspects of minority-majority relations in a European and Middle East context. The project was designed as an opportunity for young people to learn, compare and discuss minority rights in Israel and Europe, whether on theoretical and legal aspects or real practices on the ground, while also visiting many Arab villages inside Israel. Part of the programme involved voluntary work and other educational activities on how to evaluate and take part in enhancing conditions for minorities.

However, as noted earlier, the EMP lost its credibility and feasibility as a multilateral platform after the second Intifada began in 2000/2001. Hence, the EU

28 FEMISE membership, <http://www.femise.org/liste-des-membres/>, 15/5/2011

29 Euro Med Youth program: http://collections.europarchive.org/dnb/20070702132831/http://ec.europa.eu/youth/priorities/euromed_en.html

tried to keep working towards partnership with its neighbours through bilateral and sub-regional initiatives. One of the most successful projects on the bilateral level is the EMP contribution to Palestinian state-building measures. Palestinian state building: The measure of Palestinian state and institution building are not included in one specific project of the EMP, or the EU foreign policy agenda in general, but rather are a collateral effort of the EU to support, finance, and provide training for state- and institution-building efforts in Palestine.

On the 24–25 March 1999, the European Council Presidency held a meeting to discuss several issues of European interest in Berlin, Germany. The subsequent Berlin Declaration of 1999 stated that 'the creation of a democratic, viable and peaceful sovereign Palestinian state ... would be the best guarantee for Israel's security and Israel's acceptance as an equal partner in the region'.³⁰

The statement showed the political stance of the EU towards establishing a Palestinian state. However, the EU has to use the economic and financial (i.e., second) dimension of the EMP to help the Palestinians in their state and institution-building process. Financial, technical and human expertise was offered to the Palestinian Authority (administrative organisation also known as PNA Palestinian National Authority, which was formed in 1994 to govern parts of the West bank and Gaza strip according to Oslo agreement in 1993) in several sectors, including the legislative council, police force, statistics bureau, broadcasting corporation, and municipal authorities. From 1994 to 2000, the bulk of European aid was directed toward infrastructure improvement, in projects to create or upgrade road networks, water wells, sewage disposal, the Gaza harbour and airport, hospitals and schools.

During the second Intifada, this newly established Palestinian infrastructure was destroyed by Israel. The EU then had to shift a large amount of aid given to the PA from state-building to an emergency support programme. Aid was redirected to humanitarian intervention and rescue with efforts to rebuild the necessary infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza. It was the EU that covered the role that Israel was obliged to take as an occupying power according to international law. The same happened again during the Gaza War in 2009. No serious attempt was taken by the EU to demand compensation from Israel for the wasted EU funds that were spent in the Palestinian territories. Israel demolishes and the EU rebuilds in silence, while opportunities for the EU and international community to warn Israel that there will be consequences for its aggression are wasted.

While the Palestinian Authority (PA) is considered the smallest trading partner of the EU, the EU remains the largest international donor to the Palestinian Authority as well as civil society and the private sector in Palestine. The total amount of trade between the EU and the PA was €56.6 million in 2009, of which €50.5 million are the PA exports from the EU and only €6.1 million are EU exports from the PA – mostly

30 Presidency conclusion, European council meeting, 23-24 March 1999, in Berlin, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/ACFB2.html

agricultural and processed agricultural products.³¹ The Rabat roadmap – announced in 2005 as part of the European neighborhood policy – manages agricultural cooperation with Europe's neighbours, especially its EMP partners. Under the framework of the EMP, the PA entered negotiations with the EU in accordance with the Rabat roadmap that year. On 13 April 2011, the High Representative of Foreign Affairs for the EU Catherine Ashton signed an agreement with PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad that gave Palestinian agricultural products and fish products immediate duty-free access to the EU market.

Ashton linked the economic benefit of the Palestinian side to the political stance of the EU:

*Facilitating Palestinian trade is a crucial element of the state building process which the EU is supporting both politically and financially. This agreement is the tangible expression of our support. This agreement is extended also to duty free some of the Palestinian industrial products.*³²

Despite the sincere efforts of the EU and its partnership with the PA for state-building measures, the state-building process in Palestine faces several challenges. First, Israeli reoccupation of lands under PA control between Oslo 1 and the second Intifada, and Israeli acts of aggression (of which the war on Gaza was the latest) caused huge amounts of damage to the Palestinian infrastructure that the EU had facilitated both financially and technically. Second, there are the challenges caused by the PA itself. There are three main problems here that could be solved by pressure and serious measures from the EU:

- Corruption and lack of transparency, as well as lack of accountability and the self-enrichment of leaders and officials;
- The authoritarian nature of the PA, the abuse of the Palestinian people, and the lack of human rights practiced by the national police force;
- The inability of the PA to achieve any progress in the peace process or the issue of Palestinian sovereignty.

The EMP helped to enhance Israel's legitimacy in the region. It is a contextual recognition of Israel to join a partnership as a full member with Arab neighbours that do not recognise it. The EMP was not the only gateway for Israel to cooperate with the EU – there had been long and strong economic bilateral relations since the founding days of the EC – but the EMP represented a chance for trilateral cooperation and regional recognition with Arab states.³³

Despite the European economic and socio-cultural projects that flooded into the region since 1994, successive Israeli governments have preferred the United States as

31 'European Union opens its market to Palestinian exports', European Commission, IP/11/475, press release 13 April 2011

32 Ibid

33 On EU-Israeli relations, see: Sharon Pardo, 'Going West: Guidelines for Israel's Integration into the European Union', *The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 51– 62.

their partner for peace. Romano Prodi President of the Euro Commission announced in February 2001 that the EU has not previously played a role in the Middle East peace process because the Israelis never recognised that role. In April 2002, the Israelis refused a peace proposal offered by the EU and Shimon Peres (then Foreign Affairs minister), saying that Washington was the preferred ally and peace mediator for Israel.³⁴ Accordingly, the EU went back to playing their preferred and accepted role as an economic and cultural partner.

The Union for the Mediterranean

The Union for the Mediterranean was first proposed by French President Nicolas Sarkozy. It departed who called for a Union of the Mediterranean. It was different from the Barcelona Process formula as it would exclude the non-Mediterranean states of Europe. As Germany was against the project and Turkey expressed reservations, the French President amended the proposal to be 'the Barcelona Process: A Union for the Mediterranean'.³⁵

It is not a new idea; it is really a re-launch of the Barcelona Process that can face new and current challenges in the region, such as terrorism and illegal immigration. The mechanisms are also different from the Barcelona Process. The new strategy depends on cooperation through specific projects for member states to address areas such as the economy, environment, energy, health, migration and culture.

The Paris Summit that took place on 13 July 2008 was a success and brought together the leaders of the forty-three partners. The summit was led by France and Egypt, representing Europe and the South of the Mediterranean respectively. Once again, the partners from the South could not afford to reject cooperation with Europe, even though relations with Israel had deteriorated compared to Barcelona in 1995. However, the Union for the Mediterranean was launched at a moment of relative hope in the region, as confidential and indirect Syrian-Israeli negotiations were held under Turkish auspices. Although Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad avoided shaking hands with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, a limited success was achieved at the Paris Summit regarding the presence of all the EMP parties.

However, 2009 began with the Israeli war on Gaza, and subsequently hopes faded for the Union. The Arab states refused any high-level meetings in the first half of the year to avoid meeting with Israeli counterparts. Later in 2009, it was overtly said that the Arab Ministers of Foreign Affairs would not attend the ministerial meeting in response to the provocative statements of the Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman (a member of Netanyahu's coalition government that took office in March 2009). Lieberman said in a speech to the General Assembly of the UN in September 2009 that the Palestinian-Israeli peace process had lost its validity and the 'land for peace' principle should be changed to 'land for population',

34 Cited in Selim, op.cit., p. 25.

35 Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, <http://www.ufmsecretariat.org/en/>

with an insistence on Israel's so-called right to build settlements. While the Israeli government said that Lieberman's views were personal and not expressing the official Israeli point of view, the Arab ministers refused to join him at the ministerial meeting of the Union for the Mediterranean.³⁶ In a further blow, Jordanian diplomat Ahmed Massa'deh, the first Secretary General of the Union, resigned in January 2011, only one year after his appointment. Massa'deh stated in his resignation press release that the 'conditions against which he accepted to assume the job have changed' and that 'the conflict between Israel and Palestine has been putting constant obstacles on the organization and hindering the realization of their first projects'.³⁷ Massa'deh wished the Union success and promised to always support its vision and objectives.³⁸

The Arab world was always suspicious of the Euro Med Partnership, believing a Euro-Mediterranean identity was a way to integrate Israel into the region with Arab states in a less embarrassing way. Europe always had ways to cooperate on all levels with Arabs, either through coordination with the Arab League or through bilateral relations with individual Arab states. Therefore, the EMP was seen as a formula to force acceptance and recognition of Israel and normalisation on the Arab states. Peace, understanding and dialogue were slogans without real plans for implementation other than gaining access to new markets with fewer restrictions and tariffs. Peace was only talked about at summits and conferences, where people were told that peace was happening yet no real schedule or actions were seen.

In sum, the EMP, with its strict conditions and extremely high standards, has always been more in favour in the EU states rather than their Eastern or Southern counterparts. The partnership has been afflicted by Arab suspicions of exploitation and alliance between two imperialist powers: a Europe that hopes for economic and financial benefits, and an Israel that seeks recognition and normalisation.

36 http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2010/09/100928_israelprimeminister.shtml

37 'Secretary General of the Union for the Med resigns', Catalan news agency, 27/1/2011, <http://catalannewsagency.com/print/1250>

38 Ibid

Case study: The Anna Lindh Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures

The Anna Lindh Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures³⁹ was launched in 2005 after the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona Summit. With its headquarters at the Library of Alexandria, Egypt, the project was launched to empower dialogue and mutual understanding in the Mediterranean. It was considered the first concrete project based on the third dimension of the Barcelona Process that was dedicated to sociocultural cooperation. It was named after Anna Lindh, the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs who was assassinated in Stockholm in an act of hate in 2003. Anna Lindh overtly condemned the invasion of Iraq and called for putting an end to the Middle East conflict based on both sides deciding to quit violence. She was also known as one of the biggest believers in the EU and the necessity of North-South dialogue.

The strategy of the Foundation is to form a Mediterranean network made up of several national networks. The national network members include civil society organisations, NGOs, academic and semi-academic institutes and think tanks. The Foundation's work is based on:

- Developing projects, events and training programmes to empower civil society in the member states.
- Technical and financial help via grants to proposed projects and prizes for the best practices.

Mr. Gianluca Solera, head of the international network unit of the Foundation, notes that 'The Anna Lindh Foundation is the only surviving project of the Union for the Mediterranean so far'..'' He also added that the Foundation is a European Union project; it is neither a programme nor organisation.⁴⁰ Funding comes from the European Commission and the forty-three governments of the Euro Med Partnership. The amounts given by the national governments are on a voluntary basis. However, many European governments do not give any money to the project – including the United Kingdom. Other European governments make large contributions; Germany and Spain, for example, each pay €1 million euro per year. Southern governments also contribute to the Foundation's revenues. For example, Egypt pays a limited amount of money but donated the headquarters and other important logistical and technical assistance. The Palestinian Authority does not pay any contribution. The

39 The Anna Lindh Foundation: www.euromedalex.org

40 This analysis of the Anna Lindh Foundation follows a long interview held at the Foundation headquarters in Alexandria, Egypt, on 14/4/2011 with Mr. Gianluca Solera.

project gets an opportunity for renewal every three years and the current round (which is the second) will end in November 2011.

Accusations, embargos and threats of withdrawal

The Anna Lindh Foundation faces political interference in its projects and initiatives for several reasons. First, it must be remembered that it is a governmental project in terms of establishment, funding and governance. Many of the heads of the national networks are assigned by their national governments – not only in the Eastern and Southern non-democratic countries, but in countries such as Israel, Spain and Italy. In addition, the steering committee and the board of governors are composed of ministers and officials from the forty-three member states. This opens up questions about political neutrality and political interference in the Foundation's activities and projects.

Another important factor that makes the Foundation heavily penetrated with politics is the nature of the region in which its activities take place. The Euro Med Partnership – with all its projects and initiatives – is the only regional gathering that brings Arab states and Israel together. In addition, new threats that were introduced after 9/11 – such as the war on terror, the war in Iraq and the illegal migration problem – all bring politics to whatever activity the Foundation is trying to introduce.

The Foundation has always been attacked by both Arab states and Israel. Arab governments, especially Syria, have accused the Foundation of forcing Arab civil society towards normalisation and working with Israeli partners. This accusation is based on the condition for project grants that requires four co-applicant organizations – two EU countries and two Eastern or Southern countries – known as the 2+2 formula. The Foundation rejects this accusation, saying it does not assign partners from the East and South Mediterranean and it never pushes the choice of specific partners. However, the Foundation would welcome the granting of a project co-organised by an Arab NGO and an Israeli NGO, as it would be a successful step towards its objectives of achieving peace, dialogue and co-existence, which cannot be reached without joint cultural and social projects.

On the other hand, Israel threatened to withdraw from the Foundation more than once because of the so-called practising of politics rather than social and cultural cooperation that it was established for. The head of the Israeli network threatened to withdraw after the Israel Committee Against House Demolition (ICHAD)⁴¹ received a grant for one of their projects. ICHAD was founded in 1997 and is an important Israeli NGO that challenges and exposes the Israeli demolition of Palestinian houses and farms. ICHAD has also taken the lead in the campaigns to boycott Israeli settlement products. The Foundation provided grants to ICHAD in 2009 for their proposed project called 'Mount Hebron summer camp', which brought students from Europe, Palestine and Israel to live together near Palestinian

41 Israeli Committee against House Demolition: www.icahd.org

villages and offered them tours to see the Israeli demolitions of Arab and Bedouin villages, houses and farms.

The Gaza War in early 2009 brought a crucial interruption to the work of the Foundation, which published a statement to condemn the Israeli aggression on its website on 1 January 2009.⁴² The statement expressed anxiety and deep concern towards not only the Israeli aggression and air strikes but also the firing of missiles on Israeli citizens. However, it was obvious that the Foundation saw the bigger picture of its work for peace and coexistence being jeopardised. The statement went on:

...Even though it is not up to us to give our opinion on the political responsibilities which led to this dramatic situation, the Anna Lindh Foundation has always decried the unbearably isolated conditions in which more than a million and a half Gaza citizens have been living for months, stating that this added to the tensions which risk spreading to other countries, thus widening the breach between Arab public opinion and that of the European Union. What has happened over the last few days has confirmed this analysis. It represents a major obstacle to the understanding and cooperation between the peoples of the Euro-Mediterranean region, and worsens dramatically the humanitarian conditions in which the Gaza population lives. We uphold that it is a tragedy for all those who believe in dialogue as the most efficient weapon to resolve in a sustainable way the conflicts in the region.⁴³

The Israeli network, headed by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute (established 1959 as an independent cultural and sociological think tank),⁴⁴ threatened to withdraw from the Foundation. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs insisted on publishing a response statement to express the Israeli point of view. This time the threats were too serious to ignore and the Foundation published the statement on 5 January 2009.⁴⁵ The Israeli mission to the EU prepared the statement to reply where they criticized the Foundation and accused it of practicing politics and showing a biased point of view:

We are deeply concerned about the one-sided statement of the Anna Lindh Foundation relating to the 'Cast Lead' operation. The Foundation was established in order to promote cultural issues in the framework of the Barcelona-Euro Med Process and the role of the Foundation is not to discuss or criticize political themes. Moreover, besides the fact that the statement mentioned the injuries of Israeli civilians, it is a one-sided statement which presents a biased picture of the reality.⁴⁶

42 Anna Lindh Foundation's statement on the situation in Gaza, 1/1/2009

43 Ibid.

44 The Van Leer Jerusalem institute: <http://www.vanleer.org.il>

45 Reaction to ALF's statement on the situation in Gaza, Israeli Mission to the EU, 5/1/2009, *ibid.*

46 Reaction to ALF's statement on the situation in Gaza, Israeli Mission to the EU, 5/1/2009.

When asked about the Palestinian position and whether they wanted to publish their statement as well, Mr. Solera said that maybe the Palestinians found the condemning statement of the Foundation enough so that they did not try to publish one of their own, but the Foundation did not offer the opportunity.

After the Israeli war on Gaza, the Syrian government decided on a total embargo of the Foundation. Their national network was ordered by the government not to take part in any activities, while the Syrian official representative to the board of governors has not attended any of the meetings since the war. Meanwhile, Lebanese law bans Lebanese citizens from any contact with Israelis even in an indirect way. This led to the withdrawal of Lebanese authors from some of the Foundation's publications in 2010 due to the contribution of Israeli authors to the same volumes, which raises questions about the point of the Lebanese presence in all Euro Med activities which invite Israeli officials and non-officials to take part.

Hence, we can see that suspicions against the Anna Lindh Foundation have come from both sides, with accusations of normalisation from the Arab side and of bias and political interference from the Israeli side.

Further, internal tensions in some Arab states have led to interference in Foundation activities. In 2009, Egypt blocked one of its NGOs from receiving a Foundation grant, on the grounds that it might increase sectarian tensions (the project focused on religious diversity in Upper Egypt). The Moroccan network has refused to accept any grants made directly to NGOs in the Western Sahara, and insisted the Foundation use maps that do not show the Western Sahara as an area separate from Morocco.

Future and reform

The Anna Lindh Foundation faces a year of change in 2011 in response to three major factors. First, the project contract ends in November and must be renewed. Second, the 'Arab Spring' and Arab revolts will definitely require new arrangements with respect to Arab national networks. The political problems surrounding the work and activities of the Foundation are not only caused by Arab-Israeli tensions. One of the main obstacles that decreases the efficiency of its work is the lack of freedom of speech and the internal political problems and disputes in each of the member states. The last factor is the possibility of a unilateral Palestinian announcement of an independent state in September, with its implications for the conflict.

Since 2007, the Foundation has had to work with two Palestinian networks: one in Gaza and another in the West Bank. This split has added more burdens to the Foundation, which has to double-fund and double-support the divided Palestinian network. Against all odds, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank is extensively interfering in the work of the Palestinian network, while Hamas is not doing the same with the Gaza network. Issues of transparency in financial and administrative spending regarding the West Bank network and its relationship with the PA have also been important in the past few years. Since the Palestinian reconciliation in

May 2011, there will hopefully be a reunification of the Palestinian network and Palestinian civil society in general.

Many of the Israeli NGOs are also struggling against their government, especially now with the current right-wing government. They feel a sense of alienation and avoidance from their Arab counterparts, but they also blame their government for deepening the mistrust and scepticism. They have noticed a tendency of Arab and European networks not to work with them, as a means of taking a stance against Israel's political course. Some of the Israeli NGOs do not accept the discriminatory laws that the current administration is trying to force, such as the Jewish identity of the state. A main concern here is that these actions will lead to injustice and the undermining of the non-Jewish citizens of Israel.

In 2009, the Egyptian government in 2009 also hindered an Egyptian NGOs receiving a grant they needed to start a project about religious diversity in Upper Egypt. According to Egyptian law, the Minister of Social Solidarity is entitled to accept any foreign grants given to Egyptian NGOs. Although the Foundation chose the project to receive a grant, the government refused to accept it. It justified with the reason stating that sectarian tensions would be highlighted and possibly increased by such projects.

Mr. Solera said that Egyptian civil society is already making a turning point since the January 25th revolution in the way the Egyptian national network is run and organised. In their last national meeting in March 2011 – the first after the revolution – the Egyptian national network representatives objected to the new assignment of the Peace Studies institute led by Ambassador Ali Maher as their head of national network⁴⁷. They did not object to the assignment of him specifically or to his institute, they refused the assigning of the head of the network by the Egyptian ministry of Foreign Affairs. The members insisted on holding elections, believing that the change in Egypt should lead to change in all fields, especially the empowerment of civil society. The Foundation will commence with a reform plan regarding membership, leadership, accountability and transparency of the national networks. The plan will be based on two pillars. The first is the distinction between governments and national networks. Second is the definition of duties and responsibilities of the heads of the network towards both the members of the national network and also their deliverance to the Foundation.

The social and cultural cooperation that the Anna Lindh Foundation tries to contribute to the EMP cannot be achieved without bringing freedom and equality to the region, especially the South of the Mediterranean. The Arab-Israeli conflict is only one part of the obstacles and not the sum of them. Discriminatory governments and oppressive regimes are also hindering the empowerment of civil society in these countries and distracting their attention into unclear issues of dialogue and

47 The Bibliotheca Alexandrina (the library of Alexandria www.bibalex.org) is the Head of the Egyptian network since the start of the Foundation in 2005. The responsibility was first given to the Alexandria and the Mediterranean research centre www.bibalex.org/alexmed of the Library then it was given to the Peace studies institute www.peacestudiesinstitute.org in the Library as well.

acceptance instead of facing the real domestic challenges of freedom, equality and democracy that each and every state of the region faces.

Conclusion

The European attitude towards the Middle East conflict has always been criticized for being pragmatic and based only on European interests instead of moral or mutual interests. All the moments where Europe tried to interfere or to mediate the conflict were marked by economic crisis or economic opportunity.

The years following the Madrid conference were full of hope and promise for the Middle East. Many thought that they were witnessing the closure of the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, the deterioration of the Middle East peace process and the rising tension on the Palestinian stage in the late 1990s made the EMP another unfeasible dream. The accusations of European enforcement of normalisation kept the Arab partners from participating in projects that included Israel. The Europeans themselves took advantage of the EMP, turning it into a way to penetrate the Arab markets. Europe also focused the political cooperation on issues relevant to European security priorities, such as counterterrorism and illegal migration. The EMP was not really instrumental to achieve the goals it was designed for. There were no real or concrete projects that brought all the partners together; on the contrary, the most successful and known achievements of the EMP were the projects with bilateral engagement of the EU with either Arab partners or Israel. There were not any Arab-Israeli concrete projects.

The Arabs signed the EMP and the Barcelona Process in the middle of the 1990s, when there was a real and serious course of negotiation with Israel. Even the most sceptical Arab states agreed to take part and did not mind sharing the Mediterranean forum with Israel since – back then – they were already taking part in peace talks.

The answer to the uncertain situation in the Middle East today should start with the ending of the colonising of the West Bank with Israeli settlements, and the re-launch of peace talks with the Palestinian side, especially after the achievement of Palestinian reconciliation in May 2011. The Palestinians cannot discuss liberating their lands while Israel is building colonies on the same lands and changing facts on the ground every day.

As Peres said in *The New Middle East*,

'Ultimately the Middle East will unite a common market... after we achieve peace. And the very existence of this common market will foster vital interests in maintaining the peace over the long term'. Despite believing in the Euro Med Partnership as a step towards his vision of the new Middle East, even Peres could not dream of his vision becoming true unless peace is achieved. Consequently, neither Europe nor Israel can dream of a coherent and comprehensive Euro Med Partnership unless the Palestinians have their sovereignty, Syria and Lebanon have their lands returned to them, and Israel can have peace and security in return.

The EMP tried to highlight the great potential of the Middle East and the Euro Mediterranean region, which currently lacks cooperation to achieve its peoples' dream of prosperity and peace. Europe could have reached the larger goal of peace and understanding by forcing the two sides – Israel and the Arabs – to reach a final settlement, by adopting a policy which links progress in economic cooperation to progress in the peace process.

Economic cooperation in the Middle East – whether between Israel and the Arab countries or with Europe – cannot be separated from the politics of the region. Both Europe and Israel are still trying to undermine the importance and inevitability of finding a peaceful and just solution to the Palestinian issue. This lack of understanding of the Arab collective mentality towards the Palestinian cause – seen as a pan-Arab issue rather than solely a Palestinian interest – drives Europe and Israel to attempt to achieve economic or cultural cooperation with the Arab world without achieving any progress in peace with the Palestinians (as well as Syria and Lebanon). Economic projects in the region will always face popular rejection and resentment as long as Israel is still occupying Arab land and changing facts on the ground by building settlements every day. Even with the absence of democracy and responsiveness to the public will, Arab states are not able to build any economic relations with Israel or even through trilateral agreements like American Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) or the EMP due to public pressure and strong accusations of normalisation and adopting Israeli expansionist agendas.

The EMP faces a complex situation due to the history of the Arab world with both Europe and Israel, which is based on occupation and exploitation. The Arab world sees the EMP as a new way for a colonial, orientalist Europe and a colonial, expansionist Israel to try a new door to penetrate the Arab world through false promises of economic prosperity. They saw it as a new invasion, this time by economic agreement and normalisation plans rather than weapons.

The hope of reviving a Euro-Mediterranean region of peace, cooperation and co-existence is conditioned on a peaceful and just solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. If Europe will not play a crucial role in pushing the Arabs and Israel to start negotiations and peace talks, the EMP will have no chance of survival.

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