



**Security through Democratization
in the Middle East: A Comparative
Analysis of the European Union's
Policies**

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to highlight the limits and inconsistency of the EU's approach to security and democracy in the Middle East. Starting from an overview of EU's main positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the study focuses on the EU's shift from a security to a human security approach. Although theoretically consistent in the case of the Palestinian Authority, this shift is actually quite problematic, both for the EU's asymmetric approach to Israel and the PA, and for the importance the EU attaches to democratization in order to promote security. In the second part, the paper discusses security and democracy issues within the European Neighbourhood Policy. Finally, it highlights the EU's asymmetric approach both to the security of Israel and the Palestinians and to the democratic conditionality the EU applies to both sides, above all in the case of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
The EU and the Arab-Israeli conflict.....	2
The EU's democracy promotion approach and its contradictions.....	5
The EU's approach to security and human security.....	9
The ENP as a new framework for the EU's foreign policy?	12
The ENP's approach to security and democracy in the Middle East	14
Conflict, democracy and security in the Action Plans	16
The EU/Israel Action Plan.....	16
The EU/PA Action Plan.....	18
Concluding remarks	21

Security through Democratization in the Middle East: A Comparative Analysis of the European Union's Policies

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to highlight the limits and inconsistency of the European Union's (EU) approach to security in the Middle East. In particular, it focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is the main cause of instability in the Middle East and a source of insecurity to Europe, besides being a threat/obstacle to the democratization of the region. This case represents a litmus test for the EU's approach to security and democracy promotion for several reasons. Firstly, it involves a state, Israel, which since its foundation has been characterized by security concerns, which have often led to a restriction of democratic freedoms and rights. Secondly, it involves a non-state actor, the Palestinian Authority (PA), which constitutes a key test for assessing the effectiveness of the EU's shift from a security to a human security approach. Indeed, as Webber *et al.* pointed out, "even in the security sphere – an area traditionally reserved for the state – non-state actors have become increasingly significant in the implementation and monitoring of security policies" (Webber et al. 2004: 5-6). That is true for the EU, a non-state actor acting as a security governance player: and for the PA? In the absence of a state, the shift from security to human security is theoretically consistent and potentially effective. Is that how the EU approaches the PA? And how does that compare to the EU's democracy promotion policies in the region?

The paper begins with an overview of EU's main positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This will highlight when this security issue emerged in the EU's official declaration on the peace process. The EU's approach to security is strictly linked to the democratization processes that it seeks to promote in third countries, because democracy is often seen by the EU as a means to achieve

security. This is also the case of the PA's democratization, which has been considered a necessary step in the securitization of the region. However, the EU's approach has shown itself to be inconsistent, as its reaction to the electoral victory of Hamas demonstrates. "The EU had supported Hamas's inclusion in the political process prior to the elections, while it refused to accept the outcome of the people's vote" (Hovdenak 2009: 60). Although theoretically consistent in the case of the PA, the shift in focus from traditional security to human security is actually quite problematic, both for the EU's asymmetric approach to Israel and the PA, and for the importance the EU attaches to democratization in order to promote security in the area.

In the second part, the paper discusses security and democracy issues within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Did the ENP introduce new elements into the EU's policies towards the Mediterranean and the Middle East? What limitations and opportunities does the ENP open up for the peace process? The last part discusses the EU's approach to Israel and the PA within the ENP, comparing the role that the conflict, security and democracy issues have in the Action Plan (AP) with Israel and in the AP with the PA. The paper highlights the EU's asymmetric approach both to the security of Israel and the Palestinians and to the democratic conditionality the EU applies to both sides. In particular, the study focuses on the specific condition of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). While one expects that the expanding Israeli occupation should not be exempt from the institutional and security sector reform of the PA, the EU is quite ambivalent in this respect, holding the PA responsible even though this is beyond its capabilities.

The EU and the Arab-Israeli conflict

The Arab-Israeli conflict became Europe's preferred arena for developing a common foreign policy from the 1970s onwards. Europe's involvement in the resolution of the conflict is due to at least five reasons: 1) Europe's historical, political and moral responsibility for the emergence of the state of Israel and the consequent Palestinian question; 2) the EU's concern for building an area of security and stability around its borders, "a ring of friends", as stated by the ex-President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi; 3) the EU's ambition to play a leading role in the international arena, above all in a context where the US remains the main broker of the peace process; 4) the EU's commitment to democracy, peace and human rights; 5) the EU's economic and geo-strategic interests in the region.

The last point was the main reason for the EC/EU's first official declaration on the conflict, which was published in November 1973, following the Yom Kippur War and above all the Arab oil-

producer States' intention to impose an embargo on exports towards Europe. Within the framework of the newborn European Political Cooperation, the six EC states called for the UN Resolutions no. 242 and no. 338 to be respected and for Palestinian legitimate rights to be recognised, thus transforming the Palestinian question from a "refugee problem" to a political issue. In the Venice Declaration (1980), which is probably the most revealing document ever published by the EC/EU on the conflict, there is a reference to security. Indeed, the Declaration established "the right to existence and to *security* of all the states in the region, including Israel, and *justice* for all the peoples, which implies the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" (European Council 1980 [italics added]). No reference yet to a Palestinian state and the democratization of the region as pre-conditions for the peace process. These two issues emerged during the '90s. With the Decision no. 276 of 19 April 1994, the European Council connected the peace process to democratization by stating that: "The European Union, in order to work for the conclusion of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East [...] will [...] work for the strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights" (European Council 1994: art. 1). The reference to "the strengthening of democracy" is clearly addressed to the Arab countries and the PA, because "compared to the other MEDA partners, Israel presents distinct characteristics. It functions as a well established parliamentary democracy, with an effective separation of powers, a functioning system of governance, and active participation of NGOs and civil society in all internal aspects of political and social life" (European Commission 2003b: 6). Israel's democratic standards are not challenged by the EU, although it recognizes that "Israel's compliance with internationally accepted standards of Human Rights is not satisfactory. Two important specific areas need to be tackled. Firstly, the issue of reconciling the declared Jewish nature of the State of Israel with the rights of Israel's non-Jewish minorities. Secondly, the violation of Human Rights in the context of the occupation of Palestinian territories" (European Commission 2003b: 6). The recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people is no longer a matter of justice (as it was in the Venice Declaration), but a matter of human rights. This new stance is confirmed by the EU's position with respect to Israel's settlement activity. While in the Venice Declaration, the EC/EU was "deeply convinced that the Israeli settlements constitute a serious obstacle to the peace process in the Middle East, [t]he nine consider that these settlements, as well as modifications in population and property in the occupied Arab territories, are illegal under international law"; in the 1994 Council Decision the EU's position is softer and more ambiguous. The Council stated that the EU will "closely follow the future of

Israeli settlements throughout the Occupied Territories and pursue démarches to Israel about this issue”.¹

The Berlin Declaration of 24 March 1999 for the first time introduced the notion of a viable Palestinian state. Its creation is seen as a means to guarantee Israel’s security. Indeed, the European Council states that “the European Union is convinced that the creation of a democratic, viable and peaceful sovereign Palestinian State [...] would be the best guarantee of Israel’s security and Israel’s acceptance as an equal partner in the region” (European Council 1999: part IV).

Two interconnected issues are at the centre of the European position: 1) the strengthening of democracy and respect of human rights as a means for a comprehensive peace in the region and 2) the creation of a (democratic) Palestinian state as “the best guarantee of Israel’s security”. The first issue is in line with the EU’s concern for respect of democracy and democracy promotion in third countries, which characterize the EU foreign policy’s normative discourse (Manners 2002). Security is still considered in the traditional and narrow sense, as the state’s, that is the protection by the state from military action and terrorist violence. It is also worthy of note that in the EU’s declarations, security is predominantly linked to Israel’s needs; thus, it’s up to the Palestinians themselves both to ensure the democratization of their institutions and to guarantee Israel’s security. This may sound ironic, but this is probably the one case in the world where the occupied people has to guarantee the security of the occupying force.

This situation was exacerbated by the onset of the second *Intifada* (September 2000) and above all by the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. On the one hand, we have witnessed “the ‘resecuritisation’ of international relations [which] put an end to a decade in which international relations were by and large dominated by economic interests” (Hänggi 2003: 1); on the other hand, despite different approaches taken by the EU and the US, “the new post-9/11 conventional wisdom [is] that Middle East democracy is the best antidote to Islamist terrorism” (Ottaway & Carothers 2004: 23) and the best way to guarantee internal and global security. Accordingly, the European Commission stated that “democratic, pluralist governments which respect the rights of minorities are less likely to resort to nationalism, violence or aggression” (European Commission 2001: 4).

¹ The EU’s position towards Israel’s settlement activity has always been in accordance with the respect of international community law, which considers all Israeli settlements on the Occupied Palestinian Territories to be illegal and a major obstacle to the Middle East peace efforts. What has changed over time is the EU’s ability to resolutely condemn this activity.

The EU's democracy promotion approach and its contradictions

In the academic debate and policy discourse, the EU is generally considered as a normative power (Manners 2002), that is a foreign policy actor intent on shaping, instilling, and diffusing rules and values (such as democracy, peace, and human rights) in international affairs through non-coercive means (such as dialogue, cooperation, diplomacy and political conditionality). However, in the view of the EU, democratization is not only a normative means to reach a normative goal (democracy), but also a means to promote Europe's interests (security). Indeed, the EU reckons that it is possible to ensure security in Europe through market economy-based democracy promotion and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in neighbouring countries. According to the European Council, "the best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states. Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order" (European Council 2003: 10). Furthermore, "fostering democracy [...] is one of the most effective ways of dealing with organised crime" (that is one of the main threat to security) (European Council 2003: 6). Finally, in the view of the EU, "democracy, good governance, rule of law, and gender equality are essential for stability and prosperity" (Ferrero-Waldner 2007). That is why "democracy in itself is not envisioned as an ultimate goal in EU eyes, but as one of the means to another objective – stability and prosperity" (Pace 2009: 42).

The EU's approach is based on an extensive body of academic literature professing to demonstrate democracy's virtue in enhancing peace, security and stability. The so-called "democratic peace thesis" states that democracies are less prone to engage in conflict (with each other). Furthermore, the same norms of mutual compromise that underpin democracy internally are, it is claimed, invariably also reflected in democracies' external behaviour. "Democracy is held to be predicated upon the principles of tolerance and compromise, and to provide opportunities for the peaceful articulation of social and economic grievances" (Youngs 2006: 1). Another virtue of democracy is that it mitigates radical anti-Western expressions. As the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Ferrero-Waldner, stated, the EU's democratization approach is characterized by three principles. The first is that "there is no a one-size-fits-all-solution to democracy promotion". According to Ferrero-Waldner, the EU recognizes that "the practice of democracy can look very different from one country to the next, and political institutions must match local conditions". Secondly, she insists on the factor of time to be taken into consideration when exporting democratic norms and values. Thirdly, she points out that the EU understands "that

democracy can never be imposed from outside: genuine democratic transition must always come from within” (Ferrero-Waldner 2006b). Although these three key principles of the EU’s approach stand in sharp contrast to the model promoted by the former US government, based on a forced-pace democratization strategy, the EU is convinced that “democracy, pluralism, respect for human rights, civil liberties, the rule of law and core labour standards are all essential *prerequisites* for political stability, as well as for peaceful and sustained social and economic development” (European Commission 2003: 7 [italics added]).

The EU’s focus on democracy promotion is probably a “necessary corrective to traditional security doctrines that for so long failed to look inside the black box of the nation state to investigate the domestic roots of instability. However, the pendulum is indeed in danger of swinging too far in the opposite direction, if too much is expected of democracy as an instrument for security-enhancement” (Youngs 2006: 7). The democratic peace thesis posits too firm and direct a link between domestic political change and external security issues, while it seems to ignore that some factors, such as economic and social development, a decline in nationalism, and civic-building consensus, constitute a precondition rather than an outcome of a democratization process. This process, which includes different stages (Morlino 2003), involves a transition stage in which political *instability* and change are needed to achieve political liberalization and a change in political system. Therefore, in the short term, democratization can be conflict-inducing, because “there may be real and direct threats to peace in democratizing societies as a result of the uncertainty and competition that democracy introduces into unsettled social environments, in particular at times of economic stress. Rapid or ill-considered democratization can also be a catalyst for violent conflict. As well, inadequate, incomplete or disingenuous democratic reform may generate threats to peace” (IDEA 2006: 8). A possible outcome of democratization is the coming to power of radical Islamist parties like Hamas, whose electoral victory in January 2006 unmasked the EU democratization approach’s contradictions. Firstly, until January 2006 the EU’s understanding of democracy “seemed to follow, on the one hand, the view of comparative politics specialists such as Huntington, Pridham and Vanhanen, Remmer, Schmitter, and Whitehead (who argue that democracy is electorally based with some allowances for freedoms of the press and of association) and on the other hand, the position of modernization theorists including Boix and Stokes, Lipset et al., and Przeworski and Limongi (who stipulate that the prevalence of economic inequality requires push for economic prosperity which will lead to progress, stability, and eventually peace and democratization) [...]. All these interpretations of liberal democracy were seriously challenged following the Palestinian elections of January 2006. In this case, a nation in its fortieth year under

military occupation produced a fair, free, and transparent process, which was confirmed as such by the EU's own mission. The organization, however, reacted by freezing direct aid to the Palestinian Authority, since the elected Hamas was on the EU's black list of outlawed terrorist organizations" (Pace 2009: 45-6). Secondly, the EU's decision to break off official relations with the Palestinian legitimate government "contrasts sharply with established EU policy, which has always been that a lot more influence can be had by dialogue rather than by designating rogue States with whom one does not talk, even if like in the case of Hamas part of their programme is not acceptable. Although Hamas is on the EU list of terrorist organizations, pragmatism should have prevailed. Why after all refuse to speak with Hamas on the ground that it does not recognize Israel, while simultaneously negotiating with Iran, the President of which has declared he would like to see Israel destroyed? By condemning the results of what probably are the fairest elections in any Arab country, the EU has severely undermined the legitimacy [and the consistency] of its democratization project" (Biscop 2008: 6). Thirdly, the conditions² imposed on Hamas have nothing to do with the standards of democratic governance within Palestinian territories (Youngs 2007).

Finally, we have to underline another three problematic features in the EU's approach. The first is that, as Ottaway and Carothers state, it is quite problematic to assert that democratic countries constitute a better means to fight terrorism and fundamentalism, because "democracy is not a cure-all for terrorism. Like it or not, the most successful efforts to control radical Islamist political groups have been antidemocratic, repressive campaigns" (Ottaway & Carothers 2004: 28). The fact is that whether democracy is present or absent simply has little bearing on security, because (traditional) security is not a matter related to forms of political system (Youngs 2006).

The second feature relates to the "neglect in the literature on democratic transition and consolidation of the question of the legitimacy of the state" (Linz & Stepan 1996: 26). This "is unfortunate because this variable, while not always of great importance for nondemocratic polities, is of fundamental theoretical and political importance for democracy. In fact, agreements about stateness are logically *prior to the creation of* democratic units from within democratic theory" (Ibid.).

In the case of the OPT, the lack of the minimum conditions of 'stateness' is a key feature, because stateness is generally considered as the basic support for the effectiveness of the EU's democracy

² "In contradiction to its declared goal of promoting democratic principles in the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) *vis-à-vis* its neighbours, the EU decided to join the rest of the Quartet (the UN, the US, and Russia) in boycotting the Hamas government in order to force it to comply with three demands: recognition of Israel, renunciation of violence, and acceptance of past Israeli-Palestinian agreements" (Hovdenak 2009: 60).

promotion (Panebianco & Rossi 2008). “Unless an organization with [...] statelike attributes exists in a territory, a government (even if ‘democratically elected’) could not effectively exercise its claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of force in the territory, could not collect taxes (and thus provide any public services), and could not implement a judicial system. [...] Logically and empirically, therefore, the argument leads to the same conclusion, that the absence of an organization with the attributes of a modern state [...] precludes democratic governance over the whole territory of the state, although it might not preclude areas of segmented political authority” (Linz & Stepan 1996: 18).

The role of the state is of fundamental importance also with reference to security. Indeed, “in the modern world, the state – at least in theory – has to fulfil a dual function with regard to political order: first, the state organizes and guarantees public order domestically within a defined territory; second, all states together constitute the international system and, thereby, the global order. Ineffective, weak, failing or failed states – which can be subsumed under the rubric of *fragile statehood* – tend to undermine both functions and cause problems at the national, regional and global levels” (Schneckener 2007: 10). If, as Mansfield and Snyder (2005) argue, “the turbulent beginning phase of democratization [contributes] to violence in states with weak political institutions”, then what can be said of the case of actual absence of the state, that is the Palestinian case?

The third feature relates to the debate about the meaning of security and the emergence of alternative security concepts, such as human security and societal security (Hänggi 2003), which “deepen and widen the concept of security from the level of the state to societies and individuals, and from military to non-military issues” (Krahmann 2003: 9). The concept of human security in particular has gained much recognition in the international policy arena after the publication of the *Human Development Report* by the UNDP in 1994. Though still an ill-defined concept, the main feature of human security is that it “is not interested in security related to nation states, and takes the individual human being and his/her needs as the main point of reference. According to the human security approach, the traditional state-centric approach neglects that very often states are the main abusers of the citizens whose security they should safeguard” (Monteleone & Rossi 2008: 63). The human security approach seems particularly suitable for the Israeli-Palestinian context. Indeed, the EU has embraced it in its democracy promotion strategy: but what are the consequences of this new European security approach to the Middle East?

The EU's approach to security and human security

The European Security Strategy document (European Council 2003) clearly embraces a multidimensional approach towards security issues. Key security threats are linked to terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure and organised crime. Endorsing an all-embracing concept of security, the EU asserts that security concerns come from poverty, disease, hunger, malnutrition, AIDS, economic failure, political problems, violent conflict, natural resources' scarcity, global warming, energy dependence and migratory movements.³ Security is considered "a precondition of development" (European Council 2003: 3), even "the first condition for development" (European Council 2003: 13). It seems that the EU's logical scheme is to promote democracy in order to achieve security as a precondition of development. From a theoretical point of view, this approach is in itself questionable, but to complicate matters even more, the EU's recent concern for human security now needs to be taken into account. As the European Council states: "We have worked to build human security, by reducing poverty and inequality, promoting good governance and human rights, assisting development, and addressing the root causes of conflict and insecurity" (European Council 2008: 2). "We need to continue mainstreaming human rights issues in all activities in this field, including ESDP missions, through a people-based approach coherent with the concept of human security" (European Council 2008: 10). Even more explicitly, in the words of Ferrero-Walder (2006c): "Central to the EU's approach [to democracy promotion] is the concept of human security – an idea of security which places people at the heart of our policies. It means looking at the comprehensive security of people, not the security of states, encompassing both freedom from fear and freedom from want. As an organisation founded on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, we believe democracy is inherently valuable and universally desirable. And we are morally obliged to foster those values in all our international partners." As the authors of the Barcelona Report of the Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities argued in September 2004, human security has emerged as a central theme of a common foreign policy for European states because of "the moral thrust of its content, countries' legal obligations under international law pertaining to human rights, and 'enlightened self-interest' as the problems of terrorism, organized crime, unchecked migration and 'soft' threats such as environmental degradation pose new types of security threat" (Study Group on Europe's Security Capabilities 2004: 9-10). The question of how the EU's democratization

³ Criticism of this too broad and unwieldy conception of security could be made, similar to that the scholar Roland Paris writes about human security: "If human security is all these things, what is it not?" (Paris 2001: 92).

approach may contribute to the realization of human security in the Middle East is key. “In a protracted conflict such as the Israeli–Palestinian one, the issue of democratization cannot be studied independently from the conflict itself. [...] The respect for basic human rights – the right to life, liberty and security – which are the pillars of democratic rule, suffer in the absence of peace. This observation deems it necessary to include the context of violent conflict when analysing an ongoing democratization process for a people living under the constraints of military occupation” (Hovdenak 2009: 60-61).

As stated, the EU’s democratization strategy has been characterized by a focus on economic change, with emphasis on the development of a market economy as a necessary step in the democratization process. It has also been characterized by a liberal conception of democracy, mainly restricted to the electoral and institutional spheres, not recognizing that political power is also a means of transforming unjust socio-economic structures. The EU applied that strategy to the Eastern European countries during the enlargement process. However, the Israeli-Palestinian case is quite different, where the democratization process would succeed only in the event that the following criteria are taken on board: 1) development (as an outcome of security gained through democratization process) is about much more than economics, involving the reduction of inequality, the furthering of rights, free expression and mobility; and 2) democracy is about more than elections. It is also about distributive and social justice. If democracy fails to provide for justly distributed socio-economic development, human security is likely to be threatened (IDEA 2006b).

Therefore, if the EU considers democracy to be a precondition of security, in the case of human security, this relationship should be reversed. Attention to human security is necessary to establish the minimum conditions under which formal democracy can be meaningfully practised and domestic and international peace can be secured. Moreover, for a long-term substantive democracy, attention to human security is also necessary because only by creating conditions such as literacy and health, are people empowered to be able to participate in the democratic process. Protection and empowerment⁴ are the two main components of human security: without them, people are not able to participate in democracy, thus undermining democracy’s stability and preventing a mature democracy from developing.

⁴ According to the UN Commission on Human Security, protection is the capacity of people to develop and pursue their aspirations as individuals and communities; empowerment refers to the strength and ability of people to understand and advocate for their rights and interests in democratic processes of elections and in direct participation in decision making (United Nations, Commission on Human Security 2003).

Since human security focuses on the individual and community rather than on the state, “the reframing of security is particularly appropriate in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this situation of occupation, as the occupying army and the population under occupation are constantly intermingled, there is, as a result, constant insecurity that has nothing to do with borders or traditional confrontations between military forces” (Nusseibeh 2008: 21). However, “the case of the Middle East demonstrates that human security cannot be implemented partially. It requires a holistic approach”, (Kaldor 2008: 28), which surpasses the opposition between Israeli state security and Palestinians human security (Kaldor & Faber: 2007). This approach should also challenge the principle of “land for peace”, which has been the linchpin of every settlement agreement since the ‘90s. This principle argues the case for a Palestinian state in return for Israel’s security.⁵ But in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, these two issues are no longer seen as symmetric,⁶ since “the conflict between Israel and Palestine tends to be viewed through the prism of the ‘global war on terror’, in which the primary goal is the defeat of terrorists rather than the protection of individuals. The biggest problem is seen to be the threat to Israel’s state security as a result of terrorist actions, i.e., violence by non-state actors directed against civilians. Rockets and suicide bombers are seen as the primary impediment to peace; the human security of Palestinians is considered secondary to state security” (Kaldor 2008: 30-31). On the contrary, the holistic approach towards achieving the goal of human security would no longer entail security for Israel and a state for the Palestinians, but security for both Palestinians and Israelis and a state for Israel and a state for Palestine. Finally, we have to recall that, although “the idea of human security shifts the focus away from the state and makes the individual the primary unit of analysis, [...] many of the threats to human security are the same as those that confront states, and the role of the state is by no means diminished” (IDEA 2006b: 13). For instance, in the OPT Palestinians’ security is often threatened by a state (Israel) and the actual absence of a Palestinian state worsens this situation. Therefore, human security and security approaches cannot be treated separately in dealing with the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and the role of the state cannot be neglected, because the state remains the central provider of security and the main organ with the capacity to provide the necessary institutions for achieving human security.

⁵ At the academic level, A. Magen (2004: 115) suggested that “the old ‘land for peace’ formula needs [...] to be complemented with a ‘reforms for peace’ agenda”, because “democratic transformation in the region is ultimately the sole hope for achieving the conditions of true security and peace”. Magen’s view is in line with the democratic peace thesis. It is astonishing that it leaves unsaid that the new formula adds another condition to fulfil (i.e. the democratic reform) only to one of the two conflicting parties (i.e. the Palestinians).

⁶ Probably these two issues have never been symmetric, since they hold the Palestinians responsible both for building a democratic and peaceful Palestinian state and for Israel’s security. Moreover, “land for peace” seems to put the blame for the conflict only on the Palestinians, who should guarantee peace for the Israelis in return for the land that Israel is occupying illegally according to the international law.

The ENP as a new framework for the EU's foreign policy?

Since 2004 the EU has developed a new specifically European framework, within which to deal with its neighbours: the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The ENP is conceived as “the EU's newest foreign policy instrument” (Ferrero-Waldner 2006: 139), which aims “to share the benefits of the EU's 2004 enlargement with neighbouring countries in strengthening stability, security, and well-being” (European Commission 2004: 3).⁷

Through the ENP, the EU offers its neighbours a privileged relationship, building upon a mutual commitment to common values (democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development). The EU underlines that the level of ambition of the relationship will depend on the extent to which these values are shared. The ENP goes beyond existing relationships to offer a deeper political relationship and economic integration.

Did the ENP introduce new elements into the EU's policies? Did the ENP change the EU's approach towards democracy and security issues in the Middle East? First of all, the ENP cannot be conceived as a radically new policy: it supplements (and does not substitute) the EMP (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) with a different approach, based on bilateral relations (single country action plans), differentiation and benchmarking, and a greater attention to human rights and democracy, as well as cooperation in foreign/security policy and conflict prevention.

There are four main aspects within the ENP which can be said to provide ‘added value’ to existing policies (Dannreuther 2006). The first is the offer of a “stake in the EU's internal market” and “further integration and liberalization to promote the free movement of – persons, goods, services and capital (four freedoms)” (European Commission 2003: 4). The second is the shift towards a more selective and differentiated approach, which takes into account the “existing state of relations within each country, its needs and capacities, as well as common interests” (European Commission 2004: 3). The third innovation is the promotion of a greater coherence and consistency in the EU's neighbourhood policy, with a single financial instrument, the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI). The fourth is an increased budget to implement its policies (€12 billion for the period 2007-2013, compared to €8.5 billion allocated to Tacis and Meda for the period 2000-2006).

⁷ The ENP applies to the EU's immediate neighbours by land or sea: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. Belarus's current system is considered authoritarian by the EU, and thus contractual links will be developed only upon the establishment of a democratic form of government based on free and fair elections. To date, Libya and the European Union are not linked by contractual relations. Since 2004 an informal dialogue has started with a view to strengthening EU- Libya relations. In the absence of an EU-Syria Association Agreement in force, Syria cannot benefit yet from the ENP.

As far as the Mediterranean is concerned, Del Sarto and Schumacher (2005) state that the ENP considerably differs from the EMP in at least four important ways:

- 1) the ENP abandons the prevalence of the principle of *regionality* that was inherent in the Barcelona Process (aka EMP), and replaces it with *differentiated bilateralism*. Certainly, the EMP already incorporated a bilateral dimension, but it was based on rather similar association agreements with the individual Mediterranean partner countries;
- 2) the ENP's individual benchmarking approach is most likely to compromise the EU's traditional ambition of being an impartial broker in the Middle East peace process;
- 3) the transition from the EMP to the ENP implies a shift from negative to positive conditionality based on a benchmarking approach: only those states that share the EU's political and economic values and/or commit themselves to engage in reforms will have anything to gain from the ENP;
- 4) the ENP is unmistakably framed in terms of EU's interests (security, stability, prosperity).

The first two points deserve attention, because of the consequences they could have on the EU-Israel-PA trilateral relationship. Firstly, a benchmarking approach and differentiated bilateralism could give Israel an advantage over the other countries of the region, because Israel is the most developed state and is considered the most democratic one among those involved in the ENP. Thus Israel could enjoy a kind of "special status" in its relation with the EU. Indeed, the EU/Israel Action Plan refers explicitly to the 1994 Essen Declaration, which stated that: "The European Council considers that Israel, on account of its high level of economic development, should enjoy special status in its relations with the EU on the basis of reciprocity and common interest". Therefore, "this AP [Action Plan] will contribute to the fulfilment of the Essen declaration" (European Commission 2005: 1). Secondly, the bilateral dimension prevents the parties in conflict from meeting. Thirdly, "bilateral negotiation [...] allows partners to articulate their own priorities at the drafting stage [of the Action Plan], a process that can involve, equally, attempting to place things on or keep things off the agenda. [...] Hence the cursory treatment of the occupied territories in the Action Plan with Israel" (Smith & Webber 2008: 80).

The main risk of this new approach is that "the future of EU-Mediterranean bilateral relations at large are most likely to be disconnected from the fate of Middle East peacemaking, a point that is also made in the EU's Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and Middle East of 2004:

'Progress on the resolution of the Middle East conflict cannot be a precondition for confronting the urgent reform challenges facing the countries of the region, nor vice versa. But it is clear that it will not be possible to build a common zone of peace, prosperity and progress unless a just and lasting settlement to the conflict is in place' (Del Sarto & Schumacher 2005: 24). This position undoubtedly reflects the worsening of the conflict since 2000 and the consequent stalemate in the peace process, but also reflects the risk that the ENP approach could bring to bilateral relations which neglect to take into account the conflict and its consequences on the countries involved, as well as an agreed resolution of the conflict itself. In this way, every neighbouring country is able to bargain for its own specific Action Plan with the EU, on the basis of its interests and bargaining power.

The ENP's approach to security and democracy in the Middle East

As far as the EU's approach to democracy within the ENP is concerned, in a speech to the World Jewish Congress Board meeting, in Paris, Ferrero-Waldner stated that the ENP's "principal 'contribution to international peace' is through the promotion of local democracy, regional cooperation and socioeconomic progress, all of which can, however, 'contribute to a more positive climate for conflict settlement'" (Ferrero-Waldner, quoted in Smith and Webber 2008: 77). Thus, within the ENP, democracy should constitute a condition to fulfil in order to gain a privileged relationship with the EU. However, in the ENP Strategy Paper, democracy is not mentioned explicitly as a condition. Indeed, the Commission states that: "The privileged relationship with neighbours will build on mutual commitment to common values principally within the fields of the *rule of law, good governance, the respect for human rights*, including minority rights, the *promotion of good neighbourly relations*, and the *principles of market economy and sustainable development*" (European Commission 2004: 3, italics added). Democracy is one of the values common to EU Member States; it is a goal the Union aims to uphold and promote in its relations with its neighbours (European Commission 2004: 12), rather than a condition that the EU's neighbours have to fulfil in order to gain a deeper relationship with the EU.

Commitments are also related to security issues, "including, in particular, the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as abidance by international law and efforts to achieve conflict resolution. [...] The level of ambition of the EU's relationships with its neighbours will take into account the extent to which these values are effectively shared" (European Commission 2004: 3). The "carrot" the EU offers to its neighbours, "in return for concrete progress demonstrating shared values and effective implementation of political,

economic and institutional reforms, including in aligning legislation with the *acquis*, [is] [...] the prospect of a stake in the EU's Internal Market and further integration and liberalisation to promote the free movement of – persons, goods, services and capitals (four freedoms)” (European Commission 2003: 4).

The EU's positive conditionality is clearly and repeatedly declared: “New benefits should only be offered to reflect the progress made by the partner countries in political and economic reform. In the absence of progress, partners will not be offered these opportunities” (European Commission 2003: 16). “Effective implementation of such commitments is an essential element in the EU's relations with partners. The level of the EU's ambition in developing links with each partner through the ENP will take into account the extent to which common values are effectively shared” (European Commission 2004: 13). The EU also points out a number of priorities that the Action Plans should contain. These priorities are intended to strengthen commitment to shared values and, in the EU's view, constitute the benchmarks to monitor countries' progress. Priorities “include strengthening democracy and the rule of law, the reform of the judiciary and the fight against corruption and organised crime; respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of media and expression, rights of minorities and children, gender equality, trade union rights and other core labour standards, and fight against the practice of torture and prevention of ill-treatment; support for the development of civil society; and co-operation with the International Criminal Court” (European Commission 2004: 13). “There is a problem of a distinct vagueness, similar to that of the eventual ‘prize’ to be offered, of how the multiple targets are to be prioritized, the timescale for their completion, and the exact benefits gained by their fulfilment. As Karen Smith argues, ‘clear benchmarks these are not’” (Dannreuther 2006: 191-2).

If democracy (together with respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms) is at the core of the EU's priorities towards its neighbours, security is the underlying rationale of the ENP, and security, stability and prosperity are the three words constantly repeated as the ENP's key objectives (Cremona 2008).

According to Dannreuther (2006: 201), as far as security is concerned, “the ENP reaffirms the European conviction that democracy and economic reform are essential if the deeper roots of insecurity are to be resolved effectively”. As regards stability, it is closely linked to democratization, political reform and good governance. Stability is both a precondition for democracy (as it was in the first of the Copenhagen criteria, referring “to the stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities”) and a long-

term outcome of democratization. However, in the short term, “the EU has not yet earnestly confronted the stability versus democracy dilemma” (Biscop 2008: 2), “that is the fact that the objectives of democratization and stability seem to be difficult to reconcile, at least under the current circumstances” (Biscop 2008: 5). In the case of the PA, “the EU interest in domestic stability stands more often than not in direct contradiction with the goal of supporting the establishment of a viable democracy in Palestine” (Stetter 2003: 154). Indeed, until Arafat’s death in November 2004, the EU was more interested in the stability of the PA than in supporting democratic elections in Palestine (FRIDE 2006). And after Hamas’s electoral victory, the EU’s position became worse still, prioritising security and stability issues over the democratic ones.

Conflict, democracy and security in the Action Plans

The EU/Israel Action Plan

In the ENP’s Country Report on Israel, which served as the basis for the Action Plan, the EU depicts Israel as “a parliamentary democracy, [...] a democratic state with associated political rights, respect for the rule of law and a flourishing civil society” (European Commission 2004b: 5-7). Specific restrictions and derogations to common law, “such as administrative detention, restrictions on access to counsel and non-disclosure of full reasons of detention, [are] mainly based on counter-terrorism legislation and regulations. The official justification for keeping the State of Emergency is the severe security situation” (European Commission 2004b: 8). In effect, since 1951 the State of Emergency has been automatically renewed every year in Israel. This leads some scholars to speak about a “pervasive and omnivorous ‘filter of security’, which has continuously dominated Israeli society” (Ben-Zvi 2005: 3), causing an erosion of Israel’s commitment to democratic values. This is evident in the case of Arab-Israeli people, whose civil, political and social rights are actually limited in Israel (McHenry & Mady 2006). For instance, in 1985, the revision of the Election Law, in addition to barring any party with a racist or antidemocratic program from participating in the elections to the Knesset, ruled out any list which denied the existence of Israel “as the state of the Jewish people”. Arab-Israeli citizens are also discriminated against by Israel’s amendment of the law on citizenship and entry into Israel in 2003. Justified by the Israeli government on security grounds, this amended law is criticized in the EU’s Country Report on Israel, while “the Action Plan is conspicuously silent on this issue” (Del Sarto 2007: 62).

Furthermore, the 1945 Defense Regulations provided the legal basis for the military rule over the Arab areas of Israel. “They enable the authorities to issue military injunctions on a regular basis,

and not necessarily during the conduct of war, to detain or restrict the movement of activists, to outlaw a publication or organization, or to declare areas as closed and lands as confiscated. These excessive powers are kept for making it easier to deter, police, and punish those among the Arab citizens of the state contemplating hostile acts” (Smooha 1993, quoted in Ben-Zvi 2005: 6). Indeed, to forestall the dangers inherent in this vision of Israeli Arabs as potentially disloyal, “the establishment of a military government in the main Arab population centers *in Israel* guaranteed that, for at least the first eighteen years of Israel’s statehood, Jews and Arabs would live under different sets of rules despite the formal civic equality” (Ben-Zvi 2005: 14-15 [italics added]). In the words of the Israeli writer David Grossman, the Arab citizens in Israel are the “invisible people”. The fact is that they are invisible also to the main international measures of democracy (Freedom House, Polity IV), which still rank Israel as a high-level democracy. In these measures “the treatment of Israeli Arabs is ignored, down-played or misrepresented, and furthermore such an omission or misrepresentation has produced the inaccuracies in the way the indices characterize democracy in Israel” (McHenry & Mady 2006: 258).

This depiction affects the EU’s approach towards Israel’s democracy, which is not challenged in the Action Plan (AP). Rather, the AP states that “the EU and Israel share the common values of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law and basic freedoms. [...] Historically and culturally, there exist great natural affinity and common heritage” (European Commission 2005: 1). The EU and Israel will “work together to promote the shared values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law” (European Commission 2005: 4).

Only one in the six priorities for action refers to the conflict and human rights, and does so in a vague and open-ended manner (Tocci 2008). The aim is to “strengthen political dialogue and identify areas for further co-operation on: progress towards a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflicts; working together with the EU on a bilateral basis and as a member of the Quartet, with the aim of reaching a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and a permanent two-state solution with Israel and a Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security” (European Commission 2005: 6). No reference to the main issues of the conflict: the status of Jerusalem, the Israeli settlements, the Palestinian refugees, the “separation barrier”, the borders of the two states, the energy and natural resources (water, gas).

As regards human rights and the State of Emergency in Israel, the EU’s position is very soft and elusive. Thus, the Action Plan states that the EU and Israel will “*explore the possibility* to join the optional protocols related to international conventions on human rights” (European Commission

2005: 4, italics added). “While this statement might, *inter alia*, refer to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that allows individuals to submit complaints to the Human Rights Committee (and which Israel has not signed), the expression ‘exploring the possibility’ is clearly not very committing. Indeed, considering the international criticism of Israel’s human rights violations in the occupied territories, along with the controversy on whether the Geneva Conventions apply to the occupied territories (as most international lawyers maintain), or not (as Israeli governments claim), the Action Plan’s human rights provisions are strikingly elusive” (Del Sarto 2007: 61-62). Furthermore, both sides acknowledge that “while recognising Israel’s right of self-defence, the importance of adherence to international law, and the need to preserve the perspective of a viable comprehensive settlement, minimising the impact of security and counter-terrorism measures on the civilian population, facilitate the secure and safe movement of civilians and goods, safeguarding, to the maximum possible, property, institutions and infrastructure” (Del Sarto 2005: 6).

As regards security, “an important goal of the Action Plan is to encourage cooperation on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the fight against terrorism, as well as prevention and resolution of conflicts in the region and beyond” (Del Sarto 2005: 2). In particular, the fight against terrorism takes up a specific paragraph of the AP, in which the EU and Israel commit themselves to “strengthen EU-Israel co-operation in the fight against and prevention of terrorism; exchange views and experiences on means and methods used to counter terrorism and to improve counter-terrorism capacity, including in third countries; [...] exchange information on terrorist groups and their support networks, in particular those acting in Europe and in the Middle East” (Del Sarto 2005: 7).

The EU/PA Action Plan

The EU is the most important financial donor to the Palestinians, providing humanitarian assistance, support to refugees, development assistance and support to the PA. Within the ENP, the EU has confirmed its financial commitment, since the EU/PA Action Plan’s funds amount to €632 million for the period 2007-2010 (while the EU/Israel Action Plan’s funds amount only to €8 million for the same period). However, since Hamas’s electoral victory in 2006, the EU has joined the United States in banning direct assistance to the PA, and established a Temporary International Mechanism (TIM)⁸ to channel aid directly to Palestinians, bypassing the Hamas-led government.

⁸ The TIM mandate has been extended six times and ended on 31 March 2008. Since February 2008 PEGASE has been the new European mechanism for support to the Palestinian Authority and to the Palestinian people.

The EU resumed normal relations and re-established political dialogue with the PA in June 2007, after the split between the Gaza Strip (where Hamas established a “deposed” parallel government) and the West Bank (with a Fatah-led government).

According to the EU’s Country Report on the PA, “the general constitutional order of the Palestinian Authority arises from the interim agreements, on the basis of which the Basic Law was approved by the Palestinian Legislative Council in 1997, and belatedly enacted by President Arafat in 2002. [...] The Basic Law provides for a parliamentary democracy, political and party pluralism and fundamental freedoms” (European Commission 2004c: 6-7). In contrast to its position towards Israel, the EU is quite clear and strict towards the PA. Indeed, the Commission states that “much of the [Palestinian] legislation has not been implemented and the judicial system is far from being fully operational. [...] The independence of the judiciary has [...] been undermined by interference from the executive” (European Commission 2004c: 9). The EU underlines the gap between the formal acknowledgement of human rights and basic civil liberties, which is present in the Basic Law, and their substantive implementation, which is lacking. This is not the case with Israel.

The EU’s approach is also asymmetric as regards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While it is completely neglected in the EU/Israel AP, the EU/PA AP states that: “There are a number of constraints and limitations resulting from the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the continuing occupation, including settlement activity, restrictions to movement as a result of the closure policy and the separation barrier. The limitations on the Palestinian Authority pending the creation of a Palestinian state must also be taken into account” (European Commission 2005b: 1). It is a bit paradoxical that these constraints (such as Israeli military occupation, settlement activity, restrictions to movement of people and the separation barrier), which are all ascribable to Israel’s activity, are referred to only in the Palestinian AP. The fact is, that despite Israeli schemes to create facts on the ground (settlements, checkpoints, curfews, separate road systems), “the occupation itself is hardly ever described (at least officially) as a violation of democratic and human rights” (Pace 2009: 47) by the EU. The OPT of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank constitute a kind of grey zone of law. Indeed, “Israel did not extend Israeli law to the West Bank and Gaza Strip when it occupied them in 1967. Israel does not consider itself as an occupying power in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. Therefore, Israel claims that the Fourth Geneva Convention does not apply to its actions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which are based on the British Mandatory Emergency (Defence) Regulations (1945). According to Israel, International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights (ICCPR) does not apply to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, the UN consider Israel an occupying power in the West Bank” (European Commission 2004b: 8).

Since June 1967, the West Bank’s legal status has fallen under the international law of belligerent occupation, allowing the occupying power (Israel) a wide range of measures without legislative or judicial review. These may include “freezing political activities, curtailing freedom of speech and assembly, limiting free movement, [...] requisitioning material and services from the population [...] [and] using state property” (Dowty 1998: 218). The right to security and democracy of the Palestinians in the OPT are undermined by Israeli military occupation, but this statement of fact is present only in the EU/PA Action Plan and is not fully considered in the EU’s democratization approach towards the PA. While not mentioning democracy as a “shared value”, the EU/PA Action Plan refers to shared values including “issues such as strengthening the fight against terrorism and incitement to violence, promoting the protection of human rights and the rights of minorities, improving the dialogue between cultures and religions, co-operating in the fight against racism and xenophobia, in particular anti-Semitism and Islamophobia” (European Commission 2005b: 3). This AP is mainly focused on PA’s commitment to security issues such as the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Notably, these issues refer to external security: that is the PA has to commit to them mainly as a guarantee of the EU’s and Israel’s security. The AP mentions the objective of “pursuing a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of WMD” (European Commission 2005b: 5). The AP with Israel mentions no such goal. This is probably due both to the fact that Israel is not perceived by the EU as a threat to the regional security, and to Israel’s bargaining power.

As far as democracy and the rule of law is concerned, the AP commits the PA to carry out a series of reforms, including:

- The establishment of an independent, impartial and fully functioning judiciary in line with international standards and a sharper separation of powers;
- the acceleration of constitutional and legislative reform;
- the implementation of civil service and public administration reform;
- the organisation of transparent general and local elections according to international standards.

There is no need to mention the EU’s ambivalence with reference to the organisation of elections in the OPT and the recognition of the result of the poll. Instead, it is necessary to stress that the bilateral dimension of the AP reveals its ineffectiveness above all in the case of the OPT, where the

political authority and the control of territory are contended by Israel and the PA. How is it possible to leave Israel out of the security and democracy reform of the OPT if the EU acknowledges that even “the movement of Palestinian goods has been severely affected in recent years by restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities on security grounds, which apply to the movement of both goods and persons within the West Bank and Gaza Strip”? (European Commission 2004c: 15). It seems that the EU’s concern about Israel’s occupation applies mainly to the economic issues. As the Commission states in a recent progress report: “The year 2008 saw some progress in several of the areas covered by the ENP Action Plan. [...] However, political reform and institution building suffered a setback as a result of the split between the West Bank and Gaza. [...] The *economic development* in the West Bank was [...] severely hampered by the on-going Israeli occupation, settlements expansion, Israeli government activities in East Jerusalem and the uneased restrictions on movement and access” (European Commission 2009: 2 [italics added]). Instead, “democracy and the rule of law continue to be *subject to developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict* and progress is hardly perceptible. In the absence of a quorum, with over 40 Parliamentarians held in Israeli jails, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) has been non-functional throughout the year” (European Commission 2009: 3 [italics added]).

Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper has been to shed light on the EU’s approach to democracy and security in the Middle East. Israel and the PA constitute two very peculiar cases to deal with for several reasons. In particular, the paper focused on the role both of the eternal conflict involving Israel and the Palestinians, and of the lack of a Palestinian state in influencing the EU’s democratization and security policies effectiveness.

The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is considered “a strategic priority for Europe [because], without this, there will be little chance of dealing with other problems in the Middle East” (European Council 2003: 8). Thus “the EU has nonetheless effectively applied a wide range of its policy tools: ‘diplomacy and good offices, trade concessions and investment, technical and development expertise, humanitarian and refugee assistance, electoral support, multilateral aid coordination, and bilateral grants and subsidized loans for running costs, infrastructure, and institution-building designed to build the foundations of civil society and conditioned on respect for the rule of law and human rights’” (Ginsberg 2001, quoted in Smith & Webber 2008: 106). However the EU’s concern for the resolution of the conflict has been weak both within multilateral fora and

above all within the ENP bilateral relations with Israel and the PA. In the APs the conflict was pushed into the background, and treated as a condition threatening Israel's security and the PA's democratic reform.

This is confirmed by the EU's asymmetric approach both to democracy and security issues towards Israel and the PA. Theoretically, the EU had to work on enhancing Israel's democratic maturity, thus imposing on Israel some positive conditionality on this issue in the AP. But in fact the EU considers Israel as a full democracy, whose status does not need to be challenged. Indeed, Israel and the EU share democracy as a common value. It is questionable whether this position is related to the EU's profound conviction about Israel's democracy's maturity, or to Israel and the EU's common heritage and affinity, or to the European historical culpability for the birth of the State of Israel. However a key question is: could the EU promote the quality of Israel's democracy when the EU itself is not always a shining example of democracy?

By contrast, the EU's democratization approach towards the PA has been seemingly more convincing, as the EU imposed democratic political reform on the PA and the need to organize regular elections as two central conditions for improving the EU/PA political and economic relationship. However, the EU's approach has still been inconsistent, as the case of the Hamas' electoral victory demonstrated. "The European response to the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections in 2006 is quoted in all regions, not only in the Arab world, as the prime example of double standards that undermine the credibility of EU calls for democracy and free elections" (IDEA 2009: 9).

Furthermore, the EU has treated the Palestinian state issue mainly in the framework of Israel's security and not as a condition for Palestinian security and democracy.

European efforts to introduce democratic procedures in conditions of grave insecurity would in any case have produced limited results (IDEA 2006). What is striking is both the EU's inability to foresee this situation and the inconsistency of its reaction, with concern for Israel's security prevailing over recognition of the legitimate result of the Palestinian poll.

As far as security is concerned, the EU has failed to adopt the concept of human security as a new narrative underpinning its foreign policy: human security entails a holistic approach addressing human beings, irrespective of religion, nationality, political situation, and economic interests. Human security cannot be disconnected from security, because of the state's central role as a provider both of security and human security. The alternative, framing the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict as a conflict between Israel's security and Palestinians' human security is not helpful in this aim.

Moreover, "the democratization of the Middle East should not be achieved in isolation from the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and vice versa" (Harpaz 2007: 92). However, the EU's attempts to manage the conflict by eliminating excessive violence and instability through democratization have not implied the end of the conflict. "Conflict resolution requires that the underlying causes of conflict are effectively addressed" (Kleiboer 1996: 382), while the EU's policies can be considered as a way to work around the conflict, to manage it, not to resolve it. Certainly the Action Plans would not have been the solution to all these problems, since they are not legally binding, representing "a declaration of mutual objectives and commitments" (European Commission 2005: 3). But it is the ENP's overall approach which has proven ineffective with reference to the conflict and its constraints and limitations. If the EU wants to persist in its democratization and security approach towards the Middle East, it would be useful to bear in mind that "critical to the mitigation and management of contemporary root causes of conflict is *democracy that strengthens the state* by strengthening social capacities to manage threats to human security" (IDEA 2006b: 13).

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Changing Multilateralism: the EU as a Global-regional Actor in Security and Peace, or EU-GRASP in short, is an EU funded FP7 Programme. EU-GRASP aims to contribute to the analysis and articulation of the current and future role of the EU as a global actor in multilateral security governance, in a context of challenged multilateralism, where the EU aims at “effective multilateralism”. This project therefore examines the notion and practice of multilateralism in order to provide the required theoretical background for assessing the linkages between the EU’s current security activities with multi-polarism, international law, regional integration processes and the United Nations system.

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