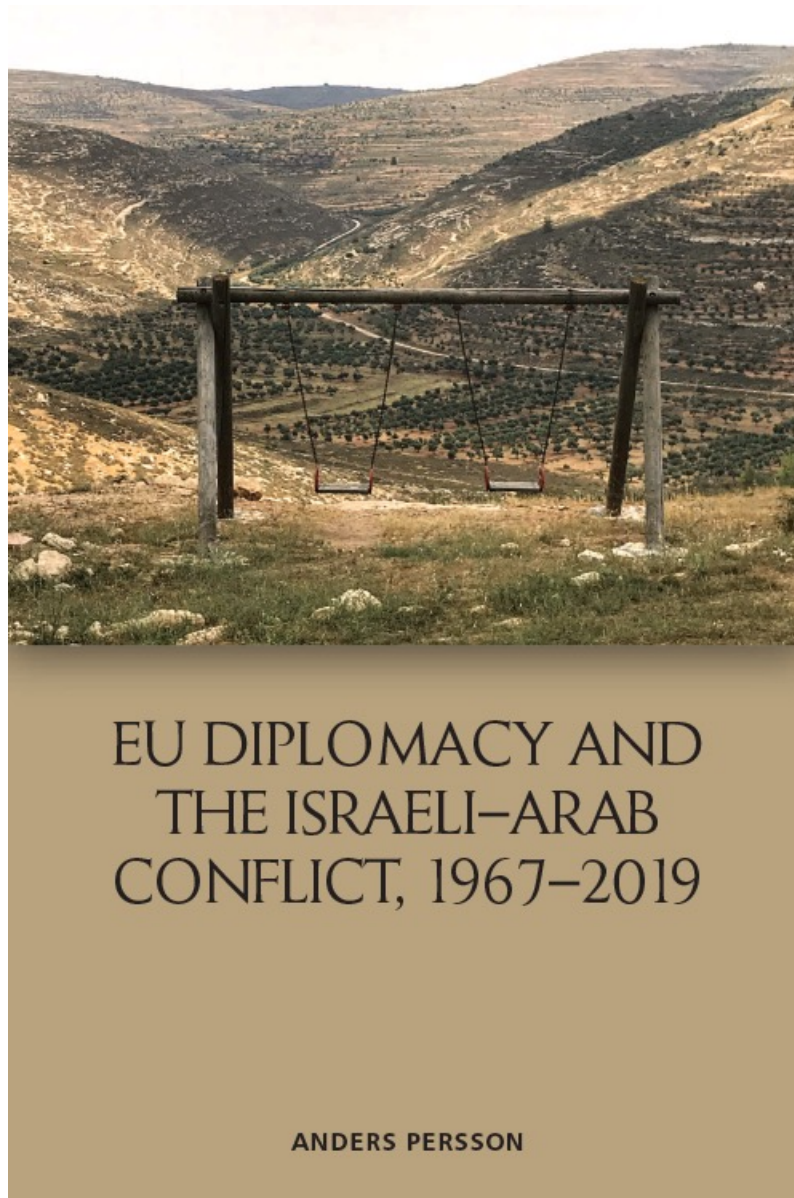




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# Rationale of the book

- In 2021, it was 50 years since the EU's Foreign Ministers issued their first declaration on the Israeli-Arab conflict
- This book aimed to be the first historic overview of the EU's almost 50-year involvement in the conflict, based exclusively on primary sources
- It tries to identify and analyse all the big policy departures - when, how and why they happened



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# The Bulletin of the EC/EU







# Material and methodology

- In each issue, five keywords were coded:
- **'Israel'** (which includes Israeli, Israelis)
- **'Palest'** (which includes Palestine, Palestinian, Palestinians)
- **'Arab'** (which was the term used before Palestinian became accepted EC/EU language and even after that sometimes)
- **'Occupied'** (referring to the occupied territories, a phrase often used by the EC/EU before Palestinian became accepted EC/EU language)
- **'Middle East'** (which includes Middle East Peace Process, the conflict in the Middle East etc.)



# Material and methodology

- 42 years of the Bulletin: 1967-2009 (after which it ceased to exist)
- 42 x 11 issues/per year x 150-200 pages = 70,000-90,000 pages of text
- The last empirical chapter, which covers the period from 2009 to 2019 consists of material from Council Conclusions on the conflict, statements from the EU's High Representatives, reports from the European Commission, press interviews with EU officials, and other similar material
- The method used can best be described as a form of quantitative and qualitative content analysis
- Altogether, the quantitative content analysis resulted in 2,300 different declarations, other statements, and mentions of the keywords related to the Israeli-Arab conflict



# The arguments made

Four broad arguments underlie the book's overarching thesis that the Israeli-Arab conflict has been more important for the EU than other conflicts:

- (1) The conflict has been central to the formation of the EU's foreign policy
- (2) The EU's involvement in the conflict has been based on major strategic factors (oil, trade, security, terrorism, refugees)
- (3) The conflict has had a persistent unique place in the EU's foreign policy
- (4) The EU is part of the conflict



# (1) The conflict has been central to the formation of the EU's foreign policy

- The 1967 war presented what was widely seen to be a 'marvellous opportunity' for the EC to unite its foreign policy in the late 1960s and early 70s
- But as important was that many European politicians simultaneously saw an equally golden opportunity for the EC to contribute to help resolving the conflict
- Thus, the conflict became a test case for the EC's emerging foreign policy during the 1970s, especially after the 1973 war





## (2) The EU's involvement in the conflict has been based on major strategic factors (security, oil, trade)

- The Middle East is geographically much closer to Europe than to the US or Russia. The EC was also much more dependent on oil from the Middle East than both of the superpowers during the Cold War
- In 1967, the EC depended for 80% of its oil consumption (48% of its supply of power) on the countries of the Middle East
- The high oil prices led to massive transfers of wealth from the industrialized world to the oil producers in the Middle East, which in turn led to massive increases in trade, thereby creating another strategic objective





## (2) The EU's involvement in the conflict has been based on major strategic factors (security, oil, trade)

- The EU has always seen the Israeli-Arab conflict as key to security in the region
- The EU's 2003 security strategy (ESS) outlined what had long been the EU's twin narrative regarding the Middle East:
  - 1) the Israeli-Arab conflict was the key to deal with other problems in the Middle East
  - 2) resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict would lead to positive developments elsewhere in the Middle East
- The fact that the EU's involvement in the conflict had a strong real political basis meant that the importance of the conflict for the EU could go up and down depending on the real political circumstances



### (3) The conflict has had a persistent unique place in the EU's foreign policy

- The coding schedule in the back of this book clearly attests to the conflict's persistent unique role for the EU's foreign policy
- The EC/EU's many hundred declarations, other statements, and mentions related to the Israeli-Arab conflict are simply remarkable
- There simply is no other conflict which has occupied such a central place in the EC/EU's foreign policy over these past five decades; no other conflict comes even close



## (4) The EU is part of the conflict

- The EU's long involvement in the conflict, its close political and economic ties with Israel, its massive economic support to the Palestinians, and its peacebuilding missions on the ground in the conflict - have all contributed to make the EU part of the conflict
- This can be seen in European cities like Malmö





# The theoretical departures

- Different paradigms or theories of international relations can account for different phases of the EC/EU's involvement in the Israeli-Arab conflict, but it is impossible for one paradigm or theory to accurately account for EU's five-decade-long involvement in the conflict
- **Realism** - security, interests, power rivalry, and concerns over resources
- **Liberalism** - the UN system, international law, trade, democracy promotion, interdependence, regional cooperation, and support for NGO's
- **Constructivism/critical perspectives** - ideas, identity formation, agency, discourse analysis, and normative power



## The book's six empirical chapters

- 1967-1979 - A 'marvellous opportunity'
- 1980-1991 - Forward-thinking on the long road to Oslo
- 1991-2000 - Peace through regional cooperation
- 2000-2009 - The Israeli-Arab conflict in the 9/11 era
- 2009-2018 - Upholding the sacred flame of the two-state solution
- Conclusions – The past 50 years - and the next?



## 1967-1979 A 'marvellous opportunity' opens up for the EC's emerging foreign policy

- The 1967 war presented what was widely seen in the European Parliament to be a 'marvellous opportunity' for the EC to unite its foreign policy in the late 1960s
- But as important was that many European politicians - from left to right with liberals in between - simultaneously saw an equally marvellous opportunity for the EC to contribute to help resolving the conflict





## 1967-1979 (continued)

- The EU's self-perceived 'special', 'moral', 'unique', and 'distinctive' roles have been one of the defining features of its involvement in the conflict
- What emerged from the two golden opportunities was a widely shared twin belief that the Community could help the conflict to reach peace and that the conflict could help the Community to reach unity on foreign policy
- Thus, the conflict became a test case for the EC's emerging foreign policy during the 1970s, especially after the 1973 war



## 1967-1979 (continued)

- Euro-Arab Dialogue 1973, much talk during the 70s, little during the 80s
- Important declaratory diplomacy on the Palestinians: Refugees (1971), Palestinians, Legitimate rights (1973), Legal rights (1975), Palestinian people, Homeland (1977), Self-determination, Talks with the PLO (1980)
- Much critique from Israel and the US over these declarations



## 1980-1991 Forward-thinking on the long road to Oslo

- The 1980 Venice Declaration is considered to be the most important EU declaration ever on the conflict
- But the optimism of the Venice Declaration, the Camp David process, and the Israel-Egypt peace treaty soon faded with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon
- The conflict continued to be stalemated during the mid-80s until the outbreak of the first intifada in 1987, which again led to massive criticism from the EC against Israel





## 1980-1991 Forward-thinking on the long road to Oslo

- The 1980s is the period when the EU is the most critical of Israel – from the 1982 Lebanon war to the 1987 First intifada
- 1986 – the EU starts directly assisting the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza
- In the late 1980s, there was a remarkable shift in tone in the EC's declarations from hopelessness to rays of hope
- The 'new world order' brought about by the end of the Cold War opened up new possibilities for the Israeli-Arab conflict



## 1980-1991 (continued)

- Many of the ideas that the EC had long advocated for in the 1980s materialized in the late 80s and early 90s:
  - Negotiations with the PLO (1980)
  - Having the Arabs/PLO recognizing Israel (1977)
  - An international conference on the conflict (1986)
  - A peace process based on mutual recognition and a land for peace formula (1989)



## 1980-1991 (continued)

- By this time, it was clear that the EC had five distinct roles to play in the conflict:
- It was a major normative power in the conflict
- It was a major financier to the Palestinians
- It was a major trading partner to Israel
- It was probably the most enthusiastic supporter of the peace process
- It was becoming more and more involved on the ground in the occupied territories

Also important to emphasize what kind of roles the EU do not play...(military, using sticks, high-level mediator)



## 1991-2000 Peace through regional cooperation

- The Oslo peace process was met with an intense interest from the EC/EU
- The EU was probably the biggest supporter of the peace process, contributing with around 50 percent of the total aid to the Palestinians during the peace process
- However, the EU's vision of peace in the Middle East through regional cooperation did not materialize. Only one track of the multilateral peace process was successful: the Israel-Jordan track. The Israel-Palestinian track, the Israel-Syria track, the Israel-Lebanon track, the Israel-wider Arab world track - all failed





## 1991-2000 (continued)

- Despite all the obstacles, a Palestinian entity with limited self-rule was created in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the peace process
- However, many obstacles had undermined the peace process. In particular, the EU singled out the settlements for 'eroding confidence in the peace process', but Palestinian terrorism also got a much harder treatment than before from the EU
- Big gap between rhetoric and reality in the EC/EU's declarations during this period...much talk about using all of its power



## 2000-2009 The Israeli-Arab conflict in the 9/11 era

- While the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000 had mortally wounded the EU's vision of peace in the Middle East through regional cooperation, the events that followed definitely killed it, at least for the foreseeable future
- The 2001 9/11 attacks, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the 2004-2005 terror attacks in Madrid and London, the 2006 war in Lebanon - all contributed to make the EU's vision of peace in the Middle East through regional cooperation look like a distant dream from the past decade



## 2000-2009 (continued)

- One clear result of the peace process and the period that followed after 9/11 was that the EU started more and more to talk about a distinct Israeli-Palestinian conflict, rather than a wider Israeli-Arab conflict
- Among other things, this meant that the Israel-Lebanese/Hezbollah conflict and the Israeli-Syrian conflict became more and more separated from the Israeli-Palestinian track. Iran's ascending role in Middle East also contributed to this
- Another clear result of 9/11 was that a 'war on terrorism-narrative' became much more prominent in the EU's declarations, esp. vis-à-vis Hamas



## 2009-2019 Upholding the sacred flame of the two-state solution

- The decade between 2009 and 2019 was a tumultuous period for the Israeli-Arab conflict and for the EU's involvement in it
- As it had done so many times before in crisis situations in the Middle East, the Council of the European Union responded to the 2011 Arab Spring by stating that '[t]he fundamental changes across the Arab world have made the need for progress on the Middle East Peace Process all the more urgent.'





## 2009-2019 (continued)

- No Palestinian state was created. The hesitant Member States of the EU could not decide on a common position on either the 2011 or the 2012 Palestinian bid for statehood
- Much of the EU's work vis-à-vis the conflict shifted from focusing on Palestinian state-building to differentiation
- Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu developed his own differentiation strategy between the EU and individual Member States



## Conclusions – The past 50 years - and the next?

- This book specifically focused on the policy departures of the EU in the conflict since 1967 – when, how, and why they took place. In this regard, there are three broad policies that stand out in particular:
  - (1) the decades-long legitimization of the Palestinians, including the PLO, and their right to a state
  - (2) the firm recognition of Israel's right to exist in security and prosperity within internationally recognized borders without being subjected to terror or boycotts
  - (3) among the five final status issues (borders, settlements, refugees, security, and Jerusalem), the settlements issue has been singled out by the EU since the late 1970s as an especially serious obstacle to the peace process.



## Conclusion 1: The decades-long legitimization of the Palestinians

- Once new terminology was introduced, it often remained, it often became real policies, and other actors often followed and adopted the EU's positions
- The EC/EU's positions on the conflict have naturally evolved over the decades, but there have been both a clear path-dependency and normative power attached to them.



## Conclusion 2: The sacrosanct existence of Israel

- Israel's right to live in security and prosperity within recognized borders has been mentioned in almost all declarations by the EC/EU on the conflict since 1971
- The EU has always been against boycotts of Israel
- 'The question', a top EU official once told me 'is to what extent does Israel care that the EU is caring about them?'





## Conclusion 3: Singling out the settlements

- The EU sees the settlements as the vehicle for taking over the land
- The EU has opposed the settlements since 1977, declared them illegal since 1979
- Much stronger language (terms like colonialization and annexation were used) on the settlements in the 1970s-80s than today



## Additional conclusions

- Moreover, there are a number of additional conclusions that can be drawn from this study:
  - (1) the EU has tremendous potential leverage in the conflict, but there is a big rhetoric-reality gap in the EU's declarations
  - (2) the historical record clearly shows that the EU cannot lead the peace process in place of the U.S.
  - (3) the EU was very critical of Israel in the 70-80s, less so now. The other way around for the Palestinians
  - (4) the EU has indeed been obsessed with the Israeli-Arab conflict, as Israeli government officials often accuse the EU of
  - (5) the Palestinian territories are a *sui generis* case for state-building and foreign aid
  - (6) the EU has never been more divided over the conflict than what it is today



# After the book was published

## EU positions on the 2SS vs 1SS

Many recognize that the 2SS is "dying before our eyes"

At the same time, "low appetite in the EU to advocate for a one-state solution as long as the parties themselves do not favor such a solution".

"Have done the Palestinians an enormous disfavor by locking them into a position we don't want to enforce, thereby undermining their rights".

Consequently, "the EU stands nowhere at the moment with no serious debate on either the two-state or one-state solutions with fewer and fewer EU officials believing substantively in the two-state solution"



# After the book was published

## EU positions on equal rights vs. apartheid (1)

Mogherini (2018), the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: "one-state reality, with unequal rights for the two peoples, perpetual occupation and conflict".

The EU has followed the US example emphasizing equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians.

Language of equal rights in EU and US can be interpreted in two ways:

- 1) ... "with every new iteration backed by no action, it becomes clear how empty it is" (empty words), or:
- 2) "a shift away from an immediate focus on the two-state solution towards a more fundamental norm that ultimately there needs to be equality in either two states or one state – any solution there is, there must be equality" (substantive shift).

Is the "equal rights-narrative" stronger or weaker than the 2SS-narrative? US/EU not ready to enforce it





# After the book was published

EU positions  
on  
equal rights  
vs.  
apartheid  
(2)

“We struggle with defining the situation. If it is not Apartheid, then what is it?” (EU official in Jerusalem)

“The apartheid narrative is not a trajectory, more a description of a permanent situation”, another official said.

The EU is not ready to agree on the apartheid narrative, but officials recognize many features of apartheid on the ground.



# After the book was published

## EU- positions on a non- solution

The current situation recalls Antonio Gramsci's quote "the old is dying and the new cannot be born".

"What is right or wrong according to international law vs. what is politically possible?"

Awaiting what will happen after the 87-year old PA President Mahmoud Abbas eventually leaves office.

"A collapse of the PA may change the map"

"The two-state solution was a unifier" [...] "but now that unifier is gone". Instead, "the discourse today is polarizing between two A-words: apartheid versus antisemitism".