
ANDERS PERSSON

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The Israeli–Palestinian conflict lies at the heart of European foreign policy. Back in 1980, European Community Member States jointly signed the Venice Declaration, delineating their shared position on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Doing so at that time was remarkable in at least two respects. First, because back then – thirteen years before the establishment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy – there was no EU foreign policy worthy of the name. Loosely connected by foreign policy information-sharing and a coordination system known as the European Political Cooperation, Member States achieved in 1980 what they often struggle to accomplish today: a commonly agreed and incisive position that swims against the international and local tide of conflict dynamics. Europeans recognized both Israel’s right to live in peace and security, and the Palestinians’ right to self-determination. They did so at a time in which the international community was a long way away from recognizing collective Palestinian rights, less still the right to self-determination and thus possibly to statehood. In retrospect, this European position was as far-sighted as it was revolutionary.

Over the decades and particularly after the Oslo accords, whereas mediation remained firmly in the hands of the United States, the European Union maintained its standard-setting primacy in determining the accepted contours of Israeli–Palestinian peace. Through its diplomatic initiatives and above all its financial support for the then nascent Palestinian Authority, Europeans
sought to shape both in rhetoric and in practice the parameters of what became known as the two-state solution to the conflict. Notwithstanding differences and at times divisions between Member States, the Union as a whole should be given credit for its ability to formulate, stick to and advocate its preferred solution to the conflict over the years. With the international system being in a state of profound structural transformation and disruption, the EU’s position on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict must be hailed for its predictability and responsibility.

Alas, this is of little solace. Europeans notwithstanding, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has been rapidly degenerating, particularly since the turn of the century. Eighteen years have passed since there have been meaningful negotiations between the parties with a reasonable chance of success. There is no Middle East Peace Process anymore. There is, occasionally, a process in the Middle East, but certainly not one that has even the slimmest chance of yielding a sustainable peace. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Whereas one may speculate that the ‘process’ has at least prevented an outbreak of sustained mass violence, it is certainly true that the same process has entrenched the conditions of structural violence on the ground. The process, to which the EU has greatly contributed, has alleviated the costs and has contributed precious time for the deepening of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, as such reducing over the time the chances for a genuine two-state solution on the ground. In other words, as the years have gone by, the EU’s steadfast position towards the conflict has gradually, almost imperceptibly, tilted, from being a ground-breaking move towards peace, into becoming part of the conflict’s own dynamic, endurance and resilience.

The EU thus finds itself today in a Catch-22. On the one hand, if it adjusts its policy – for instance by discarding the two-state solution and embracing a one-state alternative – it would implicitly accept the degenerative local, regional and international dynamics which have conspired to erode the ground (literally) of a two-state solution. If the EU sticks to its two-state hymn sheet and the policies based thereon, it would continue to play into the very same conflict dynamics that have led to the deterioration of the situation.

Travelling between this Scylla and Charybdis is an intellectually, politically and practically complex task. It entails living up to principle, while pragmatically keeping eyes wide open to reality. It means removing rose-tinted
lenses when analysing the conflict, but remaining steadfast in the promotion of those basic rights whose protection is a *sine qua non* for any form of sustainable peace. Treading this path is certainly not easy for the EU, but neither is it impossible. The EU’s own history towards the conflict is testament to the fact that Europeans can be far-sighted, brave and stubbornly principled when they want. In order to be so, understanding the evolution of EU policy towards the conflict as much as the EU’s current predicament in the current regional and broader global context is crucial. Anders Persson’s book provides a meticulously researched and superbly argued work to this effect. An enticing read for all those with an interest and a passion for the Middle East as much as for the European project.

Enjoy the read!

Rome, September 2019

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The Member States of the European Community have particularly important political, historical, geographical, economic, religious, cultural and human links with the countries and peoples of the Middle East. They cannot therefore adopt a passive attitude towards a region which is so close to them nor remain indifferent to the grave problems besetting it. The repercussions of these problems affect the Twelve in many ways. (EC Foreign Ministers’ declaration on the Middle East, Bulletin of the EC 2-1987: 90)

The past years have seen many commemorations in the Israeli–Arab conflict: 100 years since the Balfour Declaration (2017), seventy years since Israel was created (2018), fifty years since the 1967 war (2017), thirty years since the first intifada (2017), and twenty-five years since the Declaration of Principles (2018). In 2021, it will be fifty years since the EU’s Foreign Ministers issued their first declaration on the Israeli–Arab conflict and also fifty years since it started to fund the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). If not before, this should be an opportune moment for European policy-makers to reflect on the past half-century’s involvement of the European Community/European Union in the conflict – and the next fifty years. At present, there is little suggesting that the conflict is about to end in a negotiated agreement any time soon. On the contrary, it may even escalate if a two-state solution is out of
reach for the Palestinians. Many Europeans, Israelis, Palestinians and others – from policy-makers and practitioners to students and engaged citizens – have a deep interest in the relations between the EU, including its Member States, and the Israeli–Arab conflict, but few have any knowledge about when, how and why the EC got involved in the conflict. This book aims to be the first historic overview of the EU’s almost fifty-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.

**Why has this Conflict been so Important for the EU?**

Both the European Community (EC) and Israel emerged from the ashes of World War II. Both drew the same, yet very different conclusion from the war. It consisted of two words: never again. For Israel, it was never again victim; never again would the Jewish people suffer as they had done during World War II. For the EC it was never again victimizer and never again war in Europe. The former victim and victimizer both grew and prospered, yet they developed very different views on the use of force, the primacy of international law, the role of the United Nations (UN) system, and on many other issues of international relations. The EC became involved in Israel’s conflicts with her neighbours after the June 1967 war and even more so after the October 1973 war with the subsequent oil crisis. 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 the EU’s almost five-decade-long involvement in the conflict. There are certainly several aspects of political realism involved, such as security, interests, power rivalry and concerns over resources. The same is true with regards to liberalism: the UN system, international law, trade, democracy promotion, interdependence, regional cooperation and support for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have all been important features of the EU’s involvement in the conflict over the past decades. Constructivism and more critical perspectives contribute to the analysis with their focus on ideas, identity formation, agency, discourse analysis and normative power. This book departs from all these three perspectives of international relations: there is a real political base to the analysis, but many aspects of liberalism and constructivism are also important points of
departure. Four broad arguments underlie the book’s overarching thesis that the Israeli–Arab conflict has been more important for the EU than other conflicts. It has been more important because the conflict has been central to the formation of the EU’s foreign policy, because the conflict has had a persistent unique place in the EU’s foreign policy, because the EU’s involvement in the conflict has been based on major strategic factors, and finally, because the EU has for a long time been part of the conflict.

_The conflict has been central to the formation of the EU’s foreign policy_

The 1967 war presented what was widely seen in the European Parliament to be a golden opportunity for the EC to unite its foreign policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. But as important was that many European politicians – from left to right with liberals in between – simultaneously saw an equally golden opportunity for the EC to contribute to help resolving the conflict. The EU’s self-perceived ‘special’, ‘moral’, ‘unique’ and ‘distinctive’ roles have been one of the defining features of its involvement in the conflict. These roles were based on Europe’s historical ties to the Middle East, its geographical proximity and past history of overcoming conflicts. 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. Thus, the conflict became a test case for the EC’s emerging foreign policy during the 1970s, especially after the 1973 war. It was a test that the Community passed. The EC managed to speak with a common voice on the Israeli–Arab conflict and started progressively to develop its vision of a just peace in the conflict. Hundreds of declarations followed over the decades. Many of them were visionary and ahead of their time. Other actors involved in the conflict, most notably the United States, often followed later on and adopted policies that the Community had earlier outlined. This development early on pointed to an important normative role for the EU in the conflict. As the decades went by, the conflict continued to be central to the formation of the EU’s foreign policy, especially its vision of peace through regional cooperation in its southern neighbourhood during the 1990s. But strategies like the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (EMP) had difficulties moving forward, in large part because the Israeli–Arab conflict remained unsolved.
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. Without having coded other conflicts, it is obvious through my quantitative and qualitative context analyses of the Bulletin that the Israeli–Arab conflict has received far more attention from the EC/EU than other conflicts. 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. The Israeli–Arab conflict was often mentioned first in the Bulletin’s sections on the European Political Cooperation (EPC); it had a central place when the Community spoke at the UN; the same is true for the conflict’s role in the Euro–Arab dialogue, and in the various presidencies (the rotating leadership of the Council) as well. Moreover, the conflict has also had a very central place in the works of the EU’s three High Representatives: Javier Solana, Catherine Ashton and Federica Mogherini. In addition, the very close bilateral relations between the EC/EU and Israel, and later with the Palestinian Authority (PA), also contributed to generating many matches in the coding schedule.

The EU’s involvement in the conflict has been based on major strategic factors

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. The Bulletin gives different figures as to exactly how dependent the Member States were on Middle Eastern oil in the late 1960s and during the 1970s, but there can be no doubts that oil was a major strategic factor for the EC’s original involvement in the conflict after the June 1967 war. It became an acute matter after the October 1973 war and the subsequent oil crisis, which had a shocking effect on the then nine Member States. 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. During the 1970s, exports from the EC to the Arab mem-
bers of OPEC (the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) increased almost tenfold.

The security threat that the conflict posed to Europe – from instability in the region, to tensions between the superpowers, to terrorism – were constant factors in the EC/EU’s declarations over the decades, but peaked during the 2000s after the 9/11 attacks and the invasion of Iraq. The EU’s 2003 security strategy (ESS) outlined what had long been the EU’s twin narrative regarding the Middle East: (1) that the Israeli–Arab conflict was the key to deal with other problems in the Middle East; and (2) that 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. This was obvious during the past decade, the 2010s, when major geopolitical events – such as the Arab Spring, the rise and fall of Islamic State, the signing and exit of the nuclear agreement with Iran, the refugee crisis – all contributed to make the Israeli–Arab conflict less of a burning priority for the EU, which was clearly visible in its global strategy from 2016.

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 peace-building missions on the ground in the conflict have all contributed to make the EU part of the conflict. During the 1990s, third party involvement in the conflict was widely seen as necessary and beneficial to the Oslo peace process, which was meant to be a temporary, interim period, before a final peace agreement was to be reached. But the longer this process has lasted, the more it has been questioned. The EU’s support for the Palestinian Authority and the peace process is now more and more seen, even by mainstream analysts, as helping Israel to uphold its illegal occupation rather than helping the Palestinians to achieve statehood. Even if top EU officials routinely argue that the EU’s support to the PA has saved it, and thereby the whole peace process, from collapsing during the most troublesome moments of the second intifada, it is unclear to what extent, if any, this really has helped the peace process – which has not really been a peace process during the 2010s. In the present era, there
is a big risk that the EU will be an even bigger part of the conflict as the US scales back its support to the Palestinians, and the EU, including its Member States, steps up to help fill the holes left behind by the US.

**Material and Methodology**

This book has a different research design compared to other similar books on the EU’s foreign policy and role in the conflict in that it uses an innovative methodology on a previously little-studied material. The material consists of all EC/EU declarations, other statements and mentions related to the Israeli–Arab conflict published in the *Bulletin of the European Communities* for the period between 1967 and 1993 and in the *Bulletin of the European Union* for the period between 1994 and 2009, after which the *Bulletin* ceased to exist. 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. Typically, the *Bulletin* came out with 10–11 issues each year, with 1–2 double issues, each issue consisting of between 100 and 250 pages. The double issues were coded for the first month; for example, a January/February double issue was coded only for January and coded zero for February. Altogether, the material for the 1967–2009 period consists of around 70,000 pages of EU texts and around 2,500 different statements related to the Israeli–Arab conflict. For many years, the *Bulletin* existed only in libraries, which made quantitative content analysis an overwhelming task for a single researcher. But in 2003, the University of Pittsburgh’s Archive of European Integration (AEI) began (and then stopped) uploading research materials on the topic of European integration and unification, among them many original EC/EU documents, including the *Bulletin of the European Communities* for the period 1967–93 and the *Bulletin of the European Union* for the period 1994–5. For the other issues of the *Bulletin* between 1996 and 2009, I turned to the online portal *EU bookshop*.¹ In each issue, five keywords were coded: ‘Israel’ (which includes

¹ For more information about the University of Pittsburgh’s Archive of European Integration (AEI), visit <http://aei.pitt.edu/information.html>. For more information about the EU bookshop, visit <https://bookshop.europa.eu/en/home/>. 
more important than other conflicts

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). The final key word is ‘Middle East’ (which includes the Middle East Peace Process, the conflict in the Middle East and so on). It would certainly be possible to code more keywords; for example, Jewish, Muslim/Islamic, West Bank, Gaza and so on, but each keyword means many hours of extra work. There is also an elegance in keeping things simple in academic research, which makes replications easier.

All mentions of ‘Israel’ and ‘Palest’ in the Bulletin have been included in the coding schedule, while all mentions of ‘Arab’, ‘Occupied’ and ‘Middle East’ have been included if they somehow were related to the Israeli–Arab conflict. A statement was coded as ‘1’ no matter if it was five sentences or five pages long, no matter if it included one or several of the five keywords. The next such statement was coded as ‘2’ and so on. Consequently, if the coding schedule has listed, for example, three matches in the Bulletin for a specific month it means that there were three different EC/EU declarations/statements that month on the Israeli–Arab conflict corresponding to the keywords.

The method used can best be described as a form of quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Basic quantitative content analysis enables the researcher to discover the broad pattern in a large volume of source material, which is where the analysis starts. The method is very useful for finding the manifest meaning in a text, which, at the same time, means that it has a much harder time finding the latent meaning (Bryman 2016: 284). It can count the occurrence of the keywords, but the method cannot, at least not without extra coding, say whether one occurrence of a keyword is more important or less important than another. In order to find the more latent meaning of a text, the researcher must go from quantitative to qualitative content analysis. David Altheide and Christopher Schneider (2013: 26) have described qualitative context analysis as being

systematic and analytic but not rigid. Categories and variables initially guide the study, but others are allowed and expected to emerge during the study,
including an orientation to constant discovery and constant comparison of relevant situations, settings, styles, images, meanings, and nuances.

After having coded the material, I went back into each coded statement to see if there is a latent meaning in it. It could, for example, be a new policy departure or the introduction of new terminology, which are not captured by a quantitative content analysis. Through a qualitative content analysis, it is further possible to see how much space and what kind of space the EC/EU has devoted to declarations on this conflict. For example, it is possible through this method to see how central the conflict was when the EC spoke at the UN, and so on.

**Locating the Study in Existing Research**

A quite solid body of research exists on the relations between the EU and the Israeli–Arab conflict. Israeli scholars Sharon Pardo and Guy Harpaz, with their respective colleagues, have for over a decade led the research on the EU’s bilateral relations with Israel, often focusing on the EU’s normative power vis-à-vis Israel (see, for example, Pardo and Peters 2010, 2012; Pardo 2015; Gordon and Pardo 2015a, 2015b; Harpaz 2007; Harpaz and Shamis 2010). In addition, Stefan Ahlswede’s (2009) *Israel’s European policy after the Cold War* is also a major contribution to the research on EU–Israel relations. There is considerably less research done on the EU’s wider bilateral relations with the Palestinians. Major studies have been done by Rouba al-Fattal (2010) and Amjad Fouad Abu El Ezz Banishamsa (2012). Adeeb Ziadeh (2017) has done a major study on the EU’s policies vis-à-vis Hamas. Simona Santoro and Rami Nasrallah (2007) and Patrick Müller and Yazid Zahda (2017) have done smaller studies on Palestinian perceptions of the EU. A number of European scholars have also written on EU–Palestinian relations, often focusing on the EU’s assistance to the PA, democracy promotion, EU–Hamas relations, and state-building (see, for example, Stetter 2003; Pace 2010; Huber 2011; Bouris 2014; Persson 2015; Charrett 2018).

A number of good overview studies exist on the EU’s role in the conflict, each focusing on different aspects of the conflict: Costanza Musu (2010) has analysed why the EU has failed to develop an autonomous and effective policy towards the conflict; Rory Miller (2011) has analysed the histori-
cal disarray in Europe’s policies vis-à-vis Israel and the Palestinians; Patrick Müller (2012) has analysed the ‘big-three’ Member States’ roles in the EU’s policies vis-à-vis the conflict; Taylan Özgur Kaya (2013) has analysed the EU’s foreign and security policies vis-à-vis the conflict after 9/11; Amr Nasr El-Din (2016) has focused on the EU’s security missions in the conflict and, finally, Raffaella Del Sarto (editor, 2015) has used a ‘borderlands approach’ in her analysis of the EU’s role in the conflict. This book is different from all the previous in that it is the first systematic study of the Bulletin’s reporting on the conflict. As such, it is a study based exclusively on primary sources. It also focuses exclusively on the EC/EU’s policies, whereas several of the previous studies were more European in nature and focused on the deliberations before EU policy was made and the reactions afterwards. Finally, the book covers a longer time span than the previous books.

Much of the foundations of this body of research were laid by Ilan Greilsammer and Joseph Weiler in successive works after the first international conference on the relations between the EC and Israel took place at Bar-Ilan University in 1984. Greilsammer and Weiler’s (1984, 1987, 1988) work offers in many ways a broader analysis than this book of the EC’s policy vis-à-vis the conflict and bilaterally vis-à-vis Israel between the early 1970s to the mid-1980s. Two of this book’s key arguments – that the conflict has been central to the formation of the EU’s foreign policy and that the conflict has had a unique place in the EU’s foreign policy – are to a large extent based on their work. As Alain Dieckhoff concluded in Greilsammer and Weiler’s edited volume,

It is above all through the Arab-Israeli conflict that the EEC has become a political unit which articulates a common European interest and maintains its own political voice. It is through this conflict that the European States have perfected the EPC framework and that they have introduced Europe on the international scene as an actor which has an effective capacity to behave continuously and deliberately. Nevertheless, even if the European Community is now an actor, she remains an imperfect one . . . She remains ‘some sort of half-developed international actor’. (Dieckhoff 1988: 281)

However, while their work overall is very solid, factors such as oil, settlements, and the EU’s normative power are not given prominence in their
analysis. To a certain degree, this is because an issue like settlements was a smaller issue during their time than it is today. The same can be argued about the EU’s normative power, but it has a prominent place in Rory Miller’s (2011) *Inglorious Disarray: Europe, Israel and the Palestinians since 1967*. Miller has many quotes in his book on how important Israeli and Palestinian leaders regarded the EU’s normative power. The most illustrative is perhaps a 1980 quote from Israel’s Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who believed that there was ‘nothing graver’ than Europe’s attempt to legitimize the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) (quoted in Miller 2011: 84–5). In contrast to Miller, who focused on the disarray in the EC/EU vis-à-vis the Israeli–Arab conflict, this book is based on the EU’s declarations and other statements on the conflict, which means much less disarray as compared to books like Miller’s focusing on the deliberations before the EU issues declarations and the reactions afterwards.

The EC’s dependence on energy supplies from the Middle East, both when it came to stabilizing the price of oil and to ensuring its supply, and how oil acted as a catalyst for the EC’s involvement in the conflict, have been analysed by, among others, Panayiotis Ifestos (1987), Alain Dieckhoff (1988), Soren Dosenrode and Anders Stubkjaer (2002), and Miller (2011). According to Ifestos, the 1973 war and the subsequent oil embargo made Europeans brutally aware of their vulnerability in both economic and political terms; it changed the pattern of relationships with both Israel and the Arab world, and brought about a dramatic shift towards more pro-Arab attitudes; it revealed the extent of European external disunity and generated calls for more integration as a result of this experience; it had economic effects not imaginable before the crisis; and last but not least, it brought to the surface the uneasy nature of Euro-American relations. (Ifestos 1987: 421)

The oil crisis led to a massive increase in trade between the EC and the Arab world. In 1972, before the crisis, EC exports to the Arab members of OPEC were valued at $2.97 billion. In 1979, they were valued at $27.7 billion, an almost tenfold increase. Imports also rose dramatically, from $13.2 billion in 1972 to $40.5 billion in 1975 to $65.5 billion in 1979 (Garfinkle 1983: 7–8). Oil, together with security and trade, formed the real political basis
of the EC’s involvement in the conflict, which is the third key argument of this book, that the EU’s involvement in the conflict has been based on major strategic factors.

After Greilsammer and Weiler’s pioneering work in the 1980s, another generation of scholars followed in the 1990s and 2000s. Their focus was mainly threefolded: the EU’s role in the peace process, including in building up Palestinian institutions; the EU’s regional cooperation with Israel and the Palestinian Authority as case studies; and other types of bilateral relations between the EU and the two sides (see, for example, Hollis 1997; Behrendt and Hanelt 2000; Ginsberg 2001). Since this was overall an optimistic time, the research was overall more positive than in the decades before and after, even if it was clear that the EU was nowhere near either enforcing its declarations or of being a mediator in parity with the US in the peace process. That being said, the EU was very active in the peace process. Ahlswede (2009: 248) has argued that Israel’s central tactic to cope with the EU’s unwelcome quest for political relevance during the peace process has been to provide the EU with only token roles in order to keep the Europeans more predictable and less dissatisfied.

During the 2000s, the research on the role of the EU in the conflict became much more critical. Many questions were raised about the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of the EU’s assistance to the peace process (see, for example, Le More 2005, 2008; Asseburg 2003; Brynen 2008). With neither peace nor a Palestinian state in sight, the gap between the EU’s rhetoric and the reality on the ground also grew much larger than it had been in the past decade (Tocci 2005, 2009; see also Aoun 2003). This gap is clearly visible in this book as well, in particular concerning the EU’s repeatedly stated willingness to use all of its power to reach a solution in the conflict and the reality of never doing so. By the end of the 2000s and the beginning of the 2010s, much of the research was focused on the EU’s role in Palestinian state-building (see, for example, Bouris 2014; Persson 2015). If not before, it was by now clear that the EU was part of the conflict, which is also the fourth key argument of this book. A very clear example of how the EU was part of the conflict was the reports around the time by leading human rights organizations of European complicity in both Israeli and Palestinian human rights abuses (see, for example, Amnesty International 2009; Human Rights Watch 2012).
The difficulty of achieving a two-state solution to the conflict in the latter half of the 2010s shifted much of the academic attention away from EU state-building in the Palestinian territories to instead focusing more and more on the EU’s normative power, differentiation, and other legal instruments for the EU vis-à-vis the Israeli–Arab conflict (see, for example, Pace 2007; Gordon and Pardo 2015a, 2015b; Bicchi and Voltolini 2017; Persson 2017a, 2018; Lovatt and Toaldo 2015; Lovatt 2016; Müller and Slominski 2017; Nikolov 2017; Azarova 2017; Beck 2017; Isleyen 2018). These measures have had some success so far, but have changed very little on the ground. Critics like Gordon and Pardo (2015b: 417) have, for example, argued that the EU’s 2013 guidelines against the Israeli settlements allowed ‘Israel to continue the occupation as if business was usual’. Others, like International Crisis Group’s senior analyst Nathan Thrall (2017: 72–3), have gone even further, arguing that differentiation measures that only focus on settlements, and not the Israeli state behind them, are a distraction and a substitute for real pressure that actually prolong the occupation by assuring that only the settlements and not the government that created them will suffer consequences for their repeated violations of international law. Even if no EU official yet officially acknowledges it, the differentiation strategy could actually be a strategy for dealing with Israel in a post-two-state solution reality. If the occupation continues and no Palestinian state materializes over the foreseeable future, the differentiation strategy will actually make it possible for the EU to deal with the internationally recognized Israel within the 1967 borders in such eventualities, even if this was not the original purpose behind the strategy.

The Book’s Outline

This book is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 2, the following chapter, is about how the EC got involved in the Israeli–Arab conflict after the 1967 war and even more so after the next war in 1973. The chapter outlines the EC’s diplomacy vis-à-vis the conflict during the 1970s, ending with the 1979 Israeli–Egypt peace treaty. Chapter 3 opens with the 1980 Venice Declaration, which is the most important EC/EU declaration on the Israeli–Arab conflict. The chapter analyses the EC’s diplomacy vis-à-vis the 1982 Lebanon war and the first intifada. A big part of the chapter is the EC’s forward-thinking on the long diplomatic road that eventually led to the Oslo peace process, which
is analysed in Chapter 4. The focus of Chapter 4 is the EC/EU’s vision of peace through regional cooperation. It also analyses the ups and downs of the peace process during the 1990s. The following chapter, 5, opens with the outbreak of the second intifada and continues with the impact of the 9/11 attacks on the EU’s role in the conflict during the 2000s, ending with the first Gaza war of 2008–9. Chapter 6 covers the period 2009–19 and focuses on the process leading up to the two Palestinian bids for statehood at the UN, the EU’s differentiation strategy, and resilience in the wake of Donald Trump’s diplomacy vis-à-vis the Israeli–Arab conflict. Finally, Chapter 7 presents the conclusions of the book and their ramifications.