

ESDP and Israel

Eva Gross

Abstract

This paper analyses the implications of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) for relations between the EU and Israel and for the EU's broader role in the Middle East more generally. The paper first gives a detailed overview of ESDP and its implications for a stronger EU foreign policy, both with respect to the policy's evolution since becoming operational in 2003 and to the specific missions in the Middle East. The paper then analyzes the implications of ESDP for Israel, with respect to the growing security role of the EU in the region, as well as domestic Israeli perceptions as to the utility of ESDP. The paper concludes by placing the discussion of the development of ESDP and EU-Israel relations in the broader context of the EU's growing role in the Middle East.

Introduction

With the creation of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) the EU has been able to play an increasing foreign and security role in world affairs, including in the Middle East. The year 2008 marks both a five- and a ten-year anniversary for ESDP. Ten years since the Anglo-French summit at St. Malo in 1998 made the creation of ESDP possible in the first place; and five years since the launch of the first ESDP mission, the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUPM) in 2003, marked the EU ESDP becoming operational in the full sense.¹ Since these two landmark events, both the political positions and constraints in the individual member states (including Britain and France, the two countries whose positions were furthest apart and thus delayed the creation of ESDP) but also the number and nature of ESDP operations have evolved considerably. Before analyzing the implications of this particular EU policy for third countries and conflict settings, a stock-taking of the ESDP's historical development is in order so as to highlight the possibilities and

¹ ESDP had first been declared partly operational under the Belgian EU Presidency in 2001

constraints inherent in European foreign and security policy in general, and with respect to the Middle East and Israel in particular.

As the next section shows in more detail, through the creation of ESDP the EU has evolved into a security actor in its own right, which has developed positions and policies that are implemented independently and/or alongside with NATO and the United States. The added political weight is increasingly felt in various geographical and functional policy areas the EU engages in. In the Middle East, this applies to EU foreign policy initiatives towards Iran and a growing security role in the Palestinian Territories, along with a growing political role in the Middle East peace process. European military deployments as part of UNIFIL further attest to the growing political and security presence in the region. While these developments have not been without criticism, and while knowledge about ESDP and the visibility of EU foreign policy in third countries has not kept in step with the ESDP's recent developments, the overall effect of increased EU activities has translated into greater political impact for the EU than it had at the beginning of the decade, when crisis management and foreign policy first moved into the spotlight of EU activities.

Yet, despite these positive developments, the EU faces limitations in its approach to Israel and the Middle East. Political differences among EU member states and resulting institutional constraints on formulating policy negatively impact the EU's ability to influence Israel or the dynamics in the Middle East peace process. In addition, the absence of a fully engaged US administration together with political crises and uncertainties in both Israel and the Palestinian Territories make the invigoration of the peace process difficult, with or without a stronger and more united EU foreign policy.

With respect to the Middle East, differences among EU member states do exist on what the EU's political and security role should be, which makes the task of arriving at a working consensus difficult. France, the country that currently holds the EU Presidency, has suggested the deployment of a European-led peacekeeping force to replace Israel in the West Bank that would give security guarantees to Israel, rather than merely concentrating ESDP activities on building up Palestinian state security structures, as has been the case so far, and of overall action as a security partner to Israel (Center for European Reform 2008). With political priorities currently shifting to events in the Caucasus this is unlikely to find resonance among member states particularly in the short run. However, it also reflects deeper divisions

within the EU over whether and how to act as partners with Israel: if to act as an independent military actor outside the currently defined structures, or to maintain its current approach of civilian crisis management operations. Current French initiatives pushing for a greater role for the EU in the Middle East and the ambitions for the EU and ESDP they reflect can be seen as a welcome move, in light of the growing political and security challenges at a time of low US engagement, due to the upcoming presidential elections and a record of neglect under the Bush administration. Nevertheless, the sustainability of Sarkozy's initiative also depends on continuous European and member state commitments under EU Presidencies to come.

The French push for the EU to act as a security partner to Israel also reflects a second strand of ESDP activities beyond crisis management operations in third countries that engenders both security cooperation and socialization into European security practices. Rather than instituting merely a coercive instrument in the sense of political attention paid to individual crises by virtue of ESDP missions that are to induce political change on the part of host countries, by including third countries in individual missions ESDP increasingly functions as a venue for collaboration and socialization into European crisis management and state-building practices. While Israel has expressed interest in collaboration on technical and functional/horizontal security issues that are of mutual interest and in which Israel has operational expertise, such as on terrorism and smuggling, from the EU point of view the focus in the short term at least is likely to remain on intervening in the Middle East peace process, state building and reinforcing the Palestinian security sector. In the longer term, however, the second view on ESDP – that of a security partnership rather than third party mediation or coercion – has different implications for EU-Israel relations.

ESDP – raising the EU's profile in security and crisis management

Current debates over ESDP's role in the Middle East as well as in EU-Israel relations are a far cry from the policy's early days, which were concerned most of all with transatlantic burden sharing. The creation of an autonomous European defense outside NATO structures, although often debated, did not gain traction until the end of the Cold War on account of concern over its effect on transatlantic relations,

particularly on the part of Britain. The conflict in the Balkans and questions over leadership within Europe induced a change in London's position. At its inception, the fundamental idea behind creating ESDP, and one of the reasons why Britain gave up its objections towards a European defense policy outside transatlantic structures, was the idea of transatlantic burden sharing. The experience in the Balkans, where Europe had to rely on the US military and diplomatic efforts to bring an end to hostilities, impressed upon policy makers in Europe the need for a stronger profile in security and defense policy in order to remain a credible partner for the US, and so as to prevent the US from turning its attention away from Europe. For France, the idea had been all along to create a European security and defense policy independent from the US. After the end of the Cold War and the experience of the Balkans these two positions, of Paris and of London, converged sufficiently to make possible the creation of ESDP over the objections and concerns of the United States (see Howorth 2000 and 2007). Ten years since the political launch of the project, however, it has become clear that the initial goal behind European efforts has not been entirely met, and that national priorities have not evolved to an extent that could change the fundamental transatlantic military equation – with very real consequences for what the EU can deliver in military and security terms.

The goal of raising the EU's profile and capabilities in security and defense by means of raising the level and the nature of military spending in member states has not altogether been met through the creation of ESDP. Defense spending after the end of the Cold War declined drastically as a result of the 'peace dividend'. In light of changing attitudes towards the use of force as well as domestic fiscal pressures, a level of combined European defense expenditure at around 2% of GDP has not significantly changed between 1995 and 2006 (see International Institute for Strategic Studies 2008), and is unlikely to increase in the future. Partly as a result, the initial military headline goal from 1999² morphed in 2004 into a new, less specific, Headline Goal that called for member states 'to be able by 2010 to respond with rapid and decisive action applying a fully coherent approach to the whole spectrum of crisis management operations covered by the Treaty of the European Union' (Gnesotto 2004). The lack of political commitments to ESDP and military commitments

² The 1999 Helsinki Headline Goal had called for member states 'by 2003, to deploy within 60 days and sustain for at least one year military forces of up to 50,000-60,000 persons' (see Gnesotto 2004).

under NATO, combined with competing views over ESDP's utility and purpose among the member states, has meant that ESDP was not considered a serious option for deploying European military forces in crisis management and peace keeping operations such as those in Afghanistan or Lebanon.

As far as military crisis management is concerned, the EU has engaged in few and geographically and functionally selective operations: deterrence missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia that were taken over from NATO and bridging operations in DR Congo that took place in close cooperation with the UN. Essentially, the EU has deployed military force in areas such as the Western Balkans where individual countries are viewed as potential and/or future member states or in sub-Saharan Africa, where the EU could act in support of other international institutions in pursuit of 'effective multilateralism' as stated in the European Security Strategy. While this is not to say that these missions, or the rationale behind them, are not legitimate and important, the lack of moves towards enhancing defense spending and individual member states making significant military commitments outside the EU framework in support of NATO or the US, make ESDP less than effective when it comes to transatlantic burden sharing of military crisis management. Rather than competing with NATO, or providing an automatic alternative option in areas where NATO does not want to become engaged, ESDP has fallen short of its declared goal. Current political and fiscal priorities among some member states and a declining engagement with ESDP by one of the two original drivers behind the policy do not indicate likely improvements in the near future, despite calls for permanent structured cooperation or variable geometry to move ESDP forward (see Whitney 2008).

As for the US, ESDP is increasingly no longer seen as a threat to NATO but as a potential partner (see Nuland 2007), an emerging view that is particularly based on ESDP's operational experience in civilian crisis management. Current French moves towards a return to NATO command structures³ also indicates that military ESDP and NATO are increasingly no longer seen as competitors, and that a workable division of labor might be arrived at politically without the ideological overlay of the past - and that in general the issue of European military

³ France left NATO integrated military command structures in 1966 over disagreements on the privileged role of the US in NATO and, by extension, European security.

crisis management can be infused with new momentum. The French EU Presidency's emphasis on ESDP, military crisis management and the re-visiting of the European Security Strategy also indicates a renewed focus on ESDP that could result in an actual push towards greater ESDP activity in general and military crisis management operations in particular – beyond the scope, size and geographical range of the missions to date. This is all the more important because the experience of cooperation in theatre, and the potential for joint programs and more effective defense spending that is inherent in agencies such as the European Defense Agency (EDA) mean that even the limited operational history of military ESDP has led to a socialization of member states but also third countries contributing to ESDP; and that ESDP represents one potential additional platform for military cooperation in theatre as well as in procurement, research and development. For countries and member states participating in these ESDP operations and activities, in other words, ESDP represents a platform for cooperation, contribution and socialization into European norms and practices, which further stands to strengthen and reinforce the EU's political impact.

As for ESDP's 5-year anniversary of the first crisis mission launched under an EU label, the operational experience and the demands placed on ESDP quickly revealed that ESDP has developed significant expertise in civilian crisis management, with a particular focus on various aspects of security sector reform (SSR). Of the 23 completed, ongoing or planned operations, only four have been military, the rest were police, rule of law, or border assistance missions, deployed around the globe. Increasingly, the scope of ESDP has grown from the Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa to include Asia (Afghanistan and Indonesia), the Caucasus (Georgia), but also the Middle East (Palestinian Territories, Iraq). Most of the operational experience of ESDP has thus been gathered through civilian crisis missions, and the EU's approach to SSR and the broader concern with nation-building (see Dobbins 2008) in its military missions has been perceived as real value added to international security. Furthermore, individual operational experiences together with the challenge of combining civil and military instruments have resulted in a substantial lessons-learned processes. An important political component of civilian (but also military) ESDP is to emphasize member states' interest or commitments towards a specific issue area or crises. Technically, the Commission has been effectively running SSR projects in a number of geographic locations, and continues to do so. The difference with an ESDP mission is that its intergovernmental framework highlights

member state consent and a means of exerting political pressure on host countries. In the final analysis, civilian ESDP missions signal the EU's greater political ambitions and positions, and exert pressures designed to change specific behaviors or dynamics in specific conflict settings. Despite the relatively modest commitments under ESDP, this can also be observed in the Middle East on security terms, as will be discussed in the next section.

ESDP in the Middle East

Two ESDP missions are currently deployed in the Middle East.⁴ The political background of these two particular operations in the form of growing EU diplomacy towards the Middle East arose out of Javier Solana's increasing activities and push towards an EU role in the region and the Middle East peace process. These activities evolved concurrently with the growing EU activities in the Western Balkans starting with the crisis in Macedonia in 2001. They not only constituted a sign of the EU's emerging ambitions as an actor in foreign and security policy following the appointment of Javier Solana as High Representative/Secretary General of CFSP, but also demonstrated clearly that the Middle East is regarded as a priority area for EU foreign policy. These high profile diplomatic activities are embedded in a web of bilateral contractual relations through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the Union of the Mediterranean, a brainchild of the current French EU Presidency that was launched on 13 July 2008. Politically, the EU is also a member of the Middle East Quartet, and a European, Tony Blair, has been appointed Quartet envoy. Lastly, the EU has launched two ESDP operations; in addition, European military forces are deployed in Lebanon under UNIFIL. The size and number of missions and military deployments in the Middle East represent both a qualitative and quantitative jump in European security presence since ESDP's beginnings as well as the EU's growing role in international security.

A short overview of the two ESDP operations as well as the engagement through UNIFIL reveals both the opportunities and limitations of the EU's foreign and security policy activities in the

⁴ A third mission, the EU Rule of Law Mission for Iraq (EJUST LEX), is a 'hybrid' case as police training is not taking place in theatre but rather consists of training Iraqi experts in the EU with a small liaison team operating in Baghdad (Council of the European Union 2008c).

Middle East. EUPOL COPPS (Coordination Office for Palestinian Police Support) and EU BAM Rafah (Border Assistance Mission) are two comparatively small missions that nevertheless fulfill important functions: EUPOL COPPS supports the Palestinian Authority in establishing the rule of law; whereas through EU BAM Rafah the EU acts as a third party observer in establishing and maintaining a border crossing between Gaza and Egypt, a role that it has not been able to fulfill due to changing political circumstances. Fundamentally, the missions attest to the growth but also the limitations of ESDP – and, by extension, EU foreign policy. Despite the increasing commitments, the EU continues to play a secondary rather than a lead political role in the Middle East. While the EU increasingly navigates between the US and Israel on the one hand and the Palestinians on the other, its success and its action radius continue to depend on transatlantic commitments and conditions on the ground.

EU COPPS

The EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS) has a long-term reform focus and provides enhanced support to the Palestinian Authority in establishing sustainable and effective policing arrangements. Following the pledge of EU leaders in June 2004 to support the Palestinian Authority in taking responsibility for law and order, and in particular, in improving its civil police and law enforcement capacity, EUPOL COPPS was established in November 2005 and has been operational since 1 January 2006. With an initial duration of three years, EUPOL consists of 26 EU and 5 local staff and it is headed by a UK national, Colin Smith, a number that stands to increase in the future. The 2008 mission budget is slightly above €6 million, and 15 member states and Norway participate in the mission.

The aim of the mission is to assist the Palestinian police force in establishing sustainable policing capacities in the context of wider security sector reform. In this context, the mission has provided support to the Palestinian Civil Police to realize operational priorities but also longer-term transformation. The mission has advised and mentored senior officials at District and Headquarters level and has coordinated financial assistance from various international donors to the Palestinian Civil Police (Council of the European Union 2008a). From the perspective of the EU, security and the rule of law represent key pillars in building democracy, strengthening civil society but importantly also economic growth. Building a professional police force in the Palestinian Territories force directly results from this conviction. Fundamentally, the EU regards Israel's security as a

derivative of broader state- and democracy-building efforts, including the establishment of the rule of law (see Solana 2008). In the case of Palestine, the establishment of a civil police is seen as particularly important due to the security vacuum in the absence of a politically neutral, community-based civil police (*Jerusalem Post* 2008).

Despite the not insubstantial commitments on the part of the EU, the mission has suffered both from the restricted personnel, material and financial resources but also from lack of political support from Israel. Progress has been accordingly slow, which prompted Berlin to host the June 2008 Donor Conference to increase visibility and financial pledges for building a Palestinian police (see *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 2008). Mission weakness has to do with current mission numbers, with political support for the mission and with lacking infrastructure. Twelve of the proposed 20 police stations currently exist (*Jerusalem Post* 2008). These problems illustrate the political constraints on the EU with respect to its dealings with Israel in general, but particularly in respect to this ESDP mission. As part not just of a state-building effort but also of a conflict-management or conflict-resolution tool, COPPS and the EU are beholden to the broader political situation in which the EU is not the primary external actor. At the same time, COPPS fulfils an important political function with respect to the EU's position vis-à-vis both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Given its mandate to contribute to the establishment and enforcement of security and the rule of law the EU shows its commitment to the Palestinian state and thus maintain a position as a neutral, third party to the conflict. At the same time, lacking mission effectiveness due to lack of resources, infrastructure and political interference also detract from the EU's political impact as the delivery of services is not commensurate with the political rhetoric. For the EU to maintain or increase its credibility, the mission must be equipped with greater resources and receive political backing from the EU and Israel in order to carry out its mandate.

EU BAM Rafah

Whereas EUPOL COPPS has been continuously operational and is intended to grow in size, the second ESDP mission, EU BAM Rafah, faces a more complicated constellation due to the broader political developments following Hamas' victory in the 2006 parliamentary election and the intra-Palestinian clashes as well as escalating violence between Israel and Hamas that has followed. EU BAM Rafah was launched in November 2005 following the conclusion between Israel and the Palestinian Authority of the 'Agreement on Movement and

Access', the so-called Rafah Agreement of 15 November, following Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza strip. In this set-up the EU has assumed a Third Party role to ensure the operation of the border crossing as part of a confidence-building measure between Israel and the Palestinian Authorities⁵; and the ESDP mission also cooperates closely with the Commission's institution-building efforts in an effort to streamline EU activities in the first and second pillar. The mission has been operational since November 2005 and earlier this year has been extended until 24 November 2008. The mission consists of 20 EU and 7 local staff and has a mission budget of €7 million for 18 months, and is headed by an Italian national, Lt. General Pietro Pistolese (Council of the European Union 2008b).

The mission's core purpose, to provide a third-party role as part of a move towards confidence-building and de-escalation, has been compromised by political events. While EU BAM has maintained its operational capability despite Hamas' takeover in the Gaza strip, in June 2007 the Head of Mission declared a temporary suspension of the mission. EU BAM remains in the region with the operational capacity to deploy at short notice, given the importance of having the border open and to proceed with the implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access. Practical linkages between the two missions also exist as staff of EU BAM Rafah is now reinforcing EUPOL COPPS by both assisting the auditing process and by the preparation of training courses. Despite the linkages between the two missions, the fundamental constraints acting on EUPOL COPPS also affect EU BAM Rafah – and in the latter case are even more pronounced. A cease-fire between Israel and Hamas, operational since June 2008, has resulted in Israel opening crossings for the trade of commercial goods. However, negotiations over and the eventual return of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, captured by militants in Gaza in June 2006, prisoners releases and the promised talks involving Israel, Hamas, the Palestinian Authority and the EU on reopening the Rafah crossing, have at the time of writing not met with positive results.

UNIFIL

For the past two years, in what represents a qualitative shift in European commitments to security in its neighborhood as well as in the centrality of EU institutions in decision-making, European military forces have also been active in Lebanon. European reactions towards

⁵ While Israel is not physically present at the border post, it has installed cameras so as to have virtual/visual information on proceedings (see Toronto Star 2006).

the 2006 war in Lebanon confirm growing ambitions to respond to international crises in general and to play a military role in the Middle East. Crisis diplomacy during the war saw the emergence of a 'European' pillar, led by France, that provided a counterpoint during the political negotiations towards a cease-fire as part of the UN framework, even if Britain and to a lesser extent also Germany were in support of the US position. French and Italian military commitments and leadership of the emerging peacekeeping force further demonstrated that Europeans were ready to commit to an active part in the resolution of the crisis. UNIFIL is also significant because the option of an ESDP mission had been discussed; this option was discarded both out of concern over putting the EU on display in what was rightly perceived as a difficult and dangerous mission and following the realization that duplicating or displacing an existing peace keeping force was judged too cumbersome. However, the debates over an ESDP mission and the centrality of decision-making power and discussion in Brussels-based institutions shows the extent to which EU decision-making forums have become increasingly important in member states' European decision-making (see Biscop 2007). Although UNIFIL is not conducted under an EU label, European commitments to the force indicate a growing commitment also in military terms to the Middle East, particularly as other, transatlantic, institutional options and conflict actors could not have assumed this role. While UNIFIL does not necessarily mean that the EU has morphed into a greater military power – domestic constraints outlined in previous sections continue to apply - there is certainly more direct engagement than there has been in the past; and the stakes in the region on the part of the member states have also been reinforced as a result.

The political impact of France playing counterpoint to the US in the political negotiations over a cease-fire gave added weight to European (although not necessarily EU) diplomatic efforts, even if UNIFIL as an option was not initially supported by Israel. With respect to the EU as a political and military actor, the Lebanon episode illustrated that while the nature of current European political and military engagement as part of UNIFIL is a qualitative step up from past engagement, and while it involves not only France, Britain and

Germany but also Italy and Spain⁶, the nature of the mandate is such that it does not offer a credible security guarantee to Israel and as such

does not (yet) signal that the EU is able to take over security functions in the Middle East.

The political impact of EU missions in the Middle East - some conclusions

As previous sections have demonstrated, the two ESDP missions currently deployed are small in size, not fully operational, and both suffer from lack of financial and/or infrastructure support. Both missions are also heavily impacted by political conditions outside mission control, both in terms of Israel's political reservations to the missions, Hamas' presence in Gaza and relations between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. While it is easy to dismiss ESDP's impact and presence due to the small size of the missions as well as the fact that one of the two has not been operational for a number of months, ESDP's political impact derives from two factors.

First, the fact that the EU is operationally active in the Middle East shows that it is increasingly taking on an international presence in the region. The fact that with respect to EU BAM Rafah the EU was perceived as the more neutral and as such necessary actor to undertake that mission also lends the EU legitimacy as a second external actor, alongside the US. With respect to the operational development of ESDP, the EU's growing focus on SSR as part of its operational focus on building state structures means that the EU is implementing its operational experience gained elsewhere in the Middle East as well. Fundamentally, however, especially when taken together with European military commitments as part of UNIFIL, the ESDP mission attests to the EU's growing ambitions in the region as well as an emerging qualitative shift in this engagement. Despite the incremental changes and hesitations over sending European soldiers to Lebanon, military deployments and the European lead in the negotiation of this deployment does represent a qualitative shift. For Israel, this means two things – whereas it is easy to dismiss the EU's military capabilities as negligible compared to the US, and its efforts as

⁶ Britain does not contribute to UNIFIL, nor was it instrumental in the negotiations over the mission's mandate; London however continues to hold a key position in EU and international politics towards the Middle East.

laudable but too small in scale,⁷ the EU is the only actor that could have undertaken this mission. The EU's growing role is also important with a view to the outgoing US administration's neglecting of the peace process.

Disinterest on the part of the current US administration in the Middle East peace process has given the EU an opening to establish itself as a second external actor in the Middle East as well as formulate its own political position. However, in the long run the absence of a credible US commitment coupled with the tenuous situation in the Palestinian territories and the current crisis in Israeli government mean that Europe's room for maneuver – as concerns influencing Israel, building security structures, and strengthening the Middle East peace process - remains limited even when bolstered by its growing engagement in security through ESDP. Despite the growing EU role in the region, US security guarantees and political clout remain essential. Increasing the EU's security profile and offering Israel a security guarantee will be necessary for the EU to further raise its profile, to effect for change in political positions and move beyond general commitments to state building by means of civilian ESDP operations. A stronger European role in security also promises ways of cooperation between Israel and ESDP.

Israel and ESDP: exploring avenues for cooperation and coordination

The analysis of European and ESDP operations should have already suggested that Israel does not necessarily perceive the EU as a military security actor on account of ESDP. To be sure, the EU is perceived as a neutral external actor in the Middle East in addition to the US. While neither ESDP mission has resulted in the EU being perceived as a forceful actor in the Middle East, the EU has increased its political leverage both by virtue of the two ESDP missions as well as by being a member of the Quartet. As a result, the EU has become a greater player on the political level in the sense that Israel has to accommodate EU views and positions to a greater extent than it did in the past. Israel, therefore, regards ESDP on the one hand with skepticism because of the perception that ESDP in the Middle East,

⁷ in Rafah, ESDP staff cannot prevent or intervene in smuggling activities outside the border crossing; and the assistance to the Palestinian police, while supported in principle, is seen as too small in scope

EU BAM Rafah in particular, is ineffective and does not deliver, even if in principle Israel is in support of strengthening the Palestinian security sector and general rule of law infrastructure. As far as ESDP is concerned, then, Israel is ambivalent or at least skeptical about the EU's contribution and growing role in the field of security, even if the EU has become a more established actor in state-building and aspects of SSR. A politically and militarily stronger EU, including by means of ESDP, is also seen as a potentially coercive instrument that can constrain Israel's actions.

On another level, however, ESDP is regarded with more interest. It is acknowledged that scope for cooperation exists that could be of interest to Israel, both in terms of military as well as political cooperation. ESDP is certainly perceived as an area where Israel and the EU can collaborate, with a view to moving Israel-EU relations to a more equal level beyond the bilateral relationship through the ENP. While Israel continues to regard NATO as a stronger military actor and thus a more attractive partner, collaboration with the EU is of interest to Israel. Fundamentally, the perception is that Israel could make a contribution in the areas of fighting terrorism and smuggling as well as lend military expertise. Increasing cooperation could also be seen as an alternative path to influencing Israel on the part of the EU, as opposed to vocal criticism of either settlement policies or Israeli conduct during the 2006 war in Lebanon. In the short- and medium-term, however, relations between ESDP and Israel will continue to refer to the EU's increasingly influential politics in the Middle East through political avenues and concrete state-building measures as part of ESDP, rather than to functional cooperation on security matters.

Conclusions and recommendations

With ESDP, the EU has strengthened its profile with respect to the Middle East in general and Israel in particular. This is both a function of growing EU capabilities in military and civilian crisis management as well as the growth of political instruments and institutions under CFSP that complement and reinforce ESDP, and of the neglect of the peace process on the part of the current (outgoing) US administration. US policy also became discredited in the broader region on account of its invasion of Iraq, to the extent that the EU could assume a bigger and more clearly defined role. This was evident in the EU3 negotiations with Iran, where the EU provided a successful mediating diplomatic approach to navigate between the US and Iran; it was also

evident in discussions over the peacekeeping force in/after the 2006 war in Lebanon. NATO, although favored in some quarters, was not perceived as neutral and thereby counted itself out as a viable policy option. As a result, it was up to the Europeans – although in the end not to the EU ESDP – to provide forces and lead the peacekeeping force, but also to provide political leadership in the negotiations towards a cease-fire in the 2006 Lebanon war and the establishment of the UN peacekeeping force.

The institutional and operational experience of ESDP over the past ten years has shown significant developments for the EU as a security actor. This applies particularly to EU contributions to SSR, reinforcement of EU political aims formulated under the CFSP, and the geographical reach of EU foreign and security policy more generally. As concerns military and defense in the sense of transatlantic burden sharing and being able to provide security guarantees, however, ESDP has not developed significantly beyond stabilization and bridging missions. Lacking military capabilities, together with the EU's intergovernmental mode of decision-making and domestic reservations over the use of force continues to limit the EU's political clout, and this is visible also with respect to the Middle East.

To be sure, between the initial ESDP operations five years ago and today, and between Solana's first visits to the Middle East as a sign of increasing European political ambitions in the region, much has been accomplished in terms of raising the EU's profile as a security actor. In order to make ESDP – and by extension, the EU - a more credible player in the Middle East and Israel in particular, the EU must provide sufficient personnel and resources to the individual missions; it must align its political and ESDP activities to achieve greater impact between instruments; and it must find ways to engage with Israel in order to take over greater political but also security functions in the Middle East.

In order to increase its political and security role in the Middle East, therefore, the EU should:

- Increase its commitment to the two civilian ESDP missions; this involves staffing and equipping EUPOL COPPS as well as pushing for the re-opening of EU BAM Rafah
- Align its political activities vis-à-vis Israel but also the Palestinian Authority in a way that ESDP operation will

conform with broader political objectives to maximize the EU's political impact

- Consider ways in which the EU can take over further security functions in the Middle East with a view to raise its security and political profile vis-à-vis Israel
- Further elaborate, and attempt to forge member state consensus, on likely future scenarios for ESDP activity in the Middle East
- In the absence of US leadership in the Middle East peace process, maintain high political profile and further establish the EU's role as an external actor.

References

- Biscop, Sven. 2007. For a 'More Active' EU in the Middle East: Transatlantic Relations and the Strategic Implications of Europe's Engagement in Iran, Lebanon, and Israel-Palestine. In Nathanson, Roby and Stephan Stetter, ed. *The Middle East Under Fire? EU-Israel Relations in a Region Between War and Conflict Resolution*. Berlin/Tel Aviv: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, May.
- Center for European Reform. 2008. The Arab-Israeli conflict: France's dashed hopes. CER Insight. London, 3 September.
- Council of the European Union. 2008a. EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS). Brussels, June.
- Council of the European Union. 2008b. EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah Crossing Point (EU BAM RAFAH). Brussels, June.
- Council of the European Union. 2008c. EU Rule of Law Mission for Iraq (EUJUST LEX). Brussels, June.
- Dobbins, James. 2008. Europe's Role in Nation Building. *Survival* 50 (3): 83-110.
- Gnesotto, Nicole, ed. 2004. *EU Security and Defense Policy: The First Five Years (1999-2004)*. Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies.
- Haaretz*. 2008. The Brit who can revitalize the PA police, 30 May.
- Howorth, Jolyon. 2000. Britain, France and the European Defense Initiative. *Survival* (42) 2: 33-55.
- Howorth, Jolyon. 2007. *Security and Defense Policy in the European Union*. London: Palgrave.

International Institute for Security Studies. 2008. *European Military Capabilities: Building Armed Forces for Modern Operations*. London: Routledge.

Jerusalem Post online edition. 2008. Three Palestinian police stations open. 3 June.

Nuland, Victoria. 2007. *NATO: Transatlantic and Global Security Provider*. Brussels: Institute for European Studies, 16 October.

Süddeutsche Zeitung. 2008. Nahost-Treffen in Berlin. Munich, 23 June.

Solana, Javier. 2008. Erst das Fundament, dann das Dach. Munich, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25 June.

Toronto Star. 2006. Something that works. Toronto, 21 May

Witney, Nick. 2008. *Re-energizing Europe's Security and Defense Policy*. Policy Paper. London: European Council of Foreign Relations.