

AID, SECURITY AND FORTRESS EUROPE

EU development aid in the Middle East and North Africa

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Introduction

European imperialism reached almost the entire world, violently extracting wealth from colonised regions to European metropolises. This imperialist structure has defined the global political economy and the relationship between the successor states of those empires, now European Union (EU) Member States, with their ex-colonies in the Global South. Today a largely less militaristic relationship exists between the EU and ex-colonies, which is defined more by an exchange of culture, trade and development work and humanitarian aid. Indeed, the EU – through its institutions and Member States – is the most important and largest aid donor worldwide. In 2018, the EU and its Member States allocated €74.4 billion for foreign aid, accounting for 57% of global spending (European Commission, 2019).

Given the salience and scale of the economic instruments in EU foreign policy, this chapter aims to interrogate EU development aid to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to understand the role aid plays in shaping contemporary relationship between the EU and ex-colonies in the MENA region, or what is called Europe’s “southern neighbourhood” in the EU discourse. The chapter argues that no matter how well-intentioned some EU aid actors may be, and in spite of its rhetorical positioning of aid in normative and liberal discourse, contemporary EU development policy towards the MENA region is centred on the short-term aim of deterring migration and promoting security, along with the long-term structural aim of exporting EU-styled governance and reforms.

The historical legacy of European imperialism and colonialism largely defines and sets out European Economic Community (EEC)/EU relations with MENA. This legacy and deep economic ties remain in place and continue to shape the EU relationship with the Global South, including the MENA region, which the following four sections examine. The first considers the historical context of evolving EU–MENA relationships that are based on aid and agreements (entitled “Evolving Relationships based on Aid and Agreements”). The second section offers analysis of the EU as a development actor (entitled “The Contemporary EU as ‘Development Actor’”). The third section then looks at EU development aid in MENA after the Arab Revolts in 2011, and the utilisation of resilience as a development concept (entitled “EU Aid and Development Policy after the 2011 Arab Revolts”). The fourth section then explores the

aid–security nexus, and their inter-relationship with migration (entitled “Development Aid, Security and Fortress Europe”).

Evolving relationships based on aid and agreements

The Treaty of Rome established the European Development Fund (EDF), which was launched in 1959, to fund “cooperation activities in the fields of economic development, social and human development, as well as regional cooperation and integration” (EDF, 2013). The EDF is separate from the European institutional budget and depends largely on voluntary contributions from the Member States. Although EDF financing remains outside the EU budget, to ensure consistency negotiations in the Council of Ministers on the 11th EDF took place in parallel with the negotiations of the external Instruments financed under the budget. From 1963, the EDF was applied in cycles of around five years and the Eleventh cycle ran between 2014 and 2020 with a €30.5 billion budget (EDF, 2013).

The Treaty of Rome effectively created a free trade area between the EEC Member States and their existing colonies. Upon achieving independence, from the 1960s onwards ex-colonies negotiated relations with the EEC on a contractual basis. During 1963–1975 the Yaoundé Conventions were established to govern relations between the EEC and, at the start, 18 mostly francophone African countries. This was in a period where relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) were considered particularly important for EEC economic growth, and France remained the leading EEC colonial metropole holding onto a colonial heritage. Yaoundé did represent a fundamental rhetorical and, to a large extent, *de jure* repositioning of past imperial relationships in a period of rapid decolonisation, though asymmetric power relations continued (Nubukpo et al., 2016). During 1975–2000, the successor Lomé Conventions extended that area of cooperation to cover former British colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa, following the UK’s 1973 accession to the EEC.

The EU regarded the Yaoundé and Lomé conventions, which were set-up to account for the overseas territories of the two greatest European imperial powers, to be exemplary models for North–South cooperation. Critical analysts have argued that this was more of a normalisation of past colonial linkages, which had been legitimised in the Treaty of Rome (Hurt, 2010: 162), albeit usually maintained by soft power rather than hard power. Then in 2000, these conventions evolved further with the Cotonou Agreement, which was intended to have a duration of 20 years between the EU and 78 partner countries. Cotonou was established on principles of transferring accountability and leadership of the development process to ACP countries, foreshadowing standard ethics in aid programming that would take hold in the international donor community in the 2000s with agreements like the Paris Declaration (2005) and Accra Agenda for Action, (2008) (OECD, n.d.) which the EU adopted.

Although the EEC began to establish bilateral cooperation agreements with the Mediterranean countries (compromising much of the MENA region) towards the late 1970s, it was not until 1995 that they were formalised with the Barcelona Process, known as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). The Barcelona Process formalised EU and non-EU Mediterranean relations with the long-term objective of establishing an area of “peace, stability and free trade between the EU and Mediterranean countries” (EuropeAID, n.d.: 1). Consistent with a wealthier Europe defining much of its asymmetrical relationships with its former colonies in the Global South, a *Mesures D’Accompagnement* (MEDA) programme was implemented and became the main financial instrument of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership between 1996–2006. In 2004, after the “big bang” enlargement of ten new Member States, the EU launched the European Neighbourhood (ENP) policy as a new structure for its relationship with neighbouring countries

in the MENA region, as well as in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Subsequently, the MEDA was replaced by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) in 2007 to fund EU projects within the ENP framework. That was followed a year later by the formation of the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008, which includes the EU and MENA countries (Bicchi and Gillespie, 2011; Pace and Wolff, 2017).

Development aid in EU foreign policy

In the early 2000s, the EU took a major step towards reforming the institutional structure for its external development aid programming. Accordingly, the office for external cooperation EuropeAID was established in 2001. This was followed in 2011 by the EuropeAid Cooperation Office (AIDCO). There the Directorate-General (DG) for Development and Relations with ACP states merged to form “Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid” in a further consolidation and formation of larger and stronger EU institutions. The European Commission (EC) also adopted the Agenda for Change Communication, equipping the EU with the official policy aim of “high-impact development policy and practice to speed up progress on poverty eradication” (Historical overview of EU cooperation and aid, 2013). During this evolution, in 2015 the Directorate-General became the contemporary EU organ “Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development” (DG DEVCO).

As a special kind of international actor (Hill et al., 2017), the EU’s power has been subject to scholarly debate featuring it as a civilian, normative, post-Westphalia or structural power (Holden, 2016; Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014; Manners, 2002; Telò, 2006). A military characteristic is excluded from the EU. By contrast aid spending, as a non-military device, is of great importance for the EU to exert external influence in the absence of military power. Besides the nature of its power, the EU’s unfixing shape, evolving multilayered governance and institutional setups impact its aid policy. Following the 2009 Lisbon Treaty in particular which provided the underpinning for “common” foreign policies, new actors (e.g. the European External Action Service (EEAS), European Delegations in third countries, Task Forces) have emerged and become major players in shaping EU aid policies towards MENA. Although the European Commission remains responsible for the implementation and disbursement of funds, the EEAS is responsible for formulating and managing EU foreign economic policies, including aid (Bicchi, 2014). EU aid policy is also coordinated with external international development players and frameworks like the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The EU discourse usually articulates aid policies reflecting generic normative objectives such as poverty reduction and the promotion of democracy, human rights, good governance and sustainable growth. However, it is important not to lose sight of how aid fits in its broader foreign policy objectives. In this regard, the structural account provides a cogent interpretation of EU foreign policy. According to Keukeleire and Delreux (2014: 27 emphasis in original) EU foreign policy aims at “influencing the *structures* that inform and shape other actors’ behaviour”. On this rendering, aid policy serves long-term processes of reforming or creating new structures (e.g. trade, security, migration, legal, energy) premised on organisational principles such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The neo/liberal market is however the main foundation of these principles, and very much intertwined with the liberal idealism that defined the multilateral post–World War II system, including the foundation of the EEC/EU. Aid is hence an instrument in this grand foreign policy (Holden, 2016), used to kindle structural adjustment in the MENA countries based on the same set of principles.

As a foreign policy instrument, aid reflects concrete interventions that consolidate the spatial environment of and around the EU. It is a performative act that connects the EU with external realms of the Other and defines the ideational and geographical boundaries that connect and divide them. Subsequently, aid provides a one-way interception of “somewhat fixed borders” (Browning and Joenimmi, 2008: 24) between the EU and Arab countries in the MENA region. Here, the construction of the “European southern neighbourhood” through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2004, is of particular importance. This geopolitical constellation connects different European countries into a singular actor (the EU) while disconnecting the Arab countries (the “Other”) into separate “partners” within the European (“our”) neighbourhood. On this basis, asymmetric power relations were structurally coded and stabilised as one-direction multilateralism (Amin and El Kenz, 2005: 100). The geopolitical narrative is complemented with a duty narrative. The EU ascribes to itself the responsibility to promote well-being and economic growth in the southern neighbourhood as a normative underpinning for more ambitious structural reformations. The duty narrative was dominant during the initial response to the Arab revolts, continued until 2013/4 (Schumacher, 2015) and is reminiscent of European imperial justification for interventions (Bell, 2016). Looking beyond the regular reverberations of generic liberal norms, EU priorities in the MENA countries remain unchanged: security, stability, trade and immigration (Bicchi, 2014; Cassarino, 2012). Indeed, these priorities topped the 2019 EU–Arab League agenda, where democracy and human rights were not mentioned (Badarin, 2019; Council of the EU, 2019).

Besides the different EU actors involved in aid policy, the ENP, launched in 2004, is the main platform regulating EU relations with MENA countries and societies to put them on the track of “good governance” (ESS, 2003) and to transform the region into an “area of prosperity and good neighbourliness” (TEU, 2008 art.8/1). Financial instruments are utilised to achieve these security and ideational needs of the EU. Although aid and development are not objectives of the ENP per se, its framework and related instruments regulate the flow and scope of financial aid disbursed through the ENPI 2007–2013, and later the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) 2014–2020. Structural reforms in the direction of the EU’s style of governance, foreign policy priorities and neoliberal market economy are thus transposed into the ENP, and in this context, aid serves to promote the EU’s external reformative agenda (Reynaert, 2011). This became more palpable in the first and second revisions of the ENP in response to the Arab revolts.

EU aid and development policy after the 2011 Arab revolts

In 2011, the first revision of the ENP underscored the so-called “more for more” principle, committing additional funds and support in return for reforms. This was followed by “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity”, a specific response to the Arab uprisings, reflecting the revised ENP’s “differentiated” and “incentive-based” approach in dealing with MENA countries and making about €30 million available for humanitarian aid to Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, while pledging to increase aid (European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2011: 2–5; Bouris and Schumacher, 2017). At this point, the EU stressed the conditionality of aid, “the more and the faster a country progresses in its internal reforms, the more support it will get from the EU” (European Commission, 2011: 3). Furthermore, ad hoc funds to tackle contingent matters are used in some cases. For example, in 2014, the EU launched the Madad Trust Fund to cater to the basic needs of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons in host countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq (European Commission, 2014). There was also growing interest in channelling funds

to civil society institutions and actors (NGOs, political parties, trade unions, educational programs). While it is important to account for the considerable gap between titular committed funds and the actual funds dispensed (Bicchi, 2014), it is more crucial to navigate how funds are spent and on what. For instance, activities such as European election observation missions, staff, assessment and evaluation reports, and other administrative works are financed out of the aid budget for Jordan (EU Aid Explorer, 2019a). These call to attention how a significant portion of the aid earmarked for Jordan is in reality spent internally within the EU on European personnel, corporates and administrative costs.

Looking at aid as a foreign policy tool displays how it is employed to foster and align structural transformation abroad within short- and long-term EU objectives. Whereas security and migration issues dominate the short-term priorities, long-term objectives tend to focus on structural neoliberal governance. Holden (2016: 4) argues that for EU aid policy, “objectives go beyond ‘development’ to include reform and integration”. For reasons of history, identity, ideology and security, integration is entirely foreclosed for the MENA region, leaving economic and governance reforms as the only options. Structural foreign policy gives relative fixture to EU external priorities; however, contingent conditions force the EU to alter the degree of attention and order of these priorities. For example, following the Arab revolts and its fallout, stabilisation and security were prioritised as reflected in the second ENP revision. In 2016, the EU’s Global Strategy (EUGS) reinforced this shift and embraced a more pronounced pragmatic approach, realigning aid and development policy with EU strategic priorities centred on stabilisation, security, migration and trade (EUGS, 2016). Accordingly, the “Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace” (IcSP), created in 2014, was expanded into a new funding line from the aid budget to military actors to, “deliver development activities and security for development activities” (European Commission, 2017a: 1). More importantly, the second ENP revision introduced resilience-building into EU development policy towards the MENA region and beyond. Considering the expanding literature on resilience in EU policy, the remainder of this section serves to feature the links between resilience-thinking and aid policy, rather than presenting an exhaustive analysis.

The arrival of resilience-thinking to EU foreign policy has directly influenced aid policy that started to emphasise resilience-building as a developmental goal. The EU’s interest in resilience began with a couple of projects in the Horn of Africa (SHARE project) and Western Africa (Sahel AGIR) within the framework of crises management (European Commission, 2012). While the second ENP revision added resilience into EU foreign policy towards the MENA countries, the 2016 EU Global Strategy and subsequent policy frameworks and instruments turned resilience into a “strategic” foreign policy priority (EUGS, 2016; European Commission, 2017b). Thus, “strengthening the resilience of individuals and communities is a priority for the EU in its humanitarian and development cooperation” (European Commission, 2017b).

Although resilience is in flux in EU policies and lacks a stable definition (Badarin and Schumacher, 2020), it is usually defined as “the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, adapt and quickly recover from stresses and shocks” (European Commission, 2012). Resilience itself, when spoken of in the context of the OECD conception of fragility, is conceptualised as a strategy of coping with crises situations (Neocleous, 2013). Resilience is imbricated with the security–development nexus to tackle fragile and vulnerable situations (Evans and Reid, 2014) to prevent their spillover and ensure that countries will not lag behind on the implementation of 2030 SDGs (European Commission, 2017a). Since 2016, the EU has placed resilience at the centre of its external development policy. According to the EUGS it is pursuing a “resilient society featuring democracy, trust in institutions, and sustainable development [that] lies at the heart of a resilient state” (EUGS, 2016: 24).

However in resilience-thinking, development rests on different ontological bases than just modernisation and economic catch-up growth (Duffield, 2010, 2013). Resilience is premised on the ontological view that presents the world as a complex, unpredictable and controllable place; hence, people must learn to cope and adapt to live with complexity and risk. This points to development as an enterprise for self-reliance and self-transformation through reflexive learning, and of acquiring new approaches to survive and cope with the ontologically contingent conditions (Evans and Reid, 2014; Joseph, 2018). This development is usually promoted through structural adjustment programmes intended by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to force neoliberal economic (Walker and Cooper, 2011) and governance reforms (Joseph, 2018). Furthermore, self-reliance development depends on the “constant rediscovery” of the poor, fragile, unstable and undeveloped whose agency is regarded as “incomplete or lacking the necessary requirements of life” (Duffield, 2010: 61). This constant rediscovery of the “Other” is essential for EU identity and foreign policy in general, and aid in particular, for it provides the dividing line between developed and developing, the independent and dependent, the giving and receiving. Resilience meanwhile seems to have been repurposed by the EU and IFIs it works with as a means to further pursue an explicitly neoliberal development agenda, and as a way of managing global financial crises, which may be tied to the neo/liberal reform agenda itself (Neocleous, 2013).

The following two examples provide empirical insights into development aid-resilience politics. An empirical example is the EU (IcSP-funded, €6 million) project for “Reinforcing Jordan’s Capabilities at the Eastern Borders” where a logistic hub was constructed at Ruwaidshid, near the Jordan–Iraq border, as a “forward base providing for critical logistical support to the Jordanian Armed Forces, as well as Jordanian law enforcement and security agencies” (European Commission, 2019). The project is classified as aid and funded from the aid budget to Jordan. The EU contracted a French company, Expertise France, to execute the project and provided “training”. The project aims to “enhance” the Jordanian “capability to respond to any threats. . . [that are] likely to hamper Jordan’s security (terrorist infiltration, weapon and drug smuggling)”. This includes “improving the coordination and sustainability of civil-military operations” and the “provision of a multi-agency logistical hub” to serve as “a forward base providing critical logistical support to the Jordan Armed Forces” and other security agencies. The second example is a programme “Strengthening resilience to violent extremism in Jordan” development project that ran 2016–2018. The project is divided into three sub-projects which focus on security issues and offer “assistance” to security agents, “vulnerable youth and communities” and the “radicalised” to enable them to tackle security threats locally.

The selected examples demonstrate how resilience-building has become part of aid and development. In terms of focus and activities, security concerns and the security sector and its actors are directly involved. Here, aid is deployed to serve the objective of governmentality in resilience-building by “improving”, “assisting” and “training” the capability of the Jordanian security sector to tackle threats locally. Besides a gap between committed and disbursed funding, the aid projects are often carried out by European agencies and companies, reducing the actual amount of aid that reaches the targeted society. This resilience-development conjunction is more concerned with the micro-level, putting singular units (individuals, households, communities) at the centre of attention while promoting small scale and fragmented projects. This aligns neatly with neoliberal austerity measures in many European countries since the 2008 financial crisis and the gap between pledged and disbursed funds. Resilience-development is more concerned with technical support, inculcation of skills and ways of thinking.

Meanwhile, the EU had seemingly become exhausted by the logic of security, repurposing it within resilience in the cyclical process repositioning old concepts with modern buzzwords (Neocleous, 2013).

Development aid, security and fortress Europe

A characteristic of EU development aid which stands out is the dichotomy between its pursuit of market neo/liberal reforms and a security agenda that seemingly undermines them. This is quite noticeable in the EU's development aid relationship with MENA. Security and migration concerns may, in fact, be the major driving interest in EU foreign policy towards the MENA region. Drawing on the "Fortress Europe" thesis, the European craving to maintain open borders and security internally has led to a range of policies to build hermetic external borders while exporting EU systems to the countries beyond these borders in order to hinder unwanted subjects (especially migrants) and external threats from reaching Europe (Carr, 2016).

Security concerns have also been deeply intertwined with global development aid since the 9/11 attacks. This saw a particular concern grow for what have been termed "fragile" states in danger of failure through a breakdown in governance structures (OECD, 2011). This has led to instances of development spending being diverted to security, as with technical assistance for antiterrorism labelled as development spending (Hurt, 2010). The preceding examples of resilience-building in Jordan are cases in point. Consider also EU development funding spent in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) after the Second Intifada (2000–2006) to build the PA security services and sustain the unelected Palestinian Authority (PA) (Tartir, 2017; Wildeman, 2018). The PA and its security forces have also cooperated with Israel, satisfying the latter's security concerns and reducing its spending (Monaghan, 2016). This has made maintaining control over and diverting resources to settlement building much more realisable (Hever, 2010). Preventing the PA from collapsing also pre-empts local and regional unrest and outward migration.

The EU commitment to Fortress Europe intensified in 2015 when the Syrian refugee crisis saw hundreds of thousands of people take incredible risks fleeing their homes to foreign countries. As a result, that year European governments became more concerned with addressing migrant arrivals than any other issue (Fine et al., 2019). By 2017, around one million of nearly 13 million Syrian refugees and internally displaced peoples arrived in Europe (Connor, 2018). Though by 2019 the migration surge had passed and became only one among several pressing issues for EU voters, the panic of 2015 left a lasting impact on European leaders cognisant of how politically explosive migration can be. For this reason, they became particularly interested in the causes of outward migration, ways to stabilise states in the MENA, establishing "hot-spots", and strengthening EU external borders to help deter further migration. In such a case, security and migration became the underlying basis for development spending.

Libya is on the "front line" of Fortress Europe as one of the shortest transit points from Africa to Europe. Discussions on migration between Italy and Libya began in the 1990s, when Libya was considered a pariah state under sanctions by much of the West. By 2000 an urgent desire developed within the EU to slow-down growing migration, which led to cooperation between the EU and Libya (Hamood, 2008). Italy in particular set the tone for EU policy, adopting a two-pronged approach by, "working to increase cooperation with Libya and its capacity to control its borders and return undocumented migrants" (Hamood, 2008: 32). In the early 2000s the EU and Italy seemed to be moving towards agreements on migration faster than sanctions were being lifted from Libya. The EU also seemed to find it challenging to balance respect for human rights with halting migration. Even after the Libyan state broke down following the 2011 NATO-led campaign against the Gaddafi regime, prior migration policy intensified

against people fleeing their homes for reasons such as economic crises, climate change and civil conflict/war. The European concern with limiting migration meanwhile led increasing amounts of their development funding to be diverted towards border security, as with the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) (Fine et al., 2019), in a funding pattern that lacks both transparency and risks compatibility with EU laws (Fine et al., 2019).

These policies extend as far as preventing migration in sub-Saharan Africa. There, EU migration policy undermines EU development programming, such as its Sahel Regional Action Plan 2015–2020, which calls for development through the facilitation of legal migration (Fine et al., 2019). It also runs contrary to Africans' own recognition of the value of migration for trade, embodied in the idea behind the African Union Passport designed to replace national passports across 55 countries and eliminate the need for visas. The EU approach to migration is expressed with cruelty in Libya. Using the Mediterranean Sea as a natural barrier, southern Member States like Italy and Malta have curtailed search and rescue operations by nongovernmental groups, making the sea deadlier to cross. Those governments contend that their actions aim to deter people from making the journey, even though this involves leaving people to drown to discourage others from trying to enter Europe. This saw the death rate increase from 3.2% in 2018 to 5.2% in 2019 (DW, 2019). Meanwhile, research suggests these actions are ineffective at discouraging people who are already willing to take enormous risks in part because of horrific conditions at home. The EU is funding the Libyan coast guard to keep migrants out of Europe and detain them in a now failed state, with hundreds of thousands trapped at the mercy of Libyan authorities, militias, armed groups and smugglers often working together for financial gain. Tens of thousands are kept indefinitely in overcrowded detention centres and subjected to systematic abuse (Libya, 2017). This reflects the EU strategy over the past decade of outsourcing immigration control to countries around its borders like Libya and Turkey, regardless of their human rights record, to deter potential migrants under the guise of development funding.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the purpose and nature of the EU development aid policy in the MENA region, first tracing its historical foundations to imperialism and colonialism. As military forces and direct colonialism became unsustainable in post–World War II international politics, the EU used aid as a foreign policy device to maintain its influence in the Global South. EU policies and actors involved in aid also evolved alongside the EU's internal and institutional development, and with contingent regional events like the 2011 Arab revolts. A discernible pattern of EU aid policy discourse is its representation through liberal concepts. Locating aid in EU structural foreign policy demonstrates how it is deployed to serve short-term priorities and long-term objectives, seeking reforms in the EU's preferred style of governance. Furthermore, aid serves the ideational understanding of the EU and the "Other", where an asymmetrical relationship is coded.

In response to the Arab revolts, the EU adopted stabilisation and resilience-building as a foreign policy priority towards MENA countries. Hence, resilience-building projects are appended to development aid. Since resilience is premised on a rationale that diverges from modernisation, the nature of development work has changed. Resilience imbricates the security-development nexus and shifts the burden of tackling security challenges onto the local level. As the empirical examples demonstrate, current resilience projects are most concerned with the provision of technical support, assistance, training and guidance to enable local subjects to address security challenges and threats, thus pre-empting their spill over into Europe. Yet, even the

resilience–development axis can be undermined by EU concerns about migration. There the EU’s immediate short-term aim to reinforce “Fortress Europe” by preventing arrivals from the MENA region takes precedence over development and human rights, often undermining both.

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