GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE EU’s COLLECTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST – BETWEEN NATIONAL PROJECTION AND EU ADAPTATION

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Abstract: The dynamic development of European foreign policy cooperation over the last decades has changed the context in which national foreign policies of EU Member States are made. Using the Europeanization concept as analytical framework, this paper examines the interaction of Germany’s national policy with Europe’s collective foreign policy in a central policy area – the conflict in the Middle East. It argues that Germany’s Middle East policy evolved in close interaction with Europe’s common foreign policy. Germany has relied on EPC/CFSP as a useful framework to pursue national objectives and foreign policy priorities more effectively. What is more, four decades of European foreign policy cooperation toward the Middle East conflict also had an important impact on the substance and practices of Germany’s national foreign policy. Due to its involvement in the EC/EU, the traditionally pro Israeli Germany has adopted more balanced positions on the conflict and was encouraged to play a more active part in conflict resolution in the framework of an increasingly ambitious EU foreign policy.
Introduction

There are few policy areas where the interaction of German national policy with collective European foreign policy has been as profound and longstanding as conflict resolution in the Middle East. Its special historic relationship with Israel as well as broader interests connected to the stability of the larger Middle East region has always kept the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours high on Germany’s foreign policy agenda. The Middle East conflict has also been among the first international issues addressed collectively by the Europeans in the framework of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) - the forerunner of today’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) – established in 1970. Since then, the EC/EU has with increasing clarity and consistency defined common positions on a conflict settlement through its declaratory diplomacy. In the 1990s, the development of the CFSP and its defence component, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), further enabled the Union to progressively take on new responsibilities in areas such as Palestinian (civil) security sector reform and border monitoring.

Germany, as a founding Member State of the EU, is one of the long term participants in European foreign policymaking and closely coordinates its national involvement in Middle East peacemaking with the EU. Its sustained involvement in the EC/EU raises important questions about the interplay between national and European foreign policy. Using the Europeanization concept as analytical framework, this paper examines continuity and change in Germany’s national foreign policy in the context of Europe’s collective policy in the Middle East. Two main research questions will be addressed: (a) to what extend has Germany been able to shape Europe’s common Middle East policy, up-loading its national preferences to the European level; and (b) how did nearly four decades of European foreign policymaking toward the Middle East impact on Germany’s national foreign policy? It is argued that for Germany, European foreign policy cooperation has served as an important framework to pursue national objectives and foreign policy priorities in the Middle East. Taking advantage of the so-called ‘shield effect’ of Europe’s common foreign policy, the traditionally pro-Israeli Germany has used the EPC in the 1970s and 80s to seek rapprochement with the Arab world. Since the second half of the 1990s, the reunited and more ambitious Germany has progressively stepped up its engagement in Middle East peace-making, again relying on the shield effect and enhanced leverage of European foreign policy cooperation. Still, this paper also shows that sustained European foreign policy cooperation toward the Middle East
conflict also left a notable imprint on the substance and practices of Germany’s national foreign policy.

The Europeanization of National Foreign Policy
Much has been written about the dynamic institutional development of European foreign policy cooperation over the last decades (Smith 2004). The European Political Cooperation (EPC) was established in 1970 primarily to serve as a forum for the coordination of Member States’ national policy stances, with the aim to formulate common positions in areas of mutual interest. With the 1993 Maastricht Treaty, the CFSP superseded the EPC, and in subsequent years Europeans have further deepened their cooperation in foreign policymaking. In 1999, the ESDP was added to the CFSP to strengthen the EU’s external ability to act, particularly in the areas of conflict resolution and crisis management. And more recently, the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in December 2009, introduced significant institutional changes, including the creation of a permanent Presidency, an External Action Service, a new High Representative for Foreign Affairs (who simultaneously double-hats as Vice-President of the Commission) and legal personality of the EU as an international actor (Whitman 2008).

While the EU progressively strengthened its joint action capabilities in the foreign policy realm, decision making has remained largely subject to intergovernmental consensus. Although the Lisbon Treaty places greater obligations on the Member States to ensure consultation on any policies that may be pursued and “affect the Union’s interests” (Art. 32, consolidated version of the TEU), no provisions have been established for sanctioning non-compliance. A central challenge to European foreign policymaking thus remains to formulate common policies and pursue joint objectives in an area where the Member States have retained central decision-making competences. This is particularly true for the Middle East, where the persistence of differences in the foreign policy traditions and national interests of the Member States has been identified as a central hurdle for a more coherent and effective European foreign policy (Allen/Pijpers 1984; Dosenrode/Stubkjaer 2002; Musu 2003).

Emphasizing the prominent role played by particularly the larger Member States in European foreign policy cooperation, dominant approaches from the international relations discipline, most importantly the realist and liberal intergovernmentalist school, treat European foreign policymaking essentially as an instance of inter-state cooperation (see Bull 1983; Eliassen 1998; Hoffmann 2000). In this view, European foreign policy is exclusively determined by the initial constellations of interests among national governments. However, over the last
decade there has been a growing literature on the Europeanization of national foreign policies (Torreblanca 2001; Vaquer i Fanes 2001; Miskimmon/Paterson 2003; Miskimmon 2007; Major 2005; Wong 2005, 2006; Gross 2007).

An important innovation of Europeanization research is that it (also) looks at the impact of European foreign policy cooperation on the formulation and practices of national foreign policy. In this view, European integration has altered the context in which European policies are constructed and national preferences are defined in important ways. Several observers have noted the emergence of an advanced form of transgovernmentalism within the EU that has helped to alleviate national differences. For the past 50 years, the vast majority of EU diplomats have been “involved in shaping the EU’s foreign policy or the EU itself” (Mérand 2008: 14) and national policy-makers frequently interact in the committees and working groups that underpin the institutional infrastructure of the CFSP. To understand the national foreign policies of individual EU Member States, it is thus increasingly important to appreciate the specific European foreign policy environment from which they evolve. The Middle East conflict is a very interesting foreign policy issue in this regard, as it has been one of the most widely debated international issues on the European foreign policy agenda and “is discussed at all levels of the EU foreign policy mechanism” (Musu 2003: 45).

Europeanization as a ‘top-down’ process is concerned with how ideas and directives emanating from transgovernmental EU networks and supranational EU actors impact on domestic politics and policy. Two main pathways have been identified, through which participation in the EU can lead to domestic foreign policy modification. The first pathway is ‘national adaptation’, that is, a process “where the state adapts and makes adjustments in its domestic politics and policy in compliance with the constraints and requirements of European institutions” (Wong 2006: 8). The EU has developed a unique decision-making culture and foreign policymaking in Brussels-centred institutions is subject to common standards of behaviour (Tonra 2001; Smith 2001, 2004), including a practice of sharing information and seeking consensus as well as on an automatic ‘reflex of coordination’ (Glarbo 1999; Smith 1998; Wessels/Weiler 1988). EU foreign policymaking is, furthermore, guided by the principle to adhere to the Union’s acquis politique, i.e. previous EU policy positions and actions, as well as by common foreign policy norms and values including the promotion of peace, liberty and democracy.
In the realm of EU foreign policy, where no ‘hard’ compliance mechanisms have been established, conformity with common norms and values are often achieved through ‘soft’ mechanisms, such as peer pressure and ostracism.¹ Scholars such as Michael E. Smith (2004) and Ben Tonra (2001) have taken the impact of EU-institutions on Member States a step further, describing a second path for top down foreign policy Europeanization. Drawing on social constructivist assumptions, European institutions are understood to have the ability to transform the properties of actors, i.e. their beliefs, values and identities. Sustained interactions and deliberations of national representatives in EU foreign policy institutions facilitate processes of joint learning and elite socialization, and ultimately lead to the internalization of joint understandings of foreign policy problems and a streamlining of national preferences and political discourses.²

A number of important indicators of top down Europeanization of national foreign policy have been identified (Smith 2000; Gross 2009). One could expect some of the following changes as a result of ‘top-down’ Europeanization of Germany's national foreign policy: an increasing willingness to work through the EU foreign policy framework and to coordinate national initiatives within the EU; a relaxation of national positions to facilitate the development of common European positions and policies; an increasing salience of the EU agenda; as well as a growing tendency to define positions related to the Middle East peace process in European rather than national terms. It is important to bear in mind, however, that national foreign policy is subject to numerous influences operating at the international, the EU and the domestic levels. The impact of top-down Europeanization on Germany's Middle East policy thus needs to be checked against other important events, e.g. developments in the international context (and in the conflict itself); changes in national governments; and pressures from other international actors (e.g. from the parties the conflict, the US, Arab States).

The second major dimension of Europeanization is commonly referred to as ‘bottom up’ approach. The Europeanization literature identifies important incentives for EU Member States

¹ For instance, EU Member States that take foreign policy actions unilaterally and violate common standards of behaviour are usually criticised as defectors and face the risk of being isolated in EU level discussions (Smith 2004: 123).

² From this perspective, national foreign policymakers do not comply with EU objectives and values because they feel pressured to do so, but rather because they have internalized common EU objectives and beliefs and consider them to be appropriate standards of behaviour. In this view, European foreign policy cooperation encourages a continuous narrowing down of national differences, and Member States are thus expected to increasingly define their foreign policy interests and objectives in common European terms.
to project their foreign policy interests and preferences onto the European stage. Europe’s common foreign policy is a powerful instrument that allows Member States to pursue their national interests more effectively. Through the pooling of joint resources, European foreign policy cooperation produces a ‘politics of scale effect’ (Ginsberg 1989), which increases the influence and leverage of EU governments in world affairs. The bottom-up projection of national preferences is particularly attractive when Member States pursue goals they cannot attain through unilateral action. Furthermore, Member States can use Europe’s common foreign policy to externalize national foreign policy problems to the EU level – as demonstrated by Greece in the case of the resolution of its Aegean dispute with Turkey (Economides 2005).

European foreign policy, moreover, allows Member States to pursue national objectives at lower costs and with fewer risks. Member States can use the ‘shield effect’ (Tonra 2000) offered by European foreign policy cooperation to reduce the costs of pursuing a controversial policy, such as political or economic sanctions towards a third country. Cooperation in this regard creates opportunities for national executives to better justify policy ideas by making reference to the need to support a common European policy, as well as to deflect international pressure by presenting a common European front.

**Germany’s National Foreign Policy and EU Conflict Resolution in the Middle East**

Germany’s policy toward the Middle East conflict has evolved in close interaction with Europe’s common foreign policy. Its culture of national restraint (Banchoff 1999; Katzenstein 1997) and the particular historic sensitivity of its relations with Israel made it difficult for Germany to assume a prominent national role in Middle East peacemaking. Europe’s common foreign policy – which is often regarded by Germany’s political elite as a more legitimate model of foreign policymaking than the nation state – served in important ways as a means to counteract important limitations in Germany’s national foreign policy. While the ‘shield effect’ and increased international leverage offered by EPC/CFSP clearly increased Germany’s scope for action in the Middle East, European foreign policy cooperation also confronted Germany with new expectations and challenges. As will be shown, European foreign policy cooperation has left its imprint on Germany’s national foreign policy in important ways, leading to the adaptation of national positions and policy preferences to common European policies and positions.
The Evolutions of Germany’s National Foreign Policy Approach and the first two Decades of EC conflict resolution in the Middle East

German foreign policymakers frequently emphasise that the Federal Republic’s special historic relationship with Israel is the single most important impetus behind Germany’s support for Middle East peace. The roots of its Israel policy date back to Germany’s first Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who believed that Germany’s willingness to atone for the crimes of the Third Reich and its efforts to develop ties with Israel were crucial to the international legitimacy of the new German state, as well as a moral obligation. While important objectives of Realpolitik that initially shaped Germany’s policy toward Israel – e.g. becoming an accepted member of the international community and regaining full sovereignty – were achieved with German reunification, the moral components of Germany’s policy toward Israel have nevertheless remained intact. Safeguarding Israel’s security and right to exist is today widely considered by Germany’s political elite as a raison d’etat (Weingardt 2005). And a complex web of political, economic and cultural bonds has evolved between Germany and Israel that underpins and sustains the unique bilateral relationship (Gardner Feldmann 2002).

In the early 1970s, Chancellor Willy Brandt introduced a novel policy approach that is frequently described as ‘policy of even-handedness’ (Fink 2009). In an attempt to better align its special relations with Israel with other regional priorities – most importantly at that time improving relations with energy-rich Middle Eastern countries – Germany aimed at a more balanced rhetoric toward the Arab-Israeli conflict along with financial aid to the region. This was important, as the reliance of the expanding German economy on the Arab world had increased substantially. As Udo Steinbach {Steinbach, 1984 #209@94} noted: “(t)here can be not the slightest doubt that the extraordinary expansion of ties, especially in respect of oil, trade and to an increasing extent finance (loans and investments by Arab oil producers), has let to a relationship of dependence.” Security became another important German concern. In the 1970s, extremists who were directly involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict – such as those belonging to the Palestinian terrorist group Black September – carried out a series of attacks on German and European soil. And it became increasingly apparent to Germany and other EC Member States that the Arab-Israeli conflict also had implications for European security.

The nascent European foreign policy framework became a crucial element of Germany’s policy of even-handedness, as it was easier for German governments to address Arab
concerns and support Palestinian rights under the cover of the EU. As noted by Ilan Greilsammer and Joseph Weiler, the EPC allowed the Member States to “shift the forum of foreign policymaking outside the national capitals” and to use Europe’s common foreign policy “as a justification for a posture which might not have been possible for a government to adopt independently at home (Greilsammer/Weiler 1984: 135)”. In 1971, Germany had opposed the publication of the EC’s first position paper on the Middle East conflict, the so-called Schuman plan. Yet, under the impression of the energy crisis, during which EC Member States were subject to selective embargo measures by oil producing Arab states, Germany supported the EC’s first major foreign policy declaration on the Middle East conflict that was issued in November 1973. Other key foreign policy statements followed with the London declaration (1977) and the Venice declaration (1980). Important principles of the Middle East peace process launched in the 1990s, such as the Palestinian right to self determination or the association of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) with a peace settlement, were established through these European declarations already by the early 1980s.

In fact, observers have noted that the fact that the EC had expressed these principles at an early stage and was willing to go beyond positions put forth in relevant UN resolutions was the most significant contributions of its Middle East policy, as it made it easier for other actors (most importantly Israel and the US) to engage in direct contact with the PLO and to eventually support a two-state solution (see Aoun, 2003 #498).

While the ‘shield effect’ offered by the EPC was a useful instrument for Germany to pursue its policy of even-handedness, European foreign policy cooperation also confronted Germany with new expectations and adaptation pressures. The position of France, the main driver of the EC’s Middle East policy in the 1970s and 1980s, and of other pro-Arab Member States often diverged considerably from Germany’s national stance. Even though its policy of ‘even handedness’ demanded from Germany to show greater understanding of Arab concerns and to seek a greater engagement with the Arab world, it continued to be one of Israel’s staunchest allies. The special German-Israeli relationship has traditionally translated into a reluctance of German foreign policymakers to openly criticise Israel’s policies and a tendency to support and defend Israeli positions in international institutions and in the EC/EU. According to diplomats involved in European foreign policy negotiations, Germany traditionally sought to soften the tone of passages in European declarations that it considered overly critical of Israel and tried to ensure that EU declarations remained ‘balanced’.³

³ Interview of the author with a German diplomat working at the Middle East desk at Germany’s Permanent
Yet, at the same time Germany’s involvement in the EPC meant that it had to take the viewpoints of its European partners seriously and adopt policies and positions that converged with the EC as a whole. Elaborating on the EC’s statement of November 1973, German Chancellor Willy Brandt stated that considering partners’ views and finding compromise was the price of attaining the desired unity of Europe (see Lavy 1996: 185). Germany’s support for the EC’s declaratory policy toward the Middle East conflict in the 1970s and 80s was thus more than an opportunistic reaction to the threat of Arab economic sanctions - it was also about making steps toward greater political unity. Indeed, European expectations and pressure for the coordination of national positions on the Middle East conflict were significant. As pointed out by an EPC participant, the rhythm of EPC-meetings imposed “a sometimes artificial discipline on the EPC process along with the need to take positions”, and by the late 1970s it had become “difficult for foreign ministers to meet in political cooperation without acknowledging that the Arab-Israeli conflict was under consideration” (Tomkys 1987: 433).

From Payer to Player - Germany and EU Conflict Resolution since the Launch of the Middle East Peace Process

The 1990s was an era of great hopes that the establishment of a peaceful and more democratic order in the Middle East was now feasible. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the bipolar international system that had rendered the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict even more difficult had come to an end. In the Middle East region itself, a broad US-led coalition, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt, had freed Kuwait after the invasion by Iraq in spring 1991, resulting in the First Gulf War, and there was considerable hope in Western capitals that the cooperation established with Arab states during the War would carry over into post-war diplomacy.

In October 1991, US diplomats achieved a major success by bringing the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict together at an historic conference in Madrid that marked the launch of the Middle East peace process. It is fair to say that the design of the Madrid peace process – which aimed at a comprehensive settlement of the conflict involving all parties, including a Palestinian delegation – had more in common with traditional European ideas about conflict resolution in the Middle East than previous US initiatives. Still, Europe was included in the Madrid conference only as an observer alongside the Gulf Cooperation Council and the UN,
but not as a full participant. The US leadership in the political process also continued after Israel and the PLO had signed the Oslo Accords in 1993, which paved the way for direct talks between Israel and PLO representatives.

Following the launch of the Middle East peace process, Germany supported US leadership in the diplomatic negotiations and contributed to the peace process primarily financially. Germany’s culture of national restraint and the sensitive nature of its relations with Israel functioned as powerful psychological constraints with respect to its Middle East diplomacy. During the early 1990s, then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl stated on several visits to the region that Germany would not engage in mediatory activities between the parties.\(^4\) Rather than getting involved in the political process, Germany favoured an EC/EU role that concentrated primarily on economic and development aid.\(^5\) The government led by Gerhard Schröder, who succeeded Helmut Kohl in 1998, initially adopted a similar stance.\(^6\) In a parliamentary speech in November 1998, Schröder emphasized that the role of third-party mediator in the Middle East peace process belonged to the US and international organisations. Instead of taking on a political role, Schröder suggested that Europeans could best contribute to the peace process through “pointed economic aid, opening of regional markets and participation in the construction of infrastructure.”\(^7\)

The policy area where German national projection has been most profound was the EU’s economic relations with the parties to the conflict. Germany’s special relationship with Israel, marked by close cooperation and a high level of mutual trust and confidence, was also perceived by German policymakers as a model for EU-Israeli relations. The German government was instrumental in bringing about the EU’s 1994 Essen Declaration, which was negotiated under the German EU presidency and granted Israel a ‘special status’ in its relations with the EU. Germany moreover played a critical role in the conclusion of the 1995 EU-Israeli Association Agreement and functioned as Israel’s chief advocate regarding


\(^{6}\) From a German perspective, focusing on economic peacemaking not only meant engaging in areas where the EU was particularly experienced and unified, it was also a strategy to limit potential disagreement with Washington and Tel Aviv over Europe’s involvement. While Israel and the US had traditionally been sceptical about political engagement of the EU, they both appreciated Europe’s financial commitment and expertise in institution building and development cooperation.

preferential trade and access to research and technology programs in the EU. At the same time, German governments have generally rejected to make the development of EU-Israeli economic relations conditional on good Israeli conduct in the peace process. According to German diplomats, close cooperation between Israel and the EU is an important objective that German governments generally pursue independently from efforts associated with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Committed to its policy of even-handedness, Germany also supported close cooperation between the EU and the PA. Following the launch of the Oslo Process, Germany became the single largest European donor to the Palestinians. In the period 1992-2006, Germany invested more than 500 million dollar in the development of the Palestinian economy and infrastructure and the establishment of PA institutions. In 1994, Germany was moreover the first EU country to open a representative office in the Palestinian territories, which was a significant symbolic step for the PA’s international recognition. The inclusion of the PA in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995 and the signing of the 1997 EU Interim Association Agreement with the PA testified to the interest of Germany and its European partners in strong ties with the PA. Germany’s substantial financial contribution to the Middle East peace process furthermore reflected Berlin’s growing weariness of new security challenges linked to instabilities of the broader Middle East region, such as illegal migration and organized crime (Perthes 2002; Jünemann 2005). EU integration and particularly the establishment of the Schengen area in the 1990s, which created a single external frontier of the Schengen countries at the waters of the Mediterranean, augmented Germany’s exposure to these soft security risks.

However, in the second half of the 1990s, Germany began to reassess its role in Middle East peacemaking. In a noteworthy change of its previous policy, Germany became more supportive of a stronger political engagement of the EU in the peace process and increasingly sought to initiate common European policies and to influence the direction of EU diplomacy. Germany’s growing political engagement was conducted primarily through the European foreign policy framework, and Berlin closely coordinated its diplomatic activities with the EU. In spring 1999, German and EU representatives intervened diplomatically to resolve a

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8 In 1996, Israel became the first non-EU country to be associated with the EU framework for research and development.
9 This assessment was made during interviews by the author of diplomats based in the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin and in Germany’s Permanent Representation in Brussels conducted in May 2006.
severe diplomatic crisis that had emerged over President Yasser Arafat’s announcement to unilateral proclaim a Palestinian state. Under the German EU presidency, the Union issued its Berlin Declaration that for the first time mentioned the EU’s readiness to recognize a Palestinian state and helped persuading Arafat to refrain from acting unilaterally on the issue of Palestinian statehood, which most likely would have detailed the Oslo peace process.

When violence between Israel and the Palestinians intensified after the outbreak of the second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000, Germany once more engaged diplomatically to prevent the peace process from disintegrating (Gardner Feldmann 2002). While the US had disengaged from conflict mediation during the first years of the administration of President George W. Bush, Germany and its European partners sought to fill the void. The institutional modifications of Europe’s common foreign policy in the 1990s, such as the establishment of the post of a High Representative for the CFSP, strengthened the Union’s capacity and ambitions to operate on the international stage (see Soetendorp 2002). And Germany was actively encouraged by its European partners to use its good relations with the parties to the conflict to facilitate European mediation efforts. Against this background, then-German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer made several visits to the region to mediate between the two parties, during which he maintained close contact with EU officials.10

Berlin also took on a central role in the political process that led to the development of the ‘Roadmap’ peace initiative. In April 2002, Fischer introduced a policy proposal that became known as ‘Fischer idea paper’, which envisaged an early declaration of a Palestinian state and outlined the steps necessary to reach this objective. From the outset, German foreign policymakers aimed to establish a common European initiative and coordinated their activities with key Member States such as France as well as with the EU presidency.11 According to the German foreign ministry, Fischer’s idea paper was designed as a European initiative that intended to establish a multilateral approach for Middle East peacemaking (Overhaus 2002: 6). The discussion of Foreign Minister Fischer’s ideas among European foreign policymakers gained additional momentum shortly after President George W. Bush’s key speech of 24 June 2002, in which the US president outlined his vision for a two-state solution to settle the

10 See “Fischer schlüpft in die Rolle von Europas Außenminister”, Financial Times Deutschland, 18 October 2001, p.15.
conflict. Subsequently, Germany worked in close cooperation with the Danish EU presidency to put together a European peace initiative that would serve as the basis for an internationally-sponsored peace plan. On 30/31 August, the Danish presidency invited EU foreign ministers to an informal meeting in Helsingør, Denmark where they agreed on a draft for a European peace imitative. The European initiative was then discussed at a meeting of the so-called Middle East Quartet (the US, Russia, the UN and the EU) on 17 September 2002 and functioned as an important contribution to the Roadmap plan that was established by the Quartet in Washington in December 2002.

Germany’s growing aspiration to play an active role in the EU’s Middle East policy also manifested itself at the operational level. In 2005, Germany supported both the establishment of the European Police Mission (EUPOL COPPS) in the Palestinian territories and the EU Border Assistance Mission (EU BAM) at the Rafah checkpoint between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. According to an EU official, Germany was one of the first countries to offer substantial financial support as well as human resources to the EU BAM mission in Rafah. This was an important step to allow for a timely establishment of the EU missions, particularly due to the fact that Member States carry the full costs of their individual contributions. After the launch of the EU BAM Rafah mission, Germany contributed three policemen and two tax officials to the operation. Germany also contributed financially and with personnel to the EU POL COPPS mission, which was designed to assist international efforts to reform the Palestinian security sector. In a cabinet decision in November 2005, the German government reached an agreement to send up to ten policemen to participate in the EU POL COPPS mission, which initially included a total of 30 international staff and was later increased to 41.

Under the grand coalition government of Chancellor Angela Merkel, which came to power in November 2005, Germany continued to play an active role in Europe’s policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Like the government of her predecessor Gerhard Schröder,
Chancellor Merkel supported a European foreign policy approach that covered the political as well as economic aspects of peacemaking. From the outset, Merkel’s grand coalition government faced considerable challenges in the Middle East. In January 2006, the victory of the Islamist Hamas movement at the Palestinian legislative elections took the international community by surprise. Only half a year later, a war erupted between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Germany’s substantial contribution to the enlarged UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), established after the war, once more underlined Germany’s growing role in Middle East peacemaking. Although conflict management in Lebanon was conducted through an enhanced UN mission rather than the ESDP framework, it was – from a German perspective – of historic significance as German troops were operating in this extremely sensitive political environment for the first time.

When Germany took over the EU presidency in the first half of 2007, the German government established progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process one of its key objectives.\(^{16}\) In early January 2007, Chancellor Merkel visited Washington to discuss the possibilities of reenergizing international cooperation vis-à-vis the peace process. After having focused primarily on Iraq, where American-led efforts to replace the regime of Saddam Hussein with a stable democracy had been met with considerable difficulties, President Bush demonstrated a growing interest in reengaging in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. As a result, Chancellor Merkel was able to reach an agreement with the US to re-activate cooperation among the Middle East Quartet, which had been inactive for most of the year 2006.\(^{17}\)

In addition, Germany advocated enhanced coordination between the Quartet and representatives of moderate Arab countries, including Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. A key German objective was to build upon the Arab peace initiative of 2002, which the Arab League had renewed in March 2007.\(^{18}\) A meeting between the Quartet and Arab league representatives took place in the Egyptian city Sharm el Sheikh in May 2007.

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Islamist Hamas movement in the Palestinian legislative elections took the international community by surprise, and in summer 2006 a war erupted in Lebanon between Hezbollah and Israel.


\(^{17}\) The Middle East Quartet convened five times at the level of ‘principals’ in the period between January and July 2007 and also maintained close contact at the working level.

\(^{18}\) The Arab Peace Initiative was first proposed by Saudi Arabia at the Beirut summit of the Arab League in 2002 and was re-endorsed by the Arab League at the Riyadh Summit in 2007. The Arab initiative calls for peace with Israel and a normalization of Arab-Israeli relations in return for Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian territories (including East Jerusalem) and a just settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194.
during which the participants stated their interest in proposing a follow-up to the 2002 peace initiative. Arab league representatives were also invited to attend the meeting of the EU’s General Affairs and External Relations Council (GARC) that was held the same month. At the same time, the German EU presidency aimed at close diplomatic cooperation between the EU and Israel, demonstrating its interest in an inclusive and balanced approach to the peace process. Israeli Foreign Minister Zipi Livni was also invited to a GARC meeting in June 2007. The fact that Israel, in contrast to its stance in 2002, responded generally favourably to the Arab peace offer in 2007 can also be attributed to the political efforts of the German EU presidency and the considerable level of trust that developed between Berlin and Tel Aviv during that time.19

In the run-up to the US-sponsored Annapolis Conference of November 2007, Germany once again acted as a policy initiator in the EU. Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier (2005-2009) put forth a draft for a ‘joint EU action plan’ that outlined key priority areas for the Union’s support of the Annapolis process. Foreign Minister Steinmeier’s initiative was discussed at a GAERC meeting in Luxembourg in mid-October 2007, and the Council called on High Representative for the CFSP, Javier Solana, as well as the Commission to develop the ideas into a common European action strategy.20 The High Representative and the Commission subsequently composed an ‘EU action strategy’ that incorporated essential elements of Steinmeier’s initiative and was submitted to the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GARC) in mid-November.21 The action strategy focused on EU assistance in reforming the Palestinian civil security sector, institution building and good governance, as well as on promoting sustained growth of the Palestinian economy. Furthermore, it restated the EU’s interest in assisting US-led diplomatic efforts in establishing a prominent role for the Middle East Quartet in overseeing the Annapolis peace process.22

EU-level dynamics played an important role in Germany’s transition from bystander to active participant in Europe’s common conflict resolution policy. To be sure, Germany’s intensified engagement in the EU’s Middle East policy must be analysed in the context of Germany’s

22 However, as there was little willingness on the apart of the US government to involve Europeans in the political management of the Annapolis process, the EU’s role in the process did not equal its own aspirations.
newfound self-confidence following the end of the Cold War as well as in the context of developments at the international level and the conflict itself. Observers have noted that Germany’s traditional policy of self-restraint has been increasingly counterbalanced by a greater assertiveness in international politics after reunification and the rise to power of the post-war generation (Haftendorn 2006; Webber 2001). At the same time, the fact that the US approach to Middle East peacemaking after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 encouraged a more multilateral engagement – most importantly through coordination in the Quartet – increased the scope for action for the EU and its Member States {Soetendorp, 2002 #495}. However, while the budding confidence and increased scope for action of Germany was an important condition that enabled it to overcome some of the traditional psychological constraints of its foreign policy, evidence gained from expert interviews suggests that learning processes and pressure from the EU were essential in bringing about changes in Germany’s approach to peacemaking. Following the deadlock of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in the first half of the 1990s, several EU actors – including the European Commission, the European Parliament and individual Member States such as France – pushed for a more active European involvement in the diplomatic process. According to German diplomats, the rising EU-level expectations for a more robust political engagement since the late 1990s triggered discussions among German foreign policymakers about Germany’s role in EU foreign policymaking.23 As a senior German diplomat asserted, “we [in the Foreign Ministry] had the feeling that if we did not become more actively engaged in the EU’s Middle East policy ourselves, we would then be accountable for a policy that was made by our [European] partners and that might be less sensitive to our interests”.24 Germany’s growing readiness to play a more active role in shaping the direction of the EU’s Middle East policy was also an attempt to avoid a situation in which it would face pressure to adapt to an increasingly ambitious European policy that did not reflect German national preferences.

At the same time, mounting EU level pressure for a more coordinated and effective European foreign policy has reduced Germany’s ability to pursue its independent national foreign policy. In its national foreign policy, Germany often took on a more ‘conciliatory’ line than

23 In the post-Oslo environment, a growing divide was becoming apparent between Germany’s policy preferences for diplomatic restraint and a low-key political role of the EU in Middle East peacemaking, and growing EU ambitions to play a more active role in the diplomatic process.
24 Interview by the author of a senior official from the German Foreign Ministry conducted in Berlin in December 2007.
other Member States when it came to dealing with contested issues such as Israel’s construction of settlements in Palestinian territories and other Israeli policies in violation of international law.\textsuperscript{25} For instance, Germany was the only EU country that abstained from voting on three UN General Assembly resolutions condemning Israeli settlement construction and Israeli policies in Arab East Jerusalem in 1997.\textsuperscript{26} However, in the late 1990s, Germany came under mounting pressure to support a more assertive European line. Against the backdrop of a stagnating peace process in the second half of the 1990s, several EU actors called for a greater European engagement in Middle East peacemaking and the Union began to speak out more vigorously against the failure of the conflicting parties to comply with the commitments of the peace process; such failures included Palestinian terrorist attacks and incitement to violence as well as Israeli settlement activity, human rights violations and land confiscation. As a result, German diplomats noted that it became increasingly difficult to defend Israeli policies in EU institutions, particularly when such policies violated European principles and standards of conflict resolution.\textsuperscript{27}

Though supportive of Israel, Germany also tried to accommodate the progress of Europe’s declaratory diplomacy, even if this entailed adapting to common EU positions that digressed from its cautious national diplomatic stance. A valid case in point is the EU’s position on Israel’s West Bank wall. In July 2004, the EU jointly voted in favour of a UN General Assembly resolution supporting the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concerning the illegality of the wall erected on Palestinian territories.\textsuperscript{28} Prior to the UN vote, Israel lobbied various EU governments in an attempt to undermine international support for the resolution, which Tel Aviv considered unbalanced and harmful. However, after the EU had ensured that the Palestinian-drafted resolution incorporated important European concerns, including the recognition of Israeli security interests and references to the obligations of both parties under the Roadmap, all 25 Member States voted in favour of the resolution. In its subsequent declarations and foreign policy statements, the EU reaffirmed its stance on the West Bank wall, demanding that Israel discontinue and reverse construction within the occupied Palestinian territories. As pointed out by the Israeli ambassador to the UN, Dan

\textsuperscript{25} Other prominent examples of German diplomacy that supported Israeli positions include Berlin’s reaction to the second Lebanon War of 2006 and the Gaza war of 2008, where the German government emphasized Israel’s right of self-defence.

\textsuperscript{26} Even though Germany shared the EU position on the illegality of Israel’s settlement activities, it abstained from voting on the grounds that the language of the UN resolutions was imbalanced.

\textsuperscript{27} Interview by the author of a German diplomat working at the Middle East desk in the foreign ministry in Berlin conducted in May 2006.

Gillerman, the desire for consensus among Europeans had been a decisive factor in the outcome of the UN vote.  

Conclusion
This article looked closely at the recent changes in the style and substance of Germany’s Middle East policy and analysed to what extent it has been Europeanized. As an overall assessment, it is fair to say that Germany’s policy toward the Middle East conflict has been characterized by both, a high degree of continuity as well as noteworthy changes. Its multilateral and ‘Europeanist’ foreign policy orientation continue to shape Germany’s policy, particularly in the sensitive context of the Middle East. Hence, German governments continue to prefer common European action over unilateral moves. Its special historic relationship with Israel as well as well as a strong interest in transatlantic coordination remain other important ‘constants’ of Germany’s foreign policy. Pertaining to the observed foreign policy change, it is important to highlight that these changes have been motivated by a complex mix of factors – including international developments and the policy pursued by the US as well as developments in the conflict itself. Still, EU level factors have been important for Germany to become a more active player in the Middle East arena and for the evolution of the diplomatic stances taken by Germany on conflict resolution.

The EPC/CFSP served as an important policy instrument that allowed Germany to pursue its foreign policy interests and priorities more effectively and its national foreign policy approach has evolved in close interaction with the EC/EU. Since the early 1970s, Europe’s common foreign policy served as a ‘cover’ under which Germany pursued its ‘policy of even-handedness’, shielding the Federal Republic’s new policy approach against domestic as well as external criticism. The EPC allowed the traditionally pro-Israeli Germany to redress its Middle East policy in a situation where the steadily growing energy dependence of its industry made it important to enhance relations with Arab oil producing states. Following the launch of the Middle East peace process in the 1990s, Germany initially sought to upload its priority for an economic peace building strategy to the EU level. In the German view, the EU should support the peace process primarily through economic and development assistance, while Washington was taking the lead in the diplomatic process.

Yet, the dynamic institutional development of European foreign policy cooperation in the 1990s, in conjunction with the dissatisfactory development in the US-led peace process, gave rise to growing European aspirations for a strengthened EU involvement in Middle East peacemaking. During the 1970s and 1980s, the European foreign policy framework was a comfortable shelter for Germany under which it pursued a low profile policy largely limited to Middle East resolutions by the EC. With the launch of CFSP and the rise in the EU’s international ambitions, Germany's involvement in European foreign policymaking became more demanding. It was against this background, that Germany parted with much of its customary self-moderation and began to conduct a more activist policy. Through its contributions to the Roadmap and the Palestinian reform processes, Germany was able to advance the development of important EU initiatives. Germany also displayed a growing readiness to promote common EU actions at the operational level, even giving up the long held taboo of deploying military personnel in the Middle East. As argued above, Germany’s growing readiness to play a more active role in shaping the direction of the EU’s Middle East policy was also an attempt to avoid a situation in which it would face pressure to adapt to an increasingly ambitious European policy that did not reflect German national preferences.

There has also been Europeanization from the top down, through which German foreign policy has adopted to EU-level expectations, principles and practices and sought to bring its behaviour in line with the EPC/CFSP’s consensus seeking, cooperative foreign policy culture. Germany not only contributed to the moulding of the EU’s conflict resolution policy in the Middle East; its national foreign policy approach has also been influenced by its involvement in European foreign policymaking. German foreign policymakers relaxed important national positions to accommodate the progress of a common European policy. In the 1970s and 1980s, Germany utilized a more even-handed diplomatic rhetoric under the cover of the EU, particularly out of consideration for its growing dependency on Arab energy resources. Since the 1990s, however, these considerations have become less pressing. And it was principally due to its commitment to European integration and the EU’s consensus-oriented foreign policy culture that Germany felt the need to maintain a greater balance in its rhetoric concerning the conflict. It should be noted, however, that particularly in the German foreign ministry the principle of ‘even-handedness’ has become institutionalized and is part of the political culture.
will no longer be sympathetic to Israel; its commitment to Europe’s common foreign policy, however, requires Germany to accommodate various views and interests in EU-level negotiations. What is more, the evolution of common positions on the Middle East conflict is subject to a certain path dependency, as the positions established in EU declarations and foreign policy statements set precedents that guide further decision-making. As an observer has noted, Member States tend to consider common EU positions as a series of compromises that they could scarcely abolish without losing credibility (de La Serre 1989: 254).

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