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From European Colonial Enterprise to 'Normative Empire Europe'

As we have seen, Europe has had a long history of addressing its southern neighbours as a sort of subservient hinterland. But at what point and under which conditions did its policies develop into those of a 'normative empire', whose aim is to export large parts of the European order beyond its borders and link the periphery to the core under unequal power relations? The imperial origins of the European bloc may be traced back to the beginning of the European integration process in the 1950s, when an imperial logic began to be gradually transferred from the original policies of the constituent states to the external relations of the common European enterprise. This chapter will not only show that the attitude of the European Community (EC)¹ and later on the European Union (EU) vis-à-vis its neighbours has taken on an increasingly imperial bent in recent decades, it will also demonstrate how a distinct 'process of Europeanization' has taken shape within the same imperial foreign policy behaviour.

The Colonial Past: Europe and its Southern Borderlands

The concept of borderlands is a useful tool in excavating Europe's past and present relations with North Africa and the Mediterranean Middle East (MENA). We may begin our survey with a brief reminder of Europe's colonial appetite, the consequences of this appetite for the Middle East, and its relevance for the beginning of the European integration process. As noted in the previous chapter, the European powers played an instrumental role in the political formation of many states in the Middle East and North Africa, in many cases defining their international borders. But colonial rule was also

¹ For the sake of simplicity, the term 'European Community' (or EC), will be used when referring to the predecessor of the European Union.

responsible for the export of European ideas and practices, such as nationalism, to the region. Concurrently, it led to the expansion of European trade and financial control in local economies—most often to the benefit of Europe. Moreover, European rule over the MENA region unleashed local processes of profound socio-economic restructuring. As European colonial rule exploited the labour force and natural resources of the MENA region, forging imperial trade relations in the process, millions of Europeans moved to settle in the colonies. Indeed, by the late 1930s, as Albert Hourani (2002: 323) notes, the cities of Algiers and Oran had European majorities. Europeans also constituted half the population of Tunis and nearly half of Casablanca's. The Cyrenaica, the eastern part of Libya, was home to 110,000 Italians. At the other end of the Mediterranean, immigrants from predominantly European countries had settled in Palestine from the late nineteenth century onwards, laying the foundations for what would later become the State of Israel in the British Mandate of Palestine.

After the end of the First World War, many colonies were transformed into 'mandates', a new form of colonial state granted to the victorious powers under the auspices of the League of Nations. The process of state-building in the Middle East and North Africa occurred under strictly imperial control (Rogan 2013). At the outbreak of the Second World War, the Mediterranean and the Middle East would become a theatre of battle. From June 1940 on, as Italy joined the war on the side of Nazi Germany, the European Axis powers and their opponents waged battles against one another in the Middle East and North Africa, whether over land or along the coast. Fighting took place over an extended region, including in French-controlled North Africa, Libya, and Egypt. A number of shorter campaigns took place in Syria and Iraq, with the Allies ultimately invading Vichy France-controlled North Africa in November 1942. The Middle East and North Africa also provided soldiers who fought on both sides of the war, a fact that is often forgotten in the chronicles of European history. This is particularly true of the Maghreb, where Moroccan, Algerian, and Tunisian soldiers participated in the European war efforts against the Vichy regime, while Charles de Gaulle's 'Free France' refused to grant independence to the French colonies once the war ended (Guazzone 2016: 41). Thus, by considering the entirety of European policies and interventions in the Middle East and North Africa throughout this period in history, it is clear that Europe viewed this area as its own backyard.

Imperial Beginnings: European Integration and the Borderlands

In the minds of many European citizens, policymakers, and experts of European politics, the beginning of the European integration process in the 1950s did not simply transcend the disastrous era of nationalism and two world wars on the European continent, it also marked a break with Europe's colonial past. However, this compelling narrative, termed Europe's 'virgin birth' by Kalypso Nicolaïdis (2015: 283), omits an important—and for enthusiasts of European integration, perhaps rather inconvenient—detail: from the outset the process of European integration had accommodated colonial designs on Africa and the Middle East (Hansen 2002). At the outset of the European project formally initiated in 1951 and until well after the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 that established the European (Economic) Community,² three of the six founding members were still colonial powers. With overseas 'possessions' in Africa, France and Belgium would remain colonial powers until the 1960s, and the Netherlands would govern colonies in the Caribbean well after that. Control of the Suez Canal was important enough to France (and Britain) to start a war against Egypt in 1956. Furthermore, Algeria remained an integral part of France when the founding members signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Contrary to conventional cartography of the area formed by the six founding members of the European Community, therefore, the bulk of EC territory did not lie in Europe, but on the African continent until Algeria obtained independence in 1962. Indeed, Algeria's territory at the time stood at more than double the combined metropolitan areas of the 'Inner Six'.³

Significantly, the objective of incorporating Africa and parts of the Middle East into Europe in territorial and economic terms was the cornerstone of the 'Eurafrica' project, an intellectual and political endeavour that was influential in Europe from the 1920s until the late 1950s (Hansen and Jonsson 2014a).

² In 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community was created and with the Treaty of Rome of 1957 the same six founding members—Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg—would establish the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). In 1965 the three communities merged into the European Communities (EC)—often referred to as the European Community (EC).

³ The territory of Algeria extends over 2,381,741 km². The combined territory of the six EC founding members—France (with a metropolitan area of 543,940 km²), Italy (301,340 km²), West Germany (248,577 km²), the Netherlands (41,543 km²), Belgium (30,688 km²), and Luxembourg (2,586 km²)—totalled 1,168,676 km², less than half of Algeria's territory.

During this period, many European elites considered the exploitation of the resources of the African continent to be essential for Europe's own survival and for ensuring its place in history. Although largely forgotten today, the 'Eurafrica' project formed an integral building block in the European integration enterprise. The European integration process, in other words, served to revive the colonial project (Hansen and Jonsson, 2014b).

The beginning of European integration was thus intrinsically linked to the desire of the founding members to 'manage collectively a colonial world that was escaping its Member States individually and above all the African continent—sharing sovereignty to share colonies', as Nora Fisher Onar and Kalypso Nicolaidis (2013: 293) have put it. In the negotiations leading up to the signing of the 1957 Treaty of Rome, France was adamant that the preferential treatment of its colonies and overseas territories be incorporated in the nascent European Community. In the same year, Brussels issued a joint declaration of intent to contribute to the social and economic development of Morocco and Tunisia, two countries that had gained independence from French colonial rule in the previous year (Grilli 1993: 183). A similar declaration of intent addressed Libya, the former Italian colony. Overall, Rome's contribution to the emerging common European policies towards the former colonies consisted mainly in seeking to block agreements so as to defend Italian citrus fruit producers (Bicchi 2007: 61). By contrast, France's colonial history of vertically organizing agricultural markets in North Africa to the advantage of the centre played an important role in the negotiations among the six founding members on the bloc's emerging agricultural policy that would ultimately influence the outcome (Davis 2017; Fernández-Molina 2018).

The logic behind France's insistence on the preferential treatment of its former colonies and overseas territories was that the common European project was to share the burden—mainly in the form of aid—of French colonial possessions while Paris would enjoy the economic benefits. Moreover, it would ensure continued European influence overseas. From the outset, this reasoning influenced Brussels' trade policies towards North Africa and the Middle East. To a lesser extent, it also played a role in determining the European bloc's strategy towards states in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (in EU jargon, the so-called ACP countries), countries to which Brussels granted substantive trade preferences (Grilli 1993). European (colonial) control beyond the European continent, and more specifically in the south, was thus an integral part of the DNA of the European integration project from the outset, with many external borders of the European

Community lying *outside* the European continent in the early years of the founding of Europe. From this initial point, common European policies towards the southern neighbours would further develop their imperial character. These would include European attempts to link the periphery to the core and to export those parts of the European order that were beneficial for Europe's economic and security interests.

The 'Europeanization' of (Post)colonial Policies

The European Community, and subsequently the European Union, began developing a so-called Mediterranean policy towards neighbouring countries in the south from the early 1970s onwards (Tovias 1977; Grilli 1993; Lister 1997; Del Sarto 2006: ch 3; Bicchi 2007). It is important to remember that at that time the 'Mediterranean countries' to be addressed by EC policies also included Greece, Spain, and (while not strictly a Mediterranean country) Portugal. These states would only join the European bloc in the 1980s. Interestingly, the course of action adopted by the European bloc can be read as a gradual process by which the colonial and postcolonial policies of single member states vis-à-vis their southern neighbours became a common European project, or 'Europeanized'. At this point, it is worth discussing the ways in which the imperial traits of these policies took shape and strengthened over time, and the conditions that shaped this process.

During much of the first decade of the EC's existence, Europe's imperial desires remained confined to the positions and preferences of the individual founding members, then the sole drivers of the European integration process (the European Commission and the European Court of Justice would claim only a role for themselves over time). In this early period of European integration, the member states sought to define the direction of what was then an embryonic EC trade policy through the use of a common external customs tariff. As a consequence, the bloc's external relations were subordinated to the preferences of individual member states. In particular, Paris was interested in keeping its former colonies linked to France, thereby ensuring the continuation of French influence. At the same time, the EC's common trade policies also aimed at protecting the European bloc's heavily subsidized agricultural market from competition from non-EC members. Introduced in 1962 following the experience of serious food shortages during and immediately after the Second World War, the EC's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) gradually created an internal and heavily subsidized market for

agriculture, with preferences given to EC member states.⁴ Against the backdrop of decolonization in North Africa—Algeria had gained independence from France in the same year as the introduction of the CAP—the initial agreements underpinning the bloc’s agricultural policy witnessed a shift towards the ‘Europeanization’ of former colonial ties vis-à-vis a ‘the Mediterranean’. In the words of Muriam Haleh Davis (2017: 75), the ‘Mediterranean emerged as a framework where formerly imperial links were reshaped into a different kind of European hinterland’, with European policies witnessing an ‘eventual shift from colonial preferences to a European “Mediterranean” policy’.

However, in the context of evolving Cold War dynamics, European concerns with stability in ‘the Mediterranean’ became increasingly important. As a consequence of these partly contradictory principles underwriting the EC’s relations with its southern near abroad, the European bloc entered into limited association agreements with Tunisia and Morocco, two countries that had remained heavily dependent on trade with their former colonial power, France. Israel and Lebanon entered into non-preferential trade relations with the European bloc. Concurrently, Brussels offered Greece and Turkey, two countries then constituting NATO’s ‘southern flank’, the prospect of full EC membership at an unspecified future date. These two countries signed unlimited association agreements with the EC in 1961 and 1963 respectively. With European countries in dire need of cheap labour, the accords signed with Athens and Ankara also included the free mobility of workers, if only for a limited period of time.⁵ In the context of the Cold War then, stabilizing these two countries and linking them to the European core formed a key objective of EC policies. The ‘pyramid of trade preferences’ that emerged in the 1970s thus saw Greece and Turkey at the top, followed by Morocco and Tunisia, with Cyprus, Malta, Spain, Israel, Egypt, and Lebanon at the bottom (Tovias 1977; Pomfret 1986; Grilli 1993: 182).⁶ Naturally, these trade concessions were not of enormous relevance for the ‘Mediterranean countries’ themselves, given that most of these states depended heavily on agricultural exports, upon which the

⁴ The Common Agricultural Policy can also be explained in terms of a deal between Germany and France: German industrial products gained access to the French market while in return Germany committed itself to financially support the French agricultural sector.

⁵ From the early 1960s until the end of the 1970s, five of the six EC founding members (with the sole exception of Italy) grew increasingly dependent on migrant labour, with Germany, France, and the Netherlands drawing the bulk of their migrant labour force from the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa by the late 1970s (Yannopoulos 1976: 116–122). In that period, labour migration was considered a purely economic issue and not a potential security one, as would be the case in subsequent decades.

⁶ While the four countries at the top of the pyramid obtained unlimited market access for industrial goods, the remaining six were only granted some tariff reductions on industrial goods of between 50 and 70 per cent (Pomfret 1986).

EC continued to impose high tariffs and import quotas. Furthermore, trade in industrial goods had to follow European rules of origin, implying, for instance, a preferential treatment of goods produced using raw materials originating in EC territory (Bicchi 2007: 58; Shlaim 1976: 90). Altogether, an uneasy mix of the economic interests and security concerns of the EC's six founding members defined the initial period of the bloc's so-called Mediterranean policy, with echoes of colonialism resounding in its relations with the southern borderlands.

A second feature marking the 'Europeanization' process of the postcolonial (but essentially still colonial) policies of single member states was the European polity's conspicuous concern with the stability of the southern periphery. As the author has argued elsewhere, European security concerns, coupled with attempts to maintain European influence in the area and to protect the economic interests of the EC member states, would drive the major policy initiatives of the EC and its successor, the European Union (Del Sarto 2006: 55–61). This is certainly true of the European bloc's first attempts to formulate a coherent policy towards 'the Mediterranean' of the early 1970s, termed, with remarkable self-confidence, the 'Global Mediterranean Policy'. European security concerns were also a major driving force behind the 1995 launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), also known as the Barcelona Process, to date the most important and comprehensive European policy initiative towards the 'southern Mediterranean'.

Security concerns would gain in importance throughout the decades indeed, with a number of events in the Middle East seriously preoccupying European decision makers. These included the Arab-Israeli wars in the late 1960s and 1970s, OPEC's use of the oil weapon after the October/Yom Kippur war of 1973, the growing incidence of Arab-Palestinian terrorism affecting Europe,⁷ coups and civil wars in the region, and the 1991 Islamist electoral victory in Algeria raising the spectre of Islamist terrorism on European soil. Accordingly, Brussels would not cease to stress the importance of stability and prosperity in 'the Mediterranean', viewed as essential for the security of the European bloc itself (for example European Council 1973; European Commission 1990).

Third, from the outset, the Europeans considered the economic development of the southern periphery as the key to achieving stability in the region.

⁷ From 1968 onwards, the number of violent incidents on EC territory linked to the Arab-Israeli conflict increased sharply. Attacks included the 1968 hijacking of an Israeli airline El Al passenger plane from Rome; the hijacking of aircraft by a Palestinian faction during the 1970 'Black September' war between Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in which European and US citizens were held hostage; and the terrorist attack on the Israeli team during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, perpetrated by a Palestinian organization.

Here, as before, an imperial logic prevailed and would grow steadily stronger. From the outset, the economic development of ‘the south’ was never a matter of pure altruism: the members of the European bloc were poised to benefit from improved economic conditions in North Africa and the Middle East, chiefly through better access to markets for their own manufactured goods. In addition to trade concessions, the EC would over time also grant financial and technical aid to these states, in addition to initiating cooperation in other areas (Lister 1997: 84 ff.). But while the financial aid granted to the MENA states continued to prove meagre by comparison to the aid Europe granted other regions—a fact repeatedly and critically highlighted by the European Commission and the European Parliament themselves (Schumacher 2005: 98)—the southern neighbours continued to be excluded from fair trade in those agricultural products that were covered by the Common Agricultural Policy. In that period, import restrictions also continued to apply to textile and clothing, sectors in which particularly Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt had a significant comparative advantage vis-à-vis European manufacturers (Grilli 1993: 198).

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), or Barcelona Process, also embraced the objective of contributing to the economic development of ‘the south’. However, it would adopt a different approach to achieve this goal. Launched with much fanfare in 1995, this policy initiative proposed a far more comprehensive kind of free trade agreement covering industrial goods. In addition, it aimed at the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade *area*, thus seeking to boost the volume of south–south trade that had remained (and continues to be) relatively restricted. Modelled after the three-basket structure of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) during the Cold War, a further innovation of the Barcelona Process was the creation of permanent structures for political dialogue and cultural cooperation on a regional basis. More importantly, however, Europe had by this point effected a shift to a neoliberal model of development. Until then, the Europeans had shown some flexibility in granting preferential access to their markets for a limited range of industrial and agricultural products from the borderlands, thus allowing developing countries in the southern periphery to protect some of their industries on the basis of their lower level of economic development (Salamé 1998: 35). The Barcelona Process put an end to this practice, with the new ‘free trade agreements’⁸ on offer stipulating the gradual dismantling of all

⁸ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Stiglitz (2018: 20) has highlighted that free trade agreements are not actually about free trade, but about specific conditions for which trade is liberalized in specific areas and for specific products (but not others).

tariffs on industrial goods. Equally, economic restructuring and reforms in MENA states, largely in accordance with the neoliberal Washington Consensus,⁹ became a requirement of the EU's engagement with its southern neighbours. This also meant that the southern periphery would now have to agree to and implement a set of rules and practices pertaining to economic governance prescribed by the Europeans that aimed at liberalization, the privatization of state-owned industries, and a gradual withdrawal of the state from socio-economic affairs.¹⁰

While it is thus possible to detect a (post)colonial logic informing European policy towards its southern borderlands from the early days of the European integration process onwards, different regional and international conditions influenced relations between the European core and its southern periphery. Equally, events in the Middle East and North Africa would come to determine the feasibility of different European policy initiatives over the decades. This is unsurprising, of course, given that European policies are not implemented in a political vacuum. As much as the Cold War had induced the EC to treat preferentially NATO members Greece and Turkey, the period of détente in the confrontation between the superpowers in the 1970s prompted Brussels to search for a more systematic and comprehensive way of engaging the southern periphery.¹¹ But this was also the period in which many states in the Middle East and North Africa—chiefly, the Arab republics—had continued to assertively uphold economic policies aimed at ending their dependence on the former colonial powers and 'the West' in general, promoting in its stead a self-reliant and state-driven model of economic development and modernization. This developmental strategy included the nationalization of private assets, resources, and companies (often owned by former colonial powers), as well as state-led import substitution policies that stood in stark contrast to the export-led economic development model promoted by the EC.

⁹ The Washington Consensus consists of a set of prescriptions for economic reforms promoted in the late 1980s by Washington-based institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the US Department of Treasury, believed to be necessary for the recovery of developing countries from economic and financial crises. These prescriptions include fiscal discipline, the reduction of state subsidies, tax reform, competitive exchange rates, market-determined interest rates, the liberalization of trade and foreign direct investments, the privatization of state enterprises, legal security for property rights, and deregulation, that is, the abolition of regulations that hinder market entry or restrict competition.

¹⁰ However, as Diana Hunt (1999) explains, a notable difference between the Barcelona Process and the neoliberal underpinnings of the Washington Consensus was the exclusion of the agricultural sector from free trade. A further inconsistency regards the bilateral nature of the trade agreements concluded between the EU and single MENA states.

¹¹ The looming Tokyo round of international trade negotiations conducted under the auspices of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the predecessor of the World Trade Organization, WTO) in the 1970s was an additional factor shaping EC policies, given that most preferential trade agreements signed with Mediterranean states hitherto were not compatible with GATT rules.

Equally important, the Middle East was hardly a quiet or a peaceful region in the late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. A series of military coups, two major Arab–Israeli wars, persistent rivalries among Arab states, the 1974 Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus, the Lebanese civil war starting in 1975, and a massive military build-up marked regional developments in that period. The United States had also increased its involvement in the Middle East from the late 1960s onwards, as had the Soviet Union, prompting the Europeans to initially adopt a low profile. But with the arrival of Henry Kissinger in the US State Department in 1973 during Richard Nixon’s presidency, friction between Washington and Brussels on Middle East policies began to emerge. While US policies shifted towards a privileged partnership with Israel (Quandt 2005), unfolding events in the Middle East had a far greater impact on the Europeans than on the US. For instance, the dramatic rise of the price of oil following the 1973 Arab–Israeli war affected Europe on a massive scale, prompting oil rationing and the introduction of ‘car-free Sundays’ in several European countries. The oil shock reminded Europe of its pathological dependence on fossil fuel-derived energy imports from its Middle Eastern periphery—in Italy, for instance, oil from Arab countries amounted to 87 per cent of its total energy consumption at that time; for France this figure was 65 per cent (Bicchi 2007: 77). Neither did the aforementioned Arab–Palestinian terrorist attacks perpetrated in Europe nor the Soviet Union’s naval presence in the Mediterranean against the backdrop of the Cold War provide much reassurance to the Europeans. European policies towards the Middle East and North Africa thus attempted to navigate a diverse range of interests and constraints, including the desire to avoid antagonizing the Arab states. However, Europe’s ambitions to tie the countries in the region to the European bloc and increase its influence there—while also trying to prevent any major political and economic fallout from unfolding events in the region—remained the chief concern underpinning European policies.

The 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the general economic decline of most countries in the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa, the consequence of economic and financial mismanagement and the lack of modernization by MENA economies. The economic downturn was further spurred by declining oil prices on the world market, which would also affect the non-petroleum-producing states in the region (White 2001; Toviass 1996; 1997).¹² Continued population growth in many countries in the region and soaring

¹² Declining oil prices affected the non-oil-producing countries because oil-rich countries reduced their cash transfers to the former. The remittances of immigrants and expatriates living in oil-rich states to their poorer, non-oil-producing countries of origin decreased as well.

unemployment rates, especially among young people, increased the prospect of immigration to Europe. Structural adjustment programmes prescribed by the International Monetary Fund in this period, including measures such as the reduction of subsidies on basic foodstuffs and petrol in return for much-needed loans, led to popular protests in many states in the Middle East and North Africa, dubbed 'bread riots' (Sadiki 2000; Cammett et al. 2015: 273–318). These developments prompted policymakers in Brussels and other European capitals to rethink their engagement with the southern periphery. Equally, in the mid-1990s, dramatically altered global and regional conditions coupled with the dire economic situation in most MENA states played a major role in the EU's decision to launch a new policy towards the region. The Cold War had ended, leading to a general and, in retrospect, decidedly naïve post-Cold War euphoria (Fukuyama 1989). In 1991 an international military coalition had forced Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait, a country Iraq had just invaded, and a peace process between Israel and the Palestinians had started in 1993. It was a period of high hope and regional designs—at least, as far as the Middle East was concerned.¹³ It was in this context that the European Union launched the EMP. With its declared aim of wanting to create a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area, and by establishing a regular dialogue on political and cultural matters on a regional basis, the Barcelona Process ostensibly adopted a region-building approach (Adler et al. 2006; Del Sarto 2006).

European security considerations and neocolonial ambitions, however, were never far from the surface. From the 1970s onwards, the EC's attempts to develop a comprehensive Mediterranean policy went hand in hand with European ambitions to create a sphere of political influence by granting limited economic benefits to MENA countries (Pomfret 1968: 102). This would not change considerably following the end of the Cold War, with Europe continuing to remain concerned with the political developments in its southern periphery. Factors and events shaping the EU's Euro-Mediterranean policy initiative included the victory of the Islamist party FIS (Front National du Salut) in the surprisingly free Algerian elections of December 1991, the outbreak of the civil war in that country after the Algerian army aborted the second round of elections, and Islamist terrorist activities on European soil. A general fear of unwanted immigration to Europe from an impoverished and inherently unstable region were equally important.

¹³ Among other events, in the 1990s the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the atrocious Balkan wars that followed clearly shattered these hopes and ideas on a global scale.

It is no coincidence that a number of southern European member states, led by France, had started a security dialogue with Maghreb countries as soon as the Cold War had ended.¹⁴ And for all the European talk of partnership, the EU demanded a series of economically and politically very costly structural reforms from the MENA states that had decided to sign up to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership initiative. In particular, these reforms entailed the loss of customs duty revenue, which accounted for a significant share of the total revenues of most developing countries in Europe's southern periphery (Hoekman 1999: 90). Equally, Europe's declared ambition of wanting to turn the 'Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity' (Barcelona Declaration 1995) stood in notable contrast to the terms of the trade agreements. Trade in agriculture, a key potential gain for MENA countries, continued to be largely excluded from free trade provisions, in spite of European commitments to liberalize trade in this sector as well (Hunt 1999; Schumacher 2004; Hoekman 2005; Tovias 2006).¹⁵

The changes occurring within the European bloc itself, however, were at least as important in influencing European policies towards its periphery as regional and international developments. As the bloc continued to expand, the incorporation of new members over the decades substantially affected European policies, with Britain opposing France's clientelist commercial ties with its former colonies in the Middle East and North Africa. The subsequent expansion of the EC to include countries that had hitherto been part of the Mediterranean periphery—Greece, Spain, and Portugal—was even more significant. In economic terms, the incorporation of Greece into the EC in 1981, and of Spain and Portugal in 1986, was at the clear expense of the states located at the southern shores of the Mediterranean. As the 'southern enlargement' increased the EC's self-sufficiency of typically Mediterranean agricultural products such as olive oil, citrus fruits, and fresh vegetables, Brussels reduced the import quotas of these products from the states in the Maghreb and Mashreq (Tovias 1988; Grilli 1993: 197–204). But it was the European Union's 'big bang' enlargement of 2004 that was to have the most significant impact on relations with the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa,

¹⁴ The so-called 5+5 dialogue launched in the early 1990s included France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Malta, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, and Mauritania.

¹⁵ With the EMP, the EU committed to gradually liberalize trade in agriculture, but during the first decade of the EMP, little was achieved in this area: in general, the EU extended existing preferential arrangements on a limited basis through the expansion of tariff quotas (Hoekman 2005: 5).

bringing to the fore a conspicuously imperial dimension in EU policies towards its southern periphery.

The Crystallization of European Imperial Ambitions

There is no doubt that by the early 2000s events in the Middle East—most notably, the collapse of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process and the eruption of violence with the second Palestinian Intifada—had altered political conditions to the extent that the EU’s attempt to develop a regional approach towards the area were rendered unworkable. By then, it had indeed become impossible to hold any regional meetings, let alone implement projects, in which both Israel and most Arab states would participate. While relations between the EU and Israel deteriorated considerably in this period due to repeated European criticism of Israeli human rights violations in the Palestinian Territories during the Intifada (Del Sarto 2019: 318), Turkey continued to be disinterested in the EMP, aiming instead at EU membership. Moreover, the EMP had had a negligible economic impact on the states in North Africa and the Mediterranean Middle East, with trade growth in the non-oil sector being lower in the post-1995 period than in the first half of the 1990s (Hoekman 2005: 12–13). For the Europeans, then, it seemed reasonable to look for an alternative means of engaging the states in the southern periphery.

However, it was an internal development—the EU enlargement of 2004—that precipitated a new European approach towards the MENA region. The accession of ten new members not only altered the geographical expanse of the European Union, massively increasing the EU’s territory and population. It was also to effect a drastic shift in Europe’s political posture and foreign policy behaviour. In anticipation of the imminent EU expansion that also absorbed two countries hitherto belonging to the ‘southern Mediterranean’ group of states, Cyprus and Malta, the EU developed the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2003–2004. This policy, originally intended to regulate relations with the new ‘neighbours’ in Eastern Europe that would find themselves at the European Union’s external borders after the 2004 enlargement, soon came to cover the EU’s ‘old’ neighbours in the south as well. Although the trade agreements previously signed in the framework of the Barcelona Process have remained the legal basis of EU-MENA relations, the ENP is to this day the European Union’s principal policy framework towards the wider neighbourhood. Offering a ‘stake’ in the EU’s Internal Market to the states in the

eastern and southern peripheries in exchange for reforms, the ENP espouses a bilateral and strictly differentiated kind of strategy. With regard to the southern periphery, the Neighbourhood Policy thus embodies a clear shift from Europe's regional 'Mediterranean policy' to the development of a bilateral set of relations with single MENA states, with the aim of linking these states to the EU through an advanced type of cooperation (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005). The states that have signed up to this policy may select the type of relations and the areas of cooperation they wish to develop with the EU. Whatever their preferences may be, however, the integration of these states into specific sectors of existing and evolving EU systems and laws requires them to adopt rules that are compatible with those prevailing in the EU in the relevant field of cooperation (for example European Commission 2012a: 5).

This new category of policy clearly reflected the changes in the ways in which Europe came to see itself and its place in the world following the 'big bang' enlargement of 2004. Pointing to the massively enlarged territory and the increased number of citizens living within the EU, official documents from this period constantly underline the new role and responsibilities of the enlarged European Union (European Commission 2004a; 2004b)—as if the EU was now *entitled* to play a greater role in world politics. A reformulated EU security strategy from the period defined Europe's foreign policy *interests* for the first time (Solana 2003), with ENP documents subsequently stressing the importance—for the EU—of having a zone of stability, security, and increasing prosperity on its borders (European Commission 2005). Europe did not conceal that its policies towards its near abroad were 'geared at providing security and welfare to EU citizens' (European Commission 2004c: 3). It has been observed that the EU had already adopted a core-periphery attitude towards the states that became members in 2004, particularly towards those situated in Eastern Europe (Zielonka 2001a; 2006). Consequently, an even more pronounced imperial vision came to shape the EU's policies towards the new and old neighbours in the southern and eastern periphery as well, with the ENP embodying Europe's buffering logic and neocolonial practices vis-à-vis the borderlands (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2004; Zaiotti 2007; Browning and Joenniemi 2008; Jones and Clark 2008; Bialasiewicz et al. 2009; van Houtum and Boedeltje 2011; Bialasiewicz 2012).

Certainly, the trade agreements signed between the EU and MENA states in the context of the Barcelona Process had already contained the EU's attempts to impose European norms on the southern 'partners', even if implicitly. In this vein, the underlying idea of these agreements, and of the EMP as

overarching framework, has been one of policy convergence—that is, MENA states agreeing to European rules and practices. But while a region-building logic initially still marked the EU’s political discourse, the ENP goes several steps further on the issue of ‘convergence’: the participation and integration of MENA states into selected aspects of the EU’s economic and legal systems is now contingent on these states playing by EU rules. At the same time, the principle of differentiation entails the establishment of a set of varied bilateral relations between the EU and MENA states, and thus of a hub-and-spoke system through which these states are linked to Europe. Hence, with implications for states that have no prospect of EU membership or, as in the case of Turkey, a qualified prospect, the process of exporting the European order beyond the border involves the connection of the periphery to the core in crucial areas such as trade, energy, and infrastructure. Furthermore, it involves the co-optation of MENA governments in the management of borders, security, and migration. Importantly, this process also entails the ‘untangling’ of the various political and legal functions fulfilled by borders.

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In sum, the colonial past plays a significant role in Europe’s more recent relations with the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa. With colonialism being ‘silently inscribed in the genes of the European integration project since its origins’ (Pace and Roccu 2020: 2), European policies developed from the imperial policies of single European states during colonial times into the quasi-imperial policy of the common European bloc. The ENP marked the crystallization of Europe’s imperial logic vis-à-vis its southern (and eastern) borderlands, a development that is intrinsically linked to the remarkably altered nature and self-perception of the European Union and its member states after 2004. From that period onwards, the EU has been conspicuously relating to its southern periphery as a ‘normative empire’, promoting the adoption of European rules and practices by MENA states, and cementing conspicuous core-periphery patterns of interaction, a process that ultimately serves European economic and security interests.

The ways in which this process works in practice is the topic of the next chapter.