Taking the Lead Where Others Don't[1]

Suggesting Pillars for Conflict Resolution Intervention Led by the European Union

Executive Summary

4. June 2018 by George Ghali

The conflict in Syria, considered to be the worst humanitarian crisis the world has faced since World War II, continues to have devastating effects on its people. It is also having an increasingly destabilising impact on the wider region, through the mass influx of refugees, and other impacts such as community tension, risk of spill over and spread of violent fundamentalist groups across the region.

The mass influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey resulted in additional strains on communities already suffering from under-development and social, economic and political crises. Lebanon in particular hosts around 1.5 million Syrians[2], making it the country with the highest number of refugees per capita. Considering the staggering demographic influx, it is increasingly clear that the status quo is unsustainable.

The tensions resulting from the war in Syria, the humanitarian and development needs, and the influx of refugees, could lead to further destabilisation in the region, in particular Lebanon. Violent extremist groups persistently try to mobilise among the desperate refugee population to find new recruits. The size of the refugee influx, and the incapacity of Lebanese state institutions to manage such crisis alone, could further destabilise Lebanon. This instability would create further threats to Europe's interest in a more stable Mediterranean region. The EU witnessed an unforeseen irregular displacement of refugees and migrants generating further risks. To provide for its own security, Europe will have to further step in and play a role in conflict management with respect to the Syrian civil war.

The objectives of the EU in the conflict in Syria indicate a clear 'bench position' with regard to the EU role in conflict solving. The Institutions are therefore awaiting other actors - such as Member States, the USA and the UN - to successfully reach their expected results regarding the conflict. The reluctant role it plays is generated mostly from the unwelcomed interventions in the conflict that is already heavy with the violations to the laws of war. However, for the EU to have any influence on the shape of the solution to the conflict and the future of Syria, it has to play a greater 'point-guard' role. Having said that, the EU should bypass the strong positions

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and roles of parties to the conflict in Syria – such as Tehran, Moscow, Ankara, and Riyad – and fill in entry points that are lacking, such as humanitarian protection. But also, the EU could play the role of pacesetter when it comes to setting up justice and post-conflict mechanisms. This vacuum, in certain policy areas essential for the outcomes of the conflict in Syria, could provide the EU with leverage to influence the outcomes of the conflict in Syria, but most importantly reach the level of security and stability in the Mediterranean that satisfies the imperatives of Europe.

Overview of EU policies and action with regard to the Syrian conflict

The tactics adopted by the European Union (EU) in its steps to solve the conflict in Syria, ranged from lobbying for UNSC resolutions, to sanctions and other forms of peace building diplomacy.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the EU has suspended all forms of agreements with the Syrian Arab Republic. On that track, in May 2011, the EU put a halt to the bilateral cooperation programs with the Government of Syria under the European Neighbourhood Policy, and the participation of the Syrian authorities in EU regional programs. Loans and assistance in Syria by the European Investment Bank were also interrupted.

In addition to such measures, the EU has issued a series of sanctions aiming at further pressuring the Syrian regime, and most importantly limiting the sources of income that could keep the conflict going. The sanctions fall under the EU's autonomous Common Foreign and Security Policy powers. They include measures and sanctions framed under travel bans, freezing of assets and arms embargoes.[3] The latter generated divisions among EU Member States, leading to amendments in 2013. Despite aspects of the arms embargo being eased due to disagreements between Member States, the latter still agree that arms trade with Syria should not take place. The changes in such restrictions describe the diverting positions of the EU Member States, making it more difficult for the Commission to have a strong aligned view vis-à-vis the conflict.

The power dynamics in the EU became divided under different camps, making the role of the High Representative and the policies of the Union more challenging. At the beginning of the conflict, France and the UK were in the lead to act aggressively against Assad and put a quick end to the conflict through military intervention, together with Denmark, Italy, Spain and Belgium. On the other hand, Germany and the Netherlands have always appealed for a more robust and active role for the UNSC, and for avoiding any military intervention.[4] A recent manifestation of such divisions was the joint attack of the US, France and the UK on 13 April 2018. While France and the UK were beating the drums of war, Germany remained cautious of advocating any military intervention in Syria. However, Germany ended up welcoming the attack after the fact.[5] The constant polarisation of strategies among the power holders of EU foreign policy, the EU will maintain its position as a passive bystander.

In April 2017, more than five years after the beginning of the Syrian conflict, the EU adopted a series of objectives constituting its views on the conflict in Syria and its solution. The EU considers that only a political solution, in line with UNSC Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communique, will ensure lasting stability in Syria, and the elimination of Da'esh and

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[3] A full list of provisions could be found on the following link: https://europeansanctions.com/eu-sanctions-in-force/syria/
[4] Pol Morillas, "Action by Reaction: Assessing the EU's Response to the Syrian Crisis", *EU Bulletin,* October 26, 2013. Accessed on: http://www.eubulletin.com/988-action-reaction-assessing-eus-response-syrian-crisis.html
[5] Paul Taylor, "Emmanuel Macron's Coalition of the Willing", *Politco EU,* May 3, 2018. P19

other UN-listed terrorist entities in the country. This puts the EU in firm opposition to any military solution to the conflict.[6]

The EU strategy on Syria therefore highlights policy objectives covering the below areas:[7]

a) An end to the war through a genuine political transition, in line with UNSCR 2254, negotiated by the parties to the conflict under the auspices of the UN Special Envoy for Syria and with the support of key international and regional actors,

b) Promote a meaningful and inclusive transition in Syria, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, through support for the strengthening of the political opposition,

c) Save lives by addressing the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Syrians across the country in a timely, effective, efficient and principled manner.

d) Promote democracy, human rights and freedom of speech by strengthening Syrian civil society organisations,

e) Promote accountability for war crimes with a view to facilitating a national reconciliation process and transitional justice,

f) Support the resilience of the Syrian population and Syrian society.

The objectives set above set a new outline for the approach of the EU to the Syrian conflict. Despite that, it remains mostly a role that encourages others to take action, and the EU to sit back. These objectives, nevertheless, were not standalone, and the EU did follow up on them. Such change in the policy approach on Syria could indicate a new role for the EU with regard to the conflict. In early 2018, the EU Council finally came to publish conclusions on Syria.[8] The conclusions of the European council come a year following the adoption of the EU strategy on Syria, and weeks after the Douma Chemical attack. They were also adopted days after the UK, France and US attacks in retaliation to the use of chemical weapons. The conclusions also come days before the planned Brussels conference 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the region'.

The conclusions outline the situation in Syria in a comprehensive way and set clear positions of the EU on recent developments, such as the chemical weapon attack in Douma, and on enforced disappearances among others. But more importantly set clear paths on how Europe sees the end of the conflict. The conclusion could set the EU's approach to the conflict resolution, in a way that embeds European values in the outcomes of the political process. The document highlights that the EU will continue to work with Syrian civil society as an essential stakeholder in an inclusive process, to promote democracy and human rights in support of peace and stability in Syria. The Council also advances a clear position with regard to accountability vis-à-vis crimes against humanity committed in the conflict. The conclusions describe the EU's position to the be at the 'forefront of the accountability efforts'[9].

Both the strategy of the EU set in April 2017 and the conclusions of the Council of the European Union in April 2018, could be considered a breakthrough in the EU policies towards the conflict. Despite still being in the passenger seat, the conclusions allow the EU to play a bigger role in parts of the foreign policy vacuum created by the major actors in the Syrian conflict.

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[6] European Commission, "Fact Sheet: The EU and the crisis in Syria", *EU Response to the Syrian Crisis,* Brussels, April 16, 2017. Accessed on: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2018_04_16_syria_factsheet.pdf

[7] Idem

[8] Council of the European Union, "Council Conclusions on Syria", MAMA 59 CFSP/PESC 341 RELEX 318 SY 4 , Accessed on: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/33736/syria-conclusions-7956_18.pdf

[9] Idem, Paragraphs 7 and 10.

However, the ability of the EU and its institutions to bring together Member States into a joint position does not rule out the continuous divisions of Member States with regard to interventions and hands on positions. Aiming at diverting the tension into institutional work, Germany has been instrumental in the establishment of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). Through PESCO, Member States increase their effectiveness in addressing security challenges and advancing towards further integrating and strengthening defence cooperation within the EU framework.[10] Despite PESCO being promoted to be a game changer in EU defence and security, and that the US is 'keeping a close eye'[11] on its proceedings, the joint PESCO projects adopted mostly cover logistics and trainings.[12]

The need for Europe's stronger role in security and joint flexibility in intervening, in addition to the slow start of PESCO, led France to form another process focused on bilateral buy-in, avoiding EU bureaucracy. A process on steroids. Defence ministers of France, Germany, UK, Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands, Denmark and Estonia, will meet in June to sign a letter of intent to put forward plans to develop a common strategic culture. The French-led process will also aim at sharing analysis and risk assessments, and areas that may require intervention and work to coordinate the Member States' forces for future operations.[13]

From the above-mentioned developments one could deduce two main points. The first is that, in the past few years, the EU and its institutions were able to develop a position on the conflict in Syria and are committed to play an active role in the process leading to the future of Syria. Despite the EU not being on the forefront of conflict solving matters, the Council conclusions show a more pro-active role for the EU in its views of the shape of the political process outcomes. In that sense, the EU was able to reach a common vision for its Member States on the conflict in Syria, despite divergence on the tactics to reach it. The second point is the limitation of the EU to create further common perspectives on security and interventions. Defusing the debate through institutional deliberations and structures, PESCO were not able to satisfy the greater ambitions of Member States, resulting in processes taking place outside the Brussels institutions.

Options for a greater EU influence on the outcomes of the conflict in Syria

In the midst of such divisions and a difficult policy environment at home for projecting influence in a conflict solving process, the EU should adopt a more pro-active role in the management and resolution of the conflict in Syria, it should emphasise involvements that respond to European imperatives such as security and stability of the Mediterranean and on the borders of Europe. In that sense, the EU should highlight areas of intervention that do not fall within individual Member States' scope of action and then focus on the gaps. Therefore, the EU should have an interest in broadening its policy options so as to create real leverage where this is otherwise lacking. The choices presented below could constitute a model of intervention for the EU to satisfy its imperatives and most importantly present venues for the EU to have leverage on the outcomes of political talks in Syria. The suggested framework is essentially focusing on the following pillars:

a) Prevent further instability in the Mediterranean
b) Promote accountability and justice
c) Support human rights in the region, investing in positive models.

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[10] Georgi Gotev, "EU defence ministers hold 'historic' first meeting in PESCO format", *Euractiv,* March 7, 2018. Accessed on: https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/news/eu-ministers-hold-historic-first-meeting-in-pesco-format/
[11] Aaron Mehta, "US cautiously watching EU military proposal", *Defense News,* February 13, 2018. Accessed on: https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2018/02/13/us-cautiously-watching-eu-military-proposal/
[12] Council of the European Union, "COUNCIL DECISION establishing the list of projects to be developed under PESCO", Brussels, March 1, 2018. Accessed on: http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6393-2018-INIT/en/pdf
[13] Paul Taylor, "Emmanuel Macron's Coalition of the Willing", *Politco EU,* May 3, 2018. P19

Prevent further instability in the Mediterranean

The main pillar for the suggested EU approach to the conflict in Syria is to recognise that the conflict does not take place in a vacuum. The Syrian war has created a series of ripple effects that have challenged global structures, overflowed migratory routes and most importantly catalysed further polarisation and tensions in the already vulnerable neighbouring countries. The EU did recognise the latter fact and stepped in by providing financial assistance and developing programmes with states in the region, individualising their response in one-on-one compacts that respond to the vulnerabilities of these states. For example, the Jordan Compact is promoted by the Jordanian government as 'a New Holistic Approach between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the International Community to deal with the Syrian Refugee Crisis'.[14] The Jordanian government rationalises the need for this compact as it 'has assumed a heavy burden due to its hosting of refugees and is carrying out a global public good on behalf of the international community.'

In addition to such steps, the EU has been at the forefront of bringing further attention to the conflict and its generated effects. The EU has hosted, for the last two years, a fundraising conference aimed at generating the required funds for the response. The European Union's international conference 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region', better known as the Brussels Conference, essentially aims at assessing where the international community stands in fulfilling commitments made to address the Syrian crisis. As in all its versions, the conference oversees important elements that would foster a rights-based approach to the crisis, the lack of which is behind the flawed response of host countries, in particular Lebanon.

The talks in Brussels focus on the additional efforts required to meet the growing needs of those affected by the crisis, reaffirm existing pledges, encourage additional support to people in need inside Syria and in neighbouring countries as well as to the respective host communities, and finally highlight the support for a successful outcome of the UN led intra-Syrian talks. Visibly, the stated objectives of the conference failed to address the crucial aspect of durable solutions and effective demographic burden sharing. As a matter of fact, the scope of the crisis requires out of the box solutions. The traditional approach of providing host countries with humanitarian assistance, financial support, loans and grants will certainly address some of the economic and social implications of the crisis, but falls short of dealing with the political consequences, impact on social cohesion, and the possibility of violent conflicts erupting in the future as a result of the demographic changes. Therefore, durable solutions should be on the table including short to mid-term strategies aiming at sharing the demographic burden of refugees, especially in the case of fragile countries such as Lebanon, where one third of the population is made up of refugees, Palestinian and Syrian.

By avoiding or deprioritising such discussions, the EU, and the international community, is just ignoring the accumulation of elements that will likely lead to demographic changes and violent conflicts. While humanitarian assistance is always needed and will never reach sufficient levels, the world should look at the crisis from a different perspective. Seeking durable solutions is in the direct interest of refugees, host countries such as Lebanon, as well as the European Union and its members.

In light of the above, and in order for the EU to ensure that no further instability is created in the Mediterranean, further engagement and leverage should be made. Even if international financial support to the Lebanese government to deal with the humanitarian consequences of the influx of refugees has been substantial in absolute figures, it falls short of the needs of the

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[14] "The Jordan Compact: A New Holistic Approach between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the International Community to deal with the Syrian Refugee Crisis", *ReliefWeb,* February 7, 2016. Accessed on: https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-compact-new-holistic-approach-between-hashemite-kingdom-jordan-and

Lebanese state, Syrian refugees, and their hosting communities. Material assistance should not be considered the sole requirement of burden sharing. Resettlement, security coordination, humanitarian evacuation, and other forms of sustainable actions must also be part of the international community's support to Lebanon to mitigate risks, fears, and demographic challenges. The support provided must be made conditional on key criteria with regard to the protection of refugees

In that regard, the European Union and EU Member States should adopt the following measures to ensure proper mitigation of conflict in the countries of the region, and prevent further instability:

- Ensure and increase funding to enable direct assistance for refugees for both basic and critical needs to mitigate the effect of restrictive policies adopted by the Lebanese government;
- Intensify efforts to increase the number of places for Syrian refugees globally, including humanitarian admission, or other forms of admission;
- Develop more effective and predictable responses to mass influx situations that will improve responsibility-sharing arrangements to share the burdens of first asylum countries.

Promote accountability and justice

While the international community, and certain EU Member States, are engaged directly in the armed conflict as parties to the conflict, the EU should benefit from this form of impartiality in its role to support measures essential for accountability and justice. Impunity for crimes and atrocities committed in the Syrian conflict is considered by the EU to be unacceptable. The EU accordingly should support the documentation of human rights violations and any other evidence - gathering efforts that could be the basis of any future legal action.

Such work should be translated in greater support to the Commission of Inquiry and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism. More importantly, the EU should play a stronger role in providing backing to such mechanisms and convene Member States to provide the political backing to expand their mandate, autonomy and independence. Such mechanisms face strong pressure in their work, whether from parties to the conflict on the ground, or from their backers in the Human Rights Council and the Security Council. The EU should use its leverage to promote its role, and consequently influence states to create the required space for such mechanisms to properly document and monitor the situation in Syria.

Since all members of the EU are members of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the EU and its Member States constitute the largest donors to the ICC. Although previous mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court for former Yugoslavia (ICTY), have put the EU in a difficult position with certain member states, the support of the EU to a justice mechanism having jurisdiction over atrocities committed with regard to the Syrian conflict could be better accepted. In that regard, the EU should lead and advance its vision of accountability and justice and develop its blueprint.

Leading the debate and developing the accountability mechanism for Syria would position the EU early on in the trajectory of the conflict in Syria. This positioning would give further leverage for the EU in shaping the outcomes of such procedures and have a stronger role in the transitionary period of Syria.

Support human rights in the region, investing in positive models

Most importantly, the EU is under great pressure to prove that the European values of democracy and human rights are successful. In times of heightening political changes and the rise of political movements advocating limits to freedoms and rights, the EU is invited to further support human rights in the region and elevate it as the universal recipe for the respect of individual rights and the realisation of a durable peace.

In that sense, the EU should be engaged in promoting programmes that support the work of human rights defenders in advocating for better human rights in their countries. The EU should also develop stronger due diligence in programmatic support to governments in the region. These programs should help governments in the region enhance good governance and protection of human rights. Most importantly, the EU's engagement in the region should not be limited to programs and funding, but the EU should stand against human rights violations and denounce acts of human rights violation.

The EU considers human rights defenders (HRDs) to be the 'indispensable allies'[15], a bold depiction of the relationship between the EU and defenders around the world. The guidelines of the External Action Service (EEAS) to its delegations, show clear steps to support HRDs by coordinating closely and sharing information with HRDs, providing visible recognition for the work of HRDs, and observing/attending trials against human rights defenders.[16]

Several Lebanese citizens were arrested for social media posts and articles in 2017.[17] The EU delegation in Lebanon remained at close watch and coordination with Lebanese human rights organisations. However, support to HRDs is also translated in coherent policies in Lebanon. Often, EU support to countries in the region, in particular Lebanon, is not in line with its human rights policy in the country and often weakens the work that human rights defenders try to achieve.

In November 2016, the EU and Lebanon signed the Partnership Priorities plus Compact (PP). The PP again confirms 'The respect of democratic principles and fundamental human rights constitutes an essential element of the relations between the EU and Lebanon.'[18] However, this confirmation is not reflected in the Annex through concrete commitments, nor in the Outline of the Single Support Framework 2017-2020 (SSF). The PP and the SSF Outline focus on the following priorities:

1. Security and Countering Terrorism
2. Governance and Rule of Law
3. Fostering Growth and Job Opportunities
4. Migration and Mobility
5. Mechanisms for Dialogue and Mutual Coordination

However, the SSF Outline, which allocates the funds for these priorities, only prioritises 'Promoting an Environment Conducive to Growth and Job Creation (30%); Fostering Local Governance and Socio-Economic Development (30%); and Promoting Stability and Enhancing Security and Countering Terrorism (25%). None of the specific objectives of the SSF Outline aim at promoting respect for human rights. The SFF Outline focuses on security

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[15] "EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders", June 21, 2016, accessed on: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/3958/EU%20Guidelines%20on%20Human%20Rights%20Defenders

[16] European Union, "ENSURING PROTECTION -EUROPEAN UNION GUIDELINES ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS" Accessed on: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_guidelines_hrd_en.pdf

[17] ALEF, *Annual report 2017,* https://alefliban.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/annual_report_2017_v03_-2.pdf

[18] Annex to the EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities plus Compact, p.1, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/11/pdf/st03001_en16_docx_pdf/

and supporting Lebanon in dealing with the presence of large numbers of refugees – improving refugee management rather than legal protections, a needs-based instead of a rights-based approach. The Partnership Priorities and SSF Outline thus show a shift away from human rights and the rule of law, contrary to what the EU itself still describes as an 'essential element'. Although the EU can still support human rights and refugee protection initiatives through other instruments, such as EIDHR and ECHO programming, the lack of such principles from the cooperation priorities is concerning.

The EU's support of government programmes should also be focused on promoting human rights values explicitly. Funding of the EU, prior to the refugee crisis, always aimed at incentivising government agencies to uphold human rights values as conditions of fund reception. The EU should aim in such programmes to better integrate human rights protection at the core of the mandate of the institutions and not as additional outcomes. For example, the EU and EU Member States are strong actors engaged in Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Lebanon. Although there is an increased focus on human rights in the different SSR programmes in Lebanon, the existing human rights mechanisms, supported or mainstreamed through SSR programmes, have limited impact. The Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) project, the Ras Beirut Police Station pilot, and the creation of human rights departments in the Lebanese Armed Forces, the Internal Security Forces, and the Director General of General Security, demonstrate security agencies' willingness to bring about human rights reforms. However, for now, the absence of political will, civilian oversight, and weak capacity are significant challenges to these reforms and must be addressed. The EU should commit to current human rights mechanisms in security agencies and allow Lebanese civil society to take part in the decisions that will affect their lives. Many SSR programmes supported by the EU or EU Member States would benefit from such input, which would not only allow them to evaluate their own impact but would also increase their local ownership and legitimacy. To conclude, SSR donors such as the EU and security agencies have to acknowledge the interdependency of technical support and 'soft' power in security reform. Both are complementary and essential in creating sustainable reform.

Another imperative step essential to advocate the human rights centric model, is also reflected in strong positions in condoning violations committed or threats to democratic practices. In promoting the centrality of human rights in durable peace, the EU should refrain from supporting government measures that contradict such values, and often put at risk the sustainability of peace and stability. In Lebanon for example, authorities conducted mass security raids in Arsal in June 2017, where over 350 Syrians were arrested. The following month, a statement by the Army announced the death of four Syrians in custody. According to an expert doctor, the photographs of the bodies show injuries that are consistent with physical torture and contradict statements made by the Lebanese Army that the deaths were a result of natural causes. The lack of transparency during investigations hampers efforts to establish effective evidence-based strategies to fight torture. Investigations led by military authorities are also a problem because they prevent independence in due process. In follow up to this incident, the EU did not issue any statement that could send clear messages to the Lebanese government on such acts that account to crimes under the UNCAT.

Similarly, in May 2018 and following up on the long-awaited elections, European independent monitors quickly issued a preliminary report. The report headlines that the elections were 'well conducted elections, but action needed to improve access to political power for women.'[19] The report of the European monitors provided an opposing view, or tone at least, to Lebanese

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[19] "Well conducted elections, but action needed to improve access to political power for women," Chief Observer Elena Valenciano", May 8, 2018 Accessed on: https://eeas.europa.eu/election-observation-missions/eom-%E2%80%8Blebanon-2018/44215/well-conducted-elections-action-needed-improve-access-political-power-women-chief-observer_en

independent monitors that reported at least 3,000 violations on election day.[20] Following the elections series of viral Facebook posts that shows malpractice were circulated, in addition to protests, appeals to the Constitutional Council, and NGO reports. In light of such post-election atmosphere, the European monitors' statement could be considered detached from reality and aimed to further appease government actors.

The EU should therefore adopt an approach that would stand stronger on the side of the human rights values and democratic practices and insure their proper functioning. The EU has great interest in advocating the success of its values and bring trust in them. For example, Syrian activists in Lebanon, that witnessed first-hand 'a democratic process', with the absence of any in Syria for the last decades, have decreasing hope and optimism of what democracy could bring. The EU should be at the forefront of advocates for human rights, and demonstrate for citizens and decision makers, that sustainable peace and stability can only be achieved through the respect and protection of human rights.

Conclusion

The beginning of the conflict in Syria exposed the EU and European states to a series of threats affecting the security, stability and interests of the continent. The EU and its institutions were presented with a difficult challenge to respond to such threats by bringing its own values to its interventions. Most challenging was the ability of the EU to unify the interests and approaches of the 27 Member States and act in a concerted fashion as well as have a strong leverage in the shape of the outcomes of the conflict in Syria. Although the EU has adopted a series of positions, conclusions and sanctions targeting the Syrian regime, the spread of ISIS, and mitigating risks of spill-over, the response of the EU remains passive and unable to provide the Union with a solid seat among other States fully engaged in the conflict in Syria.

The latter situation, presents an opportunity for the EU to have leverage to the shape of the post conflict situation, and the outcomes of conflict resolution where other states don't. The paper has suggested three main pillars where the EU can have an active role in conflict resolution in Syria. Essentially, they should be presented as particular approaches to secure Europe's security and interest in a stable Mediterranean.

In order to prevent further instability in the Mediterranean, the EU should continue its engagement and efforts in being the convener to bring financial support to countries affected by the conflict in Syria. The annual conference 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region', is yet one example of EU effort in bringing international attention to the crisis, and channel humanitarian aid and support to implement the UN and governments' crisis response plans. However, such engagement alone, will not ensure the sustainable support to vulnerable communities and refugee needs, and affected countries would have difficulty preserve this form of stability. In that sense, the EU should further invest in preventing future conflict associated by the refugee crisis and extended vulnerability. A strong effort should be made in designing more effective durable solutions to support countries in the region with the heavy demographic burden.

The promotion of accountability and justice constitute a second entry point for the EU where it could have leverage in influencing the outcomes of the conflict in Syria. Drafting the blueprints for transitional justice in Syria, or other accountability mechanisms in an area with little influence by other actors on the international scene. It is often suggested that the EU should play a more hands-on role in developing such models and mechanisms which would allow the Union to be a stronger player in influencing the post-conflict chapter. The latter entry

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[20] Jeanine Jalkh, "Législatives libanaises : les violations à la pelle seront soumises au Conseil constitutionnel" ,*L'Orient le Jour,* May 8, 2018. https://www.lorientlejour.com/elections/article/1114285/des-violations-a-la-pelle-seront-soumises-au-conseil-constitutionnel.html

point should be accompanied by strong support to documentation, and inquiry assignments currently taking place. Such support should not only take the form of financial support but should also aim at ensuring the presence of a supporting ecosystem diplomatically and politically.

The EU could also play a stronger role in presenting a successful model. The values shared by the EU of democratic practices and human rights should be presented as universal ideals. The EU should be further engaged with countries of the region and stand strong on the side of human rights, bringing evidence in the region that human rights protection and respect are essential building blocks for durable peace and stability. This track is also evident in insuring longer security and stability for Europe and the Mediterranean, a vital interest for Europe.