

The European Union and the Mediterranean

Posted on Saturday 22nd January 2011

Michelle Pace (</schools/government-society/departments/political-science-international-studies/staff/profiles/pace-michelle.aspx>) has recently published a book chapter on “The EU and the Mediterranean” in an edited handbook on The European Union and Global Governance edited by Jens-Uwe Wunderlich and David J Bailey and published by Routledge (December 2010).

EU-Mediterranean (Med) relations have, since the 1960s to date, come to symbolise the parallel shift in the policy-making literature from ‘government to governance’. This new process of EU governing of Mediterranean relations at a distance has been characterised by a move from ‘rowing to steering’, or in other words, a new process of governing which aims to encourage and privilege Mediterranean partners’ initiatives in this relation. On paper and in principal, this move has shifted EU policies in the Mediterranean from top-down, bureaucratic and technical control of Mediterranean relations to cooperative, joint, co-ownership of EU-Mediterranean relations’ processes, with the aim of having greater visibility of this process amongst citizens. In practice, this relationship is still fraught with huge challenges, not least due to the recent negative course which the Middle East conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has taken, the embedded distrust between Arab Mediterranean partners and the lack of a unified voice from these same partners.

In this chapter, Pace conceptually draws upon Bang (2003)’s definition of governance as an interactive mode of political communication and applies this (understanding of governance) to European Union (EU) - Mediterranean relations. Moreover, she moves beyond relations between political authorities to include lay people in Mediterranean communities, that is, the direct recipients of EU policies on the Mediterranean. Mediterranean communities are thus taken as structured and being continuously structured by the values, norms, and authority structures not just of their Mediterranean political systems (or what Khouri (2009) calls an assortment of values ranging from tribal, Arab nationalism, state-centred to democratic values) but also of international organisations such as the EU. Thus, an interdisciplinary approach is applied here: one that adopts the work of Bang (2003) to EU-Mediterranean relations. EU governance of the Mediterranean is thus not only about securing the effectiveness of political decisions and actions, but also about how political and social order is constituted (through the securitisation of the Mediterranean) and about freedoms and equality (or lack of) in the Mediterranean region.

How far do EU policies towards the Mediterranean go in empowering the very targets of these policies, that is, people in the Mediterranean? Do EU policies encourage the everyday political engagement of Mediterranean peoples? Why is it that, at its grassroots, Arab society remains passive and frustrated both with its Arab regimes as well as external actors like the EU?

Further details available from: [Routledge \(http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9781857435092/\)](http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9781857435092/)