

Preface and Acknowledgements

As is the case with most books, this volume has a rather long history. I first started thinking about the importance of borders and core–periphery relations in Europe’s interaction with the neighbouring states in the Middle East and North Africa in 2009–2010. Back then, two of my then-colleagues at St Antony’s College at Oxford University, Dimitar Bechev and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, invited me to contribute to a volume on *Mediterranean Frontiers* they were editing. The result was a book chapter, ‘Borderlands: The Middle East and North Africa as Europe’s Southern Buffer Zone’, in which I first proposed to study the ties that bind the European Union and its single member states to their so-called southern neighbours by considering the latter as Europe’s southern borderlands. A research grant I subsequently obtained from the European Research Council (ERC) gave me the opportunity to do exactly that: to undertake an in-depth and systematic exploration of different aspects and dimensions of the relationship between Europe and the neighbouring states in the Middle East and North Africa from the perspective of expanding borders and orders within quasi-imperial relations. The research project, which ran from October 2011 to March 2017, involved a dozen research associates and research assistants, forged extremely fruitful collaborations with different communities of scholars, and produced various publications on very specific aspects of the relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East from a borderlands perspective.

This book partly wraps up the overall results of the research project, but it also delves into aspects that the project left unexplored. It also reflects my ever-evolving thinking on the multifaceted relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East, which takes issue with the concepts of ‘normative power Europe’ and ‘Fortress Europe’ alike.

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