

THE BEGIN-SADAT CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES  
BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY  
*BESA Colloquia on Strategy and Diplomacy No. 19*

---

## Europe and the Middle East

© The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies  
Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 52900, Israel  
<http://www.besacenter.org>  
ISSN 0793-1050  
June 2006



### **The Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies**

The BESA Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University was founded by Dr. Thomas O. Hecht, a Canadian Jewish community leader. The Center is dedicated to the memory of Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, who concluded the first Arab-Israel peace agreement. The Center, a non-partisan and independent institute, seeks to contribute to the advancement of Middle East peace and security by conducting policy-relevant research on strategic subjects, particularly as they relate to the national security and foreign policy of Israel.

*Mideast Security and Policy Studies* serve as a forum for publication or re-publication of research conducted by BESA associates. Publication of a work by BESA signifies that it is deemed worthy of public consideration but does not imply endorsement of the author's views or conclusions. *BESA Colloquia on Strategy and Diplomacy* summarize the papers delivered at conferences and seminars held by the Center, for the academic, military, official and general publics. In sponsoring these discussions, the BESA Center aims to stimulate public debate on, and consideration of, contending approaches to problems of peace and war in the Middle East. *A listing of recent BESA publications can be found at the end of this booklet.*

### **International Advisory Board**

Founder of the Center and Chairman of the Advisory Board: Dr. Thomas O. Hecht  
Members: Prof. Moshe Arens, Mrs. Neri Bloomfield, Mrs. Madeleine Feher, Gen. Alexander M. Haig, Ms. Judy Ann Hecht, Ms. Marion Hecht, Mr. Robert Hecht, Prof. Riva Heft-Hecht, Hon. Shlomo Hillel, Sir Robert Rhodes James, Mr. Isi Leibler, Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, Mr. Robert K. Lifton, Maj. Gen. (res.) Daniel Matt, Rt. Hon. Brian Mulroney, Maj. Gen. (res.) Ori Orr, Mr. Seymour D. Reich, Amb. Meir Rosenne, Hon. Yitzhak Shamir, Lt. Gen. (res.) Dan Shomron, Amb. Zalman Shoval, Amb. Norman Spector, Mr. Muzi Wertheim

### **International Academic Advisory Board**

Desmond Ball, *Australian National University*, Eliot A. Cohen *SAIS Johns Hopkins University*, Irwin Cotler *McGill University*, Steven R. David *Johns Hopkins University*, Yehezkel Dror *Hebrew University*, Lawrence Freedman *King's College*, Efraim Karsh *King's College*, Robert J. Lieber *Georgetown University*, John J. Mearsheimer *University of Chicago*, Bruce M. Russett *Yale University*

### **Research Staff**

*BESA Center Director:* Prof. Efraim Inbar

*Senior Research Associates:* Dr. Zeev Bonen, Prof. Stuart A. Cohen, Dr. Gil Feiler, Dr. Jonathan Fox, Eng. Aby Har-Even, Dr. Hillel Frisch, Prof. Eytan Gilboa, Dr. Rami Ginat, Dr. Avi Kober, Prof. Amikam Nachmani, Amb. Itzhak Oren, Maj. Gen. (res.) Avraham Rotem, Prof. Shmuel Sandler, Dr. Dany Shoham, Dr. Shlomo Shpiro, Dr. Max Singer and Prof. Gerald Steinberg

*Research Associates:* Dr. Tsilla Hershco, Dr. Mordechai Kedar, Dr. Zeev Maghen, Dr. Jonathan Rynhold, Dr. Ron Schleifer

*Director of Public Affairs:* David Weinberg

*Program Coordinator:* Hava Waxman Koen

*Production Editor (English):* Tamara Sternlieb

*Production Editor (Hebrew):* Alona Briner Rozenman



Dear Reader,

This monograph presents the proceedings of the conference “Europe and the Middle East” held on January 11, 2006 at Bar-Ilan University, by the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies and Le Cercle, Paris, an organization of pro-Israeli French citizens.

The conference addressed a variety of aspects of the important and extremely pertinent subject of European-Middle Eastern relations, including EU-Israel relations, Israel, Europe and the US, Britain and the Middle East, the European position on terrorism and the Middle East, French-Israeli relations, and Europe and Turkey.

The conference marked the beginning of joint collaboration between BESA and Le Cercle, which we look forward to continuing in the future.

We wish you pleasant reading.

Prof. Efraim Inbar  
BESA Center

Mr. Fabrice Chiche  
Le Cercle



## Table of Contents

1.	EU-Israel Relations <b>Ramiro Cibrian-Uzal</b>	1
2.	Israel, Europe and the US: Accounting for Transatlantic Disagreements over Middle East Policy <b>Emanuele Ottolenghi</b>	7
3.	Britain and the Middle East <b>Jonathan Rynhold</b>	19
4.	Unconscious Aspects of the Relationship between Europe and the Middle East <b>Daniel Sibony</b>	29
5.	French-Israeli Relations in the Twenty-First Century <b>Tsilla Hershco</b>	35
6.	Turkey: Trends and Attitudes towards the European Union <b>Amikam Nachmani</b>	43
7.	Israel and Europe <b>Harry Kney-Tal</b>	53



## EU-ISRAEL RELATIONS

---

*Ramiro Cibrian-Uzal*

I will begin with a very categorical sentence: relations between the European Union and Israel are very good and improving. Let me also say that this has mostly been the case.

When addressing the subject of EU-Israel relations, I always like to recall something that sometimes tends to be forgotten. Both the European Union and Israel are products of the same event. They are both international entities that emerged after World War II. They are the results of World War II. Of course, Europe existed earlier and the Jewish People existed much, much earlier. But the European Union as a political entity and the modern State of Israel were created after World War II. It was very clear that after World War II there was a determination to change a number of things, both in the Jewish World and in Europe and as a result, both political entities emerged.

I am not an expert on history. But to the extent that I am familiar with history, my understanding is that all the European member states of the United Nations voted for the partition and for the creation of the State of Israel in the year 1947, which constitutes an extremely important point of reference. Europe was in favor of partition, was in support of the creation of the State of Israel, and since then there has been a history of diplomatic relations and, in my view, extremely fruitful cooperation in many areas to this day.

I could highlight some of the support Israel has received from European countries, including the extremely important supply of armaments during the War of Independence by Czechoslovakia, very significant aid that was provided at the critical moment by what was then Czechoslovakia to the State of Israel. Another very important point was the French cooperation with Israel in the

---

Ambassador Ramiro Cibrian-Uzal serves as Head of the European Commission Delegation to the State of Israel. He previously served as Ambassador and Head of the European Union Delegation to the Czech Republic and served in the European Commission's Directorates General for Environment, International Trade and External Relations.

nuclear field in the 1950's and 1960's, which gave Israel very important strategic capabilities. So, Czechoslovakia and France, both European countries, have cooperated strategically with Israel at critical times in its history.

Therefore when people emphasize the difficulties or criticize what has happened in our bilateral relations over the last five years, during the hectic years of the *Intifada*, I think it is necessary to keep this fundamental background in mind. Israel and the European Union have remained partners and as a matter of fact, the European Union is today Israel's most important trading partner. Forty per cent of Israeli imports come from Europe and about 34 per cent of Israeli exports go to the European Union.

The European Union is very conscious of Israel's important strategic partnership with the United States, focusing on defense, and is not in competition in that respect. However, the European Union has a number of competitive advantages to offer, including geography as well as culture, history and personal relations, and in spite of the difficulties of recent years, has offered Israel what in practice could represent a second strategic partnership based on the economy.

Israel and the European Union have also faced a number of differences and difficulties on how to approach some problems, particularly during the years 2000-2004. However, in spite of these difficulties, there was a determination, both in the European Union and in Israel to restore relations to a level of normality, and during the year 2005, in the last year of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's mandate, which was also the first year of my period of service as Head of the European Commission's Delegation to Israel, I experienced none of the difficulties of the years 2000 to 2004. The progress that we have made in strengthening and improving relations between the European Union and Israel has been spectacular. Many factors have contributed to this progress and certainly the leadership exercised by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was one of the fundamental factors.

The legal basis for relations between the European Union and Israel is the Association Agreement. This is one of the most ambitious agreements that the European Union can sign with a non-European country. The EU-Israel Association Agreement was signed in the year 1995 and entered into force in the year 2000. It

covers trade and economic relations, but also bilateral relations in areas such as science, the environment, and many other aspects of society, culture, education, etc.

Nevertheless, in 2004, following the last enlargement that added ten new member states, it was considered necessary to strengthen relations with the European Union's immediate neighbors on the basis of shared values, including democracy, fundamental freedoms, human rights, rule of law and respect for minorities, in the context of what is known as the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The idea of offering Israel a major partnership focused on the economic area is reflected in the ENP Action Plan agreed upon between the European Union and Israel at the end of 2004.

So, one might ask, what is the limit? What in practice is the European Union offering Israel in order to strengthen relations across the board? Sometimes in academic discussions the issue of full, regular membership is raised. Let me be very categorical on this point. There has never been any government in Israel, any competent authority in Israel, which has posed the issue of membership. Therefore, in my view, the question of membership is not relevant.

If, one day, the issue is raised by Israel then of course the European Union will have to address it. But I assume that it has not been raised so far, because the Israeli authorities have considered that membership in the EU would not be in Israel's interest.

So if full membership is not on the agenda, what is? What we are offering in practice is what we call full participation, or full integration, in the European Union's single market. What is the European Union's single market? In economic terms, as far as the internal movement of goods, services, people and capital is concerned, the European Union is very similar to the United States. If we consider, for example, the movement of goods in the US market, we know that a truck of beer that is produced, for example, in Milwaukee, can be sold anywhere in the US without any restrictions and with no customs clearances. Budweiser beer produced in Milwaukee can be sold in California or in Florida without any limitations.

In the last decade, we have achieved a similar single market in Europe, so that a truck of Heineken beer produced in the Netherlands can be sold today in Spain or in Italy or in Sweden without passing any border controls. And what applies to goods also applies to the movement of people, to the movement of services and to the movement of capital. This is quite impressive because we have a single market in an economic block of 450 million people with a high income. Average income in the European Union is a little bit higher than in Israel, but similar, in the order of \$20,000 per capita. While we have good relations with Israel, Israel is currently not a full participant in the European Union's single market. We are offering Israel full participation like other privileged neighbors of the European Union.

However, we are still far from reaching that point. The fact that the European Union is Israel's most important trading partner in goods is reassuring, but in order to participate fully in the European Union's single market it is necessary to carry out the huge task of adaptation of legislation, of harmonization of standards, of creating a level playing field for economic actors. If Israel were to have an ambition to accept the European Union's offer of integration into the EU's single market, it would be necessary to carry out the massive task of harmonization of standards and of economic rules, so that Israel could be fully integrated.

The relationship between the EU and Israel is already good. In terms of the free movement of people for example, Israeli citizens can travel without visa requirements to any country in the European Union. That is a positive development, but is it enough? I will not enter the details of the Schengen system, but suffice it to say that on the basis of the existing European treaties, European citizens can travel around the European Union without restriction. Unless they are on a police wanted list, they can travel around the EU with a national identity card and cannot be refused entry. So, in practice, it is not necessary for them to have a passport.

In the Schengen area it is possible to travel without immigration controls at the internal borders. But not all the member countries of the European Union at the present time are members of Schengen. Some of them (the UK, Ireland) do not want to participate fully in the Schengen system and this is respected. Others, like the new member states still have to comply with a

number of requirements as regards the quality of their border controls in order to join Schengen.

But regardless of these technicalities the reality is that any citizen of the European Union, whether from new Europe or old Europe, from new member states or old member states, can travel without restriction inside the European Union on the basis of a recognized identity card. This is an example of an area where much work would have to be done between the European Union and Israel before we could have free movement of people or include Israel in the Schengen system.

The European Union has made this proposal in concrete terms in the action plan that we have presented to Israel and it is now very much up to Israel to decide how far it would like to go in strengthening relations with the European Union. I have stressed economic integration in the single market. There is of course far more than this in the action plan, including, for example, cooperation against terrorism, but the most significant component is economic.

Let me just conclude by emphasizing that the European Union is pleased with the quality of its relations with Israel. We have seen some misunderstandings over the past few years and some difficulties have been overcome. We know very well that today the European Union is a player in the Middle East and that it is assuming roles that it has not played before, for example through specific European security and defense missions, such as the one at Rafah, and the operation to strengthen the capabilities of the Palestinian police. This is a reflection of the improved relations that have been consolidated within the last year and we are very pleased with these developments.

How far will it be possible to go in upgrading EU-Israel relations and strengthening our partnership? The answer to that question lies to a very large extent with Israel. The European Union, for its part, is prepared to take steps in the direction of setting up a new, major economic partnership with Israel and will go as far as the Israeli authorities are prepared to go.



## **ISRAEL, EUROPE AND THE US: ACCOUNTING FOR TRANSATLANTIC DISAGREEMENTS OVER MIDDLE EAST POLICY**

---

*Emanuele Ottolenghi*

If one looks at the ways in which the United States and Europe look at the Middle East and deal with it and one tries to explain transatlantic differences in outlook and policy, one can more or less say the following: in the US, the wide majority of people tend to be more pro-Israel and tend to blame the Arab side or the Palestinian side more; in Europe, the opposite tends to be true.<sup>1</sup>

Of course there are complex assessments of the Arab-Israeli conflict and a profound understanding of the complicated issues involved on both sides of the Atlantic. One can also find some of the positions and ideas that I will attribute to Europe and to the US expressed on both sides of the Atlantic.

Nevertheless, there are different trends, different tendencies, in Europe and in the US, and of course, while one can make strong differentiations between different countries in Europe (and my emphasis is mainly on Western Europe,) this paper focuses on a mood, a mindset and views that are present, and sometimes predominant, in public opinion, in the public sphere and in opinion-making circles.

As evidence of this, let me cite, by way of example, just a few opinion polls, which seem to confirm, or at least to strengthen, this view. A recent survey conducted by the Anti-Defamation League, attempting to assess European attitudes to the Arab-Israeli conflict, offers data strongly corroborating the above characterization. A ten-country survey conducted by the Anti-Defamation League and released in April 2004<sup>2</sup> reveals that, on average, only 23 percent of those interviewed viewed Israel favorably. Thirty-nine percent said that “Israel’s treatment of Palestinians is similar to South Africa’s treatment of blacks during the apartheid regime”. Most Europeans saw Israel’s construction

---

Dr. Emanuele Ottolenghi is Leone Ginzburg Research Fellow in Israel Studies at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies and at the Middle East Centre of St. Anthony’s College, Oxford University.

of a security barrier as illegitimate, reflecting a generally held view, detected by a previous 2002 poll,<sup>3</sup> that though in principle Palestinian terrorism is unjustified (only 14 percent disagreed), Israel's response to terrorism is "excessive".<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, 46 percent of respondents thought that Israel is not an "open and democratic society".<sup>5</sup> The survey also showed a deterioration of Israel's image in the minds of Europeans since a similar ADL poll in 2002.<sup>6</sup> Only 31 percent considered Israel to be a democracy in 2004, down from 38 percent in 2002.<sup>7</sup> Europeans generally believe that the onus is on Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians for the sake of peace and reconciliation. A December 2004 study on transatlantic cooperation conducted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States asked a sample of Americans, French and Germans whether the United States should be putting more "pressure" on Israel or on the Palestinians "in order to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict". Forty-six percent of French and 48 percent of Germans called for more pressure on Israel, while only 16 percent and 18 percent respectively called for more pressure on the Palestinians. By stunning contrast, 22 percent of Americans called for more pressure on Israel, as opposed to 48 percent for more pressure on the Palestinians. This discrepancy of views across the Atlantic is confirmed by the ADL surveys: 44 percent of European respondents in the 2004 survey claimed that their governments' policies were unbiased, whereas 22 percent felt that their governments were biased in favor of Israel. Only 8 percent felt their governments were biased against Israel.<sup>8</sup> Europeans are also less inclined to believe that Israel wants peace than they were in 2002.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, they credited the Palestinian side as being genuinely interested in peace with Israel.<sup>10</sup>

Similar surveys of the American public tend to be the mirror image of European surveys.<sup>11</sup> Americans tend to blame the Palestinians more, and ask their government to pressure Palestinians more. These results provide a small sense of the distance between public opinions on both sides of the Atlantic.

It is of course true that there are important differences, both at the public opinion level and at the policy-making level, among and within European countries. But when the European Union comes together as one, especially in recent times, again one cannot help but notice a remarkable difference between the EU and the US. The following two episodes clarify the gulf of opinion that characterizes transatlantic views of the Middle East:

The first is the Durban Conference in September 2001, where the US soon walked out in protest rather than participate in the anti-Israel hate-fest orchestrated by Arab government representatives and pro-Palestinian NGOs. European delegations, in contrast, decided to stay. The second example is the vote at the UN General Assembly in July 2004 on Israel's security fence, following the International Court of Justice decision in The Hague, where the 25 EU countries came together as one and condemned Israel's construction of the security fence. Again, the difference was striking, with the EU voting to condemn Israel and the US standing by its Middle Eastern ally.

The question is why? Why is there such a difference in attitudes and in the way views are defined on both sides of the Atlantic? My argument is very simple. There are many different factors that affect the difference in outlook and emphasis. Geography for example – the proximity of the Middle East in Europe's case, and demography – Europe's dependence on Middle East immigration, a factor that affects the composition of Europe's immigrant population as opposed to that of the US. There are different levels of energy dependence on the region. There are historical ties. There are, in short, many contributing factors to the different trends in public opinion towards the Middle East.

But the most important cause of the difference is something more profound, more structural and more enduring than the above-mentioned factors. The Palestinian *Intifada*, which began in September 2000, and 9/11 – with all that followed – exposed this difference as a growing rift that is going to become more significant and more pronounced in years to come.

Despite earlier differences between the US and Europe on crucial political issues and crises, including Suez (1956), the 1973 October War and the subsequent oil crisis, there was one thing that kept Europe and the United States very close to one another until the early 1990s: with all of the differences between the two sides and their occasional disagreements, the Middle East was one of the theatres where the Cold War was being fought. On that crucial issue, Europe and the United States had a common vision and a common understanding of the threat and the goal. Disagreements could thus be viewed – and dismissed – as tactical. The overarching goal was never seriously questioned.

Once the Berlin Wall fell and the Cold War was over, that unity of purpose, when it came to the Middle East, slowly withered away. And most important of all, as the Palestinian *Intifada* and 9/11 brought the Middle East to the fore as one of the core issues of our generation and one of the core foci of global politics, transatlantic differences became more pronounced.

There are aggravating factors as well. The Europeans would have probably much preferred to have to deal with a Labor Government in Israel after the 2001 elections and certainly many of them “voted” John Kerry for US President in 2004. But even had a Labor Government been ruling Israel in the five years since the *Intifada* started and had a Democratic administration come to power in the White House after November 2004, still some of these differences would have remained. The kind of animosity and antagonism witnessed at certain stages, mostly during the Iraq crisis between the two sides of the Atlantic, focusing on leadership and on certain policies, was more a symptom of divisions than the actual problem. When it comes to the Middle East, the problem is deeper and more structural.

The following are three useful analytical categories in attempting to try and understand this difference.

The first relates to what can be termed “The Palestino-centric” view of the Middle East, which is predominant in Europe.<sup>12</sup> This view puts the Arab-Israeli conflict at the center of the region, still focusing on an understanding of geopolitics reflected in old Medieval maps of the world. Old Medieval maps are often drawn as three oval spheres intersecting with one another, with Jerusalem at their center. The Palestino-centric view predicates that, over half a century after the UN issued the partition plan, the Palestine question still remains the single most important issue of the region. It is the one issue that complicates all other issues. It is the issue on which all other questions and problems are dependent and it is through solving this issue that one can then make every other problem more manageable.<sup>13</sup>

This perception is not unique to Europe of course, it is much more global. In a recent speech delivered to the diplomatic corps, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized how solving the Arab-Israeli dispute, bringing peace to the Holy Land, will actually bring peace to the

world. So it is not just something that will solve the problems of the region but has global repercussions and resonance. One may excuse and even understand the Holy Father for making such a statement, but such a view is not unique to the Vatican. Many European officials routinely make similar assertions. The view that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at the heart of regional tension is an article of faith among Western European policy makers, as evinced by their resolve to make the “Middle East Peace Process” (i.e. the Israeli-Palestinian peace process) their top diplomatic priority<sup>14</sup> and their emphasis on Israeli-Palestinian peace as an instrument to advance peace in the world.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, the Western European media feeds the assumption that this single issue is the region’s proverbial Gordian knot.<sup>16</sup>

On this issue there is a major difference, especially after 9/11, because the Palestino-centric view also tends to rely upon a vision of the region that is a status quo vision. Europe still tends to support the status quo, the Palestinian-Israeli dispute being the exception to that rule. The American position, after 9/11, has been the opposite: the current US agenda is set against and undermines the status quo.<sup>17</sup>

When it comes to the Arab-Israeli dispute, the US position has been that one needs to address and tackle other regional problems or at least to give them a lot more weight and importance, rather than focus on a conflict, which - at least according to what appears to be the prevalent view in Washington today - is currently not ripe for a comprehensive solution. So one can see a difference in sequencing and a difference in emphasis.

This difference in priorities and emphasis sometimes leads Europe to use the Arab-Israeli conflict as a prism through which to read, understand, analyze, and assess other phenomena. In policy-making circles, there is of course an appreciation of the complexities and nuances of regional policy issues. Not everything is related to the Palestine question, however waving it can sometimes be an excuse. This much is acknowledged. Nevertheless, one frequently hears arguments linking the Arab-Israeli dispute to other regional problems, despite the fact that there is no logical or real connection. Consider Iran’s nuclear program, an issue that is of course of the utmost urgency right now; officials will mutter in private that after all one should understand the Iranians. They are building nuclear weapons

because Israel has them already. It is a defensive posture vis-à-vis the Jewish State. Pundits go even further, suggesting that Israel, not Iran, constitutes the real nuclear threat in the Middle East:

Iran offers no “nuclear threat”. There is not the slightest evidence that it has the centrifuges necessary to enrich uranium to weapons-grade material. The head of the IAEA, Mohamed El Baradei, has repeatedly said his inspectors have found nothing to support American and Israeli claims. Iran has done nothing illegal; it has demonstrated no territorial ambitions nor has it engaged in the occupation of a foreign country - unlike the United States, Britain and Israel. It has complied with its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty to allow inspectors to “go anywhere and see anything” - unlike the US and Israel. The latter has refused to recognise the NPT, and has between 200 and 500 thermonuclear weapons targeted at Iran and other Middle Eastern states.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, if one talks to officials in the Arab world, and especially in the Persian Gulf, they tend to take a slightly different view (although that again depends whether the conversation is on or off the record). Recently, their public statements have begun to acknowledge the threatening nature of Iran’s nuclear program.<sup>19</sup> They do not see Iran’s nuclear program only as something that threatens or may threaten Israel. It worries them first and foremost, because it is an indication of Iran’s hegemonic intentions in the region, something they fear quite independently of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Iran’s ambitions over the Gulf would not be satisfied by Arab-Israeli peace. But in the public mind somehow the issue of Iran, just like other issues in the Middle East, is often discussed in conjunction with the Arab-Israeli conflict. And often, as the above quote indicates, the issue is turned on its head, with the clear intention of mudding the waters.

Now, this is not to say of course that there is no urgency or no need for a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is just to point out that the correlation between the Palestine question and other regional issues is not always as strong and as direct as many Europeans seem to suggest.

The second category follows from the first. If one believes the Palestine question to be the main problem of the region, the main

impediment to addressing all other existing problems and bringing peace to the world, then its solution becomes imperative, taking precedence over the solution of all other problems. If anyone or anything stands in the way of a solution, locating the obstacle and finding out who is responsible for it becomes the first step on the road to redemption. If Palestinians are to blame for the current state of affairs, a change of direction on their part will remove the obstacle. And if it is Israel that stands in the way, similarly, it is up to Israel to make amends: not only to solve the conflict, but also to create an environment where other problems can similarly be solved.

Of course, once again, upon examining European and American public discourse on the Arab-Israeli conflict, one discovers that in Europe there is a much stronger tendency to put the blame on the Israeli side than the Palestinian side. Consequently, there is a much higher demand for Israel's actions to change course, and scorn routinely expressed when the US takes the opposite view.

This trend in Europe is the product of a number of other interesting phenomena, which have to do, to some extent at least, with Europe's colonial past and with a certain sense of guilt that lingers on vis-à-vis the Jewish people. But Europe's tendency to put the onus for the resolution of the conflict on Israel also has to do with a dominant, rising trend of relativism in the way that Europeans view conflicts in the world. This involves a tendency to view conflicts outside Europe as the product of retrograde tribalism; to blame both sides equally; and to see violence as the product of a cycle of tit for tat. Conflict, outside Europe, seems an irrational act akin to the behavior of angry children: something that if all those involved could only get along and love one another as human beings, would no doubt be solved.

This may seem and sound a bit superficial but it is often the tendency, a tendency that leads, in many cases and perhaps in the best-case scenario when it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict, to a posture that divides the blame equally. In many ways this attitude is not conducive to engaging but rather to skirting the real issues that make the conflict so intractable. Failing to understand the complexities and the intangibles of a conflict also makes it very difficult for unaware observers to understand why it is so hard to solve.<sup>20</sup>

The third category is an extension of the second, and lies at the core of the European ethos. The core European ethos is the idea that Europe is built on one important principle, the principle of “no more war”.

This is not to suggest that European foreign policy is built and developed exclusively on the basis of a John Lennon song. But the mood and the idea of a united Europe arise from Europe’s troubled past, a past that many Europeans have come to explain in terms of the pernicious effect of two forces: religion and nationalism.

The idea of Europe is the ability to create a war-free zone the moment that nations abandon their strong identities and devote their endeavors to economic prosperity instead. The reason why Europe embraced the Oslo process so enthusiastically was that Oslo in a sense offered a similar pledge: it promised to create a new Europe in the Middle East, a place where the main obstacles in the European mind to a peaceful resolution to the conflict, mainly religion and nationalism, would finally be removed, creating a border-free common area, where peoples, once their burdensome tribal identities had been put aside, could finally come together and make peace, assisted by a substantial economic “peace dividend” that would cement peace by making a return to war simply too costly.<sup>21</sup>

This diagnosis of course, once conflict returned to the region, makes the European mind see certain solutions, which both the Palestinians and Israelis find profoundly unpalatable. For Europe, an open-border, common-market vision of the Middle East where old barriers would give way to new relations of trade, commerce and friendship, was possible. Enduring memories, historically rooted grievances and religiously driven identities were the obstacle to this vision and the cause of renewed hostilities. Removing them is still perceived in many quarters of Europe as a necessary step forward, one reason why the idea of a bi-national state is embraced mostly in Europe, and mostly by European intellectuals.

I could go into further detail about why this idea is so strong in certain circles, but the broader point seems very important, namely, the inability to give due weight and importance – let alone respect – to the desire of the two sides to have a nation-state of

their own. The importance of religion, both Islam and Judaism, in the identity of the contenders cannot be done away with if a satisfactory solution is ever to be achieved. This is a central issue that sets Europe and the United States so distinctly apart from one another in the ways in which they understand the conflict and the region.

While I have gone into less detail about America, it seems quite clear that on all three issues, the Palestino-centric view, the question of who is to blame and the issue of war and identity, the United States profoundly differs from Europe.

This difference explains why, despite the efforts and the strong relations between Europe and Israel and between Europe and America, the US and the EU have two very different sets of strategic approaches to the region, two different kinds of cooperation with the region, and two different levels of understanding of the region. This also clarifies something important, especially for Israel's foreign policy in the future. Israelis have a strong emotional connection with Europe and Europe has a strong emotional commitment to Israel. If you look at Europe today as opposed to Europe in the 19th Century, the Jews and the Jewish issue is still something crucial to understand in Europe. In the early 19th Century, according to German poet Heinrich Heine, the Jew had to assimilate in order to be accepted in Europe. Today, the ticket to becoming European is to accept the centrality of the Holocaust to European identity. This is a central issue, of a profoundly emotional nature, rooted in the history of the relations between Europe and the Jews, which leads to such different understandings.

It is important and vital that this difference be comprehended on the Israeli side, because when it comes to the circumstances and the conditions of the present conflict, the European mindset will not be able to adjust easily and quickly to Israel's needs.

Allow me to conclude by highlighting this point by way of an example. Iran is a crucial issue today for Israel, for the Europeans, and for the Americans as well. When did the Europeans begin talking so loudly about sanctions? It was not when it was becoming evident that Iran was developing nuclear weapons; that is something that the international community had long suspected. It was not even when Iran made ever more explicit statements

indicating that those nuclear weapons might be used as a means of dealing with Israel. The tipping point was reached when Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, recently suggested that the Holocaust did not happen. This was a crime of opinion, no matter how grave and how disturbing and offensive, not the declaration and enunciation of a very aggressive policy. Yet, it was the verbal violation of the memory of the Holocaust, rather than the concrete threat of repeating the Holocaust by wiping Israel off the map, that awakened the Europeans to the problem. This episode offers a glimpse into the depth and the extent of the difference of approaches to the Middle East that shapes the transatlantic relation today and probably also provides an opening to what needs to be done in this part of the world to try and bridge that gap.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Dana Allin and Steven Simon, "The Psychology of US Moral Support for Israel", *Survival*, Vol.45, No.1 (2003).

<sup>2</sup> Available at [http://www.adl.org/anti\\_semitism/european\\_attitudes\\_april\\_2004.pdf](http://www.adl.org/anti_semitism/european_attitudes_april_2004.pdf). The ten countries were: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> Anti-Defamation League, 2002 First Survey, p.11.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Anti-Defamation League, 2004 Survey, pp.23-24.

<sup>6</sup> The 2002 poll is divided into two: one five-country poll was conducted in June 2002 (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France and the UK), see [http://www.adl.org/anti\\_semitism/European\\_Attitudes.pdf](http://www.adl.org/anti_semitism/European_Attitudes.pdf); a second poll, including Austria, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland, was conducted in September 2002, see [http://www.adl.org/anti\\_semitism/European AttitudesPoll-10-02.pdf](http://www.adl.org/anti_semitism/European_AttitudesPoll-10-02.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Anti-Defamation League, 2004 Survey, p.29.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> A recent Gallup Poll, taken shortly after Hamas' victory in Palestinian elections, shows the US public strongly supportive of Israel's position. Americans have become pessimistic regarding any chance for peace in the future now that Hamas is in power and their sympathy for Israel has correspondingly grown. See <http://poll.gallup.com/content/default.aspx?ci=21406>.

<sup>12</sup> What Michael S. Doran has labeled "the Palestine-first" approach. See Michael Scott Doran, "Palestine, Iraq, and American Strategy", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.82, No.1 (January/February 2003), p.19.

<sup>13</sup> I discuss this view and its implications for transatlantic relations more in depth in Emanuele Ottolenghi, "Why Israelis and Palestinians are Not Ready for Peace", *Survival*, Vol.46, No.1 (Spring 2004).

<sup>14</sup> See the official EU position on the "Middle East Peace Process" (statement available at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/mepp/faq/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/mepp/faq/index.htm)).

This position was confirmed by Luxembourg's Foreign Minister, Jean Asselbourn, in his January 2005 visit to Israel (available at <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/8ff1b7196131b25b85256f8f005468c5?OpenDocument>). Luxembourg then held the rotating presidency of the EU.

<sup>15</sup> See for example Javier Solana's statement on January 12, 2005: "We know from experience that the search for peace in the Middle East is hard, and that the absence of peace hurts Palestinians and Israelis and also all of us, inside the region and beyond. That is why the EU, directly and through its role in the Quartet, will do all it can to use this political opening to maximum effect."

<sup>16</sup> See Emanuele Ottolenghi, "To Go Where No Hilton is", *The Jerusalem Post*, August 13, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, US President George W. Bush's speech addressing the Commencement Ceremony for University of South Carolina's Class of 2003. The speech is available at the White House website on <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030509-11.html>.

<sup>18</sup> John Pilger, "Iran: The Next War", *The New Statesman*, February 13, 2006, <http://www.newstatesman.com/200602130008>.

<sup>19</sup> See John Whitaker, "Gulf States Show Concern at Iran's Nuclear Plans", *The Guardian*, December 19, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/iran/story/0,12858,1670509,00.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Emanuele Ottolenghi, "Why Israelis and Palestinians are not Ready for Peace".

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*



## BRITAIN AND THE MIDDLE EAST

---

*Jonathan Rynhold*

### **Introduction**

There are two key questions regarding British policy towards the Middle East in the post-Cold War era, particularly in the last five years since the collapse of the Oslo process and 9/11. First, what factor determined policy? And second, how much did the British matter?

To begin with, two different approaches that drive British policy towards will be outlined. Then four issue areas in the Middle East: Iraq, Libya, Iran, the Arab-Israeli conflict, will be assessed in light of the influence of these two approaches. British policy on these issues will be then be analyzed within the broader context of grand strategy: the global war on terror. Finally the core questions will be answered in the conclusion.

### **Different Approaches to British policy to the Middle East**

British interests in the Middle East are pretty similar to the interests of most Western countries: maintaining the flow of oil, combating radical forces, preventing them from threatening regional stability with the combination of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

On these points, there is no disagreement between the United States, Europe and Britain. The question is: how do you deal with it? In Britain there are two historical long-standing approaches as to how to deal with the Middle East. One I would like to term diplomatic and the other strategic.

#### *The Diplomatic Approach*

The diplomatic approach emphasizes maintaining the best possible relations with existing regimes, or those forces that seem likely to

---

Dr. Jonathan Rynhold is a lecturer in the Political Science Department at Bar-Ilan University and a research associate at the BESA Center for Strategic Studies.

take power. It recommends that Britain try to meet the demands of such forces as much as possible and to avoid confrontation. Often a major demand of such regimes is the adoption of a pro-Arab stance in the Arab-Israeli conflict and against this background Israel tends to be viewed as the cause of instability and anti-Western feeling in the Arab world.

The diplomatic approach is associated with a mutually reinforcing combination of ideological sympathy for the Palestinians, the Foreign and Commonwealth office (FCO) as an institution, a pro-European orientation among foreign policy analysts and thinkers; and to a decreasing extent, Britain's commercial interests. (Britain used to engage in very extensive arms sales to the Arab world, but these seem to be declining).

Within contemporary British politics the diplomatic approach is strongest on the left, particularly within the Labour Party and the Liberal-Democrat Party. The diplomatic approach also has increasing domestic political value due to the improved political effectiveness of Britain's two-million-strong Moslem community, which greatly outnumbers the Jewish community that numbers about a quarter of a million.

Even though more than 60 per cent of the Moslem community does not come from Arab countries but from the Indian subcontinent, the current Intifada, the global war on terror and the Iraq war have become major issues for the community. An assessment in 2000 reckoned that around 50 marginal constituencies in Britain were dependent on the Moslem vote and about 7 on the Jewish vote.

### *The Strategic Orientation*

The strategic approach focuses on threats: military, political and ideological, and on countering them. It perceives aggressive anti-Western governments and belief systems as the principle threats, which must be contained and sometimes actively challenged.

Against this background Israel is viewed positively due to its Western orientation, its military strength and by virtue of common enemies: Islamist Iran, Iraq under Saddam, Ba'athist Syria, Hamas and Hizbullah.

The strategic approach is associated with a mutually reinforcing combination of ideological sympathy for Israel as a democracy, a residue of moral sentiment stemming from the Holocaust etc., a pro-American orientation in foreign policy in general and the office of the Prime Minister. Its support tends to be stronger in the Conservative party, though it also has strong supporters among moderate Labour leaders such as Tony Blair and the current Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown.

Of all the factors underpinning the diplomatic and the strategic approach the most important is the tension between an Atlantic or pro-American orientation and a European orientation. Since its decline from great power-status, Britain has sought to retain influence in the international arena by working closely with these partners.

British prime ministers have been particularly keen on a special relationship with the US as it provides an image of prime ministerial statesmanship, allowing the PM to claim greater international authority than British power alone would provide. In contrast, Whitehall, especially the FCO, have increasingly preferred a pro-European orientation as a means of maximizing British influence.

But there is a consensus in Britain that the ideal way to go about managing these relationships is to act as a bridge between the United States and Europe. As Tony Blair said: “The stronger we are in Europe, the stronger our American relationship”. Yet bridging is not only a tactical factor, an element of balancing and influence. It is also a strategic culture in its own right. According to Robert Kagan, Europe and the US have different strategic cultures: “The Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus”. In this context, Tony Blair has been described as a “Venusian in Martian clothing”. On the one hand, the UK recognizes that a liberal international order cannot be sustained or created for that matter, without US military power and leadership. On the other hand, it seeks to institutionalize that power within a multilateral setting. This is not Blair’s view alone, but has been a theme of British foreign policy for nearly 100 years.

Basically, the goal of British foreign policy has been to teach the Americans how to run the world properly. As former Prime Minister Howard McMillan put it: The UK should play “Athens”

to the Americans' "Rome". Yet it has proven much easier for Britain to announce such grand notions, than to actually implement them as a matter of policy, as will become apparent in the following cases.

### **Iraq**

From the beginning of the post-Cold War era, when Saddam invaded Kuwait, Britain has been the most loyal ally of the United States regarding Iraq. During the 1991 Gulf War Britain deployed an armored division putting it in the clear number-two position to the US within the coalition. In the 1990s Britain supported the US against French and Russian attempts to lift the oil embargo on Iraq and to dilute the weapons inspection system. Even while Britain held the Presidency of the EU during the inspections crisis in Iraq in 1998, it worked closely with the US, while placing little value on the common security and foreign policy of the European Union.

Britain was also America's only ally to be actively involved in the military strikes in the late 1990s against Saddam. This preceded the advent of Bush and Blair. In turn, this indicates that it had less to do with personalities and ideology than many think. Rather, British policy makers were genuinely convinced that, under Saddam, Iraq had become a rogue state, threatening not only regional stability but also the international system of order, for which the UK still has an instinct to take responsibility even if it does not have the power to do so alone. This wider global view with its emphasis on stability and the need to enforce the rules of the game in international relations was the most important factor driving British policy towards Saddam's Iraq.

While backing the US against its critics in Europe, Britain's attempts at bridging were apparent in its consistent efforts to encourage the US to gain wider legitimacy for its actions by working through international institutions. The most obvious example of this was Blair's success in persuading a reluctant Bush Administration to try and gain prior UN backing for the 2003 war in Iraq.

Ultimately this bridging tactic failed, forcing Blair to side with the US against France and Germany. However, the fallout seems to have damaged Blair's position within the Labor Party and

domestic public opinion far more than Britain's stance within the European Union, which remains strong.

So if Iraq failed in terms of bridging and in terms of British influences and independent fact, what about Libya?

### **Libya**

During the Thatcher era the strategic orientation dominated British policy towards Libya as was apparent in Britain's support for the American bombing of Libya in April 1986. However, in the 1990s lacking a clear lead from the Americans, UK policy drifted towards the European position.

In 2003, when Colonel Qaddafi announced that he would dismantle all of Libya's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs. Britain played a central diplomatic role in making this happen. This was held up as a great success for the diplomatic strategy of engagement by the FCO. However, it was clear to all that in actual fact it was primarily a by-product of American resolve during the Iraq War. Indeed, Britain's successful engagement of Libya was quite closely coordinated with the US, with the Europeans being far less involved.

### **Iran**

In the 1990s, while the US pursued a policy of dual containment towards Iran and Iraq, opposing diplomatic and economic contacts, the EU including Britain pursued a "critical dialogue" including lots of dialogue, and not much criticism.

The most powerful force behind Britain's drive to normalize relations with Iran was commercial advantage. Britain championed EU opposition to the US Congress's Helms-Burn Act 1996, which called for mandatory sanctions on any foreign company spending more than \$20 million in the energy industries of Iran and Libya. Commercial motives might also explain why in the end Britain accepted a verbal, as opposed to written, assurance that Tehran would not continue to proffer the bounty on Salmon Rushdi's head.

As late as 2003 Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who made four visits to Tehran in that year, described Iran as an "emerging

democracy” and stressed the good cooperation that Britain had enjoyed from the regime in Tehran. Nevertheless, British engagement of Iran has so far failed to yield solid gains regarding the most important strategic issue, Iran’s nuclear program.

In the latter part of 2003, following a concerted effort led by Britain in cooperation with France and Germany, the Iranians announced a cessation of efforts at enriching uranium and the readmission of nuclear inspectors to that country. However, Iran quickly reneged on that agreement and, despite continued negotiations, Britain became extremely disillusioned with Iran and led the efforts to bring the Iranian nuclear question to the UN Security Council, much to the satisfaction of the US.

Britain has also begun to publicly criticize Iranian support for insurgence against British forces in Iraq and for Hizbullah and Islamic Jihad terrorism.

So long as Iraq was the main threat to regional and international security, the UK acted as a kind of “free rider” with regard to Iran, focusing on its own economic interests within the EU paradigm, while leaving the US to play the main strategic role of containment. However, the demise of Saddam coupled with the apparent decline of moderate forces in Iran and the failure of EU engagements to neutralize the Iranian nuclear threat, the UK has shifted to a more strategic pro-American approach. While the FCO continues to talk down the possibility of any direct military action, following Iran’s recommencement of Uranium enrichment and its President’s comments about the need to wipe Israel of the map, Blair announced that “all means” needed to be considered to stop Iran. President Chirac of France was even blunter.

Indeed, in line with the strategic approach and despite appearances over the last two years both “Number 10” and important British officials seem united in regarding the Iranian question as of greater strategic importance than the Palestinian question. Here, there is a great difference between British rhetoric and real concerns.

Finally, the strategic approach appears to be gaining ground in the Arab-Israeli arena, where a far more critical line towards Iranian and Syrian support for terror has been pursued as part of an

emerging consensus that includes both France and the United States.

### **The Arab-Israeli Arena**

The issue of bridging has been most acute in the Arab-Israeli arena. On the one hand, Britain accepts and supports substantive US diplomatic leadership, while seeking to coordinate EU and US positions. Unlike France, it does not generally want the EU to balance against the Americans in this area.

On the other hand, Britain has demonstrated a consistent willingness to adopt formal European positions that differ from the American stance. European policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict is the area in which consensus has been maintained most successfully in European common foreign security policy and Britain has been supportive of this.

Moreover, as the machinery of foreign policy coordination has become stronger in Europe, the influence of Europe on British policy has grown and the overall effect has been to move British policy closer to the more pro-Arab position of the EU consensus. This was evident after the International Court of Justice in the Hague voted against Israel on the issue of the separation barrier in 2004.

Britain was initially strongly inclined to oppose a UN General Assembly resolution condemning Israel. However, following inter-European negotiations Britain gave way to France and voted with the EU block in favor of the resolution. There was, apparently, some sort of tradeoff with the French not vetoing Peter Mandelson's appointment to the European Commission.

In the 1990s it was relatively easy for Britain to pursue a policy of balance due the existence of the peace process. However, one of the first consequences of the collapse of the peace process was the reemergence of the diplomatic orientation evident in comments by the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, on the alleged double standards of the UN regarding Security Council resolutions dealing with Iraq and those dealing with Israel. Such statements were designed to cover Britain's support for the Iraq War.

More generally, this orientation was boosted by the left's outrage at Israeli policy and domestic political calculations aimed at appeasing the British Moslem community. This "red-green" alliance played the leading role in the campaign to boycott Israeli Universities and de-legitimize Israel as the new version of South African apartheid. Though the 2005 AUT boycott was reversed almost immediately, support among trade union activists and indeed church leaders for a wider boycott of Israel is widespread.

In terms of British-Israeli relations this transnational dimension is far more problematic in official state relations, because in fact, state-to-state relations have been quite positive since Prime Minister Tony Blair is sympathetic to Israel and has pushed British policy in a more strategic direction.

A member of the British Security Services, Alistair Crooke, promoted the idea of trying to bring about a formal ceasefire under the EU umbrella and that would mean talking formally to Hamas and Islamic Jihad, etc. In 2003, Tony Blair rejected this approach, fired Crooke and since then has led the charge in Europe to have Hamas and Hizbullah defined as terrorist organizations. He was also the major European leader most critical of Arafat's support for terrorism.

At the same time Blair sought to encourage the US to be more active in advancing the Road Map prior to or in parallel with the war against Iraq. However, President Bush delayed the formal announcement of the plan until the main war in Iraq was completed – a defeat for British policy.

Since the issuing of the Road Map, Britain has tried to facilitate reform of the Palestinian Security Services. This was important because the US considered Palestinian reform to be the first chronological step of the Road Map that has to be enacted before Israel is expected to make political concessions.

In 2005 Blair succeeded in hosting an international conference on the subject in London. This, and other efforts – Gordon Brown visited Israel and the PA in 2005 to advance economic development - greatly helped to raise Britain's prestige within Europe as the only party that was able to have a direct influence on the conflict.

### **Grand Strategy, Terrorism and Political Reform**

It is well known that Blair supported Bush's plan for reform in the Arab world. As he told the Labor Party in 2003 regarding the war in Iraq: "People say that I am doing this because the Americans are telling me to do it. I keep telling them it's worse than that, I believe it." Yet he argued that reforms in the Arab world required a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, since Arab regimes use the conflict as an excuse for blocking domestic reforms, while al-Qaeda uses it for garnering support. So Blair basically felt that there is a need to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict in order to prevent its use as an excuse by Arab regimes not to conduct democratic reforms.

Blair also argued that progress in the Arab-Israeli arena was a factor in combating terrorism in Europe itself, as he declared in his opening speech at the London Conference on Palestinian Reform in March 2005, "There's probably no more pressing political challenge than to move this process forward, because it has a relevance on the streets of Britain, on the streets of European countries as well as in the Middle East itself". This seemed to be the government's line immediately following the terrorist attacks on London on 7 July 2005.

However, one month later, Blair said the following: "There is no justification for killing people in Israel either. There is no justification for suicide bombing, whether in Palestine, London, Egypt or the United States of America. We are not having any of this nonsense about it being to do with what Britain is doing in Iraq or Afghanistan or support for Israel or support for America, all the rest of it. It is nonsense and we have to confront that. And when we confront it we will start to beat it." In contrast, the left wing Mayor of London, Ken Livingston declared that Likud and Hamas are the two sides of the same coin.

### **Conclusion**

Overall Britain has consistently sided with the US on strategic issues irrespective of the demands of Europe's common foreign security policy. The more decisive US leadership and the clearer and more predominant the threat to international and regional security, the more this is true. On commercial and economic

questions the UK generally sides with the Europeans. In the diplomatic sphere it mainly attempts to balance between the two.

In the wake of the 2003 Iraq War there has been an enormous amount of criticism directed at British policy within Britain, mainly by those opposed to war and advocate Britain adopting a more wholehearted European orientation.

Yet it is doubtful that such a change would actually increase British influence or indeed, prevent terror attacks on London. In fact, it would probably diminish British influence. Britain's standing in Europe has not declined as a result of its support for the US in Iraq. Meanwhile, alone in Europe only Britain has played any serious diplomatic role in the Israeli-Palestinian arena, due to its consistent support for the US and its acceptability to Israel, which in turn is due both the American factor and to the fact that it has generally adopted a more balanced approach to the conflict than the EU as a whole.

However, while bridging probably remains the best strategy open to Britain, it does not necessarily make Britain an essential player. In this vain Blair's grandiose Churchillian vision of Britain as "a pivotal power, a power that is at the crux of alliances and international politics, which shape the world", is completely unrealistic.

Ultimately Britain's diplomatic efforts depend on the good will of other parties, not on British power. Consequently, while bridging gives Britain a satisfying sense of punching above its weight in international affairs, it often produces only the semblance of substantive influence rather than the real thing.

## UNCONSCIOUS ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

---

*Daniel Sibony*

What could we possibly mean by “unconscious aspects” of a historical situation? The concept is almost a paradox, for an unconscious aspect only needs to be *said* for it to become conscious. And yet, it can remain hidden, repressed, in a given discourse or a given behavior. Sometimes we must even hypothesize that this aspect exists, in order to understand the behavior in question, which would otherwise seem absurd.

Of course, the fact that certain aspects remain unconscious bears various consequences: double speech, censorship, inflexibility of the consensus, of the politically correct. In some cases, the actors can only repress a given aspect to maintain their balance, or their place in the game; but history sanctions them by putting them out of play. (French strategy, for instance, is out of play in the Middle East.)

The repressed aspects of the relationship between France (or the France-Germany duo) and Israel are confirmed in France’s relationship with the United States during the war in Iraq. In Iraq, it was observed that France, a democratic country, did everything possible to keep Saddam Hussein in power. Chirac had said that Saddam Hussein “*obviously* possesses weapons of mass destruction”, but he wanted to disarm him through “dialogue”. Meanwhile, since Saddam did not possess these weapons, dialogue would have neither disarmed nor overthrown him. However, this regime was toxic for Chirac’s own population.

I will argue that there was an unconscious resistance on France’s part to the downfall of the Saddam Hussein regime. The following example gives an idea of it. The French journal *Le Monde* ran the headline “The Americans Enter Baghdad” on the same day and on the

---

Prof. Daniel Sibony is a philosopher, mathematician, post-Lacanian psychoanalyst, and professor of mathematics at the University of Paris.

same page as a cartoon showing Saddam Hussein, as large as an American tank, using a vacuum cleaner named “Baghdad” to suck up Marines as if they were dust or insects. This illustrates a simple contradiction: the American victory is duly noted, along with the simultaneous wish that they be crushed. (Moreover, this was the official Iraqi discourse: “Let them come, and they will be destroyed.”) The dominant discourse in France was: Iraq is the new Vietnam.

Of course, there was an attempt to mask the contradiction. In fact, this behavior presupposes a *particular conception of the event* and of history, promoted by the France-Germany duo (and not necessarily shared by the new European states, which have other desires to satisfy). According to this conception, an event is like a file to be studied, and if it fulfills the requirements, then the event is allowed to happen; otherwise, it should not take place. If it still happens, it will be criticized as unlawful. This is unlike the idea of history provoking conflicts and thus our reactions to these conflicts, like in everyday life, when we try to do the best we can. Here, the event becomes the framework in which it should take place, if we decide that it should. If it does not fit into the right frame, the event is excluded, like the war in Iraq was. But as one may recall, when faced with the violence of Kosovo, Old Europe did not find the right frame to intervene; the Americans had to lead it into action, at its own borders.

In this official and defensive relationship to the event, “international law” is invoked as though it already existed, while it is just now being developed – and while the UN is, today, far from being an impartial authority. (The conference it organized in Durban against “racism” ended with cries of “death to the Jews”.) This authority, in which the Islamic and third worldist influence is growing, wanted to keep Saddam Hussein in power, and if we were to question it today on the Jewish State, the UN would call its legitimacy into question.

Let us return to this “Old-European” notion of the event. It presupposes a fantasy of mastery: the only acceptable events are controlled. In the worst case, there are no longer any events imposed by history. The very idea of history becomes blurred, in this frozen and framed mentality.

Another example is the relationship to terrorism. Old Europe identifies terrorism as the actions of a group of crazy people, not as the coherent expression of the radical Islamist fringe. This fringe has not yet mourned an Islamic hegemony that *jihad* is supposed to spread, war on the unsubmitting. (Old Europe, and especially the France-Germany duo, has not mourned its lost hegemony, either.) Therefore, Europe wants to track down these “hoodlums” using the methods of law enforcement. Meanwhile, the other two protagonists, America and Israel, view terrorism differently. For them, it is a vital enemy whose statutes state that Jews and Americans must be killed whenever possible. They see terrorism, therefore, as the return *en force* of a *repressed* but radical *fantasy* on the part of the Islamic world, which has a hard time accepting: a) the return *en force* of the Jewish State, a pure aberration in the foundations of the Islamic mind; and b) the power of the US, a sign of unbearable arrogance since, in theory, the unsubmitting are cursed. (Europe calls this American power “unilateralism”, which means that America acts without Europe, seeing as “Europe” doesn’t find the right frame in which to act so as not to be second in importance.) On the subject of Israel, the French establishment in its irritation also meets up with the Islamic condemnation: Israel is perceived as a charitable by-product of Europe, supposed to behave well under Europe’s protection instead of emancipating itself or allying itself with America.

In the Europe-Middle East interaction, let us first clarify the main protagonist of the story: the Islamic world. The Islamic world is trying to find its way between two levels that define it: the *radical*, fundamental level, which is hostile toward others (especially the two “biblical” countries, the US and Israel); and the *convivial* level that wishes to live with the others and work with them. There is no distinct line separating these two levels, to make the moderates completely “convivial” and all the others radical. These two poles act on everyone to a variable degree. The whole Islamic bloc is crossed by the fundamental line, and crossed in the other direction by the convivial line, without letting us know in advance which one we are dealing with.

History seems intent on *integrating this Islamic world into the planetary game*, for it is too central, too near, to remain out of play

and locked in its identity fantasy. Europe wants to keep this fantasy repressed, to remain ignorant of it. Moreover, it is partially repressed, even in the Islamic world. I have managed to locate this fantasy through a thorough study of the relationship between the Koran and the Bible. It constructs a full, flawless identity, since it integrates most of the Biblical principals while blaming the failures and deficiencies on the Bible's adherents, the Judeo-Christian world. In other words, what distinguishes this identity from them is that they are evil, and so if the identity runs across a flaw, it is due to their perversity. This original fantasy manages to hide itself in present-day reality: the problems of the Arab-Muslim world, including poverty, are blamed on the West; reduced, oddly enough, to America and Israel. We have seen a recent example of this in the discourse of Iranian leader Ahmadinejad, which some people say is crazy. Actually, it is a very calm expression of the fundamental fantasy.

Faced with this fantasy, Europe finds itself in a very awkward position. Not wanting to upset the Islamic world, it ends up supporting this world as though it were a whole entity. Meanwhile, the Islamic world is trying to figure out how to divide itself in order to find its way. France is faithful to the Arab cause at the very moment that the Arab world is trying to find a way to be unfaithful to its cause. It is very aware that this cause rendered it immobile long ago.

Old Europe is thus being pulled along, not by Islam, but by its fundamental fantasy that Europe insists on repressing. While Europe seems to support the Arab cause, more than anything else it is actually helping the Arab world drown in its cause, as though through a perverse strategy. Keeping Saddam Hussein in power was one example. Supporting radical Palestinians as freedom fighters or soldiers of the Resistance is another.

France thus positions itself behind the "Muslim Cause", and chooses to ignore the efforts of the Muslim world to shake itself free from the symptom represented by this "Cause". This is the source of the impasse for France and Old Europe: at times it has to support the symptom, and at times, support the desire to shake it off. At times it supports dictatorships or fundamentalisms that use religion, and at times, hopes for emancipation efforts. France and Old Europe find

themselves caught in the same double speech as the Arab-Muslim world. For example, the pretense of believing that Iran wants nuclear reactors in order to produce electricity, while it has plenty of other energy sources, stems from this type of double speech.

Islam's dilemma, at every level, is very simple. If it wants to show its specificity, it is necessarily against the others - the unsubmitting. If it gives up showing its specificity, it runs the risk of dissolving among the others. If it distances itself from its roots, it seems to betray them; if it draws nearer to them, it becomes worrisome. Old Europe, for its part, is pinned by this contradiction, and forbids itself not only to think, but also to talk about it. As a result, it gives up any means of resisting the work of political infiltration and control that fundamentalism has unleashed in the heart of French society, labeling those who view it critically as "racist".

Another unconscious force increases the impasse of old Europe: *guilt* has practically become its only ethic. It goes well beyond "colonial" guilt, which does not make much sense anymore, even if it is called for by third-world ideologues. Guilt toward the other seems to be one of the surest means (although a little perverse) to gain control over him: if we are responsible for his misfortune, we are the only ones capable of bringing him happiness. And as the Islamist discourse is above all else accusatory, the circle is closed, reinforcing the block.

In conclusion, the third of the Ten Commandments is *Do not invoke the name of the being in vain*. For me, the divine being (not reduced to the religions' God) is what makes everything that is, becomes, and happens, be. Saying that its name is invoked in *vain* means that the potential of events yet to come is limited to a given concept or frame. This Word says that nothing is final; it is a call to time, to the event, neither optimistic nor pessimistic: there is always something more than what you are saying. If we claim that there is only *that*, we insult being, locking it in our own vanity. And it takes revenge: those who lock up being *are* locked in the vain bubble of a representation. Being is a call to the possible, and it always presupposes, above and beyond our consciousness, the tireless dynamics of the forces of the unconscious, which draw their energy from the flaw between being and what-we-are.



## FRENCH-ISRAELI RELATIONS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

---

*Tsilla Hershco*

In December 2004, Gérard Araud, the French ambassador to Israel, complained in an interview to the Israeli radio station *Galei Tzahal*, that the Israelis had developed an anti-French neurosis. The ambassador's comment triggered a furious Israeli public response, loaded with powerful emotions, passions, frustrations and accusations, which have unfortunately characterized French-Israeli relations in the past five years. These antagonistic emotions were a result of the widespread belief, that France has supported the Palestinians one-sidedly since the beginning of the present *Intifada*.

A year afterwards, an almost unnoticed incident occurred, reflecting an entirely different state of relations. On December 22, 2005, French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin made a surprise visit to the Israeli Embassy in Paris in a spontaneous gesture of friendship. Prior to this visit he went to his hairdresser, located in the vicinity of the Embassy, and the Israeli security guards proposed to his guards to invite him to visit the embassy.

These two incidents illustrate the significant changes that mark French-Israeli relations during the last year. Actually, since the creation of Israel, French-Israeli relations have been characterized by stormy ups and downs. They have been overloaded by contradictory interests and emotions on both sides, as well as by the burden of historical memory. For example, the negative memories of the Dreyfus affair or the Vichy Regime during WWII and on the other hand, the positive memories of French assistance during the Exodus affair, close relations during the golden age of the mid 1950's (*l'age d'or*), and the decisive French contribution to Israel's nuclear capacity.

In this presentation I will focus on French-Israeli relations during the last five years, the years of the second *Intifada*. I will start with a short summary of principal French interests and perceptions in

---

Dr. Tsilla Hershco is a lecturer in the Political Science Department at Bar-Ilan University and a research associate at the BESA Center for Strategic Studies.

relation to the Middle East and their impact on French-Israeli relations in general, and on the relations during the years of the second *Intifada* in particular. Subsequently, the positive changes in the bilateral relations, especially since the year 2003, will be analyzed. I will conclude with assessments and recommendations regarding potential developments of French-Israeli relations in the future.

### **French Interests and Perceptions in Relation to the Middle East**

Starting with a brief background, it should be noted that French perceptions and politics in the Middle East, have been elaborated over the course of many decades of French presence in the region. They combine a rational analysis of French interests in the region with nostalgic aspirations concerning the glorious image of the past French Empire.

The Quai d'Orsay (the French Foreign Affairs Ministry), which was and still is dominant in the formulation of French foreign policy, defined French relations with the Arab and Muslim world as France's central interest. Accordingly, in the years 1945–1948 the Quai d'Orsay regarded the Zionist movement as a danger to French interests in the region, fearing its impact on the stability of the region and on French special status in the Holy Places.

This definition influenced French attitudes towards the state of Israel and towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, becoming a central bone of contention in French-Israeli relations. The French attitude continued to be characterized by a pro-Arab approach except for the short period of “the golden age”. A significant deterioration occurred in 1967 when General Charles De Gaulle readopted a pro-Arab line, severely criticized the Israeli conquest of the Gaza strip and the West Bank, and imposed an arms embargo on Israel.

One major aspect of the pro-Arab line, continued by the General's successors as well, was support of the PLO, in spite of the article in its charter that called for the destruction of the state of Israel. During a visit to Israel in 1982, French President François Mitterand called, in his famous speech in the Knesset, for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Since then, the French have persistently demonstrated their determination to realize this vision, regarded by them as the only possible and just solution to the long and bloody conflict. The peace process and especially the Oslo Accords in 1993 led to a significant improvement in French–Israeli relations. France considered them to be a late Israeli acknowledgement of the validity of French perceptions. The failure of this process, especially the failure of the Camp David summit in July 2000 and the outburst of the first acts of violence in September 2000, marking the beginning of the second *Intifada*, caused the French tremendous disappointment and frustration. This was followed by intensive French diplomatic activities to end the violence and return to the negotiating table. The French believed that the negotiations would finally lead to the creation of a Palestinian state, living peacefully alongside Israel, within the borders of 1967.

French attachment to the establishment of a Palestinian state is motivated essentially by calculated, rational, longstanding political and economic interests in the Arab world. In addition, France has stressed that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict endangers not only the stability of the region but also the stability of the entire world. France has thus demonstrated immense sensitivity towards the import of the conflict to France, and its impact on the agitation of the members of the country's large Muslim community (numbering at least 6,000,000 according to some versions, and approximately 4,500,000, according to France's formal estimation). France has also shown deep concern regarding the acts of violence committed mostly by young French Muslims against members of the Jewish community in France (about 600,000). These aggressions embarrassed the French authorities, who feared the damage they might do to France's moral image.

Apart from political, strategic and economic interests, France justifies her striving for a Palestinian state in ideological and moral terms. These terms constitute a part of France's vision of a world, based on the universal values of the French revolution, namely the values of justice, equality and fraternity.

Furthermore, France insists that the resolution of conflicts should be done through dialogue and not by the unilateral use of military force. Accordingly France stresses the central role of the UN in the settlement of conflicts and the importance of abiding by the

international law and agreements. This explains the French criticism of Israel and repeated demands to implement UN decisions 242 and 338, which according to the French version, call for Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied in 1967. Additionally, France constantly calls for the dismantling of the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, regarding them as a severe violation of the international law, as a serious impediment to the creation of a Palestinian state and to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

France conceives the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within a framework of international involvement, including a very active role on the part of France and the EU. The French believe that only international involvement can interrupt the vicious circle of bloodshed. They stress that France and Europe, due to their experience in the region, should have a very active role in the mediation between the two sides. This conception reflects the French aspiration for influence in the region.

France is also influenced by contradictory emotional motives in the formulation of its policy towards Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On one hand, the French attitude is characterized by nostalgic aspirations to renew French influence in the region. On the other hand, France is influenced by equally powerful contradictory tendencies, to condemn and repent its colonial past and project its historical experience in Algeria onto the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Widespread French sympathy towards the Palestinians, perceived as the weaker side and as the victims of the conflict, is added to the factors above.

All of the previously mentioned factors contributed to the creation of a distinct one-sided pro-Palestinian attitude, manifested from the beginning of the second *Intifada* in September 2000. The French justified the Palestinian uprising, viewing it as proof of the frustration caused by the long Israeli occupation. They formally attributed the responsibility for the riots to Ariel Sharon's visit in the Temple Mount on September 28, 2000, calling it a premeditated provocation. The French did not use their influence and popularity in the Palestinian Authority in order to put pressure on Arafat to stop the violence, although they admitted that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak had offered the Palestinians the best peace package deal. Furthermore, French President Jacques Chirac advised Arafat to demand the establishment of an international

committee for the investigation of the violent Israeli response, thus providing him with a pretext not to sign the cease-fire agreement reached on October 4, 2000, in Paris, under the sponsorship of US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

The French criticized Israel for the measures the country took to defend its citizens against suicide bombers, including the erection of barriers, the targeted killing of terrorists, military incursions into the Palestinian territories to arrest terrorists, and the construction of the security fence. The speaker of the Quai d'Orsay expressed, in his formal reactions, French regret for the killing of Israeli innocent citizens, but at the same time demanded that the Israeli government refrain from military action.

Apart from their public declarations, the French were active in the international arena in initiating anti-Israeli decisions in the United Nations Security Council. These activities reached their peak during Israeli operation "Defensive Shield" in March 2002 and the initial adoption by the French of the false Palestinian report of a massacre in Jenin. The biased attitude of the French caused severe political damage to Israel's position in the international arena.

The French consistently supported Arafat, even when his involvement in terrorist activities was proved beyond all doubt, as was the case with the weapons boat "Karine A", intercepted by Israel in January 2002. The French supported Arafat as the elected leader of the Palestinians, representing the legal aspirations of the Palestinians to an independent state. Their support of Arafat granted them an incontestable image as the main defender of the Palestinian cause. Yet, they ignored the fact that Arafat was a despotic leader, who brought disaster upon his own people through his erroneous decisions and corrupt management of public affairs. France's support of Arafat caused a significant deterioration in French-Israeli relations.

### **Positive Changes in Bilateral Relations from 2002 Onwards**

Towards the end of 2002 however, France made considerable efforts to improve relations with Israel by encouraging bilateral exchanges in various fields such as mutual visits by senior diplomats, strategic and scientific cooperation, cultural contacts and commercial agreements. These gradual changes stemmed from the following developments:

1. The gradual realization of French foreign policy architects that their one-sided approach towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was counterproductive to French objectives and interests, undermining France's position as a potential mediator.
2. Arafat's death in November 2004 removed one of the main causes of French-Israeli friction.
3. The emergence of new common interests such as in the area of counterterrorism, opposition to Syria's presence in Lebanon following the murder of Hariri in February 2005, and mutual opposition to the development of Iran's nuclear capabilities.
2. Israel's public acknowledgment of French determination to fight against anti-Semitic acts of aggression.
3. The transatlantic partial reconciliation in January 2005 and the beginning of cooperation with the US in the reconstruction of Iraq slightly softened French criticism towards Israel, which is perceived as a US ally. There still exists, however, a possibility of joint US-EU pressure on Israel to make concessions towards the Palestinians.
4. Finally, the belief that a new window of opportunity had been created by the disengagement plan, and that it should be fully exploited for advancing a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, albeit the current problems, led to the warm reception of Prime Minister Sharon by President Chirac in July 2005 and to mutual compliments. The French regarded Sharon's decision as an extremely courageous act.

Despite the improvement in bilateral relations, substantial disagreements and differences of opinions concerning the peace process still exist. For example Whereas France calls for quick implementation of the "Road Map" plan including evacuation of the West Bank, and the creation of a Palestinian State, Israel insists on the dismantling of terrorist organizations prior to any advance in the peace process.

Nevertheless, Israel should not ignore or underestimate the recent changes in the French approach in light of the following considerations:

1. The economic and political advantages of the bilateral contacts.
2. The French concept of developing civil contacts disrupts the pattern of viewing Israel solely through the lens of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
3. French diplomatic contacts might prove to be an asset for Israel in the international arena.
4. France's potential abstention from severely criticizing Israel might improve Israel's international position because France enjoys an international image of a state that fights for moral universal values.
5. France's influential role on the foreign policy of the EU is an equally important consideration (though France's position was undermined by the rejection of the European constitution in the referendum of May 2005).
6. France might use its prestige in the Palestinian Authority to promote essential reforms there.
7. The existence of a large Jewish community in France requires further Israeli efforts to improve French-Israeli relations.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the complicated nature of French–Israeli relations, as well as their importance to both countries, necessitates a sophisticated and attentive mutual approach and the implementation of deliberate procedures for eliminating and resolving disagreements and misunderstandings. Israel should make more efforts to improve its relations with France. Thus, the current absence of an Israeli ambassador in Paris might indicate Israeli negligence in leaving vacant this central diplomatic post. However, Israel should be prudent when it allows France and the EU a more active role in the peace process. Before doing so, Israel should insure that France adopts a more balanced and impartial approach towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Seeking peace is certainly an honorable vision, which is shared by Israel, but France's rhetoric for the immediate establishment of a Palestinian state has become almost an obsession. France sometimes acts in a way that ignores realities, which is counterproductive to its own goals. France should adopt a more realistic approach that takes into consideration the fact that as long

COLLOQUIA ON STRATEGY AND DIPLOMACY

as the state of anarchy and terror prevails, there is no chance of achieving lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

## **TURKEY: TRENDS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION**

---

*Amikam Nachmani*

I want to start with a quotation from a leading Turkish newspaper:

Turkish culture is very different from the West. Concepts such as strong family ties, respect for elders and unconditional love of, and commitment, to children sound like clichés in the West but form the basis of Turkish society. Loneliness is a rare phenomenon. Relationships are not based on manipulation, and the foremost motivation of individuals is not greed. The people of Turkey are enamored of foreigners, and racism seems to be distant from everyone's mind, even though the West tries to portray Turks as ogres... On the political side, Turkey could slowly but politely let Europe stand on the sidelines while the republic looks to itself, to its other friends and to the Turkic nations of Asia. We are culturally more akin to them than to the West, with its excessive and exploitative nature, or to the Arabs, with their strange views of women and their theocratic political systems. Turkish culture, since its origins on the steppes, has always put women on the same horse as men.<sup>1</sup>

Although this quotation is from 1999, it reflects a current trend in Turkey: decreased enthusiasm regarding the country's possible accession into the European Union. It seems that many consider the price demanded from Turkey in the form of prerequisites to accession, to be too high. The European Court for Human Rights' demand that Turkey hold a second trial for Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the PKK, seems a blatant intervention in the country's internal affairs.<sup>2</sup> Together with repeated demands that Turkey considerably

---

Prof. Amikam Nachmani is a faculty member at the department for Political Studies, Bar-Ilan University, and a Senior Research Associate at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.

change its legal system, curb its military's intervention in politics, bear responsibility for the plight of the Armenians during WWI (this demand has been voiced by the European Parliament, the Foreign Relations Committee of the American Congress and 39 out of the 50 states of the United States), or yield too much in Cyprus (recognizing the Republic of Cyprus, i.e. confirming that the Republic - the Greek part of the Island - represents the entire Island, including its north - the TRNC, or letting Cypriot ships and airplanes enter Turkish ports and territory), all this raises doubts in Turkey as to the merits to be found in accession into the EU.

METROPOL, the Turkish center for social and strategic studies, found in March 2005 that half of the Turks - 35 million people - are convinced that Turkey is surrounded by enemies. In addition, many Turks are concerned lest their country's accession into the EU introduce too much permissiveness into their lives and detrimentally affect their culture, religion and tradition.<sup>3</sup>

The international situation of Turkey has changed dramatically for the better during the last 10–15 years. As if by magic, *all* of Turkey's fronts and conflicts have vanished: communism collapsed; the Soviet Union disintegrated; Iraq and Iran licked their wounds following eight years of vicious war during the 1980s; Baghdad was defeated in the Gulf war of 1991, and put under heavy international surveillance; the regime in Baghdad was defeated again in 2003 as a result of the American intervention there; in 1999, the PKK lost its war against Turkey;<sup>4</sup> and Syria found itself squeezed between the growing strategic cooperation of Israel and Turkey. The conflict with the Hellenic world, the only 20th century conflict that has survived, has been reduced to intermittent dialogue between Athens and Ankara - some even call it *détente*. The Greek defense doctrine traditionally enjoyed Turkey's involvement in aforementioned conflicts. However, when all of Turkey's other conflicts vanished and the Greco-Turkish conflict remained, Greece became very interested in dialogue with Turkey.

Geopolitically, Turkey is located in the wildest possible neighborhood: with Iran, Syria and Iraq as immediate neighbors; bloody civil wars in Russia (Chechnya), Georgia, Central Asia, and

the Caucasus; the bleeding, open conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The storm around Turkey is wild, the sea is rough, but nobody dares to mess with Turkey. The country's strength deters any aggression.

What are the views of European governments and what are the European prevalent public opinions pertaining to Turkey? It seems that the sheer number of Turks – which will reach 80 million within a decade or so - is perceived as a potential threat, but not the only one. The tension between Turkish secularism and religion causes much concern in Europe as well as the concern of being invaded by millions of Turkish job seekers or the fact that Turkey would be entitled to the lion's share of the EU budget owing to the fact that geographically and demographically it would be the largest member of the EU.

The size of Turkey's population alarms the organization. If Turkey were to join, it would soon be the Union's most populous member, with all that entails in terms of representation in the European Parliament and in the Council of Ministers. Predictions pertaining to Turkey's population are of 80 million people by the year 2020, and between 95 million and 98 million by mid 21<sup>st</sup> century. By then Germany, now 82 million and EU's largest member state, will number 66 million. Thirty-one percent of Turks are under the age of 15, as compared to 19 percent of the population in Europe. Forty percent of Turkey's population is below the age of 22 years old and just six percent of the Turks are older than 64, as compared to 14 percent and climbing in Europe. Similarly, Turkey's area of 300,870 square miles is larger than that of any EU country, which would entitle Turkey to large sums of EU budgets and monies allocated according to size and square miles.

The EU faces a worrisome situation. Should Turkey join it will be the largest recipient of EU subsidies for members with lower per capita income. The largest number of votes will go to the economically poorest member of the EU; to a country that geographically is in the margins of Europe; to a country that was not among the founders of the Union; and, as it is often claimed, to a country that has no history of integration in Europe.<sup>5</sup> Turkey's admission also raises the question of where the EU should draw its line. Will the EU reject requests by Iraq, Syria, and Iran to enter its ranks? We have already heard North African

countries claiming that they should not be excluded only because the Bosphorus is one mile wide while Gibraltar is ten.

Additional concern centers on the Trojan horse explanation: the claim is that if Turkey is in, the United States is in too. As one EU official described it, "The voice is Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau".<sup>6</sup> This was not the first time that the exclusion of Turkey had been explained in light of Ankara's close relations with Washington.

Another claim was that the entrance in 2004 of ten new candidates - all Christian - helps to offset the growing number of Muslims currently in the EU, to comprise about ten percent of its total population within a decade. After the 2005 riots in Paris, one can hear and read that having Muslim Turkey in the EU is not among the organization's top priorities.

In Turkey, the press and electronic media have reflected uneasiness - not to say open concern - as to the merits of Turkish identification with the United States. The list of frustrations due to Turkey's close contacts with the US seems to be long: the Trojan horse metaphor and the resulting exclusion from the EU; the Arab and Muslim alienation because of Turkey's contacts with Washington (and with Israel, a close ally of Washington); the establishment - with American blessing - of an autonomous Kurdish entity in northern Iraq; the disintegration of Iraq, something that Ankara is not in favor lest it should foment separatist waves in Turkey; the loss of huge Iraqi markets as a result of American initiated sanctions against Iraq during the 1990s; Turkish frustration as a result of Washington's support of Moscow in the latter's war against the Muslim Chechens; the 2003 American initiated second Gulf War that further deteriorates the Turkish economy - possible losses were estimated at 150 billion dollars and two million Iraqi refugees seeking shelter in Turkey. The war was expected to make idle some 30,000 Turkish trucks that cross the Turkish-Iraqi border daily and bring economic relief and viability to the poverty stricken Kurdish-populated south-east Turkey, etc.

A Kurdish statehood in northern Iraq - an American/European/Israeli plot according to public opinion in Turkey - even as part of an Iraqi federation, would in all likelihood adopt a policy of Kurdish

irredentism, drawing Turkey's own Kurdish citizens towards it like a magnet.<sup>7</sup> The result, the February 2003 decision of the Turkish parliament to block the passage of US troops through Turkish territory on their way to Iraq, was not surprising. In fact, Ankara's policies on a list of topics and issues (the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the war in Iraq, pressures on Syria, etc.) resemble those of the EU, not those of Washington.

The novel *Metal Storm* by the Turkish novelists Burak Turna and Orkun Ucar (published in December 2004), reflects additional Turkish concerns as regards the US. Briefly speaking, the book describes an American invasion into Turkey that causes a Turkish secret agent to blow a nuclear device in Washington, which destroys the US Capital. But Turna's second best seller, *World War III*, is even more relevant to our discussion. It describes the year 2010. The EU finally rejects Turkey. Right-wing Fascist-like-governments come to power in Germany, Austria and France, and Muslim and Turkish minorities in Europe are violently persecuted. In reaction, Turkey combines forces with Russia and both wage war on the EU. Turkish commando units encircle Berlin, eventually destroy the EU and take the whole European continent.

While *Metal Storm* reflects Turkish concern as regards US hegemony and control, the book *WWIII* describes growing Turkish ambivalence with regard to Europe. As has been said in Turkey: "The Europeans of today are the same arrogant west-European great powers that tore apart the Ottoman Empire. These are the same European nation-states that have created nothing but wars and conflicts during the past 900 years".

The August 1920 Treaty of Sevres is often mentioned by Turkish media and politicians and Turks are repeatedly warned against a new Sevres. True, Sevres was never ratified but was superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne of July 1923 that reflected the victory of the Turks, led by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, in their war of independence against the Allied Forces. But Sevres was imposed upon the Ottoman Empire by the Western victors in WWI, a lesson not to be forgotten in Turkey. The treaty stripped Turkey of its Arab colonies, virtually of all Eastern Thrace, the Aegean islands, and the Dodecanese. International control was to be set up on various Turkish ports and rivers (Constantinople,

Smyrna, Alexandretta, the Maritsa River, etc.). The Straits of Istanbul and the adjacent territory on the Asiatic mainland were to be demilitarized and handed over to an international commission. Western Thrace was ceded to Greece. The Ottoman army was to be no more than 50,000-strong; all aircrafts were to be surrendered together with the entire navy, with the exception of a few ships. In addition, the treaty granted statehood to the Armenians and local autonomy to the Kurds, at the expense of Turkey's territorial integrity.

To many Turks, Sevres is not the name of a small French town in northern France, famous for its porcelain industry, but it is synonymous with "Munich". To this day, they are convinced that the West - be it America or Europe - is merely waiting for an opportune moment to put the Sevres plan into effect. Accordingly, any utterance ordering Turkey to do this or that is unacceptable in Turkey - even if it is meant to pave the way for Turkey into the EU; even if it is part of privatization efforts that result in foreign companies buying major shares of the Turkish economy; even if it is part of the IMF conditions to grant monies to Turkey; or utterances which draw a distinction between Kurds and Turks; or which strive to find a linkage between the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul and the rest of the Orthodox world (incidentally, Ankara regards the Greek Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul as a Turkish citizen, not as the emissary of the Christian Orthodox world). The anti-Sevres formula thus produces an overwhelming Kemalist unity, and precludes any deviations.

In Turna's book *WWIII*, two officers - Russian and Turkish - re-design and re-demarcate the continent's borders after defeating the Europeans. A paraphrase of it looks like this:

We will establish a new European order, a new EU, whose main power will emanate from the East, not from the West. Istanbul will become the capital of the new EU, the Russians will receive the Bosphorus, and Western Europe will then look with agony and bitterness at the reconciliation and cooperation between Russian Orthodoxy and Muslim Istanbul.<sup>8</sup>

The conclusion is clear: the more the EU demands painful changes from Turkey (Cyprus, Armenians, human rights, Kurds, status of the

Army, legal reforms, further secularism, etc.), the *less* support is expressed in Turkey concerning joining the EU. Recently Burak Turna reported that while traveling in Turkey to promote the sales of his book, he asked a group of young people - aged 15–25 - how many of them were in favor of Turkey entering the EU. None raised his hand.

Turna's second conclusion is that the future for Turkey is in the east - with Russia, India, China, Central Asian Turkic peoples - not with the west. Again, a paraphrase of Turna's words is very telling:

India has 250 million rich people; China has a huge economy and a strong middle class. Russia is flowing with cash. Why are my politicians wasting time in the corridors of the EU when they should be visiting and courting these countries, like the U.S. does? Joining the EU is not a wonder medicine, our government does not disclose the entire truth as regards the true character of the Europeans, it is forbidden in Turkey to have a genuine discussion about the EU. Our government describes accession into the EU as panacea that will help make poor rural, agrarian Turkey flush with cash. Nobody in Turkey will shed a tear if the EU accepts us in 10-15 years time. [Hopefully] this will not happen in the near future.<sup>9</sup>

I am not going to take issue with the rosy picture that Turna paints of the love affair between Russia and Turkey, two powers that for centuries never stopped fighting. But the novelist presents a trend in Turkey: in October 2004, 94 percent of Turks supported Turkish accession into the EU; by May 2005 the number had dropped to 63 percent.

Turks were not overjoyed when they heard about the beginning of the accession negotiations and remained fundamentally unconvinced of the Europeans' willingness to accept them as one of their own. The embrace, they said, could be capricious and short-lived. It was mentioned correctly that it is hardly the first time the Europeans have recognized Turkey's Europeanness. In 1856, the Ottoman Empire was invited to join the Concert of Europe. More than a century later, following the signing of the Association Agreement between the

European Economic Community and Turkey (1964), Turkey was solemnly declared part of Europe. Such flattering remarks have been uttered many times during the past 200 years, yet Turkey's European identity has never been settled. On the contrary: Ankara is often reminded that the Europeans have always fought to push the Turks eastwards, the last time being in 1683.

Sources in Turkey suggest that accession negotiations could be little more than a political move on the part of the EU. Europeans are now faced with the need to placate growing numbers of restless Muslim minorities, now residing in the EU. Showing, even in a perfunctory way, that Europe wants Turkey in the EU (as well as supporting the Palestinians), these are two policies often used by European politicians to show "the important role the organization [EU] has in promoting values of tolerance and diversity toward the Muslim world".<sup>10</sup>

However, the EU concern with the amount of subsidies that would be allocated to Turkey were it to join, remains. Likewise, if Turkey were to be admitted into the EU and agriculture were to double, the estimation is that about 40 billion Euro (the EU presently grants 43 billion dollar a year in farming subsidies) would be granted annually (for a period of ten years) by the EU to Turkish agriculture, some of it just to compensate Turkish farmers *not* to grow certain agricultural species and plantations of which the EU has huge surpluses.

The Europeans also express concern that trade with Turkey would show a negative balance, for the Turks' purchasing power is one-third of the EU average. Turkey's exports to the EU will grow, while imports stagnate. Turkey already sends two thirds of its exports to the EU (more than 25 billion dollars worth); of each four televisions that are sold in the EU one is produced in Turkey.<sup>11</sup>

Turkish cooperation with EU demands for reforms pertaining to human rights, to democracy, to personal liberties, etc., means the imposition of restrictions on the powers and authority of the military. Yet surprisingly, the military does not block these reforms, and sometimes supports them. Briefly speaking, the army - the body that is constitutionally the guardian of secularism, democracy, and of the

integrity of the country – currently maintains that accession into the EU might promote secularism, promote democracy, and discourage separatism, claiming that once Turkey is a member of the EU, there are very slim chances that any sector of the population will strive to quit and leave the Union. Soon, however, the Turkish Chief of Staff General Hilmi Ozkuk, who occasionally expresses liberal views, will be replaced by an officer from the land forces, General Yashar Buyukanit. Traditionally, Turkish land forces are believed to produce conservative soldiers.

What should we expect from Turkey and the EU? Notwithstanding the reservations mentioned above, it seems that the coming decade will witness a Turkey that totally focuses on the EU, as if the country had mortgaged its future on accession into the organization. For that reason we will *not* see a Turkey that gets entangled in the Turkic Central Asia, in the Arab Middle East, in the Balkans, that leads the Muslim world, that serves as an active model for moderate Islam, that serves as a regional policeman, etc. It would be unwise to focus on the EU but simultaneously become entangled in other places. True, Turkey often “makes noises” according to a regional power, but this should not mislead us. Ankara is ready to mediate, to host peace negotiations, to convey messages, to serve as courier, to send guards to the “Erez” terminal between the Gaza Strip and Israel only after the Palestinians and the Israelis finished fighting there, but never to act as a policeman, never to carry a stick. Alas, a Middle Eastern policeman should always carry a big and strong stick.

However, it seems that the harmless and peaceful functions that Turkey serves contradict expectations. In *Time* magazine for example, an author inserted the following “ad” in the midst of an article on Turkey:

Help Wanted

Nation to serve as go-between for the Western world and the Middle East and assist in turning suspicion into cooperation. Must be firm U.S.-European ally desirous of still closer ties yet, Islamic in religion and culture, capable of serving as a role model of secularized Western democracy for other Muslim states. Ethnic links with some

of those states, booming free-market economy, permitting some assistance to poorer brethren highly desirable. Benefits: regional superpower within a few years; eventual major influence on wider world affairs possible.

“There is no need to look for such a country,” observed the author, “Turkey fits every specification. Moreover, it wants the job.”<sup>12</sup> It is worth repeating that as long as Turkey aims towards Brussels, it will serve as nobody’s policeman.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Birsan Iskenderoglu, “Turkey vs. the West”, *Turkish Daily News* (from now on *TDN*), February 20, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Turkey annulled the death penalty given to Ocalan in 1999, replacing it with a life sentence.

<sup>3</sup> *The Guardian*, quoted in *Ha’aretz*, March 31, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Incidentally, the EU took a different attitude towards Ankara when the Turkish–PKK war was practically over in 1999. By offering Turkey a place, the organization was no longer simultaneously importing a violent conflict.

<sup>5</sup> Oulerika Gouaro, The German Commission for Foreign Affairs, *The Economist*, reprinted in *Ha’aretz*, 31 May 2001; Walter A. McDougall, “Turkey and the West”, *Orbis*, Vol. 45, No. 1, Winter 2001, pp. 1-12.

<sup>6</sup> *Genesis*, 27, 22.

<sup>7</sup> On the Kurds in Turkey see Servet Mutlu, “Ethnic Kurds in Turkey: a Demographic Study”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (November 1996), pp. 517-541; *The Economist*, Survey Turkey, June 8, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Dan Bilefsky, “Turks embrace novelist’s war on EU”, *International Herald Tribune*, October 13, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Alan Makovsky, “Turkey: Europe–Bound?”, *MERIA TURKISHLIST*, December 22, 1999. See also Alan Makovsky, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, PolicyWatch No. 429, December 15, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> For statistics pertaining to Turkish and EU agriculture see *Ha’aretz*, July 11, 2002; Nataliya Ulchenko, “Turkey-EU Economic Relations: Problems and Prospects”, *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, No. 28, 1998, p. 140; *Ha’aretz*, *The Marker*, October 9, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> George J. Church, *Time*, October 19, 1992.

## ISRAEL AND EUROPE

---

*Harry Kney-Tal*

In this paper, I would like to take issue with the fundamental assessment that European-Israeli relations are “very good and improving” and tackle European-Israeli relations in a more nuanced way. I would not argue with this description of the current state of European-Israeli relations, which are indeed quite good and in stable condition. Instead, I would like to refer to the full potential of this relationship, which is far from being fully realized, and point out that there is great room for further improvement.

While the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan, which was finalized last year, has made a positive contribution to this relationship, one should not view it as a strategic turning point. The Action Plan does not herald a fundamental change in policy and in fact, the period of 1992-95 was much more productive. During that period, Israeli-European relations were actually elevated to a higher status, culminating in the signing of the Association Agreement, a far more ambitious framework for cooperation than an action plan, and generating a very important statement at the conclusion of the German Presidency of the EU – the Essen Declaration (1994).

In the Essen Declaration, there was a one-line reference to Israel qualifying for “privileged status in Europe”. Incidentally, neither Europe, nor the Israelis were able to translate this statement of intentions into a coherent action plan, which - if done - would have been more ambitious than the 2005 ENP Action Plan.

Now, what are the reasons for this? I have identified at least five major factors, which impact on the Israeli-European relationship. However, first let me provide an additional clarification. When I refer to Europe, my reference is basically to the European member states’ effort to coordinate their act and operate as a coherent player in the international arena. The fact that they are not always

---

Harry Kney-Tal currently serves as Ambassador of Israel in The Hague. He formerly served as Ambassador of Israel to the European Union and NATO and as head of the Political Research Center at Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

successful at doing so is not so much an Israeli problem as an internal European problem. Furthermore, I am not referring in my analysis to any of the distinct European member states' contributions. For the purpose of this analysis, my point of departure is the EU.

Let me begin with the fact that the Israeli and the European foreign policy doctrines, to the extent that one can refer to a doctrine, are fundamentally different. Israel is a strong state with a distinct national character and is viewed in Europe as a state with a growing propensity to use military means in order to advance its foreign policy goals. Europe, which is in the "post-post" period - post industrial, post ideological, post-modern - has a different view, with Jerusalem and Brussels holding different perceptions about the use of force.

Secondly, I would like to draw a distinction between bilateral relations and the multilateral dimension. Israeli relations with the member states on the bilateral level are good, and in some cases occasionally excellent. They are clearly improving. However, we do have a problem at the multilateral level, where one state or a group of states can always advocate a more critical policy or direction, thus allowing the lowest common denominator to determine the EU line.

Thirdly, the image of Israel in Europe is better at the top of the political echelon but deteriorates as we go down through the different layers of the political class to the grass roots.

In most of the European countries, the parliamentarians, acting as intermediaries, invoke the negative image of Israel in the public eye as a way of justifying their critical positions, taken in parliamentary or public debates. Again, I shall refer in this analysis only to the European parliament although a similar dynamic can be found in the national parliaments as well. The negative and deteriorating image of Israel in Europe cannot be ignored and is becoming a political factor, shaping the way in which Europeans view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The fourth element is what Israelis refer to as "the uniqueness of the Israeli case". For many years, Europe was embodied in Brussels by the European Commission, whose view of the Mediterranean area was quite undifferentiated. By the early 1990s,

in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Block, Europe started to discuss how to coordinate its act vis-à-vis neighboring countries. Typically, a balance was struck between those member states which viewed enlargement and institutional reform as the top EU priority and a number of Southern European states (mainly Italy and Spain) who supported a meaningful new relationship with the Southern Mediterranean states, a major source of illegal immigration and political instability. The Oslo Agreement and the ensuing Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) paved the way for a more ambitious multilateral cooperation attempt and the Euro-Mediterranean process was born.

Over the years, as the potential of the Barcelona process failed to materialize, the European Commission came to develop a more nuanced view. Realizing that it could not treat all the countries in the same manner, although such an approach was very convenient from a bureaucratic point of view, the EU began to use a standard framework for cooperation called an “Association Agreement”, filling in the blanks with the unique characteristics of the various new member countries.

This practice reflected a conscientious effort on the part of the overworked European Union bureaucracy to develop standard operating procedures with the aim of economizing time and attention. However, that fell short of meeting Israel’s expectation of being recognized as entitled to preferential treatment, due to its high level of economic development and democratic regime. As the enlargement process reached its final stage, and with a growing debate over the “borders of Europe” and the neighborhood policy moving to center stage, it became quite clear that a more nuanced policy, taking into account the significant differences among the Mediterranean partners, was needed. Following lengthy internal deliberations, a new policy - The ENP - was proposed, based - to use a notion coined in Brussels - on the “variable geometry” principle.

In this respect, the arrival of the “CFSP Tribe”, (the Common Foreign and Security Policy) in Brussels, as a result of the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty, was an important development. These new bureaucrats brought a new methodology to Brussels, more strategic, more foreign policy oriented, more classic and more comprehensible by countries outside the European Union, thus further contributing to the acceptance of

differentiation as the basic principle governing the EU's attempts to develop different means of cooperation with the various states. The Europeans had finally adopted a more nuanced and mature view of the realities in the region.

This brings me to the fifth and last point on which I would like to elaborate a bit more extensively: the European preoccupation with the Israeli-Palestinian problem. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the main prism through which everything coming out of the broader Middle East is filtered, analyzed, classified and referred to. In short, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the focal point of EU policy decisions regarding the region.

The debate on how to deal with Israel has sharpened following the arrival of new member states on the EU scene, the majority of which were positively predisposed towards Israel and held strong transatlantic affinities with the USA. In the context of this discussion, one can identify two major schools of thought:

The first school of thought is instrumental and refers to Israel as an essential partner in order to be engaged in the peace process. The EU understands that becoming a player in the MEPP demands maintaining a reasonable level of bilateral relations with Israel. Supporters of this school would not object to improvement of relations with Israel as a means to stay relevant. However, such an approach will never elevate the EU-Israel relationship to the level of intimacy attained by Israel and the USA. The Europeans are fully aware that there is a confidence gap between the EU and Israel, due to the European propensity to take a critical view on issues involving Israel. The marked improvement over the last couple of years notwithstanding, fundamental differences between EU and Israel will not be resolved anytime soon.

The other school of thought favors using leverage vis-à-vis Israel. Given the asymmetry between the EU and Israel and in light of the EU being Israel's major economic partner, there are European factors that consider the use of - at least - three major instruments: aid, trade and human rights, to pressure Israel into submitting to the EU's line.

Israel does not receive direct aid from Europe due to its high level of economic development. Consequently, some may be inclined to use trade leverage: not sanctions, but a discussion about the

possibility of sanctions in the hope that Israel will try hard to avoid them, thus adapting its policy/behavior to European expectations.

The other element, mentioned mainly in the European Parliament, and to a lesser degree among some European commission bureaucrats, invokes alleged human rights violations. One can hear voices calling to review Israel's human rights record and consider the possibility of suspending the Association Agreement as long as the violations occur. The resolution passed in the European Parliament to suspend the Association Agreement in April 2002 remains – to date – the only instance in which a European institution has recommended taking sanctions against Israel. The European Commission and the Council, seeking to remain relevant – as far as Israel was concerned – took issue and expressed a clear preference for the first school of thought, the instrumental approach. Since the EU aspires to be a player, not only a payer, it has to embrace a strategy that aims at winning the confidence of Israel, as the best way of affecting its behavior and bringing it closer to what the Europeans would like to see.

The internal European debate over how to deal with Israel should be viewed as a process. It is not going to be resolved in the foreseeable future. It is heavily influenced by personality factors and the perceived behavior of Israel.

Now, let me point out the major difference in the way the USA and the EU refer to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the USA, the conflict is a clash between two national liberation movements, fighting over the same piece of real estate (land). Consequently, it must be resolved through a painful, slow process of diplomatic accommodation. The USA can play different roles: sometimes it can facilitate the peace process, at other times it may attempt to bridge the gaps between the parties, always working in concert with them.

For many Europeans, and I know that by generalizing I open myself to criticism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is basically a de-colonization process: Europe has a very clear view who is right and who is wrong and what should be done to solve the problem. Israel is perceived as having a greater share of responsibility for the successful resolution of the conflict than the Palestinian side.

Moreover, despite fundamental changes in the broader Middle East, for the Europeans, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains central, the key to all of the problems affecting the region. The growing concerns of the Arab political class with radical Islam is perceived as secondary to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In other words, the conflict is perceived as the root cause for everything that goes wrong in the Middle East and as easily able to spill over into Europe. The unresolved conflict is viewed as the breeding ground for radical Islam and a major contributing factor to the emergence of homegrown terrorism. In short, the conflict is perceived as a significant threat to the quality of life in Europe, an achievement won through many sacrifices during its long and bloody history.

In conclusion, the five factors outlined above will continue to be relevant in the foreseeable future. Forecasting is always risky, but if I have to project a little bit, I would say that no fundamental breakthrough in the EU-Israel relationship can be expected as long as the conflict resolution efforts fail to produce the desired solution.

The outlook for the coming year points to continued European preoccupation with the need to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as the best way to ensure regional stability and prevent the spillover of negative energies, originating in the broader ME, to Europe.

The EU will continue to advocate engagement but will refrain from undertaking an independent diplomatic initiative. Its diplomacy of choice will remain working through the quartet, trying to influence and steer the US policy in the proper direction. While staying engaged with Israel, the primary EU diplomatic effort has been shifting toward Washington, the only power capable of changing the course of Israel and speeding up the conflict resolution process.

My analysis has not touched on our emotional bond with Europe, a bond forged during the long and painful history of Jewish-European relations. This emotional bond amplifies – in many cases – the way the EU and Israel react to each other.

Let me conclude with a personal observation. Israel and Europe share common strategic interests. Israel favors the spread of

democratic values, good governance, and respect for human rights. Israel is the only functioning democracy in this part of the world. It also served as a primary target for political and military assault, a fact obscured – in recent years - by Israel's projection of its military power. We expect greater solidarity from our European friends and neighbors than has often been displayed in the past. I was still in Brussels in 2002, when the Belgian courts discussed whether or not Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon should be subject to legal procedures as an alleged war criminal. Reading the European press in recent days reveals how far the Europeans have traveled. Sharon is portrayed today as an essential actor in changing the status quo in the territories, the departure of whom might leave a big vacuum and delay the prospects of resolving the conflict. I do hope that this reflects a more mature European attitude towards the prospects of conflict resolution in the Middle East and a growing realization that working with Israel is the best and quickest way to contribute to regional stability.