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# Manfred Gerstenfeld

European-Israeli Relations:  
Between Confusion and Change?

Raphael Bardaji, Frits Bolkestein, Rijk van Dam,  
Oded Eran, Giuliano Ferrara, Efraim Halevy, Ayaan Hirsi Ali,  
Josef Joffe, Irit Kohn, Ruth Lapidoth, Zvi Mazel,  
Rory Miller, Anton Pelinka, Nidra Poller, Robbie Sabel

*European-Israeli Relations: Between Confusion and Change?* reassesses the current interactions between Europe and Israel. It is a sequel to *Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss?* which was published in spring 2005.

By the end of 2004 the European Union was on the way to greater integration. Its proposed constitution was expected to be ratified. It was anticipated that this would lead to a more powerful Europe.

After the rejection in 2005 of its constitution by France and the Netherlands and the rise in Muslim intimidation and terrorism, the EU has lost part of its self-assuredness and finds itself in a period of confusion and Europessimism.

In Israel, the disengagement from Gaza, the breakup of the political scene, and the armed confrontation in Lebanon have introduced new uncertainties about the future. Also affecting European-Israeli relations are the deepening quagmire in Iraq, the emergence of an explicitly genocidal anti-Semitic regime in Iran, and a Hamas government in the Palestinian territories that has backtracked on previous Palestinian commitments.

The developments of the past two years have made an Israeli-European dialogue more possible and potentially useful to both sides. That is why Israel should invest efforts in it. Another important action Israel should take is to organize its friends in Europe.

In the second part of the book, fifteen interviewees from Europe and Israel discuss European-Israeli relationships in several areas.

**EUROPEAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS:  
BETWEEN CONFUSION AND CHANGE?**

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Manfred Gerstenfeld

Raphael Bardaji • Frits Bolkestein • Rijk van  
Dam • Oded Eran • Giuliano Ferrara • Efraim  
Halevy • Ayaan Hirsi Ali • Josef Joffe • Irit  
Kohn • Ruth Lapidoth • Zvi Mazel • Rory  
Miller • Anton Pelinka • Nidra Poller •  
Robbie Sabel



Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs



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Dedicated to the memory of Marc Alexandre and to my former colleagues in Eurofinance, Paris, who helped me understand the emerging Europe in the 1960s.

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## Acknowledgments

This book is a sequel to *Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss?* which was published in spring 2005. Its interviews covered a broad array of aspects of European-Israeli relations. These included matters as diverse as worldviews and perceptions, the United Nations and the European Union, anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism, bilateral relations with major EU countries, and the attitudes of NGOs and the media. These interviews illustrated both the problems and the potential of European-Israeli relations.

Like the previous book, this one is based on a joint conference by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. It was held on 16 January 2006 in Jerusalem on the subject "Dilemmas of Israeli-European Relations." Major topics concerned recent developments as well as a number of legal aspects of the relationship.

This book consists of interviews with most of the conference's lecturers as well as additional experts. With one exception, all interviews were conducted in the first half of 2006. All texts were reviewed by the interviewees. I would like to thank them for allowing the readers and myself to benefit from their experiences and thoughts.

Prime subjects concern EU attitudes toward Israel as discussed in the interviews with Frits Bolkestein, Oded Eran, Efraim Halevy, and Rijk van Dam. Legal matters are the focus for Irit Kohn, Ruth Lapidot, and Robbie Sabel. Relationships with individual countries are addressed by Rafael Bardaji, Giuliano Ferrara, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Josef Joffe, Zvi Mazel, Rory Miller, Anton Pelinka, and Nidra Poller.

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Manfred Gerstenfeld

## European-Israeli Relations: Between Confusion and Change?

Where do the relations between Europe and Israel stand and how will they develop? In a preceding book, *Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss?* I wondered whether Europe's political attitude would also impact relations in areas such as trade, science, culture, and sport.

Since then less than two years have passed. In the dynamics of contemporary world politics, realities, perceptions, interactions, and prospects evolve rapidly. This not only pertains to the Middle East but to Europe as well. Hence it is difficult to assess whether shifts in European-Israeli relations are permanent or short-term.

Forecasting has become even more uncertain in a globalizing environment. How does one mitigate this uncertainty in a book that photographs a situation at a given moment in time but also analyzes an evolving relationship? One helpful approach is to identify some key issues that can serve as indicators for following important changes in the future.

Besides change, political dynamics often create confusion. For many years a key Israeli claim against Europe has concerned the latter's frequent double political standards toward Israel. This accusation is based on comparisons with how Europe judges itself, how it acts toward Israel's enemies, and how it regards third parties. Several interviews in this book provide insights on these major aspects of European-Israeli relations.

This book was concluded shortly after the end of the war in Lebanon in summer 2006, and there is now even greater uncertainty about current interactions. The Lebanon confrontation adds several new sensors for those following the European-Israeli relationship. These include how the European attitude toward Hizballah will evolve and how the UN troops in Lebanon will function: will they defuse tensions in the area or add further strain to the European-Israeli relationship?

In addition to existing sensors such as how Europe's attitude toward Hamas evolves, these may become powerful indicators of the course of the relationship.

In the background hovers an even more complex question: to what extent does Europe's behavior toward Israel manifest problems in Europe's own identity and values? Although this introduction and some interviewees occasionally refer to this issue, the subject in its entirety is beyond the scope of this book.

## **Has the Abyss Widened?**

The preceding book was completed at the end of 2004. A rapid way to understand part of the dynamics of European-Israeli relations is to read it with the knowledge and perspectives of 2006. This sheds light on how the views of the two protagonists have changed while the global and Middle Eastern environments have mutated.

The title of the previous book begs the question of whether the abyss between Israel and Europe has widened since that time. This invites another question: what indicators should be used for this purpose? Although some were mentioned above, it may well be that confusion will become a dominant aspect of the changes in political discourse. If so, it may make assessing the "state of the abyss" extremely difficult.

The following pages describe the main recent political changes in Israel and Europe and analyze their possible significance for the future of the relationship. Some attention is also given to major transformations in other societies that influence the Israeli-European interactions.

## **1. DEVELOPMENTS IN ISRAEL**

One major development since the beginning of 2005 has been Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, including the destruction of its Jewish villages and the dislocation of their Jewish population. As time passes and in particular after the armed confrontation in Lebanon, it appears that Israel has again given up territories in return for less hostile publicity for a limited period. This seems another example of Israel's de facto policy of the past decades: trading territory for time. The future will tell whether that is indeed the case.

Both the social and economic costs of the disengagement were substantial. Moreover, for over a year since it was carried out, many more Qassam rockets than before have been fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip.

Now, in addition to the civilians of Sderot, those of Ashkelon are also in the rockets' range. Meanwhile the Palestinian terrorists are building up their infrastructure for the next battle. Israel's head of domestic intelligence Yuval Diskin said that in the year since the disengagement and the transfer of control of the Egypt-Gaza border to Egypt, large quantities of weaponry have been smuggled into Gaza from Sinai.<sup>1</sup> Egypt has been ineffective in controlling this border on its side.

There has, however, been a sharp decline in Palestinian suicide and other bombings. Some Palestinian organizations have largely maintained a ceasefire while others have continued their attacks. Israel has reacted with incursions into Gaza that have substantially diminished the number of rockets fired.

Ze'ev Schiff of *Haaretz*, probably Israel's most prominent military commentator, supported the withdrawal from Gaza. In an article a few months after it had occurred, however, he wrote that escalation in the Gaza area was inevitable. In the war against the rockets, a number of the government's assessments have proved wrong. These include the assumption that the Palestinian Authority would take action on the ground against the rocket launchings. Schiff adds that the Egyptians have not kept their promise to take action against the Qassams.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Breakup of the Israeli Political Landscape**

The unilateral withdrawal from Gaza had major domestic consequences. One was the breakup of the Israeli political landscape and new elections. If one had rather arbitrarily to decide when the new election campaign started, 7 August 2005 is a good choice. On that day the then finance minister Benjamin Netanyahu resigned from the cabinet over the upcoming disengagement. This move clarified his intention to battle then-prime minister Ariel Sharon for the Likud leadership and if successful to replace him as prime minister.

Immediately rumors began that, if defeated, Sharon might leave

the Likud and start his own party. Poll data were very positive for him whether he stayed in or left the Likud. The battle within the party initially focused on whether to advance the primaries for the Likud leadership. Sharon won the vote on this at the end of September.

At the beginning of November, Netanyahu and several other Likud members voted against ministerial appointments proposed by Sharon. A few days later Amir Peretz surprisingly defeated Shimon Peres in the elections for Labor Party chairman. Under Peretz's leadership later that month Labor left the government, which triggered new elections. On 21 November, Sharon asked President Moshe Katsav to dissolve the Knesset.

That same day Sharon announced that he was leaving the Likud to form a new centrist party, taking about one-third of its Knesset members with him. Subsequently, Peres and two other Labor MKs joined this new party, Kadima.

## **The Elections**

Kadima held a comfortable lead in the polls throughout the entire campaign. Sharon first suffered a stroke in December and was totally incapacitated by a second one in early January 2006. His deputy, Ehud Olmert, took over. Toward the end of January, the terrorist organization Hamas won the elections in the Palestinian Authority. Many wonder how much Israel's disengagement contributed to their success by fostering the perception in Palestinian circles that tenacity would help them prevail without making concessions.

On 28 March, the Israeli elections were held. Of the 120 Knesset seats, Kadima obtained 29 and the Labor Party 19. The major loser of the elections, the Likud, received only 12 seats.

Thereafter Olmert repeatedly declared that his government would undertake a further disengagement on the West Bank. On 12 July 2006, unprovoked attacks by Hizballah from Lebanon led to sharp Israeli reactions and an armed confrontation that would end in a ceasefire on 18 August.

There was no all-out winner in this conflict. Judgment of the outcome is heavily influenced by prior expectations and the criteria for measuring success. Assessments of who won may also evolve over

time. The conflict raised many questions that cannot yet be answered. Perceptions vary as to what the war achieved. Many in Israel have sharply criticized both the political and military leadership's performance during the war. This has also created uncertainty about the coalition government's survival.

As for relations with the European Union, Israel had expected a lastingly improved understanding of its position after its disengagement from Gaza. That did not materialize.

## 2. CHANGES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Some significant political changes in Europe result from democratic elections. Governments as well as prime ministers come and go, gain or lose strength. These developments influence Europe's positions including those on the Middle East.

In Europe's larger countries, one important change has been the election of the Christian Democrat Angela Merkel as chancellor of Germany and the departure from politics of her predecessor, the Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder. The two major German parties now govern together. Interviewee Josef Joffe, editor of the German weekly *Die Zeit*, defines Schröder's attitude toward Israel as "aloofness or almost coldness." Nevertheless, he has supported Israel on important matters. Already in her early days, Merkel gave very positive signals both to Israel and the Jewish people.

Another important political change took place in Italy where the Forza Italia-led right-of-center coalition was defeated by a left-of-center one. Former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi was especially friendly to Israel, and so was Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini. Interviewee Giuliano Ferrara, editor of the daily *Il Foglio*, observes: "As leader of a postfascist party [Fini] needed Israeli legitimization." The new Italian prime minister, Romano Prodi, has an ambiguous attitude toward Israel. The largest party in his coalition, the DS (Democrats of the Left), is mainly composed of former communists. Their sympathies have traditionally been with the Palestinians.

In the United Kingdom, Labour Party leader and Prime Minister Tony Blair, a strong supporter of Israel in the Lebanon conflict, has

maintained his post despite increasing criticism in his party. His authority has, however, been eroded by difficult internal battles within the party on domestic policies, and his image has been damaged by the development of the Iraq war and a variety of scandals concerning his associates and party. His departure from office is now expected in the first half of 2007.

In France, after the defeat of the European Constitution in May 2005, Prime Minister Jean Pierre Raffarin was replaced by Dominique de Villepin. The latter's popularity declined rapidly. President Jacques Chirac also has a low status in French public opinion and is unlikely to run again in the 2007 presidential elections.

### **The Rejected EU Constitution**

Other events have been even more important for Europe's future. Several also indirectly affect its behavior toward Israel. By the end of 2004 the EU was a near-continent on the way to greater integration. Its proposed constitution had been prepared after long discussions and was expected to be ratified. This was supposed to lead to a more unified and powerful Europe.

In May and June 2005, however, 55 percent of French voters and 62 percent of Dutch voters, respectively, rejected the proposed constitution. This occurred despite the overwhelming support for the proposal by the government and most opposition parties in both countries. It was an indicator of the gap that had developed between the political classes and the population.

The rejection of the constitution by two of the EU's founding members has weakened the Union's overall status. All indications are that the majority of voters in the two countries still oppose such a constitution unless it is substantially changed. New efforts to pass a revised proposal will have to wait several years. Meanwhile the EU finds itself in a period of confusion and Europessimism. Some observers even wonder whether Europe's good years might be over.

## **Turkey and the EU**

The constitution's defeat reflects mixed attitudes toward the EU itself. Polls also indicate that many Europeans consider the EU inefficient.

There have been several consequences of the constitution's defeat. France's status in the EU was harmed. Other developments there, such as the autumn 2005 riots in which much property was burned, and intermittent lower-level violence since then, have enhanced the impression that France, rather than being the leader of the EU, will become a country beset with problems.

Another important result of the constitution's rejection is that voices against Turkey becoming a full member of the EU have become louder and more frequent.<sup>3</sup> One consistent opponent of Turkey's entry has been interviewee Frits Bolkestein, a former Dutch EU commissioner. He gives three reasons for his position. First, Turkey is too big, too poor, and too different from the EU. Second, if Turkey becomes a member it will be followed by additional countries. And finally, all polls show a majority of Europeans opposing Turkish membership.

## **Europe's Muslim Minorities**

Other European developments may influence future attitudes toward Israel. Over the past two years European awareness has increased that parts of its Muslim minorities pose a threat to their societies, which takes different forms in different countries. Terrorism is the most noxious and visible one.

The London suicide bombings in July 2005 highlighted new aspects of this issue. Like the 11 March 2004 attacks in Madrid, they targeted civilians at random. Yet they differed in that they were not executed by immigrants but by Muslims born in Britain—with the exception of one who came as a baby—and from seemingly integrated families. Several had visited Muslim countries, however, and apparently had absorbed their influence. The number of British murdered in one day in London exceeded that of Israelis killed by Palestinian terrorists in the whole of 2005.

Although the London attacks were the most blatant case of



European Islamist terrorism, there were other related developments as well. The November 2004 murder of the Dutch media maker Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands was followed by more than a hundred attacks mainly against Muslim institutions and individuals.

In the Netherlands several politicians and intellectuals need permanent protection because of the murderous threats of extreme Muslims. A number of dissenting Muslims in the EU have been attacked or are regularly threatened by other Muslims. There is constant news in Europe about suspected terrorists. Court cases against terrorism suspects are also underway in several countries. Interviewee Rafael Bardaji of the Spanish FAES think-tank notes that the perpetrators of the Madrid bombings had many contacts with religious leaders and other Muslims abroad.

### **How Violent Will Some Europeans Become?**

Many Europeans are beginning to understand that it is very difficult to protect oneself against Islamist terrorism. Even increased ethnic profiling—opposed by many—is no longer a safeguard as terrorist organizations try to recruit converts. For instance, a female Belgian Muslim convert carried out a suicide bombing in Iraq at the end of 2005.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, there are indications of a rise in right-wing violence and possible terrorism from this direction.

The key question is less how many Europeans will get killed in terrorist attacks, but rather how many Europeans will get alarmed or even violent. One among many questions here is whether a harsher European perception of parts of the Muslim world will influence the European narrative of the Middle East and, in particular, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The problematic aspects of radical minorities in the European Muslim communities take many forms. These go far beyond the small but dangerous group of potential terrorists and other active radicals. The number of sympathizers with these is significant. A YouGov poll for the *Daily Telegraph* after the London suicide bombings found 6 percent of British Muslims saying these were fully justified.

Only 73 percent said they would inform the police if they knew of someone planning a terrorist attack,<sup>5</sup> meaning that at least three

hundred thousand adults would not. In comparison, when terrorists of the Red Army faction were active in Germany, it was commonly estimated that only a few thousand people would not inform the authorities if they knew their hiding places.

Also problematic regarding the Muslim minorities are the substantial numbers who reject the basic values of European culture, however diluted these may be. Not surprisingly, then, parts of the second and third generations of the immigrants refuse to integrate. Some do not even properly learn the language of the country in which they apparently wish to continue living. They thereby set themselves apart from almost all other citizens.

Given the large numbers of Muslims in Europe—an estimated six million in France alone—these problems cannot be ignored. Under any circumstances it would have been difficult to integrate in a few decades so many foreigners whose culture is so alien to that of Europe. Perhaps the best indicator of how remote the perceptions of many European Muslims are from both European ones and reality concerns the ethnicity of the attackers on 11 September 2001.

Fifty-six percent of British Muslims do not think Arabs carried out the attack, and only 17 percent think they did. The respective figures for France are 46 percent and 48 percent; for Germany, 44 percent and 35 percent; and for Spanish Muslims, 35 percent and 33 percent.<sup>6</sup>

## **European Xenophobia**

It is not only because of their attitude toward the dominant culture that parts of the Muslim communities in Europe are difficult to integrate. Another impediment is the substantial, deeply rooted European xenophobia, whose most continuous visible manifestation over the centuries has been anti-Semitism.

Negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims in Europe are gradually increasing. A June 2006 Pew Global Attitudes Survey found that 82 percent of Germans are concerned about the rise of Islamic extremism in their country, as are 77 percent of the British, 76 percent of the French, and 66 percent of the Spanish regarding their respective countries.<sup>7</sup>

In May 2006, researchers of the Allensbach Institute reported that

German perceptions of Islam have substantially hardened in recent times. This study found that 83 percent of respondents associated Islam with fanaticism (compared to 75 percent in 2004). Seventy-one percent saw it as intolerant (66 percent in 2004), 62 percent saw it as backward (49 percent in 2004), and 60 percent saw it as undemocratic (52 percent in 2004). Only 8 percent of the survey participants viewed Islam as a peaceful religion.<sup>8</sup>

By the end of August 2006, a YouGov poll for the *Daily Telegraph* found that 53 percent of those surveyed in Britain felt themselves threatened by Islam. Five years earlier the figure had been 32 percent. Only 16 percent believed that “practically all British Muslims are peaceful, law-abiding citizens who deplore terrorist acts as much as anyone else,” compared to 23 percent a year before. When asked whether they believed that “a large proportion of British Muslims feel no sense of loyalty to this country and are prepared to condone or even carry out acts of terrorism,” 18 percent said yes compared to 10 percent a year earlier.<sup>9</sup>

For many reasons, Europe has no solution for the minority-related problems of its own creation. One is Europe’s identity vacuum. Another is the related decline in European self-confidence and increase in confusion.

## **The Ahmadinejad Affair**

Recent years have offered much additional proof of Europe’s political weakness. A typical case concerned the actions of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. With the election of the then mayor of Teheran in June 2005 as the country’s president, Iran took an even more radical turn.

Iran represents multiple threats to all humanity. Exporting terrorism is one. Its planned development of nuclear weapons is the most universally threatening. As so often, Israel and the Jews have become an indicator of the intentions of those who pose major dangers to many others.

At a conference called “World without Zionism” at the Interior Ministry in Teheran on 26 October 2005, Ahmadinejad quoted Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the radically fundamentalist

Iranian government: “This regime that is occupying Quds [Jerusalem] must be eliminated from the pages of history.” Ahmadinejad added: “We must understand the depth of the disgrace imposed on us by the enemy, until our holy hatred expands continuously and strikes like a wave.”

Ahmadinejad also told the hundreds of students present to shout the slogan: “Death to Israel.” Other speakers at that event were terrorist leaders Hassan Nasrallah of Hizballah and Khaled Mash’al of Hamas.<sup>10</sup>

## **Noticing Genocidal Calls**

Whereas previous genocidal statements by Iranian authorities had gone largely unnoticed, the many European and other Western condemnations in the Ahmadinejad case indicated that there is now awareness of the danger of such calls.<sup>11</sup>

Reactions, however, remained almost exclusively verbal. Not a single Western country recalled its ambassador from Iran. European spokesmen often claim that human rights are a prime value that defines European identity. The reactions to the Iranian genocidal statements do not bear this out.

The only country where the reaction was more substantial was Italy, where a torchlight protest march took place on 3 November near the Iranian embassy in Rome. Senior politicians from all government and opposition parties, with the exception of the Rifondazione communist party, took part in the demonstration.<sup>12</sup>

Ferrara, who organized this unique initiative, says he felt it “a political, cultural, and civil duty to organize a protest against Ahmadinejad’s call for genocide. I wanted this demonstration to have a simple goal: to proclaim that we uphold Israel’s right to exist and object to a head of state who denies this.”

Yet Ferrara’s initiative was not followed elsewhere. If there were demonstrations at all, they were minor ones organized by Jews. The lesson seems clear: whatever murderous statements are made by major actors in the Muslim world against the Jews or Israel, the reactions of the West, and in particular the Europeans, will remain feeble. The reasons are probably multiple, including oil and trade interests as well as general apathy.

Blair was one of the few exceptions. When visiting Israel in September 2006, he said: "I think for a president of a country to say they want to wipe another country off the face of the earth and at the same time he's trying to acquire a nuclear weapons capability—if we don't get worried about that future historians will raise a few questions about us and our judgment."<sup>13</sup>

## **Gold for Chocolate**

Ahmadinejad further tested the European attitude. Having gotten away without much problem with his repeated calls for genocide against Israel, he attacked the Jews by denying the Holocaust. Once again there were only verbal condemnations from the West. Ahmadinejad then said the matter should be investigated and started to promote a Holocaust deniers' conference in Teheran. He also proclaimed that the Palestinians were the real victims of the Holocaust. Although several Holocaust deniers visited Teheran, Ahmadinejad has not so far succeeded in organizing a conference.

Ahmadinejad likely realizes by now that the West, and particularly Europe, is either incapable or unwilling to go beyond words. He may regard the genocide calls and Holocaust denial as useful tests. He could well conclude that little will happen if Iran goes ahead with its nuclear development program, officially for energy purposes, most probably for military ones.

This issue concerns Europe directly because Iran is also developing missiles that can reach parts of its territory. A state with a jihadi government without any scruples may pose a more dangerous threat to Europe than did the fading Soviet Union in the last decade of its existence.

Even if many European governments and their officials have difficulty understanding the worldview and mindset of radical Muslims, they recognize that a terrorism-promoting state developing a nuclear bomb constitutes a problem. Yet they apparently have not learned the World War II lessons that appeasement permits the aggressor to grow incrementally stronger until finally action must be taken from a weakened position.

As Iran went ahead with its nuclear development, Europe was

unable to accomplish much more than drawn-out proposals for negotiations. The European soft-power concept produced no results. In May 2006, several European countries mentioned the possibility of offering Iran a light-water reactor if it ceased uranium enrichment. Ahmadinejad's reaction was to mock Europe, saying: "How dare you tell our people to give up its gold in return for chocolate."<sup>14</sup>

So far Ahmadinejad seems to have read Europe well. Negotiations have led nowhere and by mid-October 2006 the West had not yet managed to obtain a condemnation of Iran in the UN Security Council. France has proposed to continue discussions with Iran. As a further provocation Ahmadinejad proposed to hold a television debate on world affairs with President Bush.<sup>15</sup>

## **Ahmadinejad's Travels**

Ahmadinejad can conclude from his first year in office that he has been successful internationally. Far from being a leper, he has been welcomed with honors in several countries. China, a member of the Security Council, was happy to receive him. When visiting Indonesia he asserted Iran's right to nuclear energy and claimed that Israel would be destroyed. Thousands of students cheered him.

The high point of his international activity was the invitation to address dozens of heads of state at the opening of the seventh African Union Conference in Gambia in late June 2006. In July, President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela embraced him in Teheran. Chavez became an ally, accusing Israel of behaving like Nazis in Lebanon and subsequently breaking off diplomatic relations with Israel.

Germany was saved the embarrassment of deciding whether to let Ahmadinejad visit during the football World Cup. He had said he would only come if Iran reached the second round, which it did not. In September 2006, he attacked the United States at the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Whatever the West achieves in terms of peacefully halting Iran's nuclear development is far more likely to be America's accomplishment than Europe's. A very useful indicator of the development of Europe's willpower will be its future attitude toward Iran.

## The Mohammed-Cartoon Affair

There were other recent indications of Europe's current mindset. Especially revealing was the Mohammed-cartoon controversy. In September 2005, the Danish daily *Jyllands-posten* published twelve cartoons with the Prophet Mohammed as the subject. The paper reacted to the fact that a Danish author could not find anybody to illustrate his biography of Mohammed.<sup>16</sup> The Arab ambassadors in Copenhagen protested. A debate began in Denmark, but it faded rapidly and the matter seemed closed.

The cartoon conflict was rekindled when several Danish imams toured the Arab world to agitate against Denmark. A small Norwegian Christian paper, *Magazinet*, reprinted the cartoons on 10 January 2006. On 26 January, Saudi Arabia recalled its ambassador from Denmark and Arabs launched a widespread boycott of Danish products. Early in February, various European papers published some of the cartoons to underline their support for freedom of the press.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout February the cartoons sparked violence in many Muslim and several other countries. Several European embassies and missions were burned down or attacked. For many weeks Danish citizens had to be apprehensive even when visiting non-Arab Muslim countries.

It now appears that the Western world has been the loser in this conflict. The logical reaction of the EU would have been to condemn the anti-European violence in Muslim countries and stress that Europe upholds freedom of the press. It could also have said unofficially that the Muslim world was full of the most vicious hate propaganda and should clean its own house before complaining about others.

The cartoon controversy could have been an occasion for Europe to show its strength. The EU, however, showed its weakness by issuing a statement expressing its regrets that Muslims had found the cartoons offensive.<sup>18</sup> The cartoon controversy became a further indicator of how European countries struggle to define their identity and values, how difficult it is for them to show solidarity with each other, and how easily they can be intimidated.



## **Noting Internal and External Weakness**

This European weakness was noted both abroad and internally. Seeing that the Europeans were on the defensive, the organized Muslim world decided to push for more. The world body of Muslim states, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) expressed its dissatisfaction with the EU's statement.<sup>19</sup>

Patrick Sookhdeo, adviser to the British army, said most British Muslim clerics believed that the British government, which was very critical of the countries in which the cartoons were published, had capitulated to Islam. They believed, he added, that in future, if a spokesman for British Muslims threatened violence to other religious groups, the British government would cave in again.<sup>20</sup>

The Mohammed-cartoon controversy had nothing to do with Israel or the Jews. Yet they were almost inevitably drawn into this conflict between many Muslims and the West. One major aspect of this was when Western media started to contrast Muslim sensitivity about the caricatures with the stream of far more offensive anti-Semitic cartoons published in Muslim media. A number of demonstrations in the Muslim world against Western countries included Israel as a target.<sup>21</sup>

## **Terrorist Organizations**

The EU's attitude toward terrorist organizations is yet another indicator of its willpower, or lack of it. When in January 2006 Hamas won democratic elections in the Palestinian Authority, the EU decided it would not have relations with it. Some breaches of this position came rapidly in Sweden and, outside the EU, in Norway. After Israel's incursions into Gaza in response to rocket fire, the EU stance became somewhat confused. Later, for some time the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was overshadowed by the Lebanon war.

An additional test for the EU will come if the Hamas regime is replaced by a Palestinian unity government. Will the EU be willing to dilute demands that the Palestinian government must renounce violence, recognize Israel, and accept previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians?

Although Hamas is on the EU's list of terrorist organizations,

Hizballah is not. In March 2005, the European Parliament adopted a resolution stating there was abundant evidence that Hizballah was a terrorist organization, and European ministers should list it as such. This has not happened. Interviewee Rijk van Dam, a Dutch former EU parliamentarian, says that three EU member states oppose putting Hizballah on this list: France, Spain, and Ireland.

Markus Kotzur, a German international law professor, asserted that Hizballah meets 100 percent the criteria for a terror organization under international law. He suggests that the organization fails to appear on the EU's terrorist-organizations list solely on "political, diplomatic and tactical grounds."<sup>22</sup>

At a public meeting in Brussels expressing solidarity with Israel, Jehudi Kinar, Israel's ambassador to Belgium accused the European governments "who during two years had not the courage to include Hizballah on the list of terror organizations despite the clear links between this organization and terrorist acts such as the bombing against a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires in 1994."<sup>23</sup>

Future trends in EU attitudes toward Hamas and Hizballah will be further indicators of the evolvment of Europe's mindset.

## **The Truth Emerges**

With time more proof emerges of the EU's dubious behavior in the Middle East. There is much evidence that Israeli accusations about the Palestinian abuse of EU funds for corruption and terrorism were correct. Arafat received major monies from the EU that were intended for the Palestinian people. As Van Dam observes, allegations of misuse have also been confirmed by Palestinian sources.

Interviewee Efraim Halevy, former Israeli ambassador to the EU, relates how he was in EU Commission vice-president Manuel Marin's office when the latter received a call from the German foreign minister complaining that some funds for the Palestinians had been transferred to the PA's general account rather than to Arafat's private one.

Yet another indication of the EU's ambivalence toward terrorism was its treatment of Arafat's death and its aftermath. Former Israeli diplomat Freddy Eytan wrote about the honor Chirac paid to Arafat's mortal remains: "Chirac went far beyond the requirements

of protocol. It would be difficult to find in modern times another head of a democratic country who paid such homage to a warrior chief of a virtual state." Eytan added: "Jacques Chirac bowed before Arafat's remains.... When watching this major homage of France to Arafat, one could ask on what field of honor this so-called Palestinian hero had fallen? The only thing lacking was for the president of the French Republic to confer on Arafat the Legion of Honor."<sup>24</sup>

Arafat and the Palestinian movement he headed have been leading innovators of terrorism. The Palestinians have for decades made a major contribution to terrorism's worldwide expansion. Arafat was a war criminal by any standards. He authorized payments to suicide bombers who killed Israeli civilians. Chirac and many other European leaders gave homage to the man who fostered terrorism more than anybody else. UN secretary-general Kofi Annan went even further, laying a wreath on Arafat's grave on his way to the opening of a new Holocaust museum in Israel.<sup>25</sup>

During the Lebanon war, Chirac called the U.S. opposition to his proposed terms for a ceasefire resolution "immoral." Halevy recalls that Chirac admired the late president of Syria, Hafez Assad, a mass murderer whose victims included tens of thousands of Syrian civilians. This introduction of the term morality into the Lebanon-war discourse was a further expression of the French president's ambiguous mindset.

## **The Lebanon War**

Analyzing the EU's attitude toward the Lebanon war requires first recalling how it started. Hizballah attacked Israel on 12 July, killing three Israeli soldiers and abducting two others. Five more soldiers were killed in the effort to free the two who were captured. Hizballah also fired Katyusha rockets at Israel from Lebanon. On 13 July Israel reacted massively, among other things bombing Beirut's international airport.

In the 2006 conflict, Israel was the victim of an unprovoked attack. It had international legitimacy on its side and, therefore, expected unqualified support from Western allies. Israel had withdrawn from Lebanon in 2000 under Prime Minister Ehud Barak. The Lebanese

army had failed to take over the positions Israel had left despite repeated UN resolutions calling on it to do so. Moreover, from the standpoint of the United Nations, Israel had no territorial conflict with Lebanon. (The new Hizballah claim to the Shebaa Farms in the Golan Heights was dismissed by the UN secretary-general.)

Furthermore, Hizballah, which initiated the July crisis, was a faction in the elected Lebanese government. That government had done very little while Hizballah collected massive quantities of weapons on Lebanese territory. As a result Hizballah militarily controlled southern Lebanon after Israel's withdrawal.

## **Double Standards**

The EU's stance during the Lebanon war also has to be measured against its own ambitions. The EU has for many years announced that it wants to be a global political actor with a common foreign and security policy. This large part of a continent with 450 million inhabitants wishes to be a counterweight to the United States and its preponderant role on the world scene. The Lebanese summer confrontation provided a major occasion to show that the EU could rapidly act to stop a conflict in its early stages by proposing a solution to which it would make a major contribution.

With the United States heavily preoccupied with Iraq and Afghanistan, this was an important opportunity for the EU. Lebanon is a territory where Europe, and particularly France, has a major interest. Thus, several circumstances were conducive to an important European role in dealing with the conflict.

On 13 July, Finland, which held the EU's rotating presidency, issued a statement on the EU's behalf: "The European Union is greatly concerned about the disproportionate use of force by Israel in Lebanon in response to attacks by Hizballah on Israel. The presidency deplors the loss of civilian lives and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. The imposition of an air and sea blockade on Lebanon cannot be justified."<sup>26</sup> Even if several later declarations by heads of state, particularly Blair, did not support this one-sided attitude, the Finnish announcement was made in the EU's name.

In the narrative about Hizballah's provocation and Israel's reaction

in this war, the expression “disproportionate use of force” would become a standard charge against Israel for many armchair politicians and commentators. It was a case of how double standards are applied to Israel by requiring behavior of it that is not expected of any other democratic nation. The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia’s (EUMC) working definition of anti-Semitism cites such biased statements as an example of this type of racism.<sup>27</sup>

## **Puncturing Hypocrisy**

The British author Frederic Forsyth punctured the European hypocrisy when he wrote:

certain of our politicians, seeking easy populism and the cheapest round of applause in modern history, have called the Israeli response “disproportionate.”...Why did the accusers not mention Serbia?... In 1999 five Nato air forces—US, British, French, Italian and German—began to plaster Yugoslavia, effectively the tiny and defenceless province of Serbia. We were not at war with the Serbs, we had no reason to hate them, they had not attacked us and no Serbian rockets were falling on us.

But we practically bombed them back to the Stone Age. We took out every bridge we could see. We trashed their TV station, army barracks, airfields and motorways. We were not fighting for our lives and no terrorists were skulking among the civilian population but we hit apartment blocks and factories anyway. There were civilian casualties. We did not do it for 25 days but for 73. We bombed this little country economically back 30 years by converting its infrastructure into rubble.... In all those 73 days of bombing Serbia I never heard one British moralist use the word “disproportionate.”<sup>28</sup>

There is a further perspective on proportionality. Ahmadinejad and other radical Muslim leaders have frequently said they are willing to sacrifice many millions of Muslim lives in order to eliminate Israel. As there are about two hundred times more Muslims than Israelis, the support for proportionality is tantamount to an indirect encouragement for the planned genocide by the Iranians and their allies.

## **Equivalence between Democracy and Terrorists**

The Finnish statement did not even place the EU in an even-handed, “the truth is in the middle” position between an attacked democracy and the attacking terrorists. Subsequently there were many more European claims of moral equivalence between Israel’s and Hizballah’s actions.

Spanish socialist prime minister José Luis Zapatero demonstrated how statements by European politicians in effect help terrorists. He said: “From my point of view, Israel is wrong. One thing is self-defense, and the other is to launch a counteroffensive consisting of a general attack in Lebanon and Gaza that is just going to further escalate violence in the area.”<sup>29</sup> This was yet another extreme expression of a leading European appeaser. Zapatero had withdrawn the Spanish troops from Iraq after he surprisingly won the national election that was held a few days after the Madrid bombings.

At a rally during the Lebanon war, Zapatero was photographed with a keffiyeh that had been put on his head by a member of a Fatah youth group. This headdress symbolizes the radical anti-Israeli Left. Zapatero later said he did not regret posing for the photo and would do it again. Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League in the United States, remarked: “the Spanish prime minister wears his anti-Israel bias on his sleeve.”<sup>30</sup>

On 2 August, the Finnish presidency announced that the EU would not put Hizballah on its list of terrorist organizations. Earlier that day it had also said it considered Israel’s decision to step up military actions against Hizballah unacceptable.<sup>31</sup>

Those Israeli leaders who had thought Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, despite all resulting internal problems, had made a structural contribution to a better understanding of Israel’s positions in Europe were once again proved wrong.

## **The Countries Close to Israel**

As noted, the EU was far from united during the Lebanon war. Closest to Israel in their declared positions were the governments of Germany, Britain, and the Czech Republic. Blair said in a speech in

Los Angeles that reactionary Islam had seized its opportunity first in Gaza, then in Lebanon: "They knew what would happen. Their terrorism would provoke massive retaliation by Israel. Within days, the world would forget the original provocation and be shocked by the retaliation."<sup>32</sup>

Blair held out well despite the many critical voices in his government. These included complaints that the British position was bad for getting Muslim votes in the UK. The *Observer* quoted a Blairite minister among the cabinet critics as saying: "He also completely understands the effect on the Muslim community—both in terms of losing Muslim voters hand over fist and the wider issue of community cohesion."<sup>33</sup>

One can only speculate that Blair, close to the end of his political career, is more interested in publicly identifying profound threats to his country and the Western world than in promoting short-term political goals. The Labour Party's discussion, however, revealed another indicator worth following: to what extent Muslim parliamentarians and concerns about Muslim voters in various countries will influence attitudes toward Israel.

## **Pretensions and Capabilities**

The discrepancy between the EU's pretensions and its capabilities to play a major role gradually became clear during the war. It even had difficulty reaching an agreement on the proposed procedure toward a ceasefire.<sup>34</sup> Nor could it decide expeditiously what it would contribute to the solution of the problem. The divisions of opinion between EU member states made a strong united position impossible for many weeks.

The Lebanese war was more than a litmus test for Europe's capabilities. It was also a chance for Europe to show that it stood behind Israel when it was threatened by a terrorist group with genocidal aims. Yet the EU's position remained lukewarm at best.

When the United Nations reached its decision about a multinational force, it soon became known that this force would not undertake one major task required to bring peace to the area, the disarming of Hizballah. Nor is it clear that it will be able to prevent a new flow of



arms to Hizballah from Syria. The best one can hope from the force is some mitigation of the terrorist problem.

How the UN force will function may also determine whether it will be an additional source of friction between Europe and Israel. Interviewee Rory Miller, for instance, points out that tensions in the past between the Irish contingent of UNIFIL and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have damaged relations between the two countries.

## **Hesitations**

The process of composing the international force demonstrated the EU's hesitations. It would have been reasonable to assume that its member states would rapidly provide most of the soldiers required for the force. Reactions, however, were slow as long as the ceasefire seemed fragile. In particular, France's offer—despite presenting itself as the EU's political leader in the days preceding the ceasefire—was far below expectations. The European lead thus passed to Italy, which promised 2,500 soldiers. France followed with great hesitation, initially offering only two hundred troops toward an expected UN force of fifteen thousand.

Former British defense minister Michael Portillo scathingly attacked the French. He recalled that the French general Philippe Morillon had pledged, on behalf of the United Nations, forces to protect Srebrenica in the former Yugoslavia without having the resources to do so.

Portillo wrote that he and the other NATO defense ministers “found a word to describe the French habit of making impressive statements with no means to put them into effect. We called it ‘grandstanding.’” Regarding the UN Lebanon force, he added: “Late last week, after wasting valuable time since hostilities ended nearly two weeks ago, President Chirac gave way. Having attracted the world's scorn he raised his country's offer to 2,000.”<sup>35</sup>

By the end of August, even Chirac admitted that Europe had been more than necessarily passive during the Lebanon conflict. He said that on several occasions he had recommended that Javier Solana, the EU's representative for foreign affairs, should be given a mandate to act on behalf of the EU member states, as is the case with the Iranian

nuclear issue. But the idea was not accepted because of disagreements between the member states on the Lebanese crisis.<sup>36</sup>

The next day, the French minister for European affairs, Catherine Colonna, extended the negative judgment to the overall functioning of the EU. She said it suffered from a malaise of listlessness and general fatigue that did not augur well for its capacity to respond to people's needs. Colonna added that the EU was in fact twenty-five states living side by side, aiming at difficult compromises rather than searching for a common interest.<sup>37</sup>

### **Iran's Role of "Regional Stabilization"**

At the end of July, French foreign minister Philippe Douste-Blazy made the most bizarre statement during the war by a government minister of an EU country. Before going to meet the Iranian foreign minister, he called Iran "a great country, a great people and a great civilization which is respected and which plays a role of stabilization in the region."<sup>38</sup>

He thus referred to a country that promotes genocide, murder, Holocaust denial, and was arming terrorists. The reaction of an anonymous Israeli senior diplomat was: "What planet is he on? It's not Planet Earth if he thinks Iran is a stabilizing force."<sup>39</sup> In 1995, Chirac had finally, fifty years after the end of World War II, admitted that it was France that had helped Germany collect the Jews in the Paris cycling stadium from where they were sent to their deaths. He said France had incurred an unforgivable debt.<sup>40</sup> Yet, in 2006, a minister of democratic France praised another genocidal state.

A few days later, Douste-Blazy was forced to react to Ahmadinejad's statement that the solution to violence in the Middle East was "the elimination of the Zionist regime." On France-Inter radio, Douste-Blazy stated: "I totally condemn these words." He added that they were "absolutely unacceptable on anyone's part, especially from a head of state." The crisis had presented an opportunity for Iran to "show that it can play a positive and stabilizing role in the region," but Ahmadinejad's statement "confirmed that this is not the case."<sup>41</sup> Douste-Blazy thus condemned his own earlier judgment.

## European Civil Society

European civil society reached other new extreme lows concerning Israel. Two among many examples will have to suffice. On 25 July, Sir Peter Tapsell, a British Conservative MP, compared Israel's behavior in Lebanon to that of the Nazi atrocities in the Jewish quarter of Warsaw.<sup>42</sup>

This comparison illuminates nothing about Israel's acts in the Lebanon war. The Jews in Warsaw never declared that they aimed to eliminate Germany from the earth nor acquired weapons to attack it. The opposite was true.

Hizballah, part of the Lebanese government, wants to eradicate Israel. In this it resembles Nazi Germany. Tapsell's remark is revealing mainly about himself, as it was not Hizballah that reminded him of the Nazis. Why did he not look closer to home at the bombing by the British Royal Air Force (RAF) and the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) of Dresden, a city which did not represent any military interest, from 13-15 February 1945? An estimated 25,000-35,000 civilians were killed in the city. Of the 220,000 apartments in Dresden, 175,000 were destroyed or damaged.

The other example comes from outside the EU. Norway is a country with a long history of anti-Semitism. In its latest anti-Israeli mutation, this anti-Semitism is also rife among large parts of Norway's left-wing elite. Cartoons about Israel in the country's major papers often resemble Nazi ones.<sup>43</sup>

A well-known writer, Jostein Gaarder, wrote in Norway's leading daily *Aftenposten*:

It is time to learn a new lesson: we no longer recognize the state of Israel. We could not recognize the South African apartheid regime, nor did we recognize the Afghan Taliban regime. Then there were many who did not recognize Saddam Hussein's Iraq or the Serbs' ethnic cleansing. We must now get used to the idea: the state of Israel in its current form is history.... The state of Israel has raped the recognition of the world and shall have no peace until it lays down its arms.<sup>44</sup>

Thus Gaarder, a pseudo-humanist, became a de facto supporter of

Ahmadinejad.

## **No Unequivocal Support, No Pressure**

The basic EU attitude toward Israel has been well characterized by an American observer. Jeffrey Gedmin, president of the Aspen Institute in Berlin, said: “The typical European approach to Israel is to wait until Israel reacts to an attack and then criticize it.” He added: “One would expect the Europeans to say at least once: ‘This is what we would do. Our proposal is credible for a number of sound reasons. We will support it in the following ways. If you accept it and it fails, we will protect you by taking a number of major actions.’ On that front, however, the Europeans are totally absent.”<sup>45</sup>

Gedmin’s assertion showed itself accurate again. When the Israelis accidentally bombed Lebanese civilians on 30 July in Kafr Kana, the Europeans strongly condemned the act that same day. Once more there were no European suggestions of how to better handle the situation. For instance, how should Israel fight an enemy that intentionally locates its rockets among civilians in a country where the government is incompetent and unwilling to deal with this matter?

Interviewee Oded Eran, Israeli ambassador to the EU, describes the EU position during the war: “Although there has not been unequivocal support for Israel’s battle against Hizballah, nor has there been significant pressure on Israel to end the military campaign in a way that would leave it exposed to similar threats in the future.”

This at-best neutral position has to be seen against the background of ongoing hostile declarations by the EU. Eran points out: “every month statements critical of Israel keep coming out of the monthly meetings of the EU foreign ministers. These are written by mid-level diplomats of the member states. It rarely happens that they are not automatically approved by the ministers.”

These statements have by now acquired an almost ritual character. They can only strengthen the perception among Israeli observers that the EU’s attitude toward Israel is not determined by what it does but what it is. This is another indicator for the European-Israeli relationship that will have to be analyzed in greater detail as matters evolve.

## **Belgium and the Sharon Court Case**

Interviewee Irit Kohn, former head of the International Department of the Israeli Ministry of Justice, discusses a case study of the double standards applied by one EU member state to Israel. She analyzes the development of the Belgian court case against Ariel Sharon concerning the Sabra and Shatilah massacres by Christian militias in 1982.

Kohn notes that under American pressure the Belgian parliament decided to change key elements in its laws concerning universal jurisdiction. At the time there was a major effort in the Belgian parliament to retain the original complaint against Sharon, while excluding others in similar situations from prosecution.

She observes: "That, however, would have proved that the entire motivation of the process against Sharon was political. It would also have shown that the Belgian parliament could legislate against a particular country, which would have publicly revealed their one-sidedness toward Israel. In the end they also understood that such a move would not hold up judicially."

## **The EU and Terrorism**

The EU's political position on the Middle East must also be analyzed in the context of its domestic problems. Although far less than Israel, it is confronted with terrorism against civilians. Yet its position toward various terrorist organizations—and not just the anti-Israeli ones—has been ambiguous. As noted, the EU did not put Hizballah on its list of terrorist organizations as it did with Hamas. Van Dam mentions that a European Parliament resolution in March 2005 labeled Hizballah a terrorist organization and called upon the European ministers to include it on the list of these organizations.

This still has not happened. Van Dam adds that, though the meetings of the EU diplomats who discussed the list are secret, it is known that twenty-two of the twenty-five members agreed to put Hizballah on the list. The three opponents were France, Spain, and Ireland.

After the Lebanese confrontation the situation has only become more complicated and confused. Massimo D'Alema, Italy's foreign minister, does not consider Hizballah a terrorist organization

notwithstanding that for years it has massively and specifically targeted civilians. D'Alema is also president of the Democrats of the Left and was a key figure in its predecessor, the Communist Party.

D'Alema said:

An organization that has 35 members of parliament and three ministers cannot be described solely as a terrorist group. Hizballah is not considered a terrorist group by the European Union, nor in my personal view. Hizballah is a military organization, but also a force that participates in elections. The paradox is that we support Siniora, a democratic leader, and Siniora lauds Hizballah as the defender of the Lebanese homeland. It is important to understand the complexity of the situation, because if you have a simplistic view of the enemy, you deal with him incorrectly.<sup>46</sup>

These remarks raise the question of why the EU does not hold Lebanon responsible for anything Hizballah does even though it is a member of the Lebanese government. D'Alema's statements may presage further confused EU policies in the Middle East.

Francesco Cossiga, a former president and one of Italy's elder statesmen, launched several attacks on the Italian government and D'Alema in particular. While visiting Israel he said Hizballah was a terrorist movement that was fanatic and inspired by Islamic extremism. Nevertheless, several members of the Italian government erroneously viewed it as a legitimate political party. Cossiga added: "It is nowadays dangerous to be pro-Israeli in Italy."<sup>47</sup>

A few days later he went further: "Except for Prodi, who is trying to act as a mediator, Giuliano Amato, Rutelli and Emma Bonino, the general stance of the Italian government is against Israel because anti-Israelism is the mask of anti-Semitism." Cossiga observed:

Minister D'Alema is the leading representative of the pro-Arab and anti-Israeli approach. He does so for a number of reasons: for a relapse into old communist anti-Semitism and also because this way he can become the unifying element of the left.... Moreover most former communists like him believe that, now that the myth of the Soviet revolution is over the new myth may be represented by the Islamic Revolution.<sup>48</sup>

## Media Bias

Beyond European governments' attitudes, the almost classic anti-Israeli behavior of part of Europe's elites also came to the fore during the Lebanon war. After the ceasefire, French sociologist Shmuel Trigano analyzed international bias against Israel in an article in the daily *Libération*. He went through a long list of examples to demonstrate how biased many journalists are. Trigano wrote that for weeks he had been looking in the French papers for condemnation of a bombardment by Sri Lanka's army in its fight against Tamil terrorists. Forty-three schoolchildren had been killed and sixty wounded. He compared this absence of criticism with the many media attacks on Israel after the Kafr Kana bombing, where far fewer children were killed.

Trigano noted that this did not indicate that Arab Muslim dead were considered more precious than others. If that were so, the French media would have given ongoing attention to the mass murders of Arabs by other Arabs in Iraq. The true issue, Trigano pointed out, was that the media were only interested in what Israel did, or more precisely, the Jews.

Trigano recalled how Reuters had doctored a photograph of Beirut in flames and how *US News & World Report* had shown a Hizballah terrorist in front of what seemed a downed Israeli plane in flames. When one looked closer at the picture, it turned out it was a burning garbage dump. He also mentioned that French television never showed Hizballah's bunkers, which were placed in the midst of civilian housing. Thus the press managed to conceal the organization's character as a fascist militia, its provocations, and its explicit firing at the Israeli civilian population.<sup>49</sup>

Interviewee Nidra Poller, an American journalist living in Paris, says the French media are government-influenced in a subtle manner. French journalists' difficulty in finding work creates a powerful incentive to stay in line: "That line is left-wing orientation, Third Worldist, anti-American, and anti-Zionist."

## **Amnesty and Hizballah**

European and other human rights organizations have often demonized Israel during and since the Lebanon war. Harvard law expert Alan Dershowitz heavily criticized Amnesty International's announcement that Israel was guilty of war crimes for "widespread attacks against public civilian infrastructure, including power plants, bridges, main roads, seaports and Beirut's international airport."

Dershowitz noted that Amnesty was wrong about the law as Israel committed no war crimes by attacking parts of the civilian infrastructure in Lebanon. He added:

In fact, through restraint, Israel was able to minimize the number of civilian casualties in Lebanon, despite Hizballah's best efforts to embed itself in population centers and to use civilians as human shields. The total number of innocent Muslim civilians killed by Israeli weapons during a month of ferocious defensive warfare was a fraction of the number of innocent Muslims killed by other Muslims during that same period in Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, Algeria, and other areas of Muslim-on-Muslim civil strife. Yet the deaths caused by Muslims received a fraction of the attention devoted to alleged Israeli "crimes."

He concluded that: "if attacking the civilian infrastructure is a war crime, then modern warfare is entirely impermissible, and terrorists have a free hand in attacking democracies and hiding from retaliation among civilians. Terrorists become de facto immune from any consequences for their atrocities."<sup>50</sup>

## **International Law**

Israel's enemies frequently use dubious or inverted interpretations of international law. In an analysis of several international law issues in the armed Lebanese confrontation, Dr. Robbie Sabel, former legal adviser to the Israeli foreign minister (also an interviewee), wrote:

Once armed conflict develops, a State is not, however, limited to responding only to measures chosen by its opponent. A State that takes aggressive armed action against another State, or permits



its territory to be used for that purpose, cannot dictate the terms of the subsequent armed conflict. An aggressor State risks that its armed forces will be dealt a blow disproportionate to the attack it made.

Sabel concluded that:

Hizballah is part of the Lebanese Government and acts of Hizballah can well be considered to be those of the Lebanese Government, notwithstanding that the Christian elements in the government have categorically disassociated themselves from the Hizballah attack.... some elements of the Lebanese army have collaborated with Hizballah while as to the Lebanese government as such, at the very least it can be affirmed that they have taken no measures to prevent Hizballah activity.

Sabel added:

Even if Lebanon could prove that it had done all within its power to prevent Hizballah activities but failed, this would not negate Israel's right to take military action against Hizballah and its support mechanism. If a State fails to prevent armed bands in its territory from attacking a neighboring state, the neighboring State, subject to the attack, is entitled to the right of self-defense against those armed bands.<sup>51</sup>

## **Reminders from Terrorists**

The EU's behavior during the Lebanon war accentuated problems that had been exposed over many years regarding two related political issues. One is the EU's timidity toward the more extreme forces in the Muslim world. The other is its mindset about Muslim terrorism in the EU. The latter problem is manifested, for instance, in the EU's proposal to replace the expression "Islamic terrorism" in its discussions by the misrepresentation "terrorism that abusively invokes Islam."<sup>52</sup> Thus the EU has started to make theological judgments about the nature of contemporary Islam's teachings.

Toward the war's end, however, Europe was repeatedly reminded

that the far from insignificant circles in the Muslim world that promote mass murder and violence are also present within the EU's borders. And so are hundreds of thousands of those who sympathize with them to varying degrees.

On 31 July, terrorists attempted to blow up two regional trains in Germany. In the following weeks several suspects, all Muslims, were arrested in Germany and Lebanon.<sup>53</sup> Articles also appeared in the German press saying that Hizballah members were among the 6,200 people repatriated from Lebanon to Germany at the beginning of August. The Interior Ministry denied this. The minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, however, mentioned that Hizballah has nine hundred members in Germany.<sup>54</sup>

## **Planning to Blow Up Planes**

On 11 August, it was announced that a group of terrorist suspects had been arrested in the United Kingdom. They were reported to have planned to blow up a number of U.S.-bound planes over the Atlantic. All the suspects were British-born Muslims. Soon it became known that the British authorities were searching for additional suspects, and more were arrested in the coming weeks. Peter Clarke, head of the Metropolitan Police antiterrorist branch, said thousands of British Muslims were being watched by the police and MI5 under suspicion of possible terrorist involvement.<sup>55</sup>

Some claim that the overwhelming majority of British Muslims are moderates who publicly dissociate themselves completely from the criminals who speak in the name of their religion. The disclosures and Muslim reactions to them were a reminder of how doubtful such views are. After the arrests of the terrorist suspects, thirty-eight British Muslim organizations, three of the four Muslim MPs, and three of the four Muslim peers wrote an open letter to Blair. Their main message was that Britain's policy regarding Iraq and Israel had increased the pool of terrorist recruits. The letter asked Blair to change his policy toward Iraq and Israel and said nothing about the major terrorism inciters in the Arab and Muslim world.<sup>56</sup>

At the beginning of September a number of Muslims were arrested in an immigrant district of Odense, Denmark's third largest city.

Chemical substances were found that, investigators said, could be used to make bombs.<sup>57</sup>

By now there have been many indications that worldwide Muslim terrorism, however much of a problem for Israel and the Jews, is equally one for Western society at large. The London suicide bombings of 5 July 2005 were a dramatic case. Fifty-two civilians were killed at random and many others wounded. Yet it often seems that, five years after September 11, only a minority of European politicians have understood the terrorist threat in any depth.

It is also untrue that radical Muslims are the sole terrorist problem in the EU. At the beginning of September, a group of far-Right militants, mainly soldiers, were arrested in Belgium who were aiming to perpetrate terror attacks. Police sources said this was the first time they had discovered an extreme-Right group that was so well organized and armed.<sup>58</sup>

## **Appeasers Losing Ground**

In August 2006, during both the Lebanon war and the British terrorism debate, the European public discourse kept moving between two poles. On the one hand were those who claim that terrorism can be diminished by accommodating the perceived grievances of the Muslims. On the other were those who consider that the jihad preachers, the violent anti-Western incitement from the Middle East, and the radical Islamic ideology in general will influence many Muslims to various degrees irrespective of what the West does.

These two schools of thought will continue to struggle in Europe as inevitably more terrorist plots are discovered and several may even succeed. Some are not sure who will win the ideological struggle. Developments of the last year or two, however, indicate that the more terrorist threats are revealed, the more likely are the appeasers to lose ground. This is also borne out by a number of the aforementioned polls.

This battle of ideas also relates to European narratives on the Middle East conflict. The appeasers—one might also call them accommodationists—keep insisting that Muslim terrorism and the other problems caused by parts of Europe's Muslim communities

will disappear if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved. It is not difficult to demonstrate that this is untrue. Many problems caused by parts of the Muslim minorities in the EU will not be influenced by whatever happens in the Middle East.

The more terrorist plans are discovered or executed, the more the false narrative that there is a fundamental difference between Islamism and Islam will be exposed. Many Muslims who are not Islamists sympathize with some of their goals instead of fervently condemning them. In between strong Muslim opponents of violence and the extreme promoters of jihad there are many shades among Muslims all over the world including Europe.

## **False Concepts**

The European learning process is hampered by false concepts spread among large parts of its population. The African-European insider-outsider Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a sharp observer of Europeans' underlying thoughts. This former Dutch parliamentarian of Somali origin left for the United States in spring 2006 after her life had been made almost unbearable by ongoing Muslim threats.

She puts it succinctly in her interview in this book:

Colored people, Muslims, and other non-Western immigrants are not victims. They are individuals, like me, who have come to the Netherlands in search of a better life. It is my responsibility to improve my life, and I am not asking the authorities to do it for me. I request only to live in an environment of peace and security. The socialist worldview is different. Those who are not white and Christian, and do not share the ideas of Christian civilization, are victims by definition.

Joffe provides another perspective: "Why do people so strongly condemn Israel, but not Arab terrorism? Because Israel is 'one of us,' and the Arabs are...what?: savages we cannot hold to the same rules?"

## **Pseudo-Humanitarian Racists**

Few realize the danger underlying these pseudo-humanitarian views. Implicit in the attitude of substantial parts of the European Left that Arabs, Muslims, and other colored people are not responsible for their deeds is a profound racism. Humanity is seen as divided into responsible people, the whites, and others who are much less so or not at all. The racist character of this attitude is highlighted by the fact that one major difference between humans and animals is that the former can be held responsible for their deeds and the latter cannot.

Many Europeans will always support the weak. They have long lost the ability to discern between perpetrators and victims, democrats and terrorists. Many Westerners who talk about social justice do not distinguish between the weak or poor, and criminals. That makes them de facto allies of the latter.

During the first Iraq war there was a sudden sympathy for Israel in Europe. As the Scud missiles came flying, the Israelis did not react. They sat and waited with gas masks on their faces in sealed rooms. That was how many Europeans like them: as potential victims.

Robert Kagan wrote in his analysis of America and Europe: "Europeans speak with great confidence of the superiority of their global understanding, the wisdom they have to offer other nations about conflict resolution, and their way of addressing international problems."<sup>59</sup>

This European myth is dangerous for many and particularly for Israel.

The Lebanon war has also underlined how much Israel has become a test case for Europe's problems. The unwillingness to respond other than verbally to Ahmadinejad's provocations and the mixed reactions to Arab terrorist organizations are all signs of Europe's structural weakness. The EU's attitude toward Israel is an indicator of its problems. In complex environments such as the European one, such litmus tests help to analyze the intricate issue of the state of Europe.

## Sweden and Ireland

Sweden is among the European countries most critical of Israel. Under Social Democratic rule it has long applied discriminatory policies toward Israel. Moshe Yegar, former Israeli ambassador to Sweden, already analyzed this a decade ago. He wrote: "Sweden's policy toward Israel was hostile for a long period of time before the [first] Intifada, and the latter merely served as an excuse for further attacks on Israel."<sup>60</sup> A key figure in promoting hatred of Israel was the late Social Democrat prime minister Olof Palme.

Sweden is one of several European countries that have only very partly come to terms with their massive collaboration with the Germans during the war. One Swedish inquiry commission concluded that the moral questions involved in wartime Sweden's business relations with Nazi Germany were never raised in parliamentary or government discussions.<sup>61</sup>

Sweden's record in dealing with its own war criminals since World War II is deplorable. It never prosecuted any of its volunteers for Germany's Nazi forces during the war. The country also became a haven for Baltic war criminals.<sup>62</sup>

Often those who misbehave toward Israel and the Jews show poor judgment on other matters. Palme, who compared Israel's behavior to that of the Nazis, did not have the common sense to walk with a bodyguard and was murdered.

Another Swedish Social Democrat with a heavy anti-Israeli bias is former foreign minister Laila Freivalds. In a visit to Israel, she criticized it while remaining silent about the widespread anti-Semitism in her own country.<sup>63</sup> There are many other known anti-Israeli incidents concerning Freivalds.

Later, Freivalds's own failures elsewhere would shed further light on her judging others—i.e., Israel—harshly in difficult situations. Freivalds was unable to deal adequately with the Swedish victims of the tsunami in Thailand in December 2004. Later she had to resign after lying about her knowledge of her ministry's effort to silence a Swedish website that had shown the Mohammed cartoons.

Again, analyzing Swedish attitudes toward Israel brings many other matters to light. There is seldom a single element of anti-Israeli

or anti-Jewish behavior. Collaboration with the Nazis, a haven for war criminals, extreme anti-Israeli positions, neglecting anti-Semitism: these are all manifestations of a state of mind that will have many negative consequences, and not only in areas concerning Israel.

Interviewee Zvi Mazel, a former Israeli ambassador to Sweden, relates how he developed a critical attitude toward Sweden in view of the discriminatory sentiments and hostility toward Israel he encountered in large parts of the society's left-wing elite. In the September 2006 parliamentary elections, a Center-Right coalition defeated the ruling Social Democrats. This is likely to improve Swedish-Israeli relations.

Another EU country where anti-Israelism is widespread is Ireland. Miller says: "Among the 166 members of the Dáil—the Irish parliament's lower house—and the sixty members of the Senate, not one name springs to mind as a regular defender of Israel. There are either those who do not care or pro-Palestinians."

## **Anti-Semitism**

Recent developments in the European-Israeli relationship must include an analysis of the substantial European anti-Semitism. When in 2000 the so-far largest postwar wave of European anti-Semitism began, this time focusing on Israel, it became clear that it was driven by three distinct forces.

The strengthening of right-wing anti-Semitism was not novel. The violence of this tendency was already familiar. Despite Germany's defeat it had continued to manifest itself at lower intensity since the war. Recently, both physical attacks on Jews and desecrations of Jewish cemeteries have increased. Society, always inclined to fight the last war instead of the coming one, was willing to confront neo-Nazis who were considered marginal. It became clear, however, that they were not only relics of the past but perhaps also harbingers of part of Europe's future. This is implied by the electoral support for extreme right-wing parties in some countries.

The other main violent anti-Semitic force in Europe, that of Muslim radicals and hooligans, often verbally supported by religious preachers, was totally misinterpreted by many politicians. It was considered a fallout of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, leading to

another misinterpretation: that if this conflict ended, all problems caused by substantial parts of Europe's Muslim minority would cease. A much better interpretation was that these forces only used the Jews as an intermediary target for a much more ambitious one: the white Europeans.

This emerged clearly in the Netherlands. In 2003, amid the many verbal threats and occasional physical attacks on Jews by Dutch Muslims, some Amsterdam Jews told Dutch newspapers that the day was not far when a Dutch Jew would be murdered by a Dutch Muslim. They were right about the basic issue and wrong about the victim. On 2 November 2004, the radical Muslim Mohammed Bouyeri killed the Dutch media maker Theo van Gogh.

### **The Extreme Left and Human Rights Organizations**

The third major anti-Semitic force plays key roles in society's elite or has allies there. The extreme Left, and some of the mainstream Left, are usually cleverer than others in their anti-Semitic attacks. They know that words can accomplish much of what violence aims to achieve. They use Nazi- and communist-style semantics against Israel, compare it to an apartheid state, present distorted television images, and so on.

Several major human rights organizations focus their criticism on Israel instead of on countries that are severe human rights violators. They pay major attention to Palestinians killed in Israeli military actions while downplaying suicide bombers and other murderers of Israeli civilians. Far fewer of these organizations' documents report on the thousands if not hundreds of thousands of people killed elsewhere, often by Arabs or other Muslims.

Whereas Nazism had to be defeated in an extremely bloody war, the other totalitarian evil, communism, crumbled by itself. That prevented Western society from weeding out communism's ideology and most extreme adherents. These people and ideas have now permeated many of its major institutions.



## **Great Britain**

An important question about contemporary European anti-Semitism is whether Britain has replaced France as the major country where anti-Semitism thrives. There are several indications for this. The number of reported anti-Semitic incidents in the UK in 2005 was close to that of France, where the Jewish population is twice as large as the at-most three hundred thousand British Jews. Even if the data are not fully comparable they are significant.

The Community Security Trust, the defense body of British Jewry, reported 455 anti-Semitic incidents in 2005. This was 14 percent lower than the 532 in the record-year 2004. The difference can, however, be explained by the fact that in 2004 two individuals created sixty of the incidents.

Two thousand five was the second year in a row where there were more violent attacks on Jewish people than acts against Jewish property. One particularly violent incident was in Manchester where a Jewish religious student was stabbed by a man who ran after him with a knife. Another was an attack on a Jew in London by fifteen youths, who thereafter threw a liquid on him and tried to set him on fire.

The report documents that two categories of perpetrators stand out in particular: right-wing whites and Asian youth, the latter probably largely Muslims. Among well-known individuals involved in anti-Semitic acts was the socialist mayor of London Ken Livingstone, who compared a Jewish journalist to a concentration-camp guard.<sup>64</sup>

## **The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry**

In September 2006, a report on UK anti-Semitism was published that had been prepared for the All-Party Parliamentary Group against Antisemitism. The Inquiry Commission consisted of fourteen senior MPs and was chaired by MP Denis MacShane, a former Labour minister for Europe.

The report drew valuable conclusions and made many recommendations. It expressed concern that only a minority of police forces in the UK have the ability to record anti-Semitic incidents. It recommended that there should be an annual report on anti-Semitism

to Parliament. It asked the Crown Prosecution Service to investigate the reasons for the low number of prosecutions of anti-Semitism.

The report stated explicitly that Jewish people and institutions were being targeted under the pretext of anger over Israeli policies. It pointed out that while in the past the far Right posed a greater threat to Jews than at present, there was no room for complacency. The report gave extensive attention to Islamist and left-wing anti-Semitism. It mentioned that the campaign of George Galloway's Respect Party during the 2005 general election was marred by "anti-Semitic campaigning on the part of some of its supporters."

The report recommended that university authorities should record all examples of students reporting anti-Semitic behavior. It concluded that Jewish students feel disproportionately threatened in British universities and that the response of academic authorities has been at best "patchy." It asserted that: "calls to boycott contact with academics working in Israel are an assault on academic freedom and intellectual exchange."<sup>65</sup>

## **Anti-Semitism and Anti-Israelism**

As elsewhere, anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism flourish jointly in the UK. On 29 May 2006, NATFHE, one of the two British university teachers unions voted to boycott Israeli academics who do not condemn so-called Israeli "apartheid" policies. The majority of those voting were from the Left. Not a word was said about Palestinian universities where academics promote genocide, murder, and racism, and student movements compete in elections over which has killed more Jews, mainly civilians.

Both the Anglican church and the Church of Scotland have voted in favor of anti-Israeli measures. They take these positions in an atmosphere of regular attacks on Israel from many quarters. Several articles of a former *Guardian* correspondent in Israel could be taught at journalism schools as examples of how extreme propagandists can masquerade as reporters.

Gerald Steinberg heads the NGO Monitor published by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. He mentions how the leading UK charity Christian Aid constantly blames Israel for Palestinian suffering

while barely mentioning Palestinian terrorism. This organization has an annual budget of \$150 million.

George Galloway, the only member of Parliament from the Respect Party, is also a defender of Saddam Hussein. The many other anti-Israeli parliamentarians come mainly from Labour and the Liberal Democrats. The British Foreign Office regularly condemns Israel when a Palestinian civilian is killed in attacks on terrorists. It remains silent about the many civilians killed by the coalition forces in Iraq, of which Britain is part and for which it thus has coresponsibility.

By now it also has become clear that Chris Patten, when he was a British commissioner in the EU, was a key figure in stonewalling detailed investigations of how EU money was diverted for Palestinian terrorism and corruption. Van Dam relates several details of this in his interview.

This is a worrisome but not a full picture. There are also many positive aspects in the country. Former Israeli ambassador Zvi Shtauber says that he considers the British government, with the exception of the German one, the most pro-Israeli in Western Europe.<sup>66</sup>

## **Jewish Community Leadership**

The British Jewish community tries to fight anti-Semitism by classic methods—except on rare occasions when it calls, for instance, for public rallies—such as trying to get support from the judicial system, close collaboration with the police in security matters, maintaining good contacts with politicians, and keeping a low profile. Also significant is that, Britain not having been under German occupation during World War II, the conclusions drawn from the Holocaust are far weaker than elsewhere in Europe.

Such defense policies can nowadays only provide very partial answers to the many challenges. Compared to its counterpart in France, the British Jewish leadership seems unimaginative. The recent problems, however, are unlikely to go away. Whether they like it or not, British Jews will have to change tactics against the anti-Semites and expose them far more aggressively.

Substantial anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism are usually indicators of countries in trouble. The major enemies of the Jews

are also those of British civil society. The extreme Right is still relatively weak but strikes out violently at many groups. A significant percentage of British Muslims want to replace British law with sharia. The extreme Left and parts of the moderate Left undermine society in many ways. Parts of the human rights lobby have become functional allies of potential terrorists and other murderers by trying to block antiterrorism laws.

This takes place in a general environment that is often criminal-friendly. Ken MacDonald QC, director of public prosecutions in the UK, in May 2006 attacked the legal establishment for its patronizing attitude toward crime victims in the UK, where some criminal lawyers think only the rights of the defendants matter. He added that the treatment of victims and witnesses was appalling and also said there might be a rise in vigilantism unless courts are seen to be providing justice.<sup>67</sup>

## Germany

Germany remains a case by itself because of its genocidal past. The more taboos against the Holocaust fall, the more questions arise about whether Germany has managed to build a lasting new democratic identity in which its criminal past has been confronted in a cathartic way.

American political scientist Andrei Markovits claims this process of self-identity formation has been abandoned

in favor of unruffled wishful thinking in which Auschwitz is little more than a minor disturbance. The taboo-violations of the last few years increasingly signal an end to the grace period for Jews, an acceptance of latent anti-Semitism, a defensive mentality about historical memory, and the revival of an uninhibited, unbroken identification with the German nation. The German Left, for its part, has long since become an enthusiastic participant in the trend.<sup>68</sup>

As mentioned in my previous book, in 2004 the University of Bielefeld undertook a major survey of over 2,600 Germans. Thirty-two percent of those interviewed agreed or largely agreed with the statement:

“Because of Israel’s policies, I have increasing antipathy toward Jews.” Sixty-eight percent agreed that: “Israel undertakes a war of destruction against the Palestinians.” Fifty-one percent shared the opinion: “The way the state of Israel acts toward the Palestinians is in principle no different from the Nazis’ behavior in the Third Reich toward the Jews.”<sup>69</sup>

Charlotte Knobloch, the newly elected leader of the Central Council of German Jews has complained several times about what she calls “the anti-mood against Israel and the Jews.” Among the politicians she mentioned as supporting this mood are the left-wing Social Democratic minister of development aid Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul and Left Party leader Oskar Lafontaine. In one variant of moral equivalence, the latter claimed that the Germans not only have a moral debt toward the Jews but also toward the Palestinians.

Knobloch said she had never before seen such an anti-mood against the Jews in Germany. She stated that this attitude has permeated all layers of society. As another example, she noted that a senior German official, Herman Schäfer, had in the presence of Buchenwald survivors at the opening of the Weimar Festival spoken only about the Germans who had been expelled after the war.<sup>70</sup>

Once again the attitudes toward the Jews probably express more profound problems in German society. According to a poll conducted in 2005 for the Statistische Bundesamt (National Bureau of Statistics), only 71 percent of inhabitants of former West Germany considered democracy the best way of running a state compared to 80 percent who said so in 2000. In the former East Germany, only 38 percent preferred democracy in 2005 compared to 49 percent in 2000. Three out of four polled there considered that socialism was a good concept that, however, had been poorly implemented (by the communists). In West Germany, 46 percent espoused this view.<sup>71</sup>

## **The Berlin Declaration; the EUMC Definition of Anti-Semitism**

A frequent claim of anti-Israelis and anti-Zionists is that they are not anti-Semites. Nevertheless, their motifs and methods are often mutations of earlier anti-Semitic ones. Researchers at Yale University analyzed an Anti-Defamation League survey of five hundred citizens in each of ten European countries. They found that anti-Israeli sentiment "consistently predicts the probability that an individual is anti-Semitic, with the likelihood of measured anti-Semitism increasing with the extent of anti-Israel sentiment observed."<sup>72</sup>

On the more positive side, after years of reluctance many European governments are starting to understand that anti-Israelism and anti-Semitism greatly overlap. In April 2004, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) adopted the Berlin Declaration. This document recognized the new direction from which anti-Semitism comes, particularly the demonization of Israel and Zionism. Despite the support of many governments, the question remains to what extent the declaration's words will translate into deeds.

The EUMC in its 2004 report on anti-Semitism had noted the lack of a common definition of the term. It requested a small group of Jewish NGOs to prepare one. Subsequently this detailed text has often been referred to.<sup>73</sup>

The EUMC working definition reads:

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

In addition, such manifestations could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for "why things go wrong." It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

The text gives a number of examples of anti-Semitism targeting Jews or Israel.

This is gradually becoming the accepted definition of contemporary anti-Semitism. So, for instance, the Report of the British All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism recommended that “the EUMC Working Definition of anti-Semitism is adopted and promoted by the Government and law enforcement agencies.”<sup>74</sup>

### **3. RELEVANT DEVELOPMENTS ELSEWHERE**

Several developments outside Europe and Israel over the past two years are also relevant to Israeli-European interaction. Some of these concern Palestinians. Positive predictions about them have again not materialized. As mentioned earlier, terror has continued since the disengagement. Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas has not fought it, and the present Hamas-led government does not accept previous Palestinian commitments to Israel.

In August 2006, Ghazi Hamad, spokesman for the Hamas-controlled Palestinian Authority, wrote that the Palestinian armed groups should be blamed for the crisis in Gaza rather than Israel. Describing the situation in Gaza City as “unimaginable chaos,” he added: “Gaza is suffering under the yoke of anarchy and the swords of thugs,”<sup>75</sup> and said that “the culture of life” there before the Israeli disengagement had turned into a “nightmare and intolerable burden.”<sup>75</sup> The article drew some attention because it is so rare to find a Palestinian, in a responsible position, who does not blame all his society’s plight on Israel and shows some introspection.

The developments in the Iraq war have many implications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The West now realizes that attacking primarily civilian targets is not a specific Palestinian trait. Such atrocities have been much more frequent in Iraq and elsewhere in Muslim societies.

Nowadays suicide bombing emanates predominantly from parts of Muslim culture. Its main victims from a global perspective are Muslims, with Westerners and Israelis a distant second. Civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan are the main targets, but Muslim terror attacks

or foiled attempts have also come to other Arab countries including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia.

Western countries, especially the United States, Britain, Spain, and some others, have had to face the realities of this asymmetric warfare. Like Israel, they have not found foolproof counteractions. Also relevant is that Western treatment of enemy prisoners is far harsher than in the Israeli case. All this pales, however, compared to the widespread cruel behavior of Arab regimes and terrorist groups.

Another important consideration is that if Western troops were to leave Iraq, most likely a new terrorist state would emerge. This should give pause to those who want to weaken Israel and strengthen the Palestinians, particularly as the latter have been prime exporters of international terrorism.

#### **4. EUROPEAN-ISRAELI INTERACTIONS**

When assessing how European-Israeli interactions have changed over the past eighteen months, two important matters stand out. The first is that European political pressure on Israel has diminished somewhat since the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. That also happened in the past when Israel gave up territory in exchange for no lasting gains—for instance, after the Wye agreements.

A second significant change is that Europe now has a small involvement in the Gaza area, with Europeans monitoring the border between Gaza and Egypt. On one occasion their positions were occupied by Palestinian militants and the European soldiers had to flee. They thus acquired some additional experience with the nature of Palestinian civil society.

Eran points to an additional factor that concerns more the packaging of European attitudes than their contents. He says: “One notices a growing realism in the EU that their megaphone diplomacy is counterproductive to any constructive role they want to play in the Middle East.”

Regarding changes in European-Israeli political relations, another substantial issue merits attention. The European narrative and the European semantics concerning the Middle East and Israel have been negatively influenced for decades by Arab and other incitement. The



foundations of this narrative were mainly fallacies. Recent events increasingly expose this fact.

### **Israeli-Palestinian Peace Solves Everything?**

A few examples illustrate the point. One basic concept that has been promoted by Arabs and Muslims worldwide as well as their Western friends is that if there were Israeli-Palestinian peace, the West's problems with the Muslim world would disappear.

Yet the four Muslim suicide bombers in London as well as the suspects captured in July 2005 before they could blow themselves up did not act out of anger over Israeli actions. They were driven by their abysmal hatred of the Western world.

Another example already mentioned: in the autumn 2005 riots in France about ten thousand cars were torched. Assuming that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had been solved, would one French car less have been set ablaze? Would the hooligans and criminals have burned one less shop?

Would fewer European embassies have been attacked and less people been killed in the Mohammed-cartoon riots if there had been peace between Israel and the Palestinians? And would the Muslim world's reaction to the words of Pope Benedict XVI about Islam and the Prophet Mohammed in September 2006 have been more benign if there had been such a peace?

Joffe points out that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also would not lead the Saudi government to become more democratic, nor would it reform Wahhabite thinking.

### **Are Arab Rhetoric and Violence Different?**

The second collapsing component of the European narrative on the Middle East is that Arab and Muslim violent rhetoric differs from their real intentions. In the past, for example, many EU politicians have suggested that Arab and Muslim threats against Israel should not be taken at face value.

Those British who assisted the wounded after the July 2005 suicide attack in London by young Muslims probably have a different

view. So do those who collected the remnants of those who were killed, some of whom were Muslims. They understand the reality of extremist pronouncements much better than many politicians. There is no gap between the rhetoric of extreme Muslims and their intentions.

A third fallacy known as “land for peace”—this one mainly promoted by the Israeli Left—is that peace between Israel and the Palestinians could be achieved by exchanging it for territory conquered in the Six Day War. But actual territorial concessions to the Palestinians have probably distanced peace by making Arabs think that time works in their favor.

### **Can Europeans Solve the Problems of Others?**

A fourth element of the crumbling European narrative about Israel concerns many European politicians’ harsh criticisms of Israeli policies. Thus they claimed, again inspired by voices from the Israeli Left, that Israel had to be saved from itself by dictates from the wise Europeans.

Since the terrorist attacks of the last few years in Europe, more and more Europeans have come to the conclusion that many European countries have an unsolvable problem with substantial parts of the mainly Muslim minorities that cannot be integrated in the foreseeable decades. This problem is of Europe’s own making through its immigration and absorption policies. If Europe could not see that these policies were creating problems for itself, how wise can it be in analyzing others’ problems about which it understands even less?

Yet another failing element of the European narrative, already mentioned, derives again from its left wing. It says that the colored are always victims, and as such are always right. European postcolonial guilt feelings also foster this sympathy for the underdog.

The French philosopher André Taguieff is among the few Europeans who saw at an early stage that a distinction must be made between real victims and criminals. He also recognized the dangers of blind pacifism, which places the aggressor and his victim at the same moral level and thereby turns legitimate self-defense into a crime. Future violence will lead more and more people to understand that a functioning civil society requires that criminals remain as weak as possible.<sup>76</sup>

## **The Abyss Remains**

The EU votes in the United Nations demonstrate that the major political abyss between Europe and Israel remains. Again, in 2005, European countries voted to condemn Israel in a series of resolutions in the General Assembly—a recurrence of this classic annual manifestation of Europe's bias against Israel.

Major EU-Israeli political disagreements also remain. Some of these concern the legality of Israeli settlements and of Israeli neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. Ruth Lapidot, former legal adviser to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, discusses these in an interview hereinafter.

Amid the reigning confusion, however, there are some indications of a change. As noted, after the disengagement from Gaza, Israel agreed to give Europe a small role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by stationing monitors on the Gaza-Sinai border. This may be considered a test case. Now a bigger test has emerged with the UN force in Lebanon. If Europe performs well there, it will create some confidence in Israel, which over the past decades has had no reason to believe in Europe's political impartiality. A failure of the UN force is likely to further increase Israel's distrust of Europe.

Robbie Sabel considers that one way to improve Israeli-European relations is that Israel should aim to become a full member of the Council of Europe. He says Israel should strive in general to join clubs of democratic states. If Israel were to be accepted by the Council of Europe, it would be another step by Europe to close the abyss that many of its political positions create.

Former Spanish prime minister José Maria Aznar goes further than Sabel, actively promoting the enlargement of NATO membership to include Japan, Australia, and Israel. In his interview, Bardaji explains Aznar's reasoning.

## **Israel and Jews: Indicators of Europe's Troubles**

As time passes, it becomes clearer that many problems faced by Israel and the Jews are indicators of much wider ones in Europe and other parts of the West. Looking at a small identifiable subgroup that has historically been a convenient victim of European tensions may give

sharper and different insights on certain problems of a confused Western society.

This has become most clear in France.<sup>77</sup> The autumn 2005 riots were directed at white French society at large. Almost all the rioters were North African or West African Muslims. The fallacy that there is only one type of racism, that of whites against the colored, could no longer be maintained. During the turmoil several rioters told the media they were driven by anti-French and antiwhite feelings.

This minority racism had already manifested itself several years earlier, often against the Jews in France. What France experienced in autumn 2005 parts of the Jewish community, who lived close to Muslim communities, had gone through since late 2000. The socialist government closed its eyes to the many attacks on Jews by Muslim and right-wing racists. The authorities often called it hooliganism and denied its specific anti-Semitic character.

The Jospin government, supported by Chirac, thought it would protect social peace by making no significant efforts to uphold the Jews' civil rights. Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine said while Jews were being attacked in January 2002: "One should not necessarily be shocked that young Frenchmen originating from the immigration would have compassion for the Palestinians and are excited by what is happening [in the Middle East]."<sup>78</sup>

The socialist leaders did not understand that the violence initially aimed at the Jews as a vulnerable substitute for the prime target of resentment, the white French majority. In autumn 2005, those who were willing could see better see the real factors behind the unrest in part of the Muslim community.

## **Other Indicators**

There are many other matters where studying the Jewish community yields insight into current or prospective developments in Europe. The motif of the Jew as a canary in the mine will likely become increasingly useful as the situation in Europe becomes more confused. This does not mean the Jews are a universal litmus test for what will happen in Europe at large. They are far from being the only such indicator, yet are probably as good a one as any.

Slowly, an increasing number of Europeans are starting to understand that the forces attacking Israel are also those undermining the fundamentals of European society. Often these forces act alone and often they march together, such as the extreme Left and Muslim radicals. If they succeed, the society they create will not be an improvement.

They will, however, partly destroy what has been achieved. European leaders would do well to attend more systematically to the damage caused to their countries by radical Muslims, the extreme Left, and the extreme Right, and to consider what measures to take.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Israel can draw several important lessons from the EU's current mindset and internal divisions, which the Lebanon war has further highlighted. The main lesson is that even in situations of great danger to Israel, Europe will remain broadly neutral.

Another is that a continent that has created many problems for itself and cannot adequately deal with them is also a very bad guide to tell Israel and others how to solve their own problems. Europe's role in the Lebanon conflict yet again demonstrates the great gap between its pretensions and reality.

At the end of 2004 when *Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss?* was concluded, there was a clear gulf between Europe and Israel. The question then was: how will Israel interact politically with a possibly increasingly hostile Europe? This abyss today continues to exist, but the uncertainty about Europe's future has greatly intensified. Haze covers part of the precipice.

What many Israelis see today in Europe are indications that confusion may be partly overtaking hostility. This leads to the difficult question: how should Israel deal with a confused and changing Europe?

### **New Assessments**

Confused and changing situations require new assessments. As far as Europe is concerned, the starting point could be that Israel has much more experience with the ideology and practice of violent

Muslim tendencies than Europe has so far. European Jews also have more experience with the problems caused by part of the European Muslim community than does society at large. The latter is only at the beginning of its learning curve. One logical question, then, is what can Europe learn from Israel—and the Jews—in this area?

A second question for Europeans to ask is: what methods has the European extreme Left used in its attacks against Israel and the Jews? The answer should be: the same methods it will further develop to undermine Western society. That makes studying them particularly worthwhile.

As far as Israel is concerned, the situation is even more complex. As a small nation with many problems, Israel lacks both leadership and resources to profoundly assess the complex situation in the EU. Yet it needs to be done; one needs to understand as much as one can. This includes trying to identify weak signals of the future and monitor whether they are intensifying.

One important action Israel should take in any scenario is to try and organize its friends in Europe. A first step was the establishment of the European Friends of Israel, which unites hundreds of parliamentarians in European countries.<sup>79</sup>

At this juncture, there is another important conclusion Israel should draw. Over the past two years, under the influence of a new bout of Europessimism and increasing domestic threats, the EU has lost part of its self-assuredness. An Israeli-European dialogue has become more possible and can be useful to both sides. That is why Israel should invest efforts in it.

## Notes

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# INTERVIEWS

Frits Bolkestein

## Israel, the European Commission, Europe, and the Netherlands\*

“During my commissionership, all matters concerning foreign policy were in the hands of the Italian president Romano Prodi and the British commissioner for international relations Chris Patten. Israel was not a much-debated topic in the Commission. Patten occasionally put it on our agenda.

“EU positions on the Middle East were largely determined by the heads of state of the large members. These more or less said to the Commission, ‘Don’t touch the issue, we deal with it.’”

Frits Bolkestein was during 1999-2004 the commissioner responsible for the European Union’s internal market, taxation, and customs union. Before that he had been the leader of the Netherlands’ Liberal Party, VVD, and its defense minister. In 2005, he became professor on the intellectual background to political developments at both Leiden University and the Technical University of Delft.

### **Helping the Palestinians**

“Occasionally, the EU assistance to the Palestinians came up in the Commission. One matter I recall was that the harbor in Gaza was to be built, but Israel opposed this. I remember this specifically because Dutchmen are always interested in big waterworks.

“Another snippet I recall is that Chris Patten in a full Commission meeting once said that one could oppose aspects of Israel’s foreign policy without being an anti-Semite. I replied: ‘That is true, but it is also true that anti-Semites sometimes dress up as anti-Israelis.’”

Bolkestein says this was a short exchange without personal undertones.

“On another matter, if my memory is correct, when there were inquiries on the issue of Palestinian misuse of EU funds, Patten

replied: 'We are sure that all the money has been put to good use.'"

Bolkestein interprets the attitude of many British toward the Middle Eastern question in the light of his own experience: "When I was young I lived and worked for four years in East Africa, mostly in Tanganyika, which was then a Trust Territory. The strategy of the British colonial power there was to defend the blacks against the whites.

"I find the argument plausible that during their mandate in Palestine the British looked upon the Jews as the whites and the Palestinians as the blacks. Their sympathy with the Arabs has deep roots, like everything in Europe. The British used Lawrence of Arabia and controlled the Arab Legion, commanded by Glubb Pasha." He suggests that this attitude may still survive in some circles.

### **The Israeli File**

Bolkestein stresses that commissioners have to focus their entire effort on the areas they are responsible for. "In my own area there was only one problematic issue concerning Israel: customs duties for items produced in the occupied territories. I had been invited to Israel for a conference by my friend, law professor Amnon Rubinstein, and on that occasion met the then minister for industry and trade, Ehud Olmert. We reached an agreement that products manufactured there would not benefit from the free trade agreement with Israel."

Bolkestein notes that: "The Israeli 'file' is a difficult one because so many factors come into play. In recent years, Israel has undoubtedly lost a publicity battle. This is due to the intifada and perceptions about the fence. Israel is seen by many as the oppressor of the Palestinians, both those outside Israel and inside it, i.e., the Israeli Arabs. In the Netherlands, former Christian Democrat prime minister Dries van Agt promotes this view.

"This, however, is only one factor that plays a role. Another is that people bow to numbers. There are hundreds of millions of Arabs and seven million Israelis. It is like overestimating China's power. The number of one and a half billion Chinese is much more impressive than the actual size of their trade and level of their technology."

## Arab Oil and European Muslim Votes

“Third, there is the oil issue. Oil contracts are negotiated on a bilateral basis, and this makes them highly political. The Arabs have much oil and could again someday impose an embargo. The Netherlands already had that experience when we were embargoed in 1973. Fortunately enough, the major oil companies helped by switching supplies to us from other countries.

“A fourth factor is the influence on foreign policy of so many European Muslims with their electoral power. I met French prime minister Dominique de Villepin at a Bilderberg conference when he was still foreign minister. I asked him directly how much French foreign policy had been affected by the presence of five to six million Muslims in France. He replied: ‘Not at all.’ This was not very convincing.

“In an interview earlier in 2006 in *L'Express*, I said some rather forthright things about the French. I wondered what the French policy toward Europe was, as the French seem to have no idea what they want. The French were masters in Brussels, or at least so they thought. Now, however, they have lost Brussels and no longer know what their role is in Europe.

“I was also told that in Belgium the socialists did not want to support the official recognition of the Armenian genocide. The reason was that they wanted the votes of the Turks living there.”

## Guilt and Anti-Semitism

“A fifth factor that further complicates the issue is a guilt complex toward Jews and Israel. This applies first and foremost to Germany. But it is important in the Netherlands, too, mainly because about 75 percent of Dutch Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. Nowadays that feeling has rather faded, and I do not think it is still substantial in other European countries.

“Sixth, there is anti-Semitism, which in Europe may also influence the political sphere. It often dresses up as anti-Israelism. David Pryce-Jones in a *Commentary* article discussed in detail the barely concealed anti-Semitism in the French foreign service.<sup>1</sup>

“I am not expert enough to assess whether that is true. I recall,

however, de Gaulle calling the Jews ‘a domineering and arrogant people’ in 1967. I remember well *Le Monde*’s cartoon on that occasion, showing a Jew in concentration camp clothes, standing in a provocative pose like Napoleon, with one foot on barbed wire.

“We cannot say: ‘De Gaulle was just a general who said many other foolish things.’ He had followed World War II closely, albeit in free London. One doesn’t make such remarks innocently, which is why I attach much importance to it. If the French say, somewhat heatedly, ‘We aren’t anti-Semitic, and certainly not our foreign service,’ I take the liberty to put a question-mark next to that.”

### **Muslim Anti-Semitism**

Bolkestein recalls that he spoke at the remembrance ceremony in Amsterdam for the sixty-fifth anniversary of Kristallnacht on 9 November 2003. There he said that the new manifestations of anti-Semitism often come from poorly-integrated Islamic youngsters, and that their actions are largely linked to the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel. Bolkestein added that Muslim countries propagate the anti-Semitism via state media. Many Muslims in the Netherlands watch television from these countries.

On that occasion, Bolkestein also reiterated his view that the heart of the Middle East conflict is Arab unwillingness to accept Israel’s existence. He now remarks: “Muslim terrorism against Europe is not the result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even if that dispute were settled, it would go on. This terrorism is directed against Western culture, which many Muslims see as a threat. As the West will not change its culture, Islam will have to adapt itself to modern times.”

Bolkestein likes to quote Bassam Tibi, a Syrian-born scholar of Islam who is a university teacher in Germany. Tibi proclaims that minority groups in Germany have to accept Germany’s dominant culture; otherwise a parallel Islamic society will develop where essential European values are not upheld. Bolkestein notes that in Tibi’s view, the emergence of a Euro-Islam can be compatible with European culture and is the best weapon against Muslim fundamentalism. The key question is which type of Islam will prevail in Europe: Euro-Islam or sharia Islam?

## **Fear, Threats, and Intimidation**

Bolkestein comes back to the meeting on the anniversary of Kristallnacht: "I can accept that the Turkish speaker on that occasion did not refer to the major role of Muslims in anti-Semitic incidents. I can even somewhat understand that Amsterdam mayor Job Cohen, though Jewish, also avoided this fact. He claims he has to keep all the various populations together. What surprised me, however, was that even the representatives of the Jewish community who spoke did not mention Muslims' role in the new anti-Semitism in the Netherlands.

"Why did they remain silent and why do others in Europe take a similar attitude toward the part European Muslims play in anti-Semitic incidents? The only answer is: fear. Many Dutch are afraid of the Muslims, whose number is constantly increasing. Nobody knows what the future will bring when, for instance, they form a majority in Amsterdam. Hence, these people think they should not burn their fingers."

Bolkestein adds: "A few years ago there was a demonstration in Amsterdam by Moroccans in favor of Palestinians. A young Jew wearing a kippa was chased by a group of Moroccan youngsters. He fled into one of Amsterdam's major hotels, the Krasnapolski, which is located on Dam Square where the national war memorial stands. Such an incident would have been unthinkable a few years earlier. I was furious, and said so on television.

"By now it has only become worse. Those who dare to speak their mind about Islam, such as the parliamentarians Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Geert Wilders, are ostracized. Rather than getting the support of society, people shy away from them. They need protection by the police. The same is true of my colleague at the University of Leiden, Afshin Ellian, who is of Iranian origin and critical of Islam."

## **The European Context**

Bolkestein says all the aforementioned issues have to be seen in the context of Europe's present problems. He is a frequent speaker and commentator on these issues. One subject that preoccupies him is what he calls European "self-hatred."



In the inaugural lecture for his new professorship, he said:

It is an important question why and when the West Europeans in general, and the Dutch in particular, have lost their self-confidence. In my view this goes back to World War I, the confusion of the interbellum, World War II and the murder of the Jews. All this has been reinforced by the cultural revolution of 1968 and the years thereafter....

There are many who deny that Western Europe has lost its belief in its own culture—who maintain, to the contrary, that the West suffers from a “triumphalism” that expresses a deplorable lack of appreciation for other cultures. I, however, believe that my observation is correct, and I will present three examples:

First, there is the complex that the French call *le tiersmondisme* [third worldism]. The assassinated Swedish prime minister Olof Palme was a typical example of this: “What we do is oppression, what they do is their culture.”

Second, multiculturalism and all that relates to it. The immigrant was the Good Stranger on whom no demands should be made. Initially he did not even have to learn Dutch. At the time it was called “integration while maintaining identity.” Fortunately the situation has changed. It seems to me that multiculturalism can be traced back to our guilt feelings about World War II.

The third example is the success of Edward Said’s book *Orientalism*. It is a bad book—both as far as content and composition are concerned—and merits no fame. Yet it fits perfectly the culture of self-denial that I perceive in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Bolkestein mentions that his views of Islam were shaped when twenty-five years ago he read Elie Kedourie’s book *Islam and the Modern World*. He reflects: “I think Kedourie, had he still lived, would have agreed with my words.”

## Recurring Motifs

These motifs recur frequently in Bolkestein’s lectures and articles. In regard to self-denial, he also emphasizes that the European Commission lacks self-confidence. “I saw how my colleagues were

fearful of the European Parliament and of the EU member states. Member states were afraid to criticize the Russians about their oppression of the Chechnyans and their treatment of the Georgians. The old EU members in particular behaved in this way.

“The Poles and the Lithuanians, for instance, did not. We had a conflict with the Russians, who claimed we had to compensate them for problems arising for Kaliningrad—the former Königsberg where the philosopher Kant was born—due to the EU’s expansion in 2004. We should have replied, ‘Where is the compensation for all the Latvians who have been deported to beyond the Urals?’ The Latvian commissioner at the time had been born in the Gulag.

“The Commission was also afraid of the Arabs. And it was timid as well toward the Americans. The latter wanted to have the passenger lists of planes arriving from Europe. As my mandate included data protection, I had to deal with that matter. Some European parliamentarians said we should not hand these over as it was against European law. I thought the Americans were fully entitled to decide who could enter their country. Several of my colleague commissioners said: ‘We have so many issues at stake with the Americans. Let’s agree to what they want.’”

## **Multiculturalism**

Bolkestein devotes much of his attention, however, to the issue of multiculturalism in the Netherlands. He often refers to an article he published as early as 1991 in the major Dutch daily *De Volkskrant*. His first point was that: “The existing policy of ‘integration while maintaining cultural identity’ had to change to ‘integration into Dutch society even if that means adapting one’s culture.’”

“The second point was that where Islamic values of immigrants came into conflict with essential values of Dutch society, the latter should prevail.” Bolkestein says Europe’s main current problem is finding a *modus vivendi* to live peacefully together with its Muslim minorities.

“The third assertion I made was that judged by the standards of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the dominant civilization of Europe at present is superior to Islamic civilization. All civilization

is based on making judgments. I believe that the civilization of Rome was superior to that of Gaul. I also consider Unionist America superior to the slaveholder Confederacy, and democratic postwar West Germany superior to communist East Germany.”

Bolkestein adds: “Why do so many Muslims who live in the Middle East want to settle in the West? Mainly because they think they will be happier here than where they are now. One might interpret what they say as ‘Yankee go home, but please take me with you.’ The blindness of the multiculturalist ideologists does not enable them to see this.

“Fifteen years ago my arguments emphasized essential values of Dutch society such as the separation of church and state, the equality of men and women, and freedom of speech and of religion. I also wrote that a lax integration policy would lead to ethnic ghettos. I foresaw that these would be areas marked by major unemployment, high crime, little knowledge of the Dutch language and society, and discrimination against women. I proposed reduced immigration, support for integration, and fighting discrimination.”

## **Multiculturalism’s Dark Sides**

“For me one of the dark sides of multiculturalism was the phenomenon of political correctness. Self-appointed experts decided for society which thoughts were permissible and which were not. By now, fortunately, this has disappeared in light of the many problems multiculturalism poses for Dutch society. Since the murder of media maker Theo van Gogh in November 2004, the discussion in the Netherlands about immigration and integration is no longer politically correct, but frank and open.

“Almost half of Amsterdam’s inhabitants are now of non-Western origin. This will lead to an increasing Islamization of the city, accompanied by a flight of the white population. Also unavoidable in the future is the rise of a national Muslim party. In the past we had, for instance, a Catholic Party in the Netherlands.

“Such an Islamic party will wield electoral power. Combine that with high oil prices and an increasingly fundamentalist Middle East. Add furthermore the Muslim radicals who promote violence. The outlook is for many future problems both in my country and elsewhere.

The autumn 2005 riots in France were a taste of what is to come.”

Bolkestein remarks: “We should look much more at the United States to understand what is happening in our country. It is not that we are a solution ahead of the Americans, we are a problem behind. We are just beginning to face the minority-related problems they have confronted for many years.”

## **Almost a Racist**

“In the European Commission I twice tried to raise the problem of the multicultural society and the risks of unlimited Muslim immigration. My colleagues were ten years behind the Netherlands and did not want to discuss the issue. I said to one commissioner that they almost considered me a racist. He replied: ‘Drop the word almost.’”

Bolkestein has consistently opposed EU membership for Turkey. He gives three reasons. “First of all, Turkey is too big, too poor, and too different from the EU. To become an EU member, a country should have undergone the major formative events of European history.

“Second, if Turkey becomes a member it will be followed by additional countries. One cannot then refuse membership to Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, perhaps even the Caucasian republics. Already the entrance of Poland with about forty million inhabitants has caused many problems.

“The third reason is that all polls show a majority of Europeans opposing Turkish membership. I was the only commissioner to vote against the Verheugen report, which concluded that Turkey sufficiently met the Copenhagen criteria for EU accession.

“Europeans have forgotten how to say no. Foreign policy in Europe seems to have been reduced to being nice to others. I know foreign ministers of European countries who at home say Ukraine could never become an EU member. When they visit Kiev, they say that if Ukraine meets the criteria it can be admitted. These are small-minded people concerned only with the short term. They have lost all sense of history and of the art of geopolitics.”

A decade ago, in some of his writings, Bolkestein was more optimistic. When asked about this, he answers: “Perhaps I have become more of a realist since I was a member of the European Commission.”

**Notes**

- \* This interview is part of a JPCA research project on Dutch attitudes toward Jews and Israel, sponsored by the Israel Maror Foundation.
- 1. David Pryce-Jones, "Jews, Arabs, and French Diplomacy," *Commentary*, May 2005.
- 2. F. Bolkestein, "De Europese Unie en haar toekomst," inaugural lecture presented in The Hague, 9 November 2005, to mark his visiting professorship at the Universities of Leiden and Delft. [Dutch]

Rijk van Dam

## Anti-Israeli Bias in the European Parliament and Other EU Institutions\*

“About 20 percent of the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are friends of Israel. Another 20 percent are clear friends of the Palestinian people, while the remaining 60 percent like to sit on the fence. Some of Israel’s friends are outspoken; many prefer to keep a low profile.”

Rijk van Dam was an MEP from 1997 to 2004. He represented the Christian Union, an association of Dutch Protestant parties. After he left the Parliament, he became on 1 October 2004 director of the European Coalition for Israel. The members of this pro-Israeli lobby are four Christian organizations: Bridges for Peace, Christians for Israel-International, Christian Friends of Israel, and the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem. In 2005, Ebenezer joined as the fifth full member.

Van Dam remarks: “The low profile of Israel’s friends became very clear when several years ago we took the initiative to have the Parliament investigate the funding of the Palestinian Authority. Some twenty to twenty-five German Christian Democrats were willing to sign only if we promised not to publish their names. We were still glad to have them.

“When I told this to Wolfgang Schäuble, then leader of the Christian Democrats in the German parliament, he could hardly believe it. He said he would take up the matter with the head of his faction in the European Parliament. The Christian Democrat MEPs were members of the largest faction in the Parliament, namely, the European People’s Party/European Democrats (EPP-ED), which is to the Center-Right. This is a broad, pluralistic grouping. One finds there enemies of Israel next to good friends. The MEPs who did not want their names disclosed may have had a difficult position there.”

## **Four Billion Euro to the Palestinians**

Van Dam points out that the development of this investigation process sheds much light on the European attitude toward the Middle East. He says: “Since 1993, the EU and its member states have given over four billion euros of financial assistance to the PA and various Palestinian NGOs. This was meant to develop democratic institutions as well as promote education and prosperity among Palestinians. There is no doubt that a substantial portion of the European funding has served purposes such as corruption and terrorism.

“In March 2004 in Brussels, at a meeting of the European Parliament’s temporary committee on abuses in PA funding (see below), the then Palestinian finance minister Salam Fayyad was asked how this European money was spent. He replied that he did not know, not a penny was left, and it had all gone to the pockets of fat cats. We know that longtime Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was misappropriating large parts of the PA’s resources, and led his people to economic ruin.

“In a brochure we clarified that already well before the Oslo Agreement in 1993, Western leaders knew that the PLO’s income was largely derived from dubious sources. It says:

In 1990 the British National Criminal Intelligence Service determined that the PLO’s acquired wealth ranged somewhere in the order of US \$8 to \$14 billion, while its annual income stream stood at approximately \$2 billion. British intelligence noted that the PLO generated a considerable portion of its budget from extortion, pay-offs, illegal arms dealing, drug trafficking, money laundering, fraud, and other illicit means.

In the last year of Israeli rule [1993], GDP per capita in the West Bank was \$3,500, and in Gaza, \$2,800, and it had been growing. Had that growth continued, it would have been by now approximately \$7,000, which is not that remote from what Saudi Arabia had before the meteoric increase in oil prices. It certainly would have dwarfed that of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Before the second Palestinian uprising in September 2000, under Palestinian Authority rule, the GDP per capita had fallen to about \$1,300. Since then it has only declined further.<sup>1</sup>

## **A Temporary Inquiry Committee**

“It wasn’t easy to get an inquiry started. In 2002 a few MEPS—Ilka Schröder from Germany, Willy de Clerq from Belgium, Charles Tannock from Great Britain, and I—started the effort. The procedure is a difficult one. For a parliamentary inquiry, one needs the signatures of one-quarter of the MEPs, which at that time meant 154. Despite great resistance, we finally managed to get close to 180. EU external relations commissioner Chris Patten used his personal staff to try to convince MEPs to withdraw their signatures. Nine who had already signed gave in to the pressure.

“We then presented the signatures to the presidency of the European Parliament. This is composed of the presidents of the various factions and so includes a communist, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the copresident of the Greens, a socialist, and so on. Our opponents managed to prevent a parliamentary inquiry; instead a temporary inquiry committee was established that had much less competence. It was composed of twenty-five MEPs drawn from the foreign affairs, budget, and control commissions.

“Among the committee’s members were some outspoken enemies of Israel as well as friends. Most of the inquiry took place in 2003, and a little of it in 2004. The report had to be finished before the end of the parliamentary period. Israel provided much evidence including proof of fraud found in the offices of Arafat. Thirteen committee members said: ‘We haven’t found sufficient proof, let’s close the matter.’ The other twelve concluded that much evidence of abuse had been found and stated that the matter should be investigated in more detail by the new Parliament.

“That action thus ended in failure, but the European Commission has by now become much more critical. An account has been created at the World Bank to which all monies of donors are transferred. It is claimed that nothing more is paid to the Palestinians in cash. Whether that is true or not, I cannot judge.”



## **Hate in Palestinian Schoolbooks**

“In earlier years we had already addressed another important problem: the hate promotion in Palestinian schoolbooks. Until 2000, the Palestinians claimed that they bought these from Jordan and Egypt. Yet their own new schoolbooks are not much better.

“In 2000, with a few MEPs, we started to ask the European Commission questions such as: ‘What is your relationship with the Palestinian textbooks where Israel’s existence is denied and horrible things are said about Jews?’ Their official answer was that there was no European subsidy for Palestinian schoolbooks.

“We came back saying: ‘But the EU pays for buildings and for teachers who use these books. It cannot be that you don’t inspect what kind of teaching materials are used.’ We demanded that the EU representative to the PA should check these books. We knew that he already had done so but had gotten a signal from Brussels to let the matter rest.”

## **Resolution: No EU Money for Hatred**

Van Dam continues: “Then we approached Commissioner Patten with questions such as: ‘It cannot be that you send large amounts of money to the Palestinians who use school materials containing texts that are criminal under European laws.’ Patten responded more or less: ‘We have better things to do than monitoring books and such matters.’

“He also said: ‘The EU does not pay for these books, you have to go to the member states who subsidize these.’ Patten was right insofar as some member states indeed pay directly for the textbooks. Finland, for instance, contributes about seven million euros per year.

“We then decided on a different strategy. The European Parliament should declare that no money given to the Palestinians may be used, directly or indirectly, to strengthen hatred of Jews, to encourage various types of racism, or to distort history. Such money could only be used to promote a peaceful solution of the conflict.

“We proposed such a resolution in 2002 when the 2001 annual accounts came up for approval. We mentioned the schoolbooks in it, and some MEPs opposed this. They did not want to express an opinion on

the content of schoolbooks, and the resolution was defeated. We raised it again in 2003, this time without mentioning the schoolbooks, when the accounts for 2002 came up for approval. Now the motion was adopted.

“The existing trade agreements between the EU and Israel allow for Israeli exports to enter the EU without duties. This includes products made in Israeli factories in the disputed territories. In 2002, the European Parliament discussed an initiative to suspend that treaty and boycott imports from the ‘occupied’ territories. Although the resolution obtained a majority, it was not within the competence of the European Parliament to decide the matter but, rather, of the European Commission.

“Subsequently, the Israeli Permanent Representation in Brussels reached an agreement with the European Commission about how this issue should be treated. As so many Palestinian workers are employed in the factories in the disputed territories, they would have been the main victims of such a boycott.”

## **Hamas and Hizballah**

“Nowadays much of the EU financial help to the Palestinians is suspended but not stopped. Hamas, which controls the Palestinian government, is on the EU’s list of terrorist groups. The EU cannot, however, reach an agreement to put Hizballah on that list. It can still raise money in the EU.

“Although twenty-two member states have agreed to put Hizballah on the terrorist list, the remaining three block this. Diplomats from all twenty-five member states meet in a secret clearing house to discuss the list. Yet it has leaked that the three states that oppose putting Hizballah on it are France, Spain, and Ireland.

“We had, however, some success on this matter. The European Treaty mainly covers such issues as agriculture, transportation, and the environment. Foreign affairs are not part of the Treaty, yet the European Parliament discusses them. They remain, however, a national responsibility and also are dealt with by NATO.”

Van Dam relates: “In March 2005, at a plenary meeting in Strasbourg, the issue came up. A debate in the Parliament starts with a draft resolution presented on Wednesday the week before. Usually

these are very cautious. This one stated that if it should be proved that Hizballah is a terrorist organization, then the European ministers were called upon to put them on the list.

“Afterward, every resolution is usually further diluted so as to obtain majority support. One could rightfully expect that the final text would have been even weaker. Several organizations and individuals started to lobby, the European Coalition among them. I visited all the speakers in that debate. If they were not in the office, I spoke with their assistants. I told them how incredible it is that such a double standard prevails in the EU. Democracy seems important in Europe, yet is irrelevant in the Middle East. Terror in Madrid and London is horrible, but seems of no relevance in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv.”

## **Double Standards**

“We gave the MEPs our Coalition’s brochure titled “The European Union and Palestinian Terrorism: A Double Standard That Needs Revisiting.” It records how EU leaders have routinely reacted to terrorist atrocities committed by Palestinians and to Israel’s measured military responses in self-defense. The latter are habitually condemned as ‘an excessive use of force.’

“The brochure also mentions how in April 2002, after a Palestinian suicide bomber killed twenty-nine civilians at a Passover seder meal in Netanya, Chris Patten angrily declared about Israel’s reaction: ‘The Israeli Defense Forces are trampling over the Geneva Convention and any notion of international law is being torn up.’<sup>2</sup>

“The unexpected happened. When on the Wednesday the following week the draft resolution was discussed, the inclination was to make it stronger. When it was brought for a vote on Thursday, the final text said there was abundant evidence that Hizballah is a terrorist organization, and the European ministers should put it on the list. About five hundred MEPs voted in favor and fewer than ten against, all or almost all communists.

“The European Parliament was thus ahead of the countries’ ministers and diplomats. Nothing has happened because the Parliament has no authority regarding who is put on the list. Yet it expressed itself very clearly on this matter.”

## **Israel's Major Enemies**

Van Dam explains that among Israel's major enemies in the European Parliament are the communist and other leftist factions, now called the European United Left-Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL). They have 42 of the 732 MEPs.

"The Italian Louisa Morgantini was in the previous parliamentary period the chair of the parliamentary delegation to the Palestinian Authority. One can describe her as an enemy of Israel. In the previous parliament, there was one exception. Ilka Schröder, who was elected on the Green ticket in eastern Germany, left her party and joined the GUE/NGL, was a strong supporter of Israel.

"The Greens-EFA, who have forty-one MEPs as a faction, always vote against Israel, including Cohn-Bendit, who is a strong opponent. Some members such as Johannes Vogenhuber from Austria, however, are very reasonable.

"The Socialists (PES) are the second largest group with two hundred MEPs. Most support the Palestinians because they see them as a pitiable, poverty-stricken group. There are, however, other voices among them. The previous chairman of the Israel delegation, a German Social Democrat, did not share the anti-Israeli positions.

"In the previous Parliament, the French Jewish Socialist François Zimeray was very active on behalf of Israel. Perhaps because of this, his party did not include him as a candidate again in the 2004 elections. On the other hand, my colleagues and I once heard Austrian Social Democrat MEP Hannes Svoboda say in the temporary committee for funding the PA that Israel has no right to exist."

## **The More Supportive**

"The EPP-ED with 264 MEPs is a mix of factions including conservatives as well as Christian Democrats. In this heterogeneous group, the attitude toward Israel varies from very positive to highly critical.

"The Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) are the third largest grouping with ninety seats. Some of its factions give little support to Israel, particularly the British Liberal Democrats. In

the previous Parliament, a representative of the Dutch D66 party, Louisewies van der Laan, was especially anti-Israeli. I considered her hardly better than Morgantini.

“Once she came back from the PA and showed a picture of quadruplets born in one of the hospitals there. I said I hoped that when they were adults, they would only pick up stones to build houses and not to throw at others. Now Van der Laan is head of the D66 faction in the Second Chamber of the Dutch parliament.

“There are also some smaller groups. One is Independence and Democracy (IND/DEM) with thirty-three MEPs. This includes the British members of the UKIP party who are only interested in having Great Britain withdraw from the EU. My colleagues and I were members of that group and many of its MEPs were supportive of Israel.

“The last group is Union for Europe of the Nations with thirty MEPs. It, too, is very heterogeneous. It includes the Irish Fianna Gael, hostile to Israel, and others such as the Portuguese delegates of the Partido Popular, who are very supportive. It also includes the extreme right-wing Populist Party from Denmark, which is generally dangerous including for Israel.

“There are also about thirty-two independent MEPs among whom is Jean-Marie Le Pen, the French right-wing extremist. He is now a member of the Parliament’s Israel delegation.”

## **Progress in the Commission**

“The European Union and the Commission seem to think that evenhandedness in the Middle East is the best principle. They make statements about what Israel and the Palestinians should do and give the impression that the two are comparable entities. On the one side is Israel, a democratic state with an advanced legal system; on the other is an artificial nation of Palestine, with hardly any structure. IDF retaliations are regularly condemned in Brussels and Strasbourg without mentioning the Palestinian terror that leads to them.

“As far as the present Commission is concerned, there is progress from Israel’s point of view. Patten has been replaced as commissioner for international relations by Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the conservative

former Austrian foreign minister. She tries hard to ensure that no EU money goes directly to Hamas. The Commission's vice-president Franco Frattini of Forza Italia, Berlusconi's party, who is responsible for human rights among other matters, is a very positive figure as well.

"Yet it would be mistaken for Israel to assess only the Parliament and the Commission. Another very important figure in the EU is Javier Solana, its high representative for foreign and security affairs. He tries to play the role of the EU's foreign minister even though, since there is no unified European foreign policy, there cannot be such an official. Solana is a good friend of the Palestinians and constantly tries to find new openings for Hamas."

### **Visiting the National Parliaments**

"One way to influence positions is to visit the national parliaments. The parliamentarians often do not know that they can invite their ministers to explain the positions they are going to espouse in Brussels. They can also call their national MEPs for a discussion.

"When I go to a European capital, I always do so with representatives of our member organizations. I also discuss matters with the Israeli ambassador and with the Jewish community.

"Ireland is the one country we visited where the attitude toward Israel is particularly hostile. I once went to see some members of the foreign affairs committee, including the vice-chairman. He said something like, 'Christians supporting Israel. Yes, I remember Godfried of Bouillon and his Crusaders, who were already mass murderers in Palestine.' He meant that as Christians, we had no right to speak. In the eyes of many in Ireland, the Palestinians are waging the same battle against Israel as the Catholics in Northern Ireland against the Protestants.

"One of the claims frequently made by hostile counterparts is that they are anti-Zionists and not anti-Semites. They usually use arguments, however, identical to those of anti-Semites."

## **The World Council of Churches**

“Although the EU and its institutions are our main lobbying objectives, we sometimes go beyond them. In mid-2005, we visited the World Council of Churches in Geneva after this organization had called for divestment from Israel. This got much attention at the time, though later the opposition increased. At the WCC’s headquarters, we were received by a Swedish and a Pakistani pastor.

“In the first part of the meeting, they simply denied that this call was the official view of the WCC. They claimed that, instead, it was a motion by the temporary committee for the annual conference, which had only been adopted in that committee.

“We said: ‘So there is no call. Have you placed on your website a correction that it has been canceled?’ They answered: ‘No. The motion is still there, but it is not an official document.’ So we said we understood that there was still a call for divestment.

“Then we asked them: ‘Why doesn’t the WCC condemn what goes on in Darfur, or in North Korea?’ They replied: ‘In Africa and Asia we have member churches. They will object if we take a stand on their countries. In Israel we do not have influential churches.’ We told them our conclusion: ‘What you in fact say is that you take a one-sided, biased action against Israel because you get no protest.’ They had no choice but to admit that. In May 2006, the WCC Executive condemned Israel in a very one-sided way and with this confirmed its anti-Israeli posture.

“The WCC demonstrates that church politics can be even worse than secular ones. We talked with them for about an hour. They stressed that they were not anti-Semitic, but anti-Zionist. The only thing the discussion proved was that they are hypocrites.”

## **The UN Commission on Human Rights**

“We were in Geneva in March 2005 primarily to attend a meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Delegates told the most blatant lies about Israel. Because we are not registered as an official NGO, we could not speak, but in the corridors we could talk to delegates.

“A few years ago the situation was even worse. In April 2002, several EU member states voted in favor of a UNCHR resolution that affirmed the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to resist the Israeli occupation. This provided justification for suicide bombings even though international law condemns the targeting of civilians under any circumstances. More than one hundred Israeli civilians had died in terror attacks over the preceding month.”

Van Dam sums up: “The two institutions in Geneva we visited, plus some other likeminded organizations that have their offices there, have turned that town into a Metropolis of Evil.”

### **Why Do Christians Stand Up for Israel?**

“The member organizations of the European Coalition have been supporting Israel and the Jewish people for over twenty years. Not long ago we realized that we lacked a voice in politics, and this led to the Coalition’s establishment.

“The representatives came to see me in 2003 and asked me to explain why the EU has such a negative attitude toward Israel. In my view this is directly related to secularization. There was a so-called ‘ethical revolution’ in Europe, mainly from the 1970s onward. People left churches and their ethical values. This brought with it a lack of a coherent civilization, in which anti-Semitism could rear its head again.

“Many churches took a horizontal approach, claiming that only interhuman relations were important while neglecting the relationship between man and God. They thus followed the general fashion of lack of values and respect. This also explains why among the leaders of so-called ‘progressive’ churches in the United States there are many proponents of anti-Israeli measures. These people claim that the weakest party is the one that is always right. They do not want to see that there can be extreme criminality among the weak. The many Palestinians whose national aim is to destroy others are a typical example.

“When I left the European Parliament, I was asked to represent the European Coalition for Israel within the EU and its institutions. From a technical standpoint, I have the advantage that as a former



MEP I have free entrance to the European Parliament. There is also an office available especially for former MEPs, which I can use.”

## **Standing Up for Israel**

“My colleagues and I are often asked why we stand up for Israel. As Bible-believing Christians, we think the Scriptures are very clear about the covenant the Lord made with the People of Israel. Through Israel we are crafted into that covenant.

“Thus we fight against the lie of replacement theology that says the Christians of the world have replaced the Jews in that covenant. For us, standing with Israel and the Jewish people is standing with one’s eldest brother. One can sometimes have disagreements with one’s brothers and sisters, but when they are threatened, you always support them. I am grateful to say that in recent years there is more and more response from the Israeli side.

“I am often asked whether I do this because in some way I have a remote Jewish family background. I explain that I have none. So people ask me: ‘What is in it for you and your colleagues?’ I answer that the only thing in it for us is the Lord’s blessing, which says in the Scriptures: ‘Who blesses you [Israel] will be blessed.’ That is the sole reason why we struggle side by side against the evil forces that threaten the Jewish people.”

## **Notes**

- \* This interview is part of a JPCA research project on Dutch attitudes toward Jews and Israel, sponsored by the Israel Maror Foundation.
- 1. “European Funding of Palestinian Institutions,” Issue Brief, European Coalition for Israel, [www.europeancoalitionforisrael.org](http://www.europeancoalitionforisrael.org)
- 2. “The European Union and Palestinian Terrorism: A Double Standard That Needs Revisiting,” Issue Brief, European Coalition for Israel, [www.europeancoalitionforisrael.org](http://www.europeancoalitionforisrael.org).

Oded Eran

## Israel and the European Union

“The European Union is Israel’s largest trading partner even if trade with the United States is growing rapidly and exports to it equal those to the EU. The EU is Israel’s largest source of imports by far, with close to \$17.4 billion in goods and services in 2005, while Israeli exports to it are about \$12.3 billion. This leaves a trade gap of about \$5 billion in favor of the EU.”

Oded Eran is a career diplomat who became Israel’s ambassador to the EU in December 2002. He notes that Israel-EU trade in services is also beginning to develop. Israel now wants to expand relations in areas not yet covered by its Free Trade Agreement with the EU. Israel has signed two economic agreements with the EU in the past, the first in 1975 and the second in 1995, which deal mostly with tariffs and quotas.

“Economic factors are influencing all international entities, both states and organizations. Nowadays these relations seem to be even further increasing in relative importance. The fact that Israel is the largest importer in the Middle East of goods and services is an important consideration in EU policy toward Israel.”

### **Condemning Israel Frequently**

Such a statement begs the question: why has the EU condemned Israel politically so often while it does not blame its smaller Arab trading partners? Eran replies that the EU criticizes Israel on issues that are also criticized, be it in a softer tone, by the United States. He considers that the difference between the United States and the EU on key political issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is only minor.

“The difference between the two is in the day-to-day behavior on the current aspects of the conflict. It may well be that because of the balancing forces within the EU—the wish to play a role in the Middle

East and the economic implications—the EU refrains from translating this criticism into sanctions. In April 2002 the European Parliament endorsed an anti-Israeli policy. Two hundred sixty-nine members (MEPs) voted for a resolution that the EU ‘suspend immediately’ its trade and cooperation agreement with Israel. Two hundred eight voted against and twenty-two abstained. Yet this resolution was not enacted by the European Commission.

“There have also been various calls by NGOs and EU member states to impose sanctions on Israel. These, however, were neither discussed in the Commission nor in its Council of Ministers. Germany, Italy, and Britain opposed these initiatives. My hypothesis is that the great trade surplus somewhat influences the EU’s approach to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. On the other hand, the EU tends to be reticent about imposing sanctions, even in far more extreme cases than this conflict. The Iranian nuclear program, which potentially endangers Europe, is an example.”

### **Preferring to Settle**

“Rather than imposing sanctions the EU may occasionally exert pressures on Israel. This was, for instance, the case concerning the question of exports from Judea and Samaria and other territories under Israeli control. The EU considered that the Free Trade Agreement should not be applied to goods manufactured there. We eventually reached an accommodation and found a way to distinguish between exports from within Israel’s Green Line and others.

“This issue concerned perhaps 1 percent of Israeli exports. If the EU had decided to act unilaterally on it, we might have gone to arbitration. Both sides, however, preferred to settle.

“The EU now imposes duties on these goods without saying explicitly that they come from Judea and Samaria. The practice is that on the certificate of origin, Israel or the exporter mentions the town where the product is manufactured. This can, for instance, be Tel Aviv, Israel, or Barkan, Israel. At the customs points in Europe, the officials have a list of all towns and settlements. On its basis they decide whether duties should be paid or not.”

## **Explaining the Trade Gap**

Eran explains that while the trade gap with the EU is huge, part of it derives from Israel procuring capital goods there, which are probably around one-third of total imported goods. "These assist in developing Israel's economy and will in future lead to more exports. Israel's trade deficit with the EU was in the past in the \$6-8 billion range. As mentioned, it has come down to \$5 billion in 2005 on a much larger trade volume.

"This trade gap also derives in part from the fact that Israeli companies are more geared to exports to the United States. We have in recent years also found rapidly increasing new markets in the Far East.

"Israeli companies should make a greater effort to penetrate the European market. Even more so as in Eastern Europe eight rapidly developing countries joined the EU in the enlargement of May 2004."

When asked why, even taking all this into account, the trade gap is still major, Eran answers that the EU initially made some concessions to Israel. One was that there were clauses that were applied by the EU first, and only several years later by Israel. For instance, the EU dropped its tariffs immediately upon agreements coming into force, while Israel did so only after several years.

## **The Internet and Electronic Systems**

Eran remarks: "It seems to me that structurally our economy is strong enough to compete. Where it is not, we should ask for concessions. One concerns certain issues of agriculture. For instance, the EU could give Israel larger quotas for certain flowers, or longer entry seasons without customs for certain fruits.

"But this concerns a relatively small segment of Israel's overall exports. More important for us is to open the European market in areas where we have a relative advantage. The Internet and electronic systems now dominate many aspects of trade between individual countries. These are areas where Israel is relatively strong and we want to include these in our trade agreements within the EU.

"There are beginnings of regulations in the EU and elsewhere.

Questions that emerge are: what control should governments have in these areas, and how should these be taxed? The EU and Israel have formed a joint working group to study how to proceed in these areas. It is important that we facilitate the relationship between Israeli companies and their European counterparts. We are talking mainly about services in telecommunication, information, various aspects of trade, and so on.”

## **Research**

“Space research is another area where Israel has a relative advantage. The EU is aware that it is lagging behind the United States and is trying to create its own capabilities. One important aspect is the Galileo program, which is the European equivalent of the American GPS system. We were one of the first non-European countries to reach agreement with the EU to join this program. Israel has contributed \$18 million to it.

“This will allow Israeli companies with know-how and expertise in the relevant areas to participate in the various activities, including having a share in the production of whatever components are necessary. We are also aiming to become full members of the European Space Agency, which is a European though not an EU one.

“Israel also participates in the sixth-framework R&D program of the EU, which covers the period 2004-2008. This is the central EU program of R&D activities. We are now conducting negotiations on the level of Israeli financial participation in it. The EU has decided to dramatically increase its R&D budget in its financial prospective for the years 2007-2013.

“This means Israel will also have to increase its contribution in parallel unless the formula is changed. Such an increase, which might reach 30 percent per year, is an almost impossible challenge for us. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has already discussed with several commissioners finding a way for Israel also to participate fully in the seventh program.

“At present Israel contributes about 50 million euros a year, which is a respectable amount of money. We have seen a full return on investment, even though it is difficult to measure. Not all benefits

are measurable or even visible. Many connections are created between Israeli and European entities, either academic or industrial ones, that go beyond what one can see.”

## **Environment**

“The environment is yet another field of interest. Israel faces the same problems on its Mediterranean shores as EU members such as Greece and Italy. That means we should have a similar approach to solutions and be given observer status in the European Environment Agency. This would enable us both to observe European policymaking and give an opinion when asked.

“Another important issue is whether Israel can join the European Investment Bank (EIB). At present its membership is open only to EU countries. Why should Israel not be able to participate in the activities of this bank as it does in regional banks in other areas of the world?

“We are, for example, participants and members of the Inter-American Development Bank. We are also shareholders and have a member on the board of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). It was created after the fall of the Iron Curtain in order to assist the East European countries.

“I have had conversations with the EIB’s vice-president on both the possibility of Israel participating in its activities, and it becoming active in Israel. There are potential areas of interest to the bank, such as water desalination or infrastructure.

“This would mean European companies could build desalination plants in Israel that would be partly financed by the EIB. They are already looking at participating in some transportation projects such as the light train project in Tel Aviv and the future train link between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. They were starting to be interested in future transportation between Gaza and the West Bank, assuming this will be an underground train. I recognize a growing interest on both sides that could enhance economic relations. A major benefit of being a member of the EIB is that they could finance Israeli projects in Israel. This would be in line with their many domestic portfolios in Europe.”

## **Political Impediments**

“Political considerations were sometimes an unseen and unwritten impediment to economic collaboration. Both the Madrid Conference in 1991 and the Oslo Agreement of 1993 were turning points. They led to increased direct foreign investment in Israel and created an economically sound atmosphere for putting one’s money in our country in a number of areas. The EU has only a limited economic competence and by its nature has no influence over companies’ direct investment. All it can do is give the impression that the political atmosphere is conducive to investment.

“Despite the Palestinian uprising, Israeli economic performance attracts European companies to look deeper into the potential of several business areas. That was also the case when we discussed with the EIB areas such as telecommunication, transportation, and energy. We discussed the economic prospects and not the political side.

“At present Israel’s economic prospects look much brighter than they did in the first years of the Palestinian uprising. The EU and Israel have agreed on an Action Plan. This was a by-product of the enlargement of the Union. As a result of that, the EU now had direct borders with countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, and the very problematic—from the EU point of view—Belarus. On these borders there are many problems with illegal immigration, illegal workers coming in, and smuggling. Because of its specific history Israel has much useful know-how in border protection.

“The EU also had to define a policy for these new neighbors that were not candidates to become EU members. This led to a new European Neighborhood Policy and also included five Mediterranean countries, of which Israel is one. These agreements are based on the principle of differentiability, recognizing the partners’ different levels of economic development and their individual circumstances.

“This is unlike, for instance, the Barcelona process where every participant country has to progress at the same pace. This process was launched by the EU in 1995. It covered all the non-EU countries, including Jordan and the Palestinian Authority but excluding Libya. It aims at creating a political dialogue and establishing a Free Trade

Area between the EU and each participant and among the non-EU participants themselves not later than 2010.

“Europe recognizes the special characteristics of Israel, allowing it to make progress according to its capabilities without taking into account the performance of Morocco, Tunisia, or Egypt. This 2004 agreement is set forth in a very comprehensive document. It deals with a political dialogue and cooperation in areas that are not covered by the existing association agreement. In some fields, such as space, new agreements may replace in future what is stated in the current association agreement. The life span of the Action Plan is three years, of which half has by now passed.”

## **Political Dialogue**

Eran adds: “In the Action Plan it has also been agreed to have a political dialogue. It covers many issues that include the Middle East peace process, anti-Semitism, methods of combating terror, human rights abuses, weapons of mass destruction, cooperation with other countries, and Israeli participation in international bodies. In addition to political and economic dialogue, it also includes cooperation in fields such as justice, youth exchanges, sport—that is, areas not usually covered by economic agreements. It is a policy document, and we are working on turning it into something concrete.”

On the political side, Eran stresses that the East European countries’ entrance into the EU has made a significant difference for Israel. “In the past, from time to time, the Germans told us: ‘We are the only ones who defended you.’ Now many others do. The EU position has generally become more complicated with twenty-five members. Defining a common stance has become more difficult. Sweden and Ireland are probably the countries that most frequently raise their voices against Israel.

“The East Europeans are indeed friendly to Israel. The Czech Republic has been courageously in the forefront of the friends of Israel. I have also rarely heard about any anti-Israeli initiative from the other two new members, Malta or Cyprus. Italy under Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was very friendly to Israel. The position of the new government of Romano Prodi still remains to be seen.”



## **The Beginning of a Change?**

“When I came to Brussels as ambassador, the EU commissioner for external relations was Chris Patten from the UK.” Eran observes diplomatically: “There is no way to describe him as friendly to Israel, or even friendly to a specific government in Israel. For example, he tried, albeit not forcefully, to prevent the negotiations over the Action Plan. At the time several states criticized Israel or made public statements, yet to the best of my knowledge there was no attempt by any state to table a motion against Israel.

“There are some interesting signs of change. One notices a growing realism in the EU that their megaphone diplomacy is counterproductive to any constructive role they want to play in the Middle East. This came to the fore when, at the end of 2005, a report was prepared by the consuls-general of some European countries in Jerusalem including the UK, Belgium, Spain, France, and Greece. It was very critical of Israeli activities. Parts of the report were leaked.

“The EU Council of Ministers decided not to publish it after various lower bodies had decided to recommend publication. This I read as a sign of increased political realism. It didn’t mean the EU had changed its policies on the question of Jerusalem, but it understood that it doesn’t always have to express its views.”

## **Critical Statements**

Eran adds: “I also feel some change in France since 2005. Saying this, however, one has to be very careful. The EU, either collectively or its individual member states, have not changed their views on the Middle East conflict. By changing their practical behavior on some issues, it has become more feasible for Israel to conduct a serious political dialogue with them.

“I think it is possible and necessary to have such talks with Europe on Lebanon. The French historical role in that country, the U.S. engagement elsewhere in the region (Iraq, Afghanistan), and the possibility that EU member states are major contributors to the international force that is being deployed there, are some of the reasons we should have this dialogue.

“Yet still every month statements critical of Israel keep coming out of the monthly meetings of the EU foreign ministers. These are written by mid-level diplomats of the member states. It rarely happens that they are not automatically approved by the ministers. The latter traditionally discuss the Middle East over lunch at these meetings. They hardly change the texts that have been written by these diplomats. Their final, written declarations do not even necessarily reflect the views expressed during lunch.

“More recently, while not changing its position toward Israel, the EU statements have become more critical of the Palestinian Authority. They are increasingly making demands regarding reforms and fighting corruption.

“The EU’s declared policy since the establishment of the Hamas government has been unequivocal. The EU demanded that this government recognize Israel’s right to exist, accept all previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, and agree to the road map. Pending fulfillment of these three conditions, the EU refrains from having a dialogue with the Hamas government and bypasses it in channeling its assistance to the Palestinians.”

## **Paying Attention to the EU Parliament**

“It seems to me that there is growing support for Israel in the European Parliament since the entry of the new member states into the EU. Among the MEPs one finds a variety of views. Some call for Israeli membership in the EU, others for sanctions and boycotting of Israel. The overwhelming majority understand the problems we face in the Middle East from terror and extremism.

“Israel will have to pay more attention to the European Parliament and not only to the Council of Ministers and the commissioners. The Parliament is trying to assume a more decisive role in the EU’s decision-making.

“There is no doubt that terrorism has changed the views of Europeans generally, from the leaders to the people in the street. They see it as a menace to the fabric of European society. This leads to a growing understanding of Israel’s problems. The EU should long ago have put Hizballah on the list of terrorist organizations as it did with

Hamas.

“Although the EU and especially France was instrumental in achieving UN Security Council Resolution 1559 on Lebanon, it should have exerted more effort to have it fully implemented, including the dismantlement of the militias. Although there has not been unequivocal support for Israel’s battle against Hizballah, nor has there been significant pressure on Israel to end the military campaign in a way that would leave it exposed to similar threats in the future. The EU, which in my view will play a major role in the attempts to stabilize Lebanon, will be tested in its ability to do so in a way that prevents the recurrence of the circumstances that led to the crisis in July-August 2006.

“European leaders unequivocally denounced the genocidal statements against Israel by Iranian president Ahmadinejad. Possibly his words changed European attitudes toward the Iranian nuclear program and made them more determined to confront this issue. One will have to wait and see. The Europeans can go beyond words, but their decision-making process is very slow as it needs the approval of the twenty-five member states. It will remain slow for a long time to come, certainly compared to a presidential decision in the United States.”

## **Conclusion**

Eran concludes: “On the political side, the Gaza disengagement in summer 2005 and its mode of implementation transformed Europe’s perception of Israel’s then prime minister Ariel Sharon. Other important factors were the death of Arafat, the improved EU-U.S. dialogue on the Middle East, the EU position on Iran, and Israel’s acceptance of the road map.

“The EU’s only role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict before the disengagement had been as a financial donor. Thereafter the EU assumed additional roles, one of which was operating the Rafiah crossing between Gaza and Egypt.

“A second was the upgrading of the Palestinian internal security forces and a third, the facilitation of trade relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Hamas’s accession to power has posed

major question marks concerning the last two.”

In an article in the *Financial Times* at the end of 2005, Eran underlined that the EU’s new role was assumed with Israel’s full concurrence.<sup>1</sup> He maintained that there is thus an opportunity to transform the new opening into a profound and permanent change of heart and mind. He wrote that: “Europe and Israel have to return to a constructive political dialogue building on their revived mutual confidence.” He also stated: “If Israel trusts in Europe’s ability to play an effective and impartial role, that would ease the country’s deeply entrenched reluctance to admit the EU into sensitive areas affecting Israel’s security.”

## Notes

1. Oded Eran, “Israel and Europe Must Nurture Détente,” *Financial Times*, 16 December 2005.

Efraim Halevy

## How the European Union's Attitude toward Israel Evolved

“For a very long time the Europeans’ weakness has been that so often somebody else has to solve their problems. Frequently the United States has had to do so. Yugoslavia and Iraq have been cases in point. It is possible that this will now change as European nations make major contributions to the multinational force that is being deployed on the southern borders of Lebanon after the Second Lebanon War of summer 2006.”

Efraim Halevy is a former head of the Mossad. From 1996 to 1998 he was Israeli ambassador to the European Union in Brussels. The conversation with him takes place on 18 July 2006 while Israel’s war with Hizballah in Lebanon rages (updating was added subsequently). He remarks: “A few days ago, I was in Frankfurt at a meeting where I met Benita Ferrero Waldner, Austria’s former foreign minister who is now the EU commissioner for external affairs.

“She was very busy with the question of what Europe could do concerning Lebanon. Would it intervene? Would it do something? Could it do anything? An EU official participated in the meeting. He heads a department inside External Affairs, in charge of Israel and the Middle East. He was all the time occupied on the telephone trying to work out whether Javier Solana, the EU high representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy would come to the Middle East and who would be the members of the delegation accompanying him.”

### **Europe’s Actions: At Best an Irritant**

Halevy considers all this of little importance. “Europe’s actions during the hostilities have had little or no impact on events as they unfold. At best so far, the EU has been an irritant in the Middle East conflict. It

cannot help in the battle with Hizballah, which is a proxy fight with Iran.

“Israel is fighting Iran where it is vulnerable. If Israel succeeds in greatly weakening Hizballah and severely harming its capacity to fire missiles this will be a major setback for Iran’s prestige in the region. Iran, for its own reasons, cannot come to the support of Hizballah whom they supplied with weaponry. It has threatened Israel not to attack Syria but has not come to the support of Hizballah after Israel massively attacked it. All groups who consider themselves clients of Iran must now conclude: ‘The Iranians will not come and save a client in trouble.’ This is one major aspect of the battle in Lebanon.

“When all is over, if Israel had succeeded, the Europeans would have applauded it. If Israel had failed the Europeans would have condemned it. That is the way they have always played it. Had Israel totally destroyed Hizballah, it would have removed a major threat to Lebanese democracy in which the EU has invested. That would have helped Lebanon implement Security Council Resolution 1559, which called for the Lebanese government to have full control of its territory. Had we removed Hizballah’s threat of instability in the region, that would have helped the EU when moving to rebuild Lebanon for a second time. The job would then have been done by Israel. The Europeans should have done this themselves when they invested in Lebanon. Once again somebody else had to solve the problem.”

## **Reminiscing about 1996**

Many current European reactions to Israel’s battle with Hizballah remind Halevy of the time he was ambassador to the EU. “I came to Brussels in January 1996. A few months later Benjamin Netanyahu became prime minister. His election was the result of the many terror attacks at the end of 1995 and beginning of 1996. Netanyahu became prime minister at a time when the confrontation with the Palestinians became a very serious issue. Netanyahu said he would accept the Oslo Agreement, but also followed a different policy than his predecessors toward the Palestinians.”

Halevy says that personal aspects also played a role. “The Europeans had been used to Shimon Peres. He considered himself their

great friend and was much influenced by their flattery. I have hinted at this also in my recent book *Man in the Shadows*. This explains in part why the Europeans disliked the change in government.

“Within a short time, the policies of the Israeli government became rather unacceptable to the EU. Israel, after the many terror incidents, began taking steps to restrict the Palestinian movements and deprive them of certain of their facilities. When Ehud Olmert, then mayor of Jerusalem, opened a tunnel outside the Temple Mount, there was Palestinian violence that ultimately caused loss of life on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides.”

### **Every Month a Resolution**

“Every month the EU Council of Foreign Ministers meets in Brussels. In almost each meeting during that period it passed a resolution censuring Israel for one thing or another. In the EU this was a monthly process: the draft resolution started at a low level. It went up to a medium level and from there to the director-general level. Then it was sent to the European capitals and finally it was approved at the Council of Foreign Ministers. One might call this an EU ritual. The entire month before the next resolution was approved Israeli diplomats throughout Europe were busy trying to prevent, soften, or amend it.

“In retrospect, all this was ridiculous because none of these resolutions had any importance. The same is true regarding the EU resolution adopted a few days ago in Brussels on the crisis in Lebanon. The G8 met in St. Petersburg from 15-17 July. There policy was decided, and not in Brussels or anywhere else.

“Israeli-European relations during my time were complicated. A few weeks after Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, Israel signed a new economic association agreement with the EU. A second agreement concerned Israel joining the fourth European Research and Development program. For Israel to become a member of this, the agreement had to be approved by the European Parliament and by the parliaments of all fifteen member states. This approval came up when Netanyahu was already prime minister. Many in the EU thought this an opportunity to use leverage against Israel concerning its policies in the territories. For Israel this posed a major problem.”

## **Approval by the European Parliament**

“The European Parliament is chosen in various ways by the electorates in member countries. In the parliament itself, factions are composed on a Europe-wide ideological basis. There were five of these at the time, including conservatives, liberal democrats, and socialists. It was my task to get the parliament to approve the agreement while a significant number of its members had a very negative attitude toward Israel in general.

“Several MEPs also specifically disliked Jews. Without going into detail, some Germans among the Free Democrats had a very problematic World War II past. There were Belgian MEPs from the extreme right-wing Vlaams Blok. One had been an active officer in a Belgian unit that fought together with the Nazis. Some French MEPs belonged to Le Pen’s Front National. Several left-wing socialists had little love for Israel or Jews. There were also some British diehard anti-Jewish conservatives. Most were polite to me but I knew what their real feelings were.

“This major task ended successfully. The European Parliament, surprisingly, passed the European Research and Development program with 265 votes in favor and 4 against. Almost half the approximately five hundred MEPs did not attend the meeting. Thereafter the agreement had to be approved by all national parliaments. This took some time, but also there it passed. For Israel this was a major achievement.

“The Europeans fully realized that this agreement was also advantageous to them. First, Israel had to contribute a significant amount of money annually. Even more important, however, Israeli technology and science are of interest to the Europeans. When Europeans have a practical material interest, their ideological considerations become secondary. This is normal and natural.”

## **Europe’s Role in the Middle East Conflict**

“A second problematic issue at the time concerned the European attitude toward the Palestinians and the European role in our conflict with them. They were a major financial contributor to the Palestinian



Authority. Yet politically they had no clout. They thought that since they contributed so much money they should also have a say in what was happening politically. Israel rejected this.

“Manuel Marin, then vice-president of the European Commission was the key European actor involved. He is now chairman of the Spanish parliament on behalf of the ruling Socialist Party and previously had been Spanish foreign minister. Marin said he was much in favor of peace, and was very critical of Israeli policies. He complained all the time that the EU was paying and didn't get political recognition for this.

“The EU was also, however, paying the Palestinian Authority in a less than straightforward way. They channeled part of the funds semilegally. Some money went directly into Yasser Arafat's bank accounts. Once I was meeting Marin when he got a call from the German foreign minister who complained that \$25 million, which Arafat got as ‘special emergency funding,’ had been transferred to the wrong account. It went into the general account and should have gone into his private one.”

Halevy describes this in his book: “The commissioner asked the minister for a few minutes' pause and then turned to me and politely asked me to excuse him because he had to attend to the matter at hand. I left, of course, but not before my host had unburdened himself and had expressed his exasperation at the way he was being forced to cooperate in these matters.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Double Standards**

“A few years later this matter became a point of discussion in the European Parliament as it became clear that some EU money was being abused. For political reasons the European Parliament decided to hide the real nature of what was happening and prevent a full-scale investigation into this diversion of funds. It voted for a fuzzy form of investigation so that it would not become a major political issue.

“In other words, the Europeans—the parliament and the commission—once again applied double standards to Israel. Toward us they were moralizing. When it came to the Palestinians as far as finance and politics were concerned, they were ‘very understanding,’

to put it in diplomatic language, of the special considerations of how Palestinians handle money.

“Yet another aspect was the EU’s desire to become involved in Israeli-Palestinian political relations. When there were major confrontations they immediately tried to move in and advance various proposals to ‘bring the sides together.’

“One example was when in 1997 David Levy, then Israel’s foreign minister, came to Brussels for a periodic meeting at a time there was a major crisis between us and the Palestinians. The Europeans raised the idea that Arafat should also visit so that they could bring the two sides together. Levy could not avoid the meeting.

“The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg then held the EU presidency. Its foreign minister, Jacques Poos, presided over what became a ridiculous meeting, out of which came nothing. For the Europeans the meeting was relevant even without any substance. I noticed many times that for the Europeans to appear as if they were a factor in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was much more important than playing a real role.”

Halevy describes in his book how Arafat fell asleep during Levy’s speech. Nobody bothered to wake him up. Finally Nabil Sha’ath, the PA foreign minister, responded to Levy’s words.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Muslim Issue Emerges**

“Ten years ago Europe’s problems with its large Muslim immigration were already emerging. The Europeans complained frequently to us that they were paying a price for Israel’s attitude toward the Palestinians. They claimed that the negative tendencies among the Muslim communities in Europe were fed by their frustration over how the Palestinians were being treated.

“They said that if Israel would treat the Palestinians differently European Muslims would be less hostile and Europe would benefit. They never told us this story directly but dressed it up in a different way. They said that Europe had a stake in Israeli-Palestinian issues because some Muslims were European citizens. Thus the EU was representing the sentiments and aspirations of these citizens in expressing the hope that Israel would take a different position in the conflict.

“I replied that they should face up to the real problems with

Muslims in their countries. When I was stationed in Brussels there were growing signs that the approach of many Muslims in Europe was changing. Up to the mid-1990s, most tried to become fully identified with the culture and society of the countries they lived in. They wanted to be more French than the French, or more Dutch than the Dutch.

“In the mid-1990s there was a shift toward a more separate religious identity. Many Muslims maintained their religious approach opposing the secularism of European society. I said to my European counterparts that these were growing manifestations of separatism. They answered that this was an internal European issue and none of my business.

“It was one more among many examples of European double standards. When convenient, they used the same argument in order to get a stake in what was happening in the Middle East. When it was turned against them, they adopted a different stance. This attitude caused frequent displeasure on their part and frustration on mine. They did not want to listen to what was obvious and for which they are now paying a heavy price. I wasn't too keen to press the point endlessly as my mission in Brussels was not to educate Europeans.”

### **European Integration and Individual Approaches**

“Despite the integration of Europe, every country has its own attitude toward most matters. Their national identities, cultures, and approaches to life differ. So do their financial, judicial, and social systems. Each country has its own army. On the legal side there has been an attempt to harmonize many fiscal aspects and laws that relate to customs and commercial issues, yet there was no attempt to try and harmonize criminal law.

“The only truly harmonized issues concern human rights. The Human Rights Act is a European act. This now has become a problem because in Britain, for instance, it has become a barrier against some steps to combat terrorism.

“This lack of a unified approach has made it impossible to develop a common European policy on the issue of Islam. Each country wanted to maintain its particular approach thinking it was better than that of its neighbors.”

Halevy indicates that in retrospect the Europeans would have done better to take a common approach to this matter rather than trying to create an appearance of a common European foreign and defense policy. "This concept is a misrepresentation because no common policy exists on many foreign issues. There are big differences, for instance, between the French and British on problems such as Iraq, Iran, or even the Arab-Israeli conflict.

"Furthermore, one cannot maintain a common foreign policy on issues relating to Islam if in Europe there is no common domestic policy toward these. The Europeans, however, developed a logic of creating a common denominator between the absurdities of their domestic policies and the pretensions of their foreign policy. That is how I saw it then and how I continue to see it now.

"During my stay in Brussels the European Commission was weak. It was headed by Jacques Santer from Luxembourg, who was both pleasant and feeble. In the end his commission was deposed. Over the years one country was consistently pro-Israeli. The German government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl was very positive toward us, and so were his various foreign ministers such as Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Klaus Kinkel.

"France's role was highly negative. The French government was not only highly critical of Netanyahu. It also treated his successor Ehud Barak very badly. At each meeting of the Council of Ministers they were the most extreme actor against Israel. Almost all officials at the Quai d'Orsay, their foreign ministry, were negative toward Israel. Our ambassador in Paris made many efforts to change the situation but did not succeed. Hubert Védrine, the foreign minister in the socialist Jospin government, was an outspoken anti-Israeli and so was his right-wing predecessor."

## **COREPER**

"COREPER (Comité des Représentants Permanents) is a key organ in the European Union. It is composed of the ambassadors of all EU member states. The German ambassador was very helpful to us and so was the ambassador of Great Britain. At the time the Dutch ambassador was Bernard Bot, the current Dutch foreign minister. He

might occasionally make unpleasant remarks about us but in practical matters he was very helpful.

“On the other hand, the French representative in COREPER was outright hostile. Ambassador Pierre de Boissieu is a grandson of de Gaulle and a very arrogant man. When I arrived in Brussels he refused to meet me. He said he did not have to and did not want to waste time on ambassadors from outside the EU.

“Javier Solana, a former Spanish socialist foreign minister is the current EU high representative for foreign relations. At the time he was the secretary-general of NATO. He could be critical of Israel but this should not be confused with him being anti-Israeli. He is a nonconfrontational person who always looks for compromises, diplomatic solutions, and bridging positions. I think in his heart he has a great admiration for Israel's capabilities and progress. His policy was to avert a situation in which relations between Europe and the Palestinians would deteriorate beyond what he thought was good for the Europeans. Therefore, he continued to maintain a relationship with Arafat long after it was clear that he was promoting terrorism.

“It is to Solana's credit that when, in 2002, Israel came up with the idea of changing the constitution of the Palestinian Authority, he helped us move it forward. The concept was to empower the prime minister and to turn Arafat into a figurehead. Nowadays, with Hamas in power, we are interested in the opposite, strengthening the president, Mahmoud Abbas against the prime minister. Solana has also been helpful in arranging orderly elections in the Palestinian territories and providing monitors and observers.”

## **Europe's Major Mistakes**

When asked about the major mistakes Europe made in the Middle East over the past ten years, Halevy replies: “The first one was their political assessment of Arafat. Without the EU he would not have had a financial basis for his administration. This led to their second mistake. The EU approach facilitated corruption inside the Palestinian Authority. The way they channeled their money was both a major waste and an important source of corruption.

“The third EU mistake was that they thought they could lean on

Israel. They were subtly threatening economic sanctions and thought that this would push Israel. It caused some concern in Jerusalem but mainly created a bad atmosphere between us. The Europeans thought that by making these efforts they were ingratiating themselves with the Arab world. It was, however, a major miscalculation to think that the Syrians, Egyptians, Jordanians, and others would become Europhiles as a result. Nothing of this kind happened.

“Ten years ago many Europeans had a great ambition to be close to Syria despite the fact that it was a cruel dictatorship. There was great friendship between Syrian president Hafez Assad and German chancellor Kohl. Assad also had close relations with many people around Kohl.

“French president Chirac admired Assad and many other prominent Europeans had a lot of respect or sympathy for him as a person. Every time Israel had a problem with Syria, the French were very sensitive that we did nothing to destabilize Syria or damage its interests. The fact that Assad was a mass murderer who had killed tens of thousands of Syrian civilians was not something that troubled the European leaders at all.”

This leads to the final question, whether Europe is behaving differently now.

Halevy replies: “I think the Europeans are more mature in their assessment of the Palestinians. They don’t try to exert economic pressure on Israel. They don’t allow their monies to be used in the same way as before. They are less pretentious about their political role in the Middle East. The Europeans increasingly recognize the American supremacy and do not try to upstage it too much. It now remains to be seen if Europe will move to leverage its major role in the multinational force in Lebanon into playing a more active and significant part in forging a peaceful future for the war-torn nations of the Middle East.”

## Notes

1. Efraim Halevy, *Man in the Shadows* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006), 128.
2. *Ibid.*, 126.

Ruth Lapidoth

## Legal Divergences between the European Union and Israel with Regard to Jerusalem

“A number of major political divergences of view between the European Union and Israel also find their expression in legal positions. One such issue concerns the legality of Israeli neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. The EU stance was spelled out in the Venice Declaration of 1980, which demanded the creation of a Palestinian state to which Israel was at that time opposed. The declaration was issued at a time when the announced aim of the Palestine Liberation Organization was to destroy Israel. The declaration said, with reference to Jerusalem, that the European Community ‘will not accept any unilateral initiative designed to change the status of Jerusalem.’”

Ruth Lapidoth is professor emeritus of the Hebrew University and professor at the Academic Division of the College of Management, specializing in international law. She was legal adviser to the Israeli Foreign Ministry and is a recipient of the Israel Prize, the country’s most prestigious award.

### **The Settlements**

As far as the settlements are concerned, Lapidoth stresses that the Europeans, UN organs, the International Court of Justice, and the Palestinians consider that these violate the Fourth 1949 Geneva Convention, which states: “The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.”

Lapidoth points out that both the plain meaning of the words and the legislative history of this provision of the convention do not support this interpretation. This text was adopted after World War II

to prevent the mass transfer of civilians against their will in order to replace the population of an occupied territory. It was aimed at the forceful transfer of civilians practiced by the Germans during World War II.

“This provision does not deal with the voluntary movement of individuals who do not displace local inhabitants.” In an essay, Lapidoth wrote:

In the various agreements concluded in the framework of the Oslo process, the settlements have not been declared illegal nor has their dismantlement been requested. These texts have left the issue of the settlements to the permanent status negotiations. One may hope that bona fide negotiations will lead to a rational and pragmatic compromise.

Lapidoth also noted that some settlements in the West Bank “were actually located on land which before 1948 had belonged to Jews who were expelled from those places by the Arabs in the 1947-48 war. Most settlements were established for security reasons, according to spokesmen of the government.”<sup>1</sup>

## **The Status of Jerusalem**

“One of the most sensitive and painful issues in the relationship between Israel and Europe concerns the status of Jerusalem. European governments have on many occasions shown a biased attitude toward Israel. For instance, after the Oslo Agreements the Palestinians, in violation of these, set up a political representation in East Jerusalem at Orient House. The Europeans insisted that their representatives pay an official visit to the place. It was later closed by Israel.”

Lapidoth has written about this biased EU attitude:

Several times the EU has urged the parties to refrain from activities which prejudice the outcome of the permanent status negotiations. Has the EU itself lived up to this principle? Let us examine the “Orient House” affair. This building served as headquarters for Mr. Faisal Husseini, the PLO’s representative in Jerusalem. The house served as a centre for various administrative, political and quasi-



political activities. Mr. Hussein even received and briefed foreign diplomats in these premises. Israel claimed that these activities contravened the commitments undertaken by the Palestinians in the 1993 Declaration of Principles and in the 1995 Interim Agreement namely, that the offices of the Palestinian authority “shall be located in areas under Palestinian territorial jurisdiction” in the West Bank and the Gaza strip.

This activity in the Orient House no doubt was intended to prejudice the outcome of the permanent status negotiations. Nevertheless, the EU supported this activity by insisting that its emissaries pay a visit to the place and hold there official talks with Mr. Faisal Hussein.<sup>2</sup>

Lapidot continues: “The EU’s attitude was not only against Israel’s wishes but also contrary to the Oslo Agreements. It is possible that the Israeli-Palestinian dispute on this matter would not have reached such intensity were it not for the inflammatory attitude of the EU.

“In 1996, Israel celebrated the three-thousand-year anniversary of King David and the foundation of the city. This was mainly a tourism event. The Europeans refused to come to the celebrations because they claimed they were held in a part of Jerusalem that was in dispute. The EU stated that nothing should be undertaken that could prejudice the outcome of the permanent status negotiations. The Europeans’ visits to Orient House were not less prejudicial to the permanent status, but there the Europeans did visit because it served the interests of the Palestinians.”

### **An Exchange of Letters**

“In 1999, at the time of the dispute over the visits to Orient House, there was an exchange of letters between the then foreign minister Ariel Sharon and the EU. Germany at the time held the presidency of the EU. Its ambassador to Israel wrote a note to the Foreign Ministry that according to the EU opinion, Jerusalem is a *corpus separatum* as foreseen in UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of 1947.

“The German ambassador claimed this was ‘in strict accordance with international law.’ The 1947 resolution was, however, only a

recommendation with no binding effect. In Resolution 181 the General Assembly recommended the establishment of an Arab state, a Jewish state, and a special entity of Jerusalem. The resolution received the consent of the national leadership of the Jewish community of Palestine. The Arabs rejected it and started to attack Jewish towns and villages including the Jewish quarters of Jerusalem.

“If the ambassador meant that Resolution 181 was binding, he was not convincing. There was no obligation under international law to accept and implement the *corpus separatum* regime. It would only have become binding if the two parties had agreed to it.

“The resolution defined Jerusalem as a huge area. It is much larger than what Israel annexed in 1967. It also includes, for instance, Bethlehem.”

### **Applicability of Israeli Law**

“Over the years several legal cases have arisen in European courts that are relevant to the status of Jerusalem. No country has so far recognized Israeli sovereignty in either West or East Jerusalem. With regard to West Jerusalem, the European states have de facto accepted the applicability of Israeli law.

“An interesting situation arose in Israel in 1952. The driver of the Belgian consul-general had killed a Mr. Shababo in a road accident in West Jerusalem. When the heirs of Mr. Shababo took the consul-general, his driver, and the consulate to court, these claimed that the Israeli court had no jurisdiction even though the incident had occurred in West Jerusalem. Judge Witkon, who sat on the bench, rejected their objections and said West Jerusalem was part of Israel. The armistice line established by the 1949 Armistice Agreement between Israel and Jordan had left West Jerusalem under Israeli control.

“Another famous case was that of Yossele Schumacher. This young ultra-Orthodox boy was abducted in the 1960s by his father from Jerusalem to the United Kingdom. The British court applied the law in force in West Jerusalem, i.e., Israeli law. Interestingly, foreign states have not claimed that the law of occupation should apply to West Jerusalem.”

## **East Jerusalem**

“The situation with respect to East Jerusalem is very different. From 1948 to 1967, Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan. This was in accordance with the 1949 General Armistice Agreement. In 1967, Jordan started a war against Israel attacking it in Jerusalem. Israel defeated the Jordanians and conquered the areas under Jordanian control.

“After the end of the hostilities of the Six Day War in 1967, Israel adopted several enactments saying that henceforth Israeli law, jurisdiction, and administration would apply in East Jerusalem. The United Nations objected to this.

“According to the EU, the UN, and the U.S. administration, East Jerusalem is occupied territory. Therefore it is subject to the rules of the Fourth 1949 Geneva Convention concerning civilians in times of war. One amusing aspect of the European attitude concerns the Regency Hotel, formerly the Hyatt Hotel on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. It is partly built in an area where there was an Israeli enclave from 1949 to 1967 and partly outside it. When official European representatives come to the hotel they go only into those parts located on land that belonged to this enclave.

“The U.S. Congress is so far the only institution that has recognized Israeli rule over East Jerusalem. In 1995, it adopted the Jerusalem Embassy Act. According to this statute the U.S. administration had to move the country’s embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by 1999. If they failed to comply, then Congress would cut some funds from the budget of the State Department.

“The U.S. president managed to include in this law a small proviso that says its application can be postponed each time for six months if the president declares that this is in the interests of U.S. security. Since then, every six months the president makes such a declaration. In that law Congress has said very clearly that united Jerusalem should be recognized as Israel’s capital.”

## An Unclear Status

“Many rather ill-defined situations result from the unclear status of East Jerusalem. In 1980, Israel adopted the Basic Law: Jerusalem Capital of Israel. This law reconfirmed the unification of the city and its status as capital. It also reiterated the protection of the holy places.

“Thereafter the Security Council adopted Resolution 478, which condemns Israel and says the law is illegal. They said all foreign embassies had to leave Jerusalem, which they did. By 1982 Costa Rica and in 1984 El Salvador came back and established embassies in West Jerusalem. In 2006, both countries decided to move their embassy to Tel Aviv.

“An example of this ill-defined situation is the status of foreign consulates in Jerusalem. According to international law, a consul can fulfill his functions only once he gets an *exequatur* from the country where he is to serve. The *exequatur* means that the government allows this person to fulfill his consular functions. The consuls stationed in Jerusalem do not apply for an *exequatur* because their countries don’t want to recognize Israeli sovereignty over West or East Jerusalem.

“Despite the fact that they have not submitted their letters of appointment, Israel grants them consular privileges. Officially they do not have any contacts with the Israeli Foreign Ministry other than the Department of Ceremonies. When I was legal adviser to the Foreign Ministry, I was, for instance, not allowed to go to their receptions.

“The nonsubmittal of letters of appointment is against the 1963 multilateral Convention on Consular Relations, which has not been ratified by Israel. We have ratified the Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which poses no similar problems because diplomats are appointed for the whole country whereas consuls may be appointed for a specific area.

“Many of these foreign consuls in Jerusalem are in practice representatives to the Palestinians and mainly deal with matters concerning them. Sometimes they cause complications because some of them refuse to accept that they are subordinate to the embassy of their country in Israel.”

**Notes**

1. Ruth Lapidoth, "Israel and the Palestinians: Some Legal Issues," Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2003.
2. Ruth Lapidoth, "The EU, Jerusalem and the Peace Process," in Claus Dieter Classen, Armin Dittman, Frank Fechner, Ulrich M. Gassner, and Michael Kilian, eds., *In einem vereinten Europa dem Frieden der Welt zu dienen: Festschrift für Prof. T. Oppermann* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001). [German]

Robbie Sabel

## Israel Should Become a Member of the Council of Europe

Ambassador Dr. Robbie Sabel is a former legal adviser to the Israeli Foreign Ministry. He now teaches international law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, and the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya.

He says: “The Council of Europe was set up after World War II, having as its main objective the coordination of European legal affairs and advancement of human rights in Europe. Its membership is open to all ‘democratic’ European states. At present there are forty-six member states, and they include all the West European states and most of the Central and East European countries, including Russia. Several states are observers, including the United States, Canada, Japan, and Mexico.”

Sabel considers that Israel should aim to become a full member of the Council of Europe. “Israel should strive to join ‘clubs’ of democratic states. By joining the Council of Europe, Israel would be associating itself with like-minded democratic countries. We should set this as our goal, even though it cannot be immediately attained.”

### **The Council’s Institutions**

“The Council of Europe’s executive body is the Committee of Ministers, which usually meets at foreign-minister level. Its Parliamentary Assembly consists of members of parliament of the forty-six member states. Israel is an observer to the Parliamentary Assembly but not to the council as a whole.

“Another important council institution is the European Court of Human Rights, which, like the other council institutions, sits in Strasbourg. The judges of this court are appointed individually, not as representatives of their states. This differs from appointments to

the International Court at The Hague, where judges are appointed by UN geographic voting blocs, thus ensuring representation on the court for each of these blocs. The professional standard of the judges of the European Court is considered excellent and many of Europe's leading jurists have served on the court."

### **The Council and Treaty Making**

"One of the council's main functions is the drafting of treaties on legal issues. An important Council of Europe legal treaty, to which Israel is already a party, is the European Extradition Treaty. Israel has extradited people on its basis.

"Extradition depends on the law of the two countries involved. Israeli law permits extradition of Israel nationals, subject to the condition that if they are also Israeli residents, there is an agreement that the extradited person, if convicted and sentenced, may, if he wishes, serve his sentence in Israel. The European Extradition Treaty is one of the few treaties where there is no reciprocity. It could happen that Israel would extradite an Israeli national to a state that does not extradite its own nationals.

"Extradition is a two-tier process. The first tier is that if a foreign country requests extradition, the court in the requested country has to decide whether that person is extraditable. If the court so decides, a political functionary—in Israel it is the justice minister—has discretion whether to approve the extradition or not. The minister can deny the extradition if, for instance, he believes that the request is politically motivated, based on discrimination, or that the extradited person will not receive a fair trial. This procedure is similar in all countries. In the United States, the discretion is with the secretary of state.

"Normally, countries are very careful about with whom they sign an extradition treaty. A state only wants to conclude such an agreement with a state that shares its legal standards. With a multilateral treaty, one does not know which other countries are going to sign it later. Israel now finds itself having extradition relations with East European countries not all of which have, in our opinion, satisfactory legal procedures. Russia has on occasion requested extradition, but as far as I can recall we have never extradited anybody to Russia."

## **Why Try to Become a Member of the Council?**

Sabel expands on why he thinks Israel should become a member of the Council of Europe. "Israel has a natural place in clubs of democratic societies with independent legal systems. In the United Nations we are surrounded by a majority of nondemocratic states whose legal systems cannot be trusted. The UN record in enforcing human rights is dismal. This is because states, whose policies are the antithesis of human rights, sit in judgment on democratic states.

"The UN Human Rights Commission is a travesty of human rights. We have seen countries like Libya, Sudan, and Uganda, under Idi Amin, sitting in judgment on Israel and the Western democratic states. The same happens in other bodies. I once had to present Israel's case before the UN Committee against Racial Discrimination. Elected 'experts' from Arab countries with dismal human rights records solemnly castigated Israel. It was a very unpleasant experience.

"We should strive to join groups where we are at home. The Council of Europe has as members the West European states, which are all democratic. Israel is a natural member in this habitat. Israel can be particularly proud of its legal system, which is one of the more successful elements of our society. Another good reason to try to join is that it could become an opening to other European organizations, where we would have perhaps a political or economic benefit. As a long-term goal Israel should strive for membership in the EU and in NATO, but our chances of being accepted are not high since we bring with us the 'baggage' of the Middle East conflict.

"From my experience in the Israeli Foreign Service, I have learned the advantage of setting specific goals. In the absence of diplomatic goals, the Foreign Ministry tends to occupy itself with the day-to-day solving of urgent issues. That makes the setting of a goal so crucial, even though it may be difficult and take years to achieve. In the past, as a result of intensive diplomatic effort, Israel has been partially accepted to the WEOG (Western European and Others Group) at the United Nations in New York, though not yet in Geneva.

"All in all, it may be easier to apply to a nonpolitical organization. The Middle East conflict is not on the agenda of the Council of Europe. We would have no objection if Arab states also requested to join



the council, although it is unlikely they will because it would mean accepting the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. Furthermore, requesting membership of the Council of Europe does not entail asking the European states to make what some could consider an anti-Arab move.”

## **The Council and Human Rights**

“By joining the council, all Israeli actions and laws would be subject to the scrutiny of the European Court of Human Rights. This may well be problematic for Israel since we have emergency legislation and are fighting terrorism. Several European countries, which are fighting terrorism, are uncomfortable with the European Court of Human Rights. They feel that its judicial approach encumbers their actions, and Israel might find itself in a similar situation.

“Israel is administering areas outside its sovereignty, which the rest of the world sees as military occupation. Although Israel claims they are disputed territory, the European Court may decide that they are occupied military territories. If the court decides that this is a military occupation, we are going to have the same problems as Turkey has in Northern Cyprus, where the European Council considered that these areas are under Turkish occupation and hence subject to the scrutiny of the court.”

## **The Court and the UK**

“In several instances, the European Court has decided against the United Kingdom. For Israel this is a good indicator of the sort of scrutiny we will be subjected to, as both countries have well-respected independent legal traditions that are relatively similar.

“Britain was severely criticized by the European Court for its interrogation methods in Northern Ireland, which included hooding, standing for long hours, loud noise, and sleep deprivation. The European Court decided that although this did not amount to torture, it was nevertheless illegal. The Israeli security services applied similar interrogation methods to those used in Northern Ireland. However, the Israeli Supreme Court intervened, and reaching a decision similar to

the European Court, it outlawed them, considering them to be cruel treatment.

“Several examples where the UK was condemned concerned delay in justice. As we know, justice delayed is justice denied. One specific case in a British labor tribunal was only decided after nine years. In another, it took three years for an appeal to be heard in a criminal court. This was considered by the European Court a violation of human rights.

“Another issue on which the court decided against Britain concerned parole cases. Parole boards in Britain are administrative bodies that have wide discretion as to reduction of prison sentences. The court ruled that because of the quasi-judicial nature of the parole boards, a prisoner should have all the rights and defenses available to somebody brought before a judicial system.

“Yet another case concerned access to courts. Somebody tried to sue a British police officer. The British court ruled that the police had immunity. The European Court decided that it is not reasonable to grant complete immunity to police on civil issues. In the Israeli system, of our own volition, we have abolished the immunity, so here we were a step ahead of the UK.

“One complainant from Northern Ireland who was known as an outspoken radical Catholic was denied work as a civil servant in Northern Ireland. The British courts denied access to the labor court, claiming that it was a security issue. The complainant claimed that he was denied the job because of his religious beliefs and not on security grounds. The European Court decided that the complainant must be granted access to a British court, which should determine whether he was legitimately barred on security grounds.

“Another case concerned a governor of a prison who had tried a prisoner accused of stealing in the prison. The governor treated it as an administrative offense and denied the prisoner the right to contact a solicitor. The European Court concluded that even though it concerned an administrative process, the proceedings were quasi-judicial and the defendant was entitled to defense counsel.

“The European Court also decided that people who live under the flight path of Heathrow Airport could sue the airport authority for the harm caused by noisy flights. Under British law, this was not possible.

“Among many other issues brought before the Court was also that of legal aid. The British give free legal aid in an appeal only if they consider that there is a good chance of the appeal succeeding. In numerous cases, legal aid was denied on the ground that there was no chance of such success. Thus persons had had to appear in a British high court pleading difficult legal arguments without a lawyer. The European Court ruled that, if complicated legal issues were involved, the defendant was entitled to have legal aid in the appeal irrespective of whether the government or legal-aid people felt there was a chance for the appeal to succeed.

“In Israel, prisoners can vote, which they could not in the British system. The European Court overturned the British law. Another interesting question concerns sexual relations of prisoners. The European Court gave a similar decision to that of the Israeli court. The latter decided in the Yigal Amir case that there is no absolute right for prisoners to have sexual relations in prison, even if they are married.

“There was the horrible British custom of punishing kids by whipping them with a birch. In one case brought before the European Court a child was taken to a police station, held down by two policemen, and birched. The European Court decided that this was a violation of human rights law. Such treatment of children would be unthinkable in Israel.

“In extradition cases the European Court condemned the British position a number of times. Britain wanted to return a Sikh to India. The court decided it could not because he was likely to be persecuted.

“When Britain was about to extradite somebody to the United States, where he was liable to a death penalty, the European Court decided that Britain must obtain an undertaking from the United States that if he were extradited, no death penalty would be imposed. Israel has a similar system.”

## **How Can Problems Be Solved?**

“If Israel became a council member, we can assume that some people would apply to the European Court claiming that there is discrimination both in Jewish and in Islamic religious law. It is probable that the court may find fault with these. This would certainly be a downside of joining the European Council.”

When asked how these problems could be solved, Sabel says every country has problems of a similar nature. One reason he is confident that Israel could resolve issues with the European Court is because the the Israeli justice system is very independent, respected, and of a high standard. For example, in the Israeli criminal system the defendant has more rights than in most European countries. This includes the right to cross-examine witnesses and the right to be present at the trial. Not all European countries have such a legal requirement.

“We have perhaps the world’s most highly developed system of supervision of the government by courts, i.e., the Israeli Supreme Court sitting as a High Court of Justice. The Israeli Supreme Court has also intervened in affairs that the British courts would have been reluctant to deal with. One example is the actual conduct of military activities when there was a claim of abuse of human rights.

“This further proves my point that Israel has such a strong tradition that we could live with this supervision. It is more effective than the American or the British system, and Israel can be proud of it. The question is, if we already have this internal legal supervision, do we need other countries looking over our shoulder? The answer is that it is necessary to get into ‘the club,’ and Israel can live with such supervision even if it will not be easy.”

### **Living with the Court’s Decisions**

“The European Court will not always approve of Israel, but if France, the Netherlands, and the UK can live with its decisions, we can too. Great Britain fought a bitter war in Northern Ireland. It is now using major force in Iraq. Every country now has problems with immigration, terrorists, and their detention. Our legal system is certainly better than that of Turkey, let alone Russia. If Russia can live with the court, we can.

“As far as religious laws are concerned, it seems to me that we will have to prove that they are not discriminatory. For instance, under Jewish law a woman cannot serve as a religious judge. The European Court may consider this discrimination. Israel will have to prove that these are different systems, and not discriminatory ones. We certainly will not change Jewish law because of them.

“Countries are expected to follow judgments of the European Court, but there are no sanctions. The most obvious example is Russia. It does not have an independent judiciary. So in these cases the European Court serves as a court of appeal, which can criticize situations but no more than that. The assumption of the council is that if you are a democratic and law-abiding society, and you become party to the treaty, you will implement the rulings of the court.”

### **The Obstacles to Membership**

Having reviewed the situation, Sabel asks: “So what are the obstacles?” He replies: “The first major question asked will be: ‘Is Israel in Europe?’ An answer could be that the term ‘European state’ is a flexible term. It applies to Turkey, though it is overwhelmingly in Asia. It applies to Cyprus, which is a very close geographical neighbor of Israel. It applies to Malta, which is closer to Africa than to Europe. It applies to Russia, which lies to a large extent in Asia. If the definition is west of the Ural Mountains, then we are part of Europe. If Azerbaijan and Armenia are considered European states, then Israel can fairly make a bid for membership. Israel has been accepted as part of Europe by sports bodies. And if the Europeans wish to, they can accept Israel as a European state.

“The second obstacle to membership is that it requires the unanimous approval of all member states, which means that one state can veto it. Politically this may be an advantage, because Israel can try to convince one state at a time. There are very few states, if any, that would like to go on record as the one state that prevented Israel’s membership of a nonpolitical human rights body. There is no violently hostile anti-Israeli state in the council. A country such as Sweden, which is critical of Israeli policy, might even encourage our membership because it would entail human rights supervision. From my experience, if the Israel Foreign Ministry works on one country at a time, these normally say: ‘If the others agree, we will also do so.’”

Sabel explains that when he was the legal adviser to the Foreign Ministry, the issue was not raised. He had, however, no time to deal with it because there were day-to-day crises. Only afterward, when he

had more time to reflect, did he recommend that joining the council should be set as a political goal.

“At the United Nations we are certainly never going to be at home. There will always be an anti-Israeli majority. The Foreign Ministry and other ministries would prefer to have us get into NATO. But, as mentioned, our chances there at present are nil. Neither is membership of the EU an option.”

### **The Importance of Joining a Club**

Sabel sums up his view. “Joining a club is important. The United States will not accept us as another state. We are not part of the Middle East or Africa. With all the weaknesses and problems of Europe, we are closer to it than to any other international grouping. Europe is no longer a Christian society except perhaps when it comes to anti-Muslim feeling.

“I suspect Turkey is not going to become a member of the EU, basically because it is a Muslim country. As an aside, if Turkey is excluded, it may move in the opposite direction and turn into an Islamic-fundamentalist society. That would be a problem for Europe. In that sense I think it is in Europe’s interest to bring in Turkey as an EU member. Turkey has a strong tradition of secularization and trying to exclude Islam from the government. Europe does not want to lean particularly on an army, but Turkey’s military is what guarantees its secular character.

“When Israel pinpoints a diplomatic goal, we often achieve it. Israel might be offered observer status in the council, but this should not be our objective. If our goal is limited to observer status we will certainly not be offered full membership. As Israel will not be accepted as a NATO member, the Europeans may agree to offer membership of the Council of Europe as a consolation. It would not be seen as a tremendous political achievement for Israel in the way that membership of NATO or the EU would. Yet it is achievable and would be an achievement, albeit a minor one. The Council of Europe proudly points out that no state not a member of the council has ever been accepted to membership in the EU.”

Raphael Bardaji

## Spain, NATO, and Israel

“In recent years there has been a change for the better in Israel’s portrayal in the Spanish media. Now at least a few columnists expose Palestinian terrorism, attack anti-Semitism, and outline the problematic context in which Israel has to operate. Op-ed writers like Florentino Portero at *ABC*, Gabriel Albiac at *La Razon*, and others sharply contrast with the correspondents and editors at the same newspapers. They remain, however, a small minority. A few years ago, if you wrote an article defending Israel, you were marked as a secret agent or a ‘Zionist.’

“Both the terror attacks in Madrid on 11 March 2004 that killed about two hundred, and the Israeli disengagement in 2005 have changed Israel’s image. It is unclear yet whether this will last. Ariel Sharon’s transfer of the Gaza territory was disconcerting to those Spaniards hostile to Israel. Previously the Spanish media portrayed him as a killer, responsible for Sabra and Shatilah and indicted in Brussels as a criminal.

“Now the impression has been created that an Israeli center party may be viable. It is too soon to assess how that will affect Spaniards’ irrational sentiments about Israel.”

Raphael Bardaji is head of International Policy Studies at FAES, a Spanish foundation for social research and analysis. It is headed by José Maria Aznar, the former prime minister and leader of the Popular Party. FAES aims to develop new ideas that the party can then promote.

### **The Political Scene**

Bardaji explains that Spain’s political scene is dominated by two parties, the Center-Right Popular Party and the Socialists. “There are also some communists who are marginal, and several regional parties,

of which the Catalanian one is the most important. In the Popular Party, support for Israel is far from united. Aznar is unequivocally pro-Israeli. Yet when he was prime minister he had great difficulty explaining his positions on the Middle East to conservatives.

“For many, it is not a natural attitude. Several come from families that were linked to the dictatorial regime. Old ideas still float around, including those propagated by Franco that major problems of civil society should always be blamed on an international Jewish conspiracy.

“In the early 1950s, Franco passed a law against all subversive forces, which he defined as Freemasons, Jews, and communists. It remained valid until his fall in November 1975. Franco took this position despite the fact that there is no significant Jewish community in Spain. Another paradox was that he helped Jews escape from the Germans during World War II.

“Mariano Rajoy, the present leader of the Popular Party, was deputy prime minister under Aznar. He is a very balanced man and has managed the party well in the two years that we have been out of power. I do not remember any specific statements on Israel, but I am sure his views are close to Aznar’s.

“Also in the Socialist Party the positions on Israel are very heterogeneous. It would be mistaken to claim that the party has a clear position on the Middle East conflict.”

## **The Media**

“In general, the Spanish media remain biased against Israel. This is particularly true for television but also for some of the leading dailies. They often portray the Israeli government in a harsh light. The correspondents of the Spanish papers are based in Jerusalem and spend a large part of their time with the Palestinians.

“Even so, these correspondents have changed their tune somewhat and no longer present the Palestinians as freedom fighters. However, they continue to depict terror attacks either as a reaction to Israeli policies or as manifesting ‘root causes.’ They may claim that these militants are poor, ignorant, or that their family has been victimized by the IDF. In this way they always justify terrorism.

“Few explanations are needed. The TV images show Israeli tanks,



and these prompt the viewers' irrational feelings. One first sees the IDF moving around a city, and thereafter a Palestinian child. The Palestinian cameramen are adept at these games and know how to play on the audience's emotions."

### **Justifying Terrorism**

"*El Pais*, the country's leading paper, is formally independent. The owner is a businessman who gives priority to his interests irrespective of politics. He battled the conservative Aznar government because he thought it did not serve his pocket well enough. The paper now supports the Socialist government of Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. It may sound exaggerated, but rather than the newspaper being controlled by the Socialist government, one could go so far as to say that the government is controlled by *El Pais*.

"The paper's editor in chief is a former Francoist who now is a democrat by evolution. He also demonstrates that sometimes people cannot get rid of views from their past. In addition, many of *El Pais*'s journalists have, like those of other papers, a leftist bias. Their anti-Israelism derives from their anti-Americanism. They see Israel as an extension of the United States and present both as monsters. Although the editorial line is anti-Israeli, *El Pais* lets pro-Israeli columnists write from time to time as a sop to its purported pluralism.

"*El Pais* even found some justification for the Madrid bombings by radical Muslims. It wrote that there was a clear connection between these and the policy of the outgoing Aznar government. If Aznar, *El Pais* suggested, had not been such a close ally of Bush and had not sent Spanish troops to Iraq, the bombing would not have taken place.

"So both this paper and the Socialists blamed the government rather than the murderers. Until then, terrorists had always been condemned after attacks. Acts by the ETA, the Basque independence movement, were denounced by those in power and the opposition alike. After the March 2004 bombings, the Socialists changed their tune and put the blame on the government. They had declared in demonstration after demonstration that the Spanish people would pay a price for being close to Bush and taking part in the Iraq war."

## **The Denial of Global Jihad**

Bardaji observes that a strange paradox has developed in Spain. “Socialist circles deny the existence of a global jihadist movement. They say things such as: ‘These poor Moroccans live in inhuman conditions in Spain.’

“It is increasingly clear that the March 2004 terrorists organized themselves in a local cell. Seventeen were Moroccans, one was a Tunisian. None were born in Spain. They were neither criminals nor poor. Most lived a normal life in Spain, not an underworld one. Some had links to the Mafia. Most had university degrees or were studying. Some specialized in electronics, one in physics. The majority were attending mosques.

“Although the perpetrators were living in Spain, they had links to Syrians, Iraqis, and others. The records of their phone calls have been found. In the hours before the attacks, they were calling imams and other Muslims in London, Casablanca, and Paris.”

## **More Terrorist Attempts**

“The number of legal Moroccan immigrants in Spain is estimated at well over five hundred thousand. The country’s total population is around forty-four million. The number of illegal immigrants is not known. Surprisingly enough, there were no racist demonstrations after the Madrid attacks, even though Spaniards have always looked down at people from Morocco.

“The rage was cleverly manipulated against the Spanish military presence in Iraq. After they came to power, the Socialists told the people: ‘You are safe now, our soldiers are out of Iraq. There will be no more attacks.’ This, however, was untrue. A few days after the Madrid bombings, the same people tried unsuccessfully to blow up a high-speed train.

“Another terrorist attempt was made a year later by a different Islamist cell. They tried to kill the judges of the special court for terrorism in the center of Madrid with a bomb. These terrorists had been followed by our intelligence service, and were intercepted by the police. Several other smaller-scale bombing attempts were made by

radical Muslims. In January 2005 the police arrested a dozen of them, some preparing to bring a dirty chemical bomb into Spain.

“We are discovering that the country is not safe at all but permeated by radical Muslim terrorism. Spain also serves as a logistical support base. In the last two years more than two hundred suspects have been arrested, and the number who have been jailed is probably ten times higher.”

## **Learning Lessons from the Madrid Bombing**

Aznar, Bardaji notes, pointed to an important lesson other countries must learn from the Madrid bombings. “The Muslim terrorists have shown that a substantial attack a few days before elections can change the political situation in a country. Until the bombings, all polls showed that the Popular Party would remain in power. Yet public opinion changed because of the bombings and the Socialists ended up winning.

“The Spanish intelligence service has an Al Qaeda strategy document written in 2003 by a sophisticated Iraqi political analyst, apparently belonging to the organization. We do not know the author’s name, but in the document he said that Spain was the weakest ally among the coalition forces.

“He wrote that the Aznar government did not have public support for sending troops to Iraq. He claimed that two or three strikes against Spain would bring the government down, and the Socialists would then come to power and withdraw the Spanish soldiers.

“The document is over fifty pages long, of which seven are devoted to Spain. It was intercepted by the Swedish Defense Ministry and given to us around the beginning of March 2004. It was misinterpreted as indicating that the attack would be mounted against the Spanish forces in Iraq.”

## **Other Dailies**

Bardaji comes back to his description of the media. “The next largest daily is *El Mundo*, which has no clear policy line. *El Mundo* opposed Spain’s military participation in Iraq and tended to link it with the Madrid bombings. It has, however, undertaken by far the best media

investigations of those bombings. The more they have discovered, the more they claim that in fact it was wrong to link these to developments in Iraq. Actually *El Mundo* is the main proponent of the thesis that points to ETA, some Spanish intelligence officers, and probably some Spanish socialists as the real masterminds of the bombings.

“Another important daily is *ABC*, which is traditionally conservative and pro-Catholic. Its current editor in chief, José Antonio Zarzalejos, is pro-Israeli. The editorial line has to reach a compromise because many writers and editors are more to the Left. The reflex of such journalists on all papers is to look suspiciously at Israel and naively at the Palestinian side.

“In March 2004 after the change of government in Spain, when the Israeli army killed the Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the editor in chief of *ABC* called me for an opinion. He was probably seeking a critical reaction. But I told him that whereas in the then Spanish reality the action might not have been justifiable, the Israeli reality was very different. I gave a long explanation of why targeted killings are an effective Israeli defense against Palestinian terror.

“He published my op-ed prominently in his paper. Thereafter he showed me how many negative reactions it received, yet kept defending my point of view and my right to express it. *ABC* never made any linkage between the Madrid attacks and the Spanish involvement in Iraq. The paper’s editorial board believes that Spain was attacked by the global jihad.

“*La Razon*, a relatively new conservative daily, has not yet found its overall policy line. It has several columnists who are pro-Israeli. The paper was not yet widely distributed when the Madrid bombings occurred.

“Another important daily is *La Vanguardia*, published in Barcelona in the Catalan language. They do not have a clear-cut position on the Middle East. Some of their writers compare the Palestinian struggle to that for Catalan autonomy, but the paper’s position varies.”

## **The Academy**

“A major source of support for the Palestinians is in universities. Over the last twenty years Palestinians have quietly pursued a strategy

of planting exchange professors in departments of international relations, and in this way they have created a constituency.”

Bardaji speaks from his own experience. “In the late 1970s I tried to do my PhD at the Madrid Complutense University. My professor was pro-Palestinian, anti-American, and anti-Israeli. His only concern was promoting the cause of Yasser Arafat. I could not do my thesis with him. The subject I had chosen was NATO and Spain, and he literally told me that ‘if I wanted to talk about weapons, I should choose to defend Fatah and not the imperialistic Americans.’

“The main problems for Israel in Spanish universities are located in the international relations departments. There are only two exceptions: Rey Juan Carlos University in Madrid, which is private and small, and the University of Navarra, which is very conservative and linked to Opus Dei. They are not automatically anti-American.

“In lectures on the Middle East, professors often manipulate their audience. One can do that very simply by using TV images. These academics also portray the Israeli government as a devious force that promotes Jewish interests in the world. They never define what these interests could be.

“In addition, there is a growing group of revisionists. They do not challenge Holocaust history but claim that the Jews, by representing themselves as victims, manipulate the public to advance Jewish interests.

“In the Spanish academic world, anti-Americanism, anti-Israelism, and anti-Semitism are all related. When anti-Americanism is linked to attacks on Israel, there is always a conscious or subconscious element of anti-Semitism at play. I believe that the distorted images of the Jews brought about by the expulsion in 1492 are somehow still under our skin. Something like ‘they deserve it’ still runs through our veins.”

## **Building Fences**

Bardaji refers to a similarity between Spain and Israel. “Spain has built fences around two of its enclaves in North Africa, Ceuta and Melilla, which are surrounded by Morocco.

“These have been reinforced and made higher. Their purpose is to

keep Moroccan immigrants out. These fences have not been criticized in Spain because we see large numbers of Moroccan immigrants trying to cross them. The fear in Spain of being flooded by Moroccans is so great that people tend to forget what their principles are.

“I have written articles asking what is the difference between the Israeli fence—almost all media keep calling it a wall—and our fences. The usual answer is that Spain builds on its own territory, whereas Israel does so on what is called occupied territory though actually, according to international law, it is disputed territory. I have replied that these writers agree that we should put up fences to keep poor illegal immigrants from entering the prosperous areas of Spain. At the same time they want to forbid Israel the right to defend itself by keeping terrorists out. That usually silences them.”

## **Reconquering Al-Andalus**

“Aznar has been making headlines with his proposal to enlarge NATO membership with Japan, Australia, and Israel.” This idea is propounded in a brochure under his name that Bardaji wrote, and that was published by FAES.<sup>1</sup>

Bardaji explains: “I prepared this proposal because of West European and Spanish interests and not because I am pro-Israeli. I believe that the West is at war and we are not just facing a few terrorists linked to Al Qaeda. The latter is the tip of the iceberg of a larger phenomenon—a global Islamic insurgency. We need to be prepared to fight this as effectively as possible.”

Bardaji has been specializing in Islamic terrorism, particularly Bin Laden. “I am probably one of the few Spaniards who has read all his statements, including tapes and interviews. He frequently mentions Spain as well as conquering Andalusia for the Muslim world.”

## **Bin Laden and Hitler**

Bardaji already stated in 2001 that one of Bin Laden’s goals was to turn Andalusia into Muslim territory. “He thinks it belongs to the House of Islam because in the Middle Ages it was, for several centuries, in Muslim hands. Back then, everybody I told that to laughed at me.”

Aznar presented this thesis at Georgetown University in 2004. He said:

Bin Laden shares a common characteristic with Adolf Hitler; he writes and says what he intends to do. And his vision and plans are crystalclear [*sic*]. He talks about the Land of Islam stretching from Al-Andalus (the name the Muslims used many centuries ago to refer to Spain) to the Philippines.... Some say Islam is a tolerant faith. But not Bin Laden's Islam, that is for sure.

In order to achieve our victory, we must accept and understand that we are at War. Obviously, not a conventional or traditional War, but a new form of conflict. A war that we never looked for, but a War that fell upon us just because of the implacable logic of our enemy. Bin Laden declared War on us, on the democratic, prosperous, free and basically laicist Western society. And he declared a total War where, according to his view, there is neither room for negotiations nor peace agreements.<sup>2</sup>

Bardaji comments: "*El Pais* mixed this speech up, saying that Aznar and Bin Laden had the same fantasies about Al-Andalus. Today, reluctantly, many more people understand that this is what Bin Laden wants. You are no longer discredited if you say so, but people do not wish to think about its consequences."

## **Israel Should Join NATO**

"NATO is Europe's best military instrument. For several decades it focused on targets linked to the Soviet Union. These are irrelevant to today's security needs, and to win the next world war NATO now has to reorient. Israel would introduce a new dynamic within NATO helping it focus on the right issues.

"Israel would also benefit. It has become isolated, and one major reason is that the Europeans do not want to face the challenges ahead. Iranian nuclearization threatens the West as well as Israel. Although Israel might be forced to take unilateral action, if it were part of NATO the Iranians might realize they were facing a strong deterrent force representing the entire Western world.

"However anti-Semitic parts of Europe's population may be, I still

cannot imagine any European politician saying it would be fine if Israel were nuked by Iran. We would be much better protected if we were all together on this issue.”

## **Discussing NATO's Future**

In his brochure, Bardaji wrote:

We are fully aware that Israel's membership of NATO poses greater political problems, for example, than that of Australia. Nevertheless, we believe that the benefits of this expansion would well outweigh any possible disadvantages. What is more, NATO and Israel would not be starting from scratch. In fact, since the Istanbul Summit of 2004, the Alliance's authorities and those of Israel have been drawing up a framework for closer cooperation between the two parties as a part of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. Unfortunately, the Alliance has not been able to go one step further and grant this important relationship the publicity it deserves, nor has any initiative been designed that goes beyond the narrow framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue. It is time to change this attitude.<sup>3</sup>

Bardaji relates that before he wrote the brochure, he and several FAES staff members traveled to a dozen NATO member states as well as the proposed candidates. They spent four months conducting 240 interviews, both within and outside governments. “The draft document was discussed with experts in Brussels and Washington. Before its publication it was discussed with staff members of Angela Merkel, when she was still opposition leader; with Nicolas Sarkozy, then president of the ruling UMP in France; with Conservatives in Great Britain; and with the then Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi. Aznar has a very close relationship with him. Of course we also discussed it with leaders and staff of our own party in Spain.

“When the report was published, Aznar made two presentations, one in Washington and one in Brussels. He sent the report to all heads of state, foreign ministers, and ambassadors related to this issue. We also sent it to Zapatero. We got no answer from him; he doesn't read English and we did not have a Spanish text then.



“Russian president Putin sent us a relatively positive response. He said we did not understand that his problems in Chechnya also involved Islamists. The reaction of French president Jacques Chirac was not as negative as expected. The British tend always to be very cautious of any change.

“Overall, most people thought it was an excellent report. The problem, however, remains how to make some of the ideas operational and what calendar to apply. In December 2006, the NATO summit will determine the organization’s strategy for the coming fifteen years. So there is still time to discuss the issue with additional decision-makers.”

## Notes

1. José María Aznar, “NATO: An Alliance for Freedom,” *Fundación para el análisis y los Estudios Sociales*, Madrid, 2005.
2. Jose Maria Aznar, “Seven Theses on Today’s Terrorism,” lecture presented at Georgetown University, 21 September 2004, [www.president.georgetown.edu/aznar/inauguraladdress.html](http://www.president.georgetown.edu/aznar/inauguraladdress.html).
3. See note 1

Josef Joffe

## Germany and Israel: Between Obligation, Taboo, and Resentment

“Gerhard Schröder, too young to be part of Nazi Germany, was the first German chancellor who did not seem to labor under the historical cloud that preoccupied all his predecessors from Konrad Adenauer to Helmut Kohl. Its three components were: inherited guilt feelings toward the Jews, a sense of moral obligation toward Israel, and, especially under Adenauer in the early days of the Federal Republic, the sense that it was good *realpolitik* to be on the side of the young Jewish state.”

Josef Joffe is publisher-editor of the German quality weekly *Die Zeit*. He is also adjunct professor of political science at Stanford University, where he teaches U.S. foreign policy and co-teaches a seminar on terrorism. At Stanford, he is Distinguished Visiting Fellow of the Freeman-Spogli Institute for International Studies as well as Abramowitz Fellow of International Relations at the Hoover Institution. These positions combined give him a broad perspective on political issues.

He explains the origins of this *realpolitik*: “The German restitution—known as *Wiedergutmachung*—under Adenauer had a moral as well as realistic impetus. Adenauer, the chancellor of a defeated nation, understood that one victor—the United States—mattered above all in the quest for rehabilitation and sovereignty. To gain American benevolence, he reckoned, it was necessary to pay restitution not only to individual Jews but also to the state of Israel as the heir of the voiceless dead.

“This led to a number of initially secret deals brokered by Nahum Goldman, then president of the World Jewish Congress. Thus a tradition began that continued through the decades, even under

Schröder and his successor Angela Merkel.”

## **No Lip Service**

Joffe remarks that with Schröder there was more than met the eye. “On the one hand, there was a certain reserve toward Israel; in his seven years in office Schröder did not visit the country once. He left that to his foreign minister, Joschka Fischer of the Green Party, who made up for the apparent neglect in spades. Fischer was rhetorically almost Schröder’s polar opposite. He used the most sympathetic language toward Israel of any German foreign minister. Even Klaus Kinkel, who had an Israeli son-in-law, was not so outspoken in his sympathies for Israel.”

For instance, in an interview with Joffe on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of German-Israeli diplomatic relations in 2005, Fischer said:

As somebody who really sees himself as a friend of Israel, I have the impression that many people in Europe, not only in Germany, no longer sufficiently understand why Israel needs a position of military superiority.

This does not come out of militaristic considerations. Since its foundation, the existence of the state of Israel has never been recognized by its neighbors. Israel has been marked by the Shoah and has always had to fight for its existence. That requires military superiority. One says it so easily. Military superiority does not always generate good publicity for a country. This anniversary has also given a chance to explain Israel’s existential problems to a younger generation.

## **Not Guilt, but Responsibility**

Later in the same interview, when asked about the impact of guilt feelings on German policy, Fischer answered:

Not guilt feelings, but a historical, moral responsibility that Germany has for the Shoah. I experienced it again recently during

the opening of the Yad Vashem [museum]. There is one nation about which this museum speaks when it shows the perpetrators, and that is us. When I go there, I find the most abysmal, blackest history of my people. That creates this special situation. Not in the sense of feeling guilt, but historical moral responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

Joffe observes: “When one talked to Fischer about Israel, one was struck by the warm language. His actual foreign policy may not have been as pro-Israeli as his words, but remember that in modern democracies, foreign policy everywhere has flown from the Foreign Office to the chief executive—whether Downing Street or the White House. We might sum up German foreign policy toward Israel in the Social Democratic-Green era (1998-2005) as an interesting mix of aloofness (chancellor) and heartfelt sympathy (Fischer).

“Yet now to the surprise. At the very end of his tenure, practically in the last hours, Schröder signed a deal that will give Israel two state-of-the-art submarines at subsidized interest rates. My considered judgment is that these U-boats will be used to strengthen Israel’s seaborne nuclear deterrent. What is the moral of this story? In the affairs of states, pay less attention to words and more to actions. At the end of the day, the Schröder government gave to Israel what it craved most, and what will strengthen the country’s deterrence posture against a nuclearizing Iran.”

## **Merkel’s Attitude**

“Nonetheless, symbols do matter, and so it was a critical signal of future intent that the new Christian Democrat chancellor, Angela Merkel visited Israel almost immediately—at the end of January 2006—after assuming office.”

When asked whether this new approach had anything to do with Merkel’s East German origin, Joffe answered: “It is fascinating, but not necessarily revealing to speculate about the impact of biography. Also, by the time Merkel entered office, the Wall had been down for sixteen years; so the GDR was a long way off already. At any rate, I find it hard to attribute ‘East-Germanness’ to her. To become chancellor, she had to adapt to West German ways of politics. If you listen to her, her

language and terminology have very little East German about them.

“All politicians must adapt and forget. Merkel had a decent career as a scientist under the East German dictatorship. She was a member of the Free Democratic Youth, the youth organization of the Communist Party. Thereafter she adapted brilliantly to the West German system, which was like emigrating to another planet—except that they spoke her old language in the new world. Otherwise she would not have become chancellor.”

### **A Preponderance of Critique**

What is the country’s attitude toward Israel? Joffe recalls that the pro-Israeli mood during his youth began to turn after the Yom Kippur War. “Today, it would not be unfair to say that the majority of German opinion ranges from critical to resentful. But it is difficult to tell whether this is specifically German or European—or neither, but part and parcel of the postmodern liberal mindset throughout the West.

“Certainly, in the ‘chattering classes’—the media, the academy—the ideological center of gravity is on the Left. But that is true throughout the West, certainly in Western Europe. How does this relate to Israel?

“The new European dispensation is antipower, antiwar, anti-racist—the *prise de conscience*, as the French call it, of ‘Never again!’ It reflects Europe’s horrible past, with a lot more complicity in the Nazi project than some nations—say, Norway and Sweden, who are among the most anti-Israeli in Europe—are willing to own up to. It reflects ancient guilt feelings and the unconscious need to project them onto somebody else. Israel makes such a good candidate because it is (a) the source of these guilt feelings and (b) refuses to behave like Sweden or Switzerland, mainly because it does not live in their neighborhood that looks like a permanently pacified Europe.

“So suddenly, the Israelis are the perpetrators and the Palestinians are the victims. Never mind that Palestinian or Hizballah terror is directed at innocents as a matter of principle. It is very comfortable to point the finger at the Israelis and say: ‘You are no better than our forefathers were, in fact you behave like Nazis. We have learned our lessons, and you have not. So you have no claim to our sympathy, let alone on our conscience.’”

In an essay titled “Nations We Love to Hate,” Joffe wrote:

To regain moral stature, Europeans have turned anti-Fascism into a worldly doctrine of transcendence, into a secular Decalogue that reads: Thou shalt not pray to the discredited gods of nationalism; thou shalt not practice power politics, thou shalt relinquish sovereignty and rejoice in cooperation. From there, it is but a short step to the darker side of redemption. Don't the Israelis—and the Americans—behave in the evil ways we have transcended? Aren't we better than those who are a grating reminder of our unworthy past?<sup>2</sup>

## Israel, the United States, and Europe

Joffe also made a far-reaching forecast in that essay:

Israel will remain a threatened polity, and the United States the world's number 1 power, hence a target of antipathy, for the rest of this century.... Both countries remain targets not only for what they do, but also for what and where they are.... Without extraordinary strength and the willingness to use it, neither will Israel endure as state among those who deny it legitimacy, nor America as “Imperial Republic” (to recall Raymond Aron's term) that wants to remain the world's predominant power while seeking safety in the *juste milieu* of a democratizing world.<sup>3</sup>

In an interview in 2000, Joffe detailed Europe's military dependence on the United States even in the post-Soviet period and explained that this also creates resentment:

A high official in the Pentagon recently told me that every French plane that took off in the post-Yugoslav skies had to be accompanied by four American planes. One to go in front to do the defense suppression, electronic warfare. One on each wing for protection. And one on its tail for damage assessment, which the French apparently have no capabilities for.

So here's the reason why the United States, by dint of its incredible conventional technological superiority—at this point at least—is

forced to carry most of the burden, as it has in Bosnia and Kosovo, and of course in the Gulf War. It's easy for the Europeans to hang back because they know Big Daddy is there, and Big Daddy is incredibly rich and has technological goodies for which we don't have the money. So that too explains why the United States would trigger so many resentments because of its power, [and because it still] remains a much-needed player in these games.<sup>4</sup>

### **Sublimated Anti-Semitism**

“One crucial issue is how anti-Semitism relates to anti-Zionism. Of course, and it is tiresome to repeat it again, there is lots to criticize about Israeli policy. For instance, I would have no problem criticizing the Four Week War against Hizballah in the summer of 2006 on strategic, political, and even moral grounds. Militarily, the IDF fought to a draw only, for the first time in its history. Politically, the war did not weaken Hizballah, Damascus, or Teheran. Morally, it was not exactly a shining moment, given the destruction of civilian infrastructure.

“But in Europe, there was something relentless, obsessive, and merciless about the criticism. For instance, in a poll taken six days into the war (*Der Spiegel*, 24 July 2006), almost two-thirds of the German respondents opined that ‘Israel had no right to eliminate the attacks of the radical-Islamic Hizballah’; only 22 percent conceded that right. Does this mean Israel should return to the classic Jewish role as victim? I hope that these figures don't prove that.

“So the larger question is, over and over: is anti-Israelism sublimated anti-Semitism? Anti-Semitism still carries an enormous taboo, certainly in polite society. To hate Jews is a no-no, but to loathe Israel is apparently not. Has Israel become the über-Jew, a legitimate target, while Jews as such are not? Why do people so strongly condemn Israel but not Arab terrorism? Because Israel is ‘one of us’ and the Arabs are...what?: savages we cannot hold to the same rules?

“All of this is of course subliminal. A nice instance was Norbert Blüm, a former CDU labor minister, who in 2002 accused Israel of ‘a war of *Vernichtung*’ against the Palestinians. Now, *Vernichtungskrieg* (war of extinction) is a term usually applied to the Nazi war of

extermination against the Jews and other 'subhumans' in Eastern Europe. The unconscious equation here was: the Jews are like the Nazis.

"A telling case was the Hohmann affair in 2003. The Christian Democrat parliamentarian Martin Hohmann called the Jews "*Tätervolk*," a nation of perpetrators, by referring to what he termed an inordinate number of Jews in the Bolshevik Revolution, which took the lives of millions. Again, the message read: you are as bad as we were, or worse: you came first on the road to evil. But if you want to play the *pars pro toto* game, why didn't Hohmann say that the Georgians were a nation of perpetrators, even though, from Stalin down, there were a lot more Georgians in top positions of power than Jews (who were murdered, one by one, by Stalin). The CDU did the right thing by expelling Hohmann from the party and parliamentary faction.

"I might add that nobody in his right mind would call the Arabs a terrorist people just because so many of the terrorists are Arabs."

### **Will Jews Ever Be Forgiven for Auschwitz?**

"To an Israeli psychiatrist, Zvi Rex, is ascribed this quip: 'The Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz.' He meant to say that the Germans, and in fact all of Europe, did not want to live under the psychological burden of Auschwitz forever. The Jews and the state of Israel are constant reminders of the moral failure not only of Germany but also of Europe. This leads to the projection of guilt on Israel. Although some criticisms of Israel may be valid, accusations of Nazi behavior have nothing to do with reality and must be seen as exercises in self-rehabilitation.

"It is not the first time in history that the roles of victim and aggressor have been reversed. The more so as the Arab-Islamic side of the struggle is so much larger and more powerful. The Arab-Islamic world could seriously damage Europe if it ever wielded its oil weapon in a sustained manner. It can also inflict terrorism on Europe, and has done so already in Madrid and London, not to speak of many foiled attempts, most recently at the end of July 2006 in Britain. Hence, one might surmise, the reflex that seeks to propitiate, even to appease.

"Muslim terrorism in Europe including the bombings in London



has nothing to do with what happens in the Middle East and whether or not there is peace between Israel and the Arabs. These folks do not bomb for a two-state solution, nor did Al Qaeda lay low the Twin Towers because of Ariel Sharon. Moreover, this European-type terrorism is homegrown, stemming from the encounter of uprooted young Muslims with what they see, or are taught to see, as poisoned and corrupt modernity.

“Farther afield, I would counsel anybody searching for the ‘root causes’ not to look at Israel, though it is a convenient target of limitless hatred, but at Arab-Islamic societies themselves—at myriad dysfunctionalities in their political cultures, starting with domestic oppression and an exploding population of young men without a job and a future. Empowering women might also enhance civilizational restraints. My wife civilizes me all the time, and so do my daughters.

“The resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict will not lead the Saudi government to loosen its grip on Saudi society. It will not reform the Wahhabite self-righteousness it seeks to impose at home and abroad. Israeli policy cannot possibly explain the closed economies of the Arab world, of countries that trade only minimally with one another. That contributes to the lack of development and growth in this part of the world, as do the serious lack of education and the widespread exclusion of women from education and the workplace.”

### **Anti-Semitism in Germany**

“We have talked about anti-Semitism in Germany and Europe, open or sublimated. The most critical thing is that in Germany the taboo against classical anti-Semitism remains exceedingly powerful. Whoever breaches this taboo is dealt with swiftly, and the price is the loss of position and office. One example was Jürgen Möllemann, a key figure in the Free Democratic Party (FDP). After some initial hesitation by the party’s leader, Guido Westerwelle, Möllemann lost his functions and afterward died in a parachute accident, which was probably a suicide.

“Looking back over ten to twenty years, I could not come up with more than ten names of people in positions of influence who acted as Hohmann or Möllemann did. All were quickly ostracized.

“Anti-Semitism in Germany, whatever its strength, is now part of the European mainstream; there is nothing specifically German about the phenomenon. Measured anti-Semitism is low, perhaps 15 percent of the polled population. Ironically, some surveys suggest that anti-Arabism is stronger than anti-Jewish sentiment. Far more people would reject an Arab or an African as a neighbor than a Jew.”

## **A Past That Will Not Pass Away**

“When one analyzes the basic anti-Zionist thrust of European opinion, one is quickly drawn to Europe’s past that will not pass away. Many Europeans, though generations later, may feel a sense of inherited guilt about how their countrymen collaborated in the Holocaust or just stood by. Norway, perhaps the most anti-Israeli country in Western Europe, may have come to terms least with its collaboration. There was a lot more than Quisling. It is also among the fiercest critics of Israel. We might assume a correlation between the two.

“The same goes for Austria, which managed to have itself declared as ‘first victim of fascism.’ I detect little sympathy for Israel in Austria, and some of its foreign ministers have acted as hardliners against Israel in the EU. In jest, one might say that in 1938 when Austria became part of Germany through the Anschluss, it was the Austrians who took over. There was certainly a disproportionate number of Austrians in the top Nazi hierarchy: Hitler, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Adolf Eichmann, and Rudolf Höss, the commander of Auschwitz. The same holds true for membership in the Einsatzgruppen and concentration camp personnel.”

## **Possible Realignment**

“There are some new cards in the ancient Middle East game. In the old days it was just Israelis fighting Arab terrorism. Suddenly, so much of the world is on the target list of Arab-Islamist terrorism. For the Europeans it is no longer so easy to separate between the Israeli and Western dimensions of the conflict, not after 9-11, Madrid 2004, London 2005, and the foiled plots in London and Germany in 2006. So perhaps, there may be a bit more sympathy for the Israeli struggle

against Islamist terrorism. But the opposite may happen just as well, on the basis of the fallacious theory: if it weren't for those damn Israelis, we wouldn't have this problem.

"The second factor that may lead to a realignment is that it is becoming harder to romanticize Palestinian nationalism. How many cafés have to be blown up? How many buses have to be gutted? How many children have to be murdered? Especially now that the Israelis have vacated Gaza, leaving a space behind where the Palestinians could build a protostate that would then segue into a state encompassing the West Bank. Unless you are a Lawrence of Arabia, you are bound to have second thoughts when withdrawal from Gaza leads not to 'nation-building' but to an endless rocket barrage, when southern Lebanon, vacated by Israel in 2000, becomes the springboard for Iranian- and Syrian-equipped Hizballah terrorism."

## Notes

1. "Anwalt Jerusalems," *Die Zeit*, 11 May 2005. [German]
2. Josef Joffe, "Nations We Love to Hate: Israel, America and the New Antisemitism," *Posen Papers in Contemporary Antisemitism*, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2005.
3. Ibid.
4. Harry Kreisler, "Power and Culture in International Affairs: Conversation with Josef Joffe," Institute of International Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 20 January, 23 March 2000.

Anton Pelinka

## Austria's Attitude toward Israel: Following the European Mainstream

“Austria doesn’t play a leading role in the European Union nor, as far as I’m concerned, should it. The country’s overall attitude can be characterized as ‘going with the mainstream and not being conspicuous.’ Before the enlargement of the EU in 2004, Austria was one of its smaller countries. Now it is usually considered a medium-sized one.”

Prof. Anton Pelinka is a leading, internationally known political scientist. He is director of the Institute of Conflict Research at Vienna University and professor of political science at the University of Innsbruck.

“Austria did not treat Israel as a special case when it was established in 1948. It behaved as if its diplomatic relationship with Israel was a normal one, despite its war past. This reflected Austria’s false claim to have been solely a victim in World War II. In this it intentionally acted differently than Germany. When Konrad Adenauer and David Ben-Gurion established their relationship, Austria demonstratively behaved as if this was not its concern.

“Until the 1960s, the two main Austrian parties, the conservative ÖVP (the People’s Party) and the Social Democrat SPÖ, had no interest in systematically confronting the crimes of the National Socialists or the Holocaust. Both parties needed an armistice consisting of ignoring the crimes committed by people in their camp. Each had a voter clientele as well as prominent members who were former Nazis.”

### **The Left-Right Divide**

“Until the Six Day War in 1967, Austrian society’s attitude toward Israel was more or less split along the Left-Right divide. The Austrian Left, which meant the Social Democrats—the Communist Party was

very small—were mostly very pro-Israeli. They had a link to the Israeli Left, especially to Mapai (the Labor Party). The ideological world of the kibbutzim greatly appealed to them. Israel was, to some extent, considered a model of democratic socialism. This changed in 1967. The Palestinians then became the underdog so much loved by the Left.

“The conservatives, until 1967, were strongly influenced by the anti-Semitic tradition of the Austrian Right. This was covered up, however, by Austria’s official diplomatic stance toward Israel.

“From the watershed year 1967 Israel was increasingly seen as the dominant power in the Middle East conflict. Gradually the Right started to view it more positively, while on the Left sympathy diminished. Still, the official attitude was that there were normal relations with Israel. This changed when the Social Democrat Bruno Kreisky became chancellor in 1970.”

### **Kreisky's Role**

“Kreisky invited Yasser Arafat to Vienna to promote the interests of the PLO. It was not an official state visit, but the public could not distinguish between Kreisky in his role as SPÖ chairman and that as head of the Austrian government. He collaborated with Willy Brandt and Olof Palme to make the Socialist International lean toward a more pro-PLO policy, which was also reflected by the Austrian government’s official stance.

“Until Kreisky became Austria’s prime minister, Israel’s Labor Party was a rather normal member of the Socialist International. Thereafter, it always had to defend the Israeli positions.

“In Austria until then, it had been almost unacceptable to be openly critical of Israel. Now began a link between criticizing Israeli policies and using anti-Semitic stereotypes. The concept that ‘the Jews are doing the same to Palestinians as the Nazis did to the Jews’ was often expressed publicly. It was also promoted by the Austrian-Arab Association, which at that time was strongly influenced by then-younger socialists like Karl Blecha.

“Kreisky never used such expressions. Yet much of what he said promoted the idea that the lesson of the Holocaust should be learned

by the victims rather than the perpetrators. When his party colleagues said that Jews behaved like Nazis, or treated the Palestinians as the Nazis did the Jews, the underlying message was that it was not the responsibility of non-Jews to draw conclusions from the Holocaust.

“This anti-Semitic stereotype also attacked the Israeli alliance with the United States. It was portrayed as a partnership of American economic interests and Israeli national ones against the Palestinians, the underdog of the region. Thus for the socialists a convenient anticapitalist motivation also came into the picture.”

### **The Code Words of the Waldheim Affair**

To put this in perspective, Pelinka points out that Austrians have always used the German language very circumspectly. “Austrians frequently use code words. This phenomenon has been described by early twentieth-century authors such as Arthur Schnitzler. His novel *Der Weg ins Freie* (The Road to Freedom) and his play *Professor Bernardi* provide an excellent analysis of turn-of-the-century anti-Semitism in Habsburg Austria.

“The Waldheim affair became a typical example of how code words are used in contexts involving Jews. In 1986 Kurt Waldheim, former UN secretary-general, became the ÖVP’s candidate for the Austrian presidency. During World War II he was a German intelligence officer. When asked, he told the media that he did not know about the Jews’ mass deportation from Salonika, which took place when he was stationed there.

“Waldheim said, for instance, ‘I did my duty in World War II like anybody else.’ This is classic code-word rhetoric. What does it signify when one does one’s duty as an intelligence officer in Salonika in 1943? It means you didn’t intervene when tens of thousands of Jews were transported from the ghetto to Auschwitz. Thereafter, you forget about it. If anyone must have been informed about this deportation it was the intelligence officer in the German garrison.

“In the Waldheim affair yet another code expression was frequently used: ‘We Austrians vote for whom we want to vote for.’ What it meant was: ‘Foreigners, i.e., Jews, should not tell us whom we should elect.’

“Another interesting aspect of the Waldheim affair was the ÖVP’s

defense line. It was well expressed in an open letter by Carl Hödl, deputy mayor of Linz. He used partly anti-Semitic expressions to attack the World Jewish Congress, which was Waldheim's main opponent. Hödl claimed that the Jewish organization's activity might be responsible for a resurrection of Austrian anti-Semitism. In other words, he pretended there was no Austrian anti-Semitism and if it was there, the Jews were to blame."

### **Kreisky Attacks Wiesenthal**

"Earlier Kreisky had made use of coded semantics against Simon Wiesenthal. The latter had strongly criticized the composition of Kreisky's 1970 cabinet, which included four former Nazis—Otto Rösch (interior), Josef Moser (construction), Erwin Frühbauer (transport), and Hans Öllinger (agriculture). When Öllinger resigned, his successor was Oskar Weihs, another former member of the Nazi Party.

"Wiesenthal also attacked Kreisky in 1975 when it seemed that Friedrich Peter, the leader of the FPÖ (Freedom Party), would form a coalition with Kreisky and consequently become a cabinet member. Wiesenthal disclosed that Peter had served in the First SS brigade that had committed major atrocities in the Soviet Union against Jews and others.

"Kreisky reacted very emotionally, believing poorly fabricated rumors about Wiesenthal. He said something like: 'This engineer Wiesenthal has done during the Nazi years things I could tell you about, but I won't.' He implied that he had collaborated with the Gestapo. This was typical Kreisky code wording. His calling the architect Wiesenthal an engineer contained, of course, an element of disdain. In 1986 Kreisky repeated these accusations. Wiesenthal took him to court and in 1989 Kreisky was found guilty of defamation and had to pay a fine.

"The Social Democrat minister and former Nazi, Rösch, said in 1975 during the Wiesenthal crisis that the 'East Coast' was responsible for the negative international response to Kreisky's behavior. This expression is a typical code word for American Jews. The term East Coast would later be used frequently during the Waldheim affair."

## Haider Uses Coding

“Jörg Haider, the extreme right-wing leader of the FPÖ, used this expression many times. For instance when, in the local elections in Vienna in 2001, his campaign to make the FPÖ the largest party there failed. The main SPÖ campaign adviser was an American consultant, Stanley Greenberg. Haider stretched his name to ‘Greeeenberg, who is from the East Coast.’ Everybody understood what he meant to say: ‘He is of course a Jew.’

“Haider also recycled the expression ‘Austria first,’ which had been used in the Waldheim campaign. It means that Austrian patriotism had supplanted traditional pan-German nationalism.”

Pelinka says this code wording became very clear to him during decades of teaching in Germany. “The German use of the language is sharper, more outspoken and provocative. Austrians don’t use this kind of polarizing rhetoric as easily as Germans, which is one among many aspects of misunderstandings between the two nations. They use the same language in different ways.”

## Israel Recalls Its Ambassador

Pelinka mentions that Israel has twice recalled its ambassador from Austria. “The first time was when Waldheim was elected president in 1986. The Western boycott consisted of the United States blacklisting him and none of the other Western states inviting Waldheim for a state visit. Israel, however, played the strongest card, recalling its ambassador from Vienna. It just went one step further than the others, yet remained broadly in line with them.

“The same happened in 2000 when the EU member states downgraded their diplomatic relations with Austria as a protest against Haider’s party becoming part of the government. Israel again went a step further by recalling its ambassador.

“In the current government the BZÖ faction of the right-wing Freedom Party is a coalition partner. The BZÖ has, however, given all foreign policy authority to the larger ÖVP. Both the chancellery and the Foreign Ministry are held by the conservatives.

“Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel has a clear concept. He wants to



fight the negative response by the West and Israel to the inclusion of the Freedom Party in his cabinet. He does so by accelerating the decision on restitution to Holocaust victims. The Freedom Party accepted this policy of the conservatives. This was part of the government's effort to restore normal diplomatic relations with Israel. This policy succeeded when Israel again appointed an ambassador in Vienna."

### **Main Parties' Attitudes toward Israel**

"The ÖVP, now Austria's largest party, seems, on the surface, most friendly to Israel. The opposition SPÖ is divided on the Middle East conflict. The issue is not debated much among party members. Among SPÖ activists there is a strong minority that is pro-Palestinian, anti-American, and very critical of Israel. One of its most prominent members is former foreign minister Erwin Lanc.

"Even more negative toward Israel is Fritz Edlinger, secretary-general of the Austrian-Arab Society. He acts as a lobbyist for Arab interests against the state of Israel in Austria. Another major critic of Israel is Hannes Svoboda, a prominent member of the European Parliament. They are part of a significant minority in the SPÖ.

"Another wing of the party is traditionally more Israel-friendly. It includes activists like the chairman of the Austrian-Israeli Society, Sepp Rieder, who is deputy mayor of Vienna. He follows in the path of what used to be called the right wing of the SPÖ. This can be defined as—if in doubt, be pro-Israeli.

"The party leadership tries to balance these two wings. When SPÖ chairman Alfred Gusenbauer was in Israel in spring 2006, he met both with Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Labor Party leaders. He did not meet with the Hamas leadership."

### **The Right Wing**

"The Freedom Party has split. We do not know what the BZÖ, which has existed only one year, will become. In our analysis it is better to consider the two factions as one party that has split for tactical reasons. Both have strong ties to Arab countries. One party leader in the parliament, Herbert Scheibner, is head of the Austrian-Syrian

Society. Ewald Stadler, a former prominent Freedom Party member, used to be chairman of the Austrian-Iraq Friendship Association until 2003. He is now people's advocate, one of the three ombudsmen elected by the parliament to represent citizens in disputes with the bureaucracy.

"Haider visited Saddam Hussein twice in Baghdad, and Qaddafi many times in Tripoli. The party's prime connections were with the more extreme Arab leaders, not with Egypt and Jordan. They tried to profit from the anti-American mood that is also directed against Israel.

"The Green Party is fairly new and doesn't have former Nazis in its rank and file. Initially it resembled the German Greens and was thus in some respects strongly anti-Israeli. It changed direction since. It has abandoned much of the leftist anti-Zionist rhetoric and become more pragmatic as far as Israel is concerned. Yet it remains to be seen how the Greens will behave if they are ever invited to join a government. So far they have never held responsibility at the federal level."

## Media

"The largest Austrian daily is a yellow paper, *Neue Kronenzeitung*. Hans Dichand, its founder and 50 percent owner, is rather pro-Israeli and this shows itself in the paper. He is over eighty, was a member of the Wehrmacht, and as far as I know has no Nazi past. Dichand is now rich and wants to achieve respectability's final symbol, i.e., to be accepted by the Jews. This seems to drive him. He has never written anti-Semitic articles. One has to understand that in Austria one can be both anti-Nazi and anti-Semitic. In the 1990s one of the paper's columnists, Richard Nimmerrichter, wrote some articles with anti-Semitic undertones under the pen-name Staberl. This no longer happens.

"Among the quality papers, the left-of-center *Standard* has a hybrid position on Israel. The owner and publisher, Oscar Bronner, is Jewish and more or less pro-Israeli. Some of its writers have since the first Gulf War become more and more critical of Israel. This is a byproduct of their criticism of the United States.

"To put this in perspective, though, even the anti-Israeli wing in

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the *Standard* is more moderate than that of the British *Guardian*. They will not write that Israel is an apartheid state. Criticism of Israel in Austria is usually moderate as a result of the country's Nazi past. Unlike the British, Austrians still have to demonstrate that they have nothing against the Jews.

"The other quality paper, the *Presse*, takes a Center-Right stance. Its general tendency is to be more or less pro-American. Concomitantly, it is also more pro-Israeli. Yet other opinions can also be found there. It is owned by Styria, a publishing house in turn owned by the Catholic church. Styria also owns the largest regional paper, *Die Kleine Zeitung*. Out of its profits it finances the *Presse*.

"Another significant paper is the daily *Kurier*. It was established by the American occupation administration in the late 1940s, and later was taken over by Austrians. *Kurier* is in most cases rather pro-Israeli and probably the most friendly to it among the leading Austrian papers.

"Among the weekly journals, *Profil* should be mentioned. Established at the beginning of the Kreisky era, it was and still is very outspoken in all matters of Nazi attitudes and anti-Semitism. *Profil* played a significant role in criticizing Kreisky in 1975, during the Kreisky-Peter-Wiesenthal affair, and again in 1986 when it was a leading force in the anti-Waldheim movement in Austria."

## Regional Papers

"There has been much improvement in the regional press over the past twenty years. That concerns more than the anti-Semitism issue alone. The *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, which has almost a monopoly in the province of Tyrol, a few decades ago published anti-Semitic articles. One of these by a prominent editor made the Jews responsible for all evils.

"They also invented Jews by turning non-Jews into Jews. This is an old pattern of anti-Semites who do not have enough Jews, so they convert them on paper. The *Tiroler Tageszeitung* editor would, for instance, write about the negative role of the Jew Bertold Brecht, who of course was not a Jew. Since a change in ownership such crude anti-Semitism doesn't appear there anymore.

"I know no prominent local paper that is predominantly anti-Israeli.

The most respected regional paper is the *Salzburger Nachrichten*, which is trying to become a national daily. After the war it was strongly in favor of reintegrating former Nazis into Austrian society. Among them several played a role in the paper. Because of a change of generations in the owning family, this is no longer the case.”

## Intellectuals

“Intellectuals have their different environments. On the Left, there is the now almost dominant stream of criticizing neoliberalism. It is strongly flavored by anti-Americanism, which also means being one-sidedly anti-Israeli. It usually tries to distinguish itself from anti-Semitism by saying that it is anti-Zionist.

“One old proponent of this tendency is John Bunzl, a descendant of a well-known Austrian family of industrialists. He doesn’t try to deny his Jewish identity. He is one-sidedly overcritical of Israel. His position is based on that of the Israeli journalist Uri Avneri who claims that Jews must have higher standards than others.

“I would never judge Jews by standards different from other people. This comes from the same mentality that the lessons of the Holocaust have first to be learned by Jews and not by non-Jews. Bunzl will never argue that Israel doesn’t have the right to exist. He will instead say provocative things such as that he is not in favor of Ahmadinejad but one has to understand him in the context of his national history.

“As there are not many experts on the Middle East, Bunzl has become a central figure in Austria in this area. Kreisky very much favored him and put him in the Österreichische Institut für Internationale Politik, an independent research institute where he is till now. One might say he is out-Kreiskying Kreisky. He plays the Kreisky role in academia and says he can speak out more openly because he is a Jew.

“Bunzl is very typical of the leftist attitude that measures Israel with specific criteria none of which are applied to Syria, Egypt, or Saudi Arabia nor ever existed for Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. One also sees examples of such an attitude at the BBC.”

## **Criticism of Israel**

Pelinka has often been criticized in Austria for his positions. Haider has taken him to court. He now sums up his stance on the Middle East by saying the most important issue is to treat Israel as a normal state.

“One can criticize Israel for any specific policy under the condition that it is within a universal standard. That is a basic position of my profession as a political scientist. There can, however, be no specific standard regarding human rights for Israel only. If one criticizes Israel, one also has to face the question, what about human rights violations in Syria? Many people do not want to face this.

“One of my basic arguments in a debate is that I do not know any other Arab city in the world that is as democratic as Nazareth. All Arab cities can learn from it, and that includes Amman and Cairo, let alone Riyadh and Damascus.”

Ayaan Hirsi Ali

## Confronting Israeli Realities with Dutch Ones\*

In the past few years Ayaan Hirsi Ali has become known worldwide. In 2006, *Reader's Digest* gave her the European of the Year award and said she best embodied Europe's contemporary values. Hirsi Ali was born in Somalia in 1969 and granted asylum in the Netherlands in 1992. She left for the United States in spring 2006 after she had to resign from the Dutch parliament because of a minister's ruling that she had never obtained the Dutch nationality.

Under parliamentary pressure, the minister's decision was canceled a few weeks later. Over the past years, however, Hirsi Ali's life had become almost unbearable because of ongoing Muslim threats and their consequences. Her last neighbors obtained a court injunction that she had to relocate because they felt the permanent protection she received affected their privacy.

### **Israel: Solving Immigration Problems**

Part of Hirsi Ali's interest in Israel concerns its approach to solving immigration problems somewhat similar to those with which the Netherlands has such great difficulty. Her adoptive country is perplexed at the trouble it has in integrating numerous non-Western immigrants and their offspring, to a substantial extent of Muslim origin.

She says: "I visited Israel a few years ago, primarily to understand how it dealt so well with so many immigrants from different origins. My main impression was that Israel is a liberal democracy. In the places I visited, including Jerusalem as well as Tel Aviv and its beaches, I saw that men and women are equal. One never knows what happens behind the scenes, but that is how it appears to the visitor. The many women in the army are also very visible.

“I understood that a crucial element of success is the unifying factor among immigrants to Israel. Whether one arrives from Ethiopia or Russia, or one’s grandparents immigrated from Europe, what binds them is being Jewish. Such a bond is lacking in the Netherlands. Our immigrants’ background is diverse and also differs greatly from that of the Netherlands, including religion.”

### **Socialist and Palestinian Corruption**

“I have visited the Palestinian quarters in Jerusalem as well. Their side is dilapidated, for which they blame the Israelis. In private, however, I met a young Palestinian who spoke excellent English. There were no cameras and no notebooks. He said the situation was partly their own fault, with much of the money sent from abroad to build Palestine being stolen by corrupt leaders.

“When I start to speak in the Netherlands about the corruption of the Palestinian Authority and the role of Arafat in the tragedy of Palestine, I do not get a large audience. Often one is talking to a wall. Many people reply that Israel first has to withdraw from the territories, and then all will be well with Palestine.

“Before I joined the VVD liberal party, I was a member of the Labor Party. They have forgotten the positive role they played in the creation of Israel. Their great model thinker is the Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit, who promotes solidarity with those who are weak. In socialist eyes whoever isn’t white or Western is a victim, and this includes Muslims, Palestinians, and immigrants. My position is that I am not a victim. I am responsible for my acts like anybody else and so are all people.”

### **Minority Racism**

“I studied social work for a year in the Netherlands. Our teachers taught us to look with different eyes toward the immigrant and the foreigner. They thought racism was a phenomenon that only appears among whites. My family in Somalia, however, educated me as a racist and told me that we Muslims were very superior to the Christian Kenyans. My mother thinks they are half-monkeys.

“When I started to explain this truth in the class, the teacher responded that it was ‘untrue and impossible.’ I said, ‘Yes, it is true.’ I mentioned that I was living in the center for asylum seekers in the town of Ede and that the Somalis I knew there talked about native Dutchmen as uncircumcised, irreligious, and dirty.

“When a Somali man in the Netherlands sees his sister with a Dutch friend, that is what he thinks and he usually becomes very angry. Such attitudes may spill over to behavior. There was a case in the Netherlands, for instance, where an Iraqi man killed his sister because she bore a child from a native Dutchman. That is extreme nonwhite racism, even if it is called honor-related violence. After my initiative in the Dutch parliament, a pilot investigation was carried out that found there had been eleven honor-related murders in the Netherlands over an eight-month period.”

### **Dutch Double Standards**

“There are many other cases of minority racism. For instance, a nephew and a niece may have to get married because the family wants to keep its blood pure. Marrying someone from another race, of course, is completely out of the question. If, however, a native Dutch woman says, ‘I’m not interested in a Moroccan man,’ then it makes all the headlines. The Dutch think this manifests the decline of their society.

“If a Dutchman says he doesn’t want a Moroccan or a Turk as a neighbor, he is a racist. If a Moroccan says, ‘I want to live next to other Moroccans,’ that is viewed as a sign of group attachment, because he has been isolated by immigrating. So that is not considered racism. If a right-wing skinhead draws swastikas on a Jewish cemetery, that is Nazism and he will be punished. If a Moroccan immigrant does the same, it is an expression of his displeasure with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“A few years ago on 4 May when the Netherlands commemorated its World War II dead with two minutes of silence, Moroccan youngsters made a lot of noise in one Amsterdam location and played football with the memorial wreaths in another. Although there were angry reactions, even this was explained as a protest against the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.



“Defining an individual as an eternal victim is a fundamental mistake. Colored people, Muslims, and other non-Western immigrants are not victims. They are individuals, like me, who have come to the Netherlands in search of a better life. It is my responsibility to improve my life, and I am not asking the authorities to do it for me. I request only to live in an environment of peace and security. The socialist worldview is different. Those who are not white and Christian, and do not share the ideas of Christian civilization, are victims by definition.

“Paradoxically enough, that attitude derives partly from the Holocaust, which created major guilt feelings in the Netherlands. Some people think the behavior of their countrymen toward the Jews during the war is something that should never be repeated. Thus they compensate by letting Muslims beat their wives and a few others beat up homosexuals or prepare to plant bombs. Such an attitude reflects mental illness.”

### **Double Moral Standards toward Israel**

“The crisis of Dutch socialism can be sized up in its attitudes toward both Islam and Israel. It holds Israel to exceptionally high moral standards. The Israelis, however, will always do well, because they themselves set high standards for their actions.

“The standards for judging the Palestinians, however, are very low. Most outsiders remain silent on all the problems in their territories. That helps the Palestinians become even more corrupt than they already are. Those who live in the territories are not allowed to say anything about this, because they risk being murdered by their own people.”

When asked whether the moral standards to which many Dutch hold Israel are often also far higher than those they apply to the Netherlands, Hirsi Ali replies: “The VVD and parts of the CDA Christian Democrats do not apply double standards to Israel, nor do the smaller Christian parties. Many other politicians do, however.

“This also has to be seen in a wider context. Not only the Netherlands, but many other European countries have changed their minds after more than fifty years of commemorations of the Holocaust. They are happy to free themselves of its history and of Israel’s history.

Thus they apply these very unequal criteria. They also think they are entitled to have their double standards, whereas the Israelis are not.”

## **Israel's Security Needs**

Hirsi Ali fully understands Israel's security needs. Her own history makes her very sensitive to them. She is no stranger to threats by other Muslims. In November 2004, Theo van Gogh made the movie *Submission* on extreme discrimination against women by Muslims, based on Hirsi Ali's script. Soon after he was cruelly murdered by the radical Muslim Mohammed Bouyeri. The latter left a knife in his body to which a letter was attached that threatened several Dutch politicians with murder, of which Hirsi Ali was one.

She had already received many threats before that. This time Hirsi Ali had to leave her home and live for weeks in a Dutch army camp. Part of the time the Dutch sent her to the United States because they could not protect her in the Netherlands. She could not do her parliamentary work during that period. The same was the case for the Dutch conservative politician Geert Wilders.

Her preoccupation with security is felt throughout our conversation. Before she arrives in the hotel where we meet, one of her state-provided guards tells me she can only sit at one specific table in the lobby. Elsewhere she may be shot at through the windows. When she arrives surrounded by tall bodyguards, two young Danish men in the room come over to express their admiration for her.

When we start to talk, she is worried about somebody who remains seated too close to us for her taste. I explain that he is probably a foreigner who has no idea who she is. Finally the hotel manager, who is very honored by her visit, suggests that we continue our conversation in his office.

## **Who Is Responsible?**

The conversation moves to who is responsible for the Middle East conflict. Hirsi Ali says: “It is hard to believe that there are Dutch people who say that if Israel would follow another foreign policy and withdraw from the territories, the problem would disappear entirely.

This attitude is infantile and utopian wishful thinking, but one cannot get it out of their heads.

“Still I do try sometimes. For instance, I refer to the behavior of Arab countries that have no direct interaction with Israel. Their oil reserves have made them extremely rich, yet they remain very fundamentalist, hate the West, and want to destroy it. This Wahhabi thinking is promoted by the Saudis and not the Palestinians. To think that if Israel leaves the occupied territories, Saudi Arabia will suddenly propagate another religion is both too infantile for words and opportunistic.

“To counteract such attitudes, Israel first of all has to stand firm. A state’s prime responsibility is to guarantee the security of its citizens. If Israel doesn’t do that, its society is in danger. When I visited Israel, I found much firmness there. One such person I talked to there was Natan Sharansky, whom I have also met in the Netherlands.”

## **Israeli and Dutch Fundamentalism**

Not all of Hirsi Ali’s reactions to what she saw in Israel were positive. “From my superficial impression, the country also has a problem with fundamentalists. The ultra-Orthodox will cause a demographic problem because these fanatics have more children than the secular and the regular Orthodox.

“Knowledge and realism are the basis for the well-being of a small country. Those who want to exclude their children from this so as to promote a certain type of religion are a danger for any state. Such an attitude also exists among nonfundamentalists in Dutch society. There are many who close their eyes to realities. All they want is entertainment; they do not want to read anything or find out anything more. People like that no longer understand what danger is.

“However, if there are bomb attacks in the Netherlands like those in London in July 2005, utopian socialism will increasingly give way to realism. The utopists, once Muslims throw a bomb at their house, will lose much of their leftist ideology and become more realistic human beings. There is already such a trend in the Netherlands. When the immigrants arrived, many of them refused to integrate. At that time the authorities refused to listen to the complaints of native Dutchmen.

“Thus more and more people left the big cities for the suburbs or the countryside. There is also some emigration from the Netherlands for a variety of reasons. Farmers have gone abroad and been successful. This will influence others who will want to do the same.

“On the other hand, some groups of native Dutch have begun to defend themselves through violence. Increasingly people want to join new political parties that make security and the fight against terrorism a central plank. The existing parties and the Dutch government will have to deal with developments more realistically. If they run away from their responsibility there will be small, or even large, explosions of violence.”

### **A False Image of Tolerance**

“Those who propagate the image of the Netherlands as a tolerant country talk nonsense. There is a huge difference between being tolerant and tolerating intolerance. Many Dutchmen think they are very tolerant if they let others do whatever they want so long as it doesn't threaten their own personal freedom.

“A few centuries ago, they did not have that attitude. They did not tolerate the Dutch Catholic church because it was an intolerant religion. The Catholics then adapted themselves. Many Dutch baby-boomers in power nowadays, however, think that if you tolerate the actions of those who break the law that is a sign of great tolerance.”

One of the many occasions when Hirsi Ali received much publicity in the Netherlands was in March 2004. She wrote an open letter to Amsterdam socialist mayor Job Cohen, telling him he was a nice and involved person but was radically wrong in his understanding and approach to the Muslim issue in the Netherlands.

### **Criticizing the Mayor of Amsterdam**

Some of her observations in that letter were:

A consensus policy works only if all parties concerned agree to a pragmatic approach.... In what society do you want Muslims to integrate? In a secular individualistic society? In a democratic

society where the law rules that has been created by human beings and not by God? In a society where parents try to educate their children—boys and girls—to become independent individuals, who after they are eighteen act as responsible citizens?

She added:

The adherents of Islam have diametrically opposed ideas to this.... True Muslims see secular countries as sinner states, which regretfully are in power today. The head of the mosque...sees in you the confirmation that the secular power-holder is a sinner.... In your conversations with them they [only] tell you what you so much want to hear.

She also referred to Cohen's Jewishness:

The spirit of profound anti-Semitism that dominates the Muslims sees in you not a nice mayor of Amsterdam, who has the best intentions toward his citizens and wants to keep society together. They see a shrewd Jewish manager who wants to manipulate the world according to his will.

### **A Jew Remains a Jew**

In our conversation Hirsi Ali also adds that Cohen has for some time been in need of bodyguards. "One would think that radical Muslims would be smart and not threaten somebody who gives them all they want. He provides their children with the possibility for segregated swimming and subsidies for segregated schools. He supports additional mosques. But some Muslims threaten him to make him understand that whatever the Jew does to please them, he always remains a Jew. For the head of the Amsterdam mosques, the mayor is the Jew Cohen."

Hirsi Ali sees Cohen as a central figure in the mistaken approach toward Amsterdam's problems with minorities. "He is indeed a sweet, cultured man, full of good intentions. He is also lonely and thus a true victim for whom I have a lot of sympathy. The more he does for the Muslims, the more he is criticized by them. He also gets a lot of criticism from the Jewish community because of the anti-Semitism in

Amsterdam, while many native Dutchmen say: 'We don't feel secure. You, Mr. Mayor, speak all the time about keeping things together, but the city has already for a long time not been kept together.' The task of a mayor is to see to it that living in his city is safe. His approach of, 'I give a lecture here, I give a lecture there' is of no interest in this context.

"Cohen finds the way I talk about Islam and Muslims harmful. He says it sets people against each other. I, however, tell the truth. If a homosexual is beaten up in Amsterdam by Muslim youngsters out of their religious convictions, it is my duty as a parliamentarian to make that known. It is his duty as a mayor to see that these Moroccan youngsters are treated severely. One shouldn't tell pathetic stories about the difficult youth they may have had because that is irrelevant. They are criminals.

"As a nonnative Dutchman, I am always welcome as long as I agree with everybody. I am supposed to be extremely grateful if I am defined as a victim. If I have a dissenting opinion, I am 'the other, the non-Dutch' for the socialist. They tell me that I have just arrived. Cohen, when he talks to me or to Afshin Ellian, an Iranian refugee who is both a Leiden University law professor and a poet, always refers to our background. When we disagree he says: 'Yes, I can imagine that. You people have had such bad experiences in your home countries.'

"If I were the mayor of Amsterdam, I would follow Giuliani's approach in New York, which worked. The Dutch national authorities have reached a state of mind where they would probably be willing to pay for such methods. Giuliani was called intolerant and a racist. Black Americans demonstrated against him, but New York in his time was safer than Amsterdam is today."

Hirsi Ali says that what is true for Amsterdam also applies elsewhere in the country. "The Netherlands is only theoretically a state of law. Its legal reality is confronted by a major challenge. Only a small number of criminals are identified, of which only a limited number are sentenced."

## **Islam Stopped Thinking a Thousand Years Ago**

Hirsi Ali's criticism of Islam is more general. "Almost nobody in the West wants to understand that Islam's problems are structural. Contemporary Islam hardly exists. Islam stopped thinking in the year 900 and has stood still for more than a thousand years. Western Muslims, however, live in an environment where you can think independently without your head being chopped off by somebody.

"If one wants to meet contemporary Muslims, one has to go to the Ahmadiyya movement. The Muslim mainstream, however, considers them heretics. I have been educated as a Muslim, I want to change some of Islam's tenets. This makes me a heretic and thus radicals want to eliminate me."

Hirsi Ali explains why she is a danger to radical Muslims. "They realize that I know too much about Islam. I am also a woman. If a woman no longer believes, she frees herself. They are deathly afraid that if one drops out, others may follow; that is how herds function."

## **Inducing Muslims to Come out of the Closet**

"The Western world is desperately in need of Muslims who use their freedom of thought and opinion. There are many Muslims who think like me. They contact me and when I appeal to them to come out of the closet, they say, 'It is easy for you to talk. You have all these bodyguards, which I do not have. I must think about my family.' It is crucial for the United States, Europe, and Israel to see to it that these people get adequate protection.

"Dissident Muslims in the Netherlands see how I and a few other dissidents have been threatened with murder. They do not go to the prime minister to complain about their situation, instead remaining silent. When Van Gogh was murdered, the Dutch queen and the prime minister went to mosques instead of visiting the family of Van Gogh, who was the true victim.

"The Muslims' leaders had wept to the authorities: 'We are such poor, pitiful, and threatened people now that Bouyeri has murdered Van Gogh.' This appeals to Dutch compassion. Add to this that the Labor Party in particular, but also Christian Democrats, want to

get Muslim votes, and one gets an idea of the functioning of the Netherlands today.

“The problem exists throughout the West. As long as there is no protection for those who want to change Islam, there will not be a contemporary Islam. It is my intention to start a fund and raise money so that dissident Muslims can be protected. It would have to be managed by others. That is my greatest dream.”

I ask Hirsi Ali what Muslims would do if there were a murderous attack in Amsterdam like the one in London. She replies: “The local authorities will go to the various Muslim organizations and say: ‘Please organize a demonstration to condemn it.’ Such an initiative would not come from Muslims themselves. It would be a totally artificial exercise.”

In June 2006, related to the parliamentary debate on the restoration of Hirsi Ali’s Dutch citizenship, the Dutch cabinet fell. She followed this from the United States, where she had started a new life. The fall of a government over the issue of a single person’s passport represented yet another Dutch absurdity. Another way of looking at this event is that for the first time, a European cabinet fell on an issue concerning migration. It is unlikely to be the last time. Also in that sense, Hirsi Ali has made European history.

## Notes

- \* This interview is part of a JPCA research project on Dutch attitudes toward Jews and Israel, sponsored by the Israel Maror Foundation.



Zvi Mazel

## Anti-Israelism and Anti-Semitism in Sweden

“Sweden claims to be a superdemocracy, an example of enlightenment and openness. People with such pretensions should be a little more knowledgeable about Israel, another democracy after all. And yet the average Swedish citizen does not know more than what the country’s shallow media tells him. This is often anti-Israeli, and the public is influenced by it.”

Zvi Mazel was the Israeli ambassador to Sweden from December 2002 to April 2004. “Before, I had been for five years ambassador to Egypt, where massive hatred of Israel was promoted on a daily basis. We were regularly accused of all that was wrong everywhere in the world. I did not expect to find a somewhat similar atmosphere in a democratic country such as Sweden.”

During his stay in Stockholm, Mazel developed a critical view of Sweden. Among large parts of the society’s elite he encountered a discriminatory attitude and hostility to Israel as well as pseudomorality and arrogance. Sweden’s apparent tolerance for rabid anti-Semitism has reinforced his opinion of the country’s ruling classes.

### **Often Hostile Media**

“The Swedish media have hardly any investigative function. In that regard their performance compared to the Israeli media is very poor. Issues, including domestic ones, rapidly arise and disappear. The Swedish media’s frequent hostility to Israel can partly be explained by the disproportionately large number of journalists who belong or are supporters of the Green and Left parties or the ruling Social Democrats. Jan Guillou, a man who praised Saddam Hussein in his articles and who holds extreme anti-Israeli views, was elected

chairman of the Journalists Association—a body that seldom openly criticizes the government.

“A notable exception occurred when Sweden’s king, Carl XVI Gustaf, visited Brunei. The king, under Swedish law a figurehead, told his entourage that he considered the Sultan of Brunei an open-minded person who looked after his people. These words led to strong media reactions. How did Sweden’s king dare to say this about a ‘terrible dictator’?”

“The debate on this trivial matter raged for days. The media would never dare to behave similarly against the powerful ruling Social Democrats. They did not have the courage to do so when politicians of the left-wing parties stepped over the line, including financial abuses.”

## **Media Policies**

“There is much that is aberrant in the Swedish media world. One day all foreign ambassadors were invited to a meeting by government communication representatives. Some eighty to ninety ambassadors showed up. The head of the state television news department told us, with great arrogance, that they did not interview diplomats. This was not of interest, she said, because diplomats could only express their government’s official policy.

“She added that diplomatic representations should not contact the state media for coverage of specific events or countries’ independence days. African ambassadors were furious. They have little occasion besides their independence days to draw any attention to their country.

“She furthermore said there were only three international issues of interest for the television: the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iraq situation in connection to the United States, and relations with neighboring Scandinavian countries. For a democratic country this is an unheard-of attitude and also a sign of how narrow-minded it is.

“She emphasized that the Swedish media are free to publish what they want: ‘If they have written against your country, you have no right of reply.’ As for the ombudsman, he receives hundreds of complaints per year about the media. He told us that he only takes

action on about fifteen cases, ordering that a response should be published. He observed that this was a lengthy procedure.” Mazel remarks that in many other democratic countries there is a right of reply.

## **The Swedish Dailies**

Mazel observes: “Among the Swedish dailies, the biggest, *Aftonbladet*, is the most anti-Israeli. Its editor in chief, Helle Klein, is a descendant of a well-known rabbi but she can find nothing good in Israel and her paper attacks us regularly. During the worst Arab terrorist acts of the intifada, the paper still said Israel was an oppressive colonialist state that behaved entirely unjustly.

“*Dagens Nyheter*, the more intellectual daily, is also consistently anti-Israeli. It published the worst anti-Semitic article I ever read in a Swedish paper. It was titled ‘It Is Permitted to Hate Jews.’ The author, Jan Samuelson, who presented himself as an Islam expert, wrote that as long as Israel occupies territories, the Muslim hatred against all Jews is justified. This view entails that any Muslim is entitled to hate a newborn Jewish child anywhere in the world. He did not refer to the genocidal hatred of Jews that existed among Muslims long before the Six Day War.

“*Svenska Dagbladet*, the other quality newspaper, is also critical of Israel but not as much as the other two. A fourth daily, *Expressen*, rather a tabloid paper, is usually more balanced. Yet during my stay in Sweden they let an imam of the Stockholm Great Mosque publish a weekly column on Friday. Its text was very different from the violent sermons of the imams in the same mosque.”

## **Preaching Hate in the Mosque**

“From friends I used to receive Hamas anti-Semitic material, which is regularly distributed in Stockholm’s Great Mosque. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qardawi, an Egyptian Muslim hate-preacher based in Qatar and considered the main theologian of the Muslim Brotherhood, spoke there in 2004. His speech was tantamount to calling for the murder of Israelis. I had complained to the Swedish government even before he

came, asking why they let such a well-known hatemonger speak there. I did not even get a reply.

“On this matter the Swedish media initially remained silent. After extracts of Qardawi’s talks were published, I wrote to many people in Sweden and distributed his texts. It took some time until one of the leading members of the Liberal Party’s young guard wrote an article against the hate preacher. That finally led to some discussion in the Swedish press.”

## **The Social Democrats**

Mazel mentions that the Social Democratic Party has been ruling the country since 1932 except for two short interludes. “Since Olof Palme became the Social Democratic leader in 1969 the party has been following an anti-Israeli line, which continues till today.” At present the Social Democrats, who lead a minority government, have 144 seats out of 349 in the Riksdag (parliament) and are in an open coalition with the two extreme-Left political parties—the ex-communist Left Party and the Greens, both having a strong anti-Israeli bias. The diplomatic personnel they send to the Swedish representation at the United Nations continue to take anti-Israeli stances and play an important role in encouraging anti-Israeli voting.

“However, one must say that Prime Minister Goran Persson gained much positive publicity when he organized a major international conference on Holocaust education—the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in January 2000.

“In anticipation of this conference, which was very successful, he had set up a research institute called Living History whose task was and still is to investigate the various aspects of the Holocaust, and which published a book on the Shoah. This excellent work has been translated into many languages and became a textbook for high schools. One of the results of the conference was the formation of a task force of teachers from various countries that would be sent to Yad Vashem for training in Holocaust education.

“In the following years Persson strayed from the centrality of the Holocaust in various other directions. We had major discussions with Swedish diplomats to keep the 2004 conference on Preventing

Genocide from becoming highly politicized, focused on contemporary issues, and anti-Israeli.

“Persson’s speech at that conference was rather ambivalent. He avoided mentioning the word Islam and did not say a thing about the murderous inclinations and violence of its radical currents. Holocaust Memorial Day, 27 January, fell in the middle of the conference. Persson came to the Great Synagogue in Stockholm and spoke there as he does every year.

“I had been told that in previous years he had made very good speeches. But the one in 2004 was much less so. He hardly mentioned the Holocaust and the Jews. All was very neutral. From the newspapers I learned that on the morning of that same Holocaust Memorial Day, he had gone to visit the Great Mosque. He wanted the media to report the next day on how balanced he was.”

## **The Rise of Swedish Neo-Nazis**

“I wondered why Persson had initiated the research into the Holocaust. His main reason seems to have been his worry about the rise of neo-Nazi groups. During World War II there were strong Nazi sympathies in Sweden. Hundreds of Swedes volunteered for the Nazi army in Germany.

“After the war these sympathies did not vanish but were less out in the open. Since the 1960s, Swedish pro-Nazi movements have been on the rise and increasingly problematic. Persson was looking for a way to counter their activities. Someone suggested to him to focus on the Holocaust and arrange a major international conference. He also was advised that this would give him international stature.

“Despite all Persson’s efforts the neo-Nazis continue with their gatherings and activities. Rumors are that their number is increasing. There are laws against Nazi incitement and if done openly one can be brought to court. Yet from time to time neo-Nazis demonstrate in the streets of Stockholm and Malmö. On Holocaust Memorial Day in 2003, neo-Nazis demonstrated close to the Stockholm synagogue where the remembrance ceremony was held. The police did not prevent that, of course.

“To the best of my knowledge Persson has never made any strong

anti-Israeli statements. Sometimes the media asked him whether he was pro-Israeli; he never answered clearly. The late foreign minister Anna Lindh usually made the most vicious attacks on Israel. Her hatred of Israel can only be described as almost pathological. Under her leadership Sweden published the greatest number of one-sided condemnations of Israel of any EU country. Whenever the IDF reacted to a suicide bombing she issued a 'balanced statement' that condemned both sides. Lindh was stabbed to death in 2003 by a mentally disturbed Swede of Serbian origin.

"The head of the young Social Democrats is of Iranian descent. After he was elected he told the media that the first thing he would do was to urge Persson to take a more anti-Israeli position. There are about half a million Muslims in Sweden, representing 5 percent of the population. They come from a great variety of countries. Sweden remains the most anti-Israeli country in the European Union and also the most pro-Muslim one.

"Despite Persson's personal attitude he has to carry part of the blame for his party's discriminatory stance toward Israel. For decades the Social Democrats helped create the country's anti-Israeli atmosphere. He also has to take responsibility for the behavior of the Swedish International Development Corporation Agency (SIDA), which blames Israel for all the many wrongs in Palestinian society."<sup>1</sup>

## **The Mohammed Cartoons**

Mazel says: "One proof of the Social Democrats' pro-Muslim attitude came in February 2006 during the international debate on the Mohammed cartoons. No Swedish paper published these, yet the website of a small extreme-Right party, SD-Kuriren, did. The Foreign Ministry gave instructions to the Internet provider to close the site. The government had never before closed any media since the law on press freedom of 1789.

"For a few days the Swedish media wondered how this had been possible. Foreign Minister Laila Freivalds said her ministry had intervened without her knowledge. She had to resign when the media discovered proof of her involvement.

"As the caricatures were already on the Internet, even though

hardly anyone had seen them, Sweden sent two Muslim envoys to Muslim countries in order to apologize. Sweden led Europe in this new state of servitude.

“One might say that Social Democratic Sweden is the first European dhimmi state. In Islam those who belong to other monotheistic religions, such as Christians and Jews, are protected by Islam. Yet it is stressed that they are dhimmis, inferior people. As second-class citizens they are often treated poorly, as is true today in many Muslim countries. In some periods they had to pay special taxes, what we would today call protection money. In old times they could not walk on the sidewalk nor ride a donkey, let alone a horse.”

### **Cowardly Media**

“To be fair it must be pointed out that the Swedish media are not alone in being cowards. If the European media had more courage, they would constantly expose Muslim violence all over the world. The perpetrators draw motivation directly from Muslim culture. The ongoing mass murders in Iraq demonstrate how widespread violence can be in contemporary Muslim societies. If the European press were really as enlightened as it pretends to be, its editorials would continuously castigate this culture of violence.

“At the beginning of 2006, the Swedish pro-Palestinian organizations held their annual meeting and discussed how to develop their strategy toward Israel. Freivalds spoke at this hate gathering, and was criticized by the press for one day.

“When Freivalds became foreign minister she surprisingly said: ‘I am a friend of Israel, though I am also a friend of Palestinians.’ For being a friend of Israel she was strongly attacked by many Social Democrats. It took her only a few weeks to adopt the party line and imitate Lindh’s statements.

“Israel has very few friends in the Social Democratic Party. The meetings I had with the head of the parliament’s foreign affairs committee and with the international secretary of the Social Democrats always entailed accusations from their side.

“Among Foreign Ministry officials one finds outspoken Israel-haters. Some accused us of colonialism and oppression in my

conversations with them. They said that they support Israel's existence but oppose our behavior. It was clear that they were pro-Muslim. Several said that the average Swede is an anti-Muslim racist and that it was their task to take the Muslims' side. After Hamas won the Palestinian Authority elections at the beginning of 2006, Sweden gave visas to their representatives. Government officials did not meet with them, but some parliamentarians did."

## **Other Parties**

"Among the opposition parties the Conservatives, Liberals, and Christian Democrats support Israel. Together they have 136 seats. The Center Party is more reserved. Sometimes these parties even collaborated to come out in favor of us. Being the opposition, though, their influence is limited.

"In the Left Party with thirty seats and the Green Party with seventeen there is a universal anti-Israeli attitude. When there is a debate on the Middle East they express an abysmal hatred, which one also finds in their papers. One Green parliamentarian came to Israel together with people from the International Solidarity Movement. He threw stones at the security fence together with Palestinians and was finally evicted from Israel. Initially the Swedish media criticized Israel but later they were more understanding.

"Despite all this I tried to meet the leaders of these parties. My secretary's calls were never returned. There are also a number of extreme-Left extraparliamentary groups. Although not so strong numerically, the extreme Left is very active.

"Many NGOs collaborate with the extreme Left and march with the pro-Palestinians. They would regularly organize demonstrations in front of the Israeli embassy. They would even throw excrement at the building. In Sweden that is apparently permissible. The police let them advance almost to the wall of the embassy.

"This is the common police attitude. In March 2004, I attended a gala evening of the Keren Hayesod that opened the fundraising season. It was held in Nalen Hall, one of the nicer ones in town. Suddenly the security officer of the Israeli embassy entered. Hundreds of protesters, Muslims and extreme leftists, were demonstrating



outside and trying to break into the hall and the police did not seem able to block them.

“I told him that I could not leave the audience alone, most of which were non-Jewish friends of Israel. It also seemed to me that the police would not let matters get totally out of hand. Later the public was made to leave through a side door. The following year the owners of the hall refused to rent it again to Keren Hayesod. The violence had intimidated them.”

## **The Lutheran Church**

“For about a decade the Lutheran church has no longer been the state church. Its head, Archbishop Hammar, is a well-known Israel-hater. I had barely arrived as ambassador when I learned from the papers that he had gathered seventy Swedish intellectuals to sign a petition to boycott Israeli goods, particularly those that come from the territories. They also wanted to suspend the EU’s association agreement with Israel. Even Anna Lindh was not ready to go that far and did not want to boycott Israel.

“Among the signatories was the Swedish ambassador to Germany. A diplomat is an official of his country, whose policy he has to represent. The Jewish community protested against the boycott effort and a media debate resulted. Lindh later said she had told the ambassador her opinion. When asked what she had said she refused to tell. The ambassador stayed in his post.

“The Lutheran church also has a theological institute in Jerusalem that is led by a pro-Palestinian director. When a delegation of all parliamentary parties came to Israel earlier in 2006, I was invited to address them. It turned out the director had arranged matters so that, besides me, they would only meet with Palestinians and extreme-Left Israeli organizations. They visited Ramallah but not Tel Aviv.

“A recent study by a researcher at Lund University notes that from 1937, well before World War II, Swedish Lutheran pastors would not perform marriages between Germans of Aryan blood and anyone with a Jewish grandparent. This racist position was adopted on the advice of the Swedish Foreign Ministry.”<sup>2</sup>

## **Wrecking a Work of Art**

Often people do many things in their life but become famous only for one minor act. On 16 January 2004, Mazel became internationally known by disconnecting the electricity of what was supposedly a work of art. Exhibited in a Stockholm museum, it glorified Palestinian suicide bombings. The artist was an Israeli living in Sweden who belonged to an extreme-Left party.

Mazel comments: “This exhibit was the culmination of dozens of anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish events in Sweden. When you do not protest, the situation gets worse and worse. It had to be stopped even if in an unconventional way for a diplomat. Afterward I got a phone call from Prime Minister Sharon that expressed the support of the Israeli cabinet.

“The reactions in the Swedish press did not surprise me: the great majority of the editorials condemned my act. Some support came from letters to the editor. What is important to note is the readers’ reactions: in the informal Internet polls by the three leading papers they were more or less balanced for and against my act. In two of the dailies I even had a slight majority.

“Before my intervention at the museum it was almost taboo in the Swedish press to speak about anti-Semitism even though it is widespread. In the last two years it has become a subject for the newspapers. There is, though, great fear of mentioning that it has a substantial Muslim component.”

## **Calling to Kill Jews Is Permitted**

“In the 1980s a Swedish Muslim, Ahmed Rami, opened Radio Islam where he virulently attacked Jews, Israel, and its supporters. It took years of complaints until the authorities closed his station. Thereafter he opened a website where he does the same.

“The situation with respect to anti-Semitism in Sweden got even worse at the beginning of 2006. Goran Lambertz, the chancellor of justice—the government’s counselor on legal matters—discontinued an investigation of the Grand Mosque of Sweden. Cassettes sold there had a highly anti-Semitic content, calling for jihad and the killing of

Jews. The chancellor said these were part of the everyday occurrences in the conflict in the Middle East.

“If one chooses the right context one can now call for the mass murder of Jews without any consequences. That is Swedish democracy, which also considers itself entitled to teach Israel morality.

“A major survey in 2005 revealed the widespread anti-Semitism in Sweden. Out of a sample of three thousand Swedes aged sixteen to seventy-five, 41 percent declared themselves anti-Semites, 5 percent strongly so. Twenty-five percent did not consider a Jewish prime minister in Sweden acceptable, 26 percent believed Israel dealt with the Palestinians similarly to how the Nazis dealt with the Jews, and 26 percent thought the Israelis operated according to the biblical concept of an eye for eye.”

## Notes

1. NGO Monitor, “Analysis of NGO Funding: The Swedish International Development Corporation Agency (SIDA),” 16 February 2006.
2. “Sweden Applied Nazi Race Laws in Wartime, Study Shows,” *Haaretz*, 6 April 2006.

Rory Miller

## Irish Attitudes toward Israel

“If one were to throw a sack of flour over the Irish parliament, it is unlikely that anybody pro-Israeli would get white. Among the 166 members of the Dáil—the Irish parliament’s lower house—and the sixty members of the Senate, not one name springs to mind as a regular defender of Israel. There are either those who do not care or pro-Palestinians.”

Rory Miller, Irish-born, is a lecturer in Mediterranean studies at King’s College, University of London. In 2005 he published a book titled *Ireland and the Palestine Question, 1948-2004*.

He adds that one has to put this observation in perspective. “Only a handful of parliamentarians would stand up for the United States. These are all government supporters, mainly from the conservative Progressive Democrats.

“If they do so it is mainly out of economic interest. I could not name seven or eight Irish politicians who would publicly say they are supportive of the war in Iraq. At most they would admit that they are not against it, as Ireland has so much involvement with the United States both on economic matters and in the Northern Ireland peace process.”

### **Bilateral Economic Relations**

Miller explains: “In Irish politics sympathies are very much with the Palestinians. The negative attitude toward Israel is in line with that of the European Union and its belief that Israel was in the wrong when the Second Intifada broke out. Yet Irish politicians are pragmatic. Many believe that Israel has much to offer their country in the economic field and thus think Ireland should not burn its bridges with it. Moreover, Irish politicians would not be willing to break ranks with the EU and adopt a tougher position on Israel than its European partners.

“The trade volume between Ireland and Israel is \$700 million a year. Exports and imports are about equal. Ireland is a good case study to prove that no matter how bad political relations are these do not necessarily impact negatively on bilateral economic relations. It is also a good case study to demonstrate that however good economic relations are, these do not improve the political relationship.

“Irish ministers say it is important for Ireland to develop a relationship with Israel in the hi-tech field. The same people will stand up in parliament and say that Israel needs to make concessions, and that the problems in the Middle East are its fault.

“Israeli governments, for decades, have wanted to separate the economic from the political sphere, and have often been successful. Now that the two are separate, this also means that economic developments have no political influence. The EU’s multibillion-dollar trade surplus with Israel has not reduced its political animosity.”

## **An Artificial Economy**

“Ireland has been very successful in attracting overseas investment over the past decade, mainly from the United States. There have been years that it exceeded the U.S. investment in China. Ireland, however, has been unable to create its own entrepreneurs. Neither does it invest significantly in research and development.

“Many Irish do not realize how artificial their national economy is. One can understand that, for instance, from its trade with Israel. Israel is mainly importing and exporting from subsidiaries of U.S. multinationals that happen to be located in Ireland. Very little derives from indigenous Irish companies.

“American multinationals in pharmaceuticals and other technological areas have invested heavily in Ireland. They employ many Irish workers. If these companies were to expand further in cheaper countries abroad, Irish-Israeli trade would shrink significantly.”

## **Research and Development**

“It is common among Irish politicians, businesspeople, and scientists to say that their country has to learn from Israel. They view the latter

as a country with a small population and few natural resources, facing economic challenges similar to those of Ireland. So they claim that their country should follow Israel as far as investment in education and technology is concerned.

“Irish ministers say openly that Israel is a model economy and that from their perspective it offers vast opportunities. From 1995 onward there has been a significant development of R&D cooperation between Ireland and Israel. When Israeli chief scientists or, for instance, biotechnology experts visit Ireland, they are treated professionally and warmly welcomed at the highest level. That continued after the breakdown of the Oslo agreements.

“In these conversations one could not detect any political animosity among senior economic advisers, civil servants, or politicians. I would imagine if one asked these people, once the Israelis had left, who was in the right in the Middle East, most would be sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, but the political issue is just not a consideration in bilateral economic ties.”

## Politics

Concerning Irish politics Miller remarks: “The election of Hamas has had some influence. A small example will illustrate this. The *Irish Times* is Ireland’s newspaper of record. It does not have the largest circulation but it is the one all politicians and the elites read. Its leanings are close to those of *The Guardian* in the United Kingdom, though unlike *The Guardian* it does at least try to offer the Israeli side on some occasions. Moreover, over the years, in the foreign news section, while some of the reporters it uses are deeply critical of Israel to the point of parody, it can lay claim to having published a number of Israelis who are by no means anti-Israeli, including David Horowitz, current editor of the *Jerusalem Post*.

“When Hamas was elected, for the first time ever, the *Irish Times* started accepting articles that were very critical of this organization. They were not motivated by Hamas’s radical anti-Israeli attitude but by its antiseccular one. To my amazement the paper even published an article of mine on Hamas. Although I have published there often, they have always been more likely to accept pieces from me on the wider

Middle East or with an EU angle than on Israel, even though I am a moderate.”

There Miller wrote that:

...in February 1980, Ireland became the first EEC member to call publicly for the inclusion of the PLO in the political process at a time when Arafat's group not only refused to recognize Israel's right to exist—that would come grudgingly in 1988—but was engaged in a relentless campaign of terror against Israeli and Jewish targets across the globe.

He added:

More astonishing, successive Irish governments have been prepared to overlook Palestinian terrorism that directly challenged Irish interests. From 1969, when the matter was first raised in the Dáil, it has been widely assumed that the PLO was co-operating with, even training, various IRA factions. During the 1980s the PLO was responsible for numerous attacks on Irish troops serving in Lebanon with the UN.<sup>1</sup>

### **A Short-Lived Attitude**

Miller observes: “The paper's attitude lasted perhaps for a month. Thereafter it again used articles very negative on Israel. The *Irish Times* is always an excellent barometer for the mood of the elites, the politicians, the media, and many other prominent people. To be fair, though I often disagree with the *Irish Times's* position on the conflict, and I don't believe they give even nearly sufficient, nuanced coverage of the Israeli position, it is no worse than most liberal, elite newspapers across Europe in that regard. And, to the bewilderment of many of its leftist readers, it does publish conservative columnists like Mark Steyn and Charles Krauthammer from abroad.

“The current tone is that the *Irish Times* is much more willing to accept that Israel did not have a partner in Yasser Arafat. When he was alive, they never comprehended this. Their new version is that Hamas is not corrupt and is working for the people. The party is transparent and has been democratically elected. What the paper suggests is that

in Arafat Israel did not have an honest partner, but now it has one. Many opposition members adopt this position.

“The Irish government does not say the same. Its position can best be summarized as following whatever the EU does. That means that if tomorrow the EU fully embraces Hamas they will do so as well. The EU always leads them. Moral objections are absent in Ireland, at least when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

## **Right-of-Center Government**

“The Irish parliamentary system is based on proportional representation. Governments are thus always coalition ones. Since 1997 the major nationalist party, Fianna Fail, has headed the government. It holds 78 of the 166 seats in the Dáil. Their coalition partners, the Progressive Democrats, have eight. Both are in favor of free trade. Having a capitalist orientation, they are not anti-American and did not join the EU American-bashers over Iraq.

“Although Ireland is a neutral country, many American troops pass through it every year on their way to Iraq and Afghanistan. George Bush is very unpopular in Ireland, like elsewhere in Europe. However, when he was reelected, Prime Minister Bertie Ahern said something like: ‘To be honest, in terms of our economic interests, I’d much rather have George Bush in the White House than John Kerry.’

“Ahern explained that the Democratic presidential candidate was opposed to America continuing to outsource. As Ireland makes so much money from this, it was much better that George Bush remained president. For the prime minister it was not a matter of ideology or politics, only of economics.”

## **Rare Government Support for Israel**

“Only rarely does the Irish government come out in Israel’s favor. In 1999, Ahern visited Israel and met Netanyahu. At the press conference he said Netanyahu had told him that with the Palestinians trying to murder Israelis, Israel should not give up land. Ahern said this position made sense to him.

“On other occasions the same Irish government has irrationally



backed Arafat to the hilt. The Irish see themselves as anti colonial victims of partition and ultimately victors over the British. Although this happened many decades ago, their philosophy is still the same. In Mahmoud Abbas, Arafat, and Hamas, they see those who struggle against a colonial ruler. The Irish cannot shake off the belief that Israel is a colonial oppressor while they have much in common with the Palestinians. Analytically speaking, it is easy to show that they have much more in common with Israel than with the Palestinians.

“There are major parallels between their own history of large-scale migration and suffering in response to the Famine and the Penal Laws and that of the Jews under the Russian Czars and later under the Nazis. Moreover, in 1936 the spiritual leader of the Irish Republic’s Jewish community, the renowned Rabbi Isaac Herzog, left Dublin to take up the post of Chief Rabbi of Palestine, later becoming Israel’s first Chief Rabbi.”

### **Learning the Same Lessons?**

“The Jewish underground fighting the British during the pre-1948 era was modeled on the old IRA—Yitzhak Shamir’s nom de guerre was, after all, ‘Michael,’ after Michael Collins. In the decades after Israel’s birth Irish Jews, like Rabbi Herzog’s sons Chaim (a future president of Israel) and Yaacov (a great scholar and diplomat), as well as others like Max Nurock of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and Geoffrey Wigoder (editor of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*) contributed greatly to Israeli political, diplomatic, and intellectual life.

“As such, Israel always hoped that Ireland would draw on what David Vital, the distinguished Israeli historian, has termed ‘an Irishman’s intuitive understanding of the Jewish-Israeli predicament’<sup>2</sup> and support it in its struggle for survival and security. As Zvi Gabay, Israel’s first resident ambassador in Dublin, put it, ‘as a small democracy, Israel is guided by the same school of thought that built Ireland. The founding fathers of Ireland and Israel—although they came from different backgrounds—learned the same lessons from the same eternal book, the Bible.’<sup>3</sup>

“At times this did occur. Following the Six Day War of 1967,

Ireland's then foreign minister Frank Aiken, who was highly regarded internationally, worked hard to get the UN to take into account Israeli concerns in its resolutions on the conflict. This led Abba Eban to call on other UN member states to follow the example of his 'friend' Aiken. But overall, the Irish have refused to translate the natural kinship that existed between the Irish and the Jews into political support for the Jewish state.

"The main opposition party is Fine Gael, a center party that has always been the main challenger of Fianna Fail. It holds thirty-two seats. The other opposition parties are Labor with twenty-one seats, the Green Party with six, and Sinn Fein with five. There are also fourteen Independents. All these left-wing parties are overwhelmingly pro-Palestinian. Sinn Fein, led by Gerry Adams, is a Marxist party. Its military wing, the IRA, trained with the PLO and Muammar Qaddafi in Libya as well as in other terrorist states.

"The Republican movement in Northern Ireland has in its ranks many ex-IRA members and others who fought the British. They, too, in their newspapers and publicity have expressed much sympathy for the Palestinian struggle. Since entering politics in the Republic of Ireland, Sinn Fein politicians have been among the most outspoken critics of Israel, with Aengus Ó Snodaigh, the party's International Affairs and Human Rights spokesperson in the Irish parliament, recently describing Israel as 'one of the most abhorrent and despicable regimes on the planet.'"

## **No Jewish Parliamentarians**

"In the past, there were three Jewish members of parliament who all stood up for Israel, one in each of the three main parties. Ben Briscoe belonged to Fianna Fail, Alan Shatter to Fine Gael, and Mervyn Taylor to Labor. The latter was the first Irish Jew to become a cabinet member when he was appointed labor minister in 1993. He then served as minister for equality and law reform during the two governments of 1993-1994 and 1994-1997.

"In debates on the Middle East when many members of parliament bashed Israel, these three would support it. Two have retired and one lost his seat. So there is nobody who says to the other members of

parliament: 'You can't discuss the situation in Israel without looking at the suicide bombings.' One formerly pro-Israeli member of the Senate, David Norris, by now has become anti-Israeli, using terms such as the 'apartheid wall' and vehemently condemning the Israeli response to Hizballah in Lebanon in July 2006."

As an aside, Miller remarks that in Ireland there is better access to parliamentary debates than in any other European country. Every parliamentary session since 1922 is fully available on the web. Miller says this also enables demonstrating in detail how major are the distortions in the Middle East debates. "Everybody can read how the Dáil discussed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without even mentioning suicide bombing."

### **An Example of Bias**

"One interesting case occurred in 1996 when Benjamin Netanyahu was elected prime minister. At that time Europe started to panic because they were afraid that the Oslo process, in which they had invested so much time and effort, would fail. Thereafter the ratification of the Israel-EU trade treaty came up, which also had to be ratified by the parliaments of all member states.

"At the same time the ratification of the treaties with Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia also came up. Ninety-nine percent of the debate was taken up with Israeli human rights violations against the Palestinians. Alan Shatter then said that he had listened to the debate, 'Not just with astonishment but with sadness.' He noted that the ongoing Palestinian terrorist attacks on Israel had hardly been mentioned."<sup>4</sup>

Miller adds another perspective: "Compared to those of other countries, the Irish government's official statements about Israel are never extremely abusive. There are no statements like those heard on occasion from Jacques Chirac or Swedish foreign ministers. The Irish will say the usual platitudes that military responses are not the answer to the problem, or that Israel must make concessions so that there will be peace with the Palestinians.

"I have no doubt that if Ireland were faced with the same type of terrorism Israel confronts it would act much more violently to defend

itself. On a political level Irish hypocrisy is at par with the rest of Europe. Yet there are no politicians who make a career out of bashing Israel like some in Sweden.”

### **UNIFIL, a Source of Conflict**

“A major issue of conflict between Israel and Ireland was the two countries’ interaction while Irish soldiers were serving in UNIFIL in southern Lebanon. From 1978 to 2000, Ireland’s largest-ever military involvement outside its borders was in Lebanon.

“One has to keep in mind that Ireland is a neutral country with a small army. Over forty thousand Irish troops served in Lebanon, which represented a massive commitment. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Irish regularly called in the Israelis to threaten them and discipline them over the treatment of Irish UNIFIL troops. Ireland’s foreign minister for much of the 1980s, Brian Lenihan, said that most of his sympathy for Israel disappeared when he saw how they treated the Irish soldiers in southern Lebanon, and this was echoed among the various political parties.

“There was a lot of animosity, as would happen on any tense border. There are two sides to this story. The Irish troops were no less guilty of turning a blind eye to Arab violence than any other UN troops. On the other hand, I have spoken with a number of IDF liaison officers who worked with UNIFIL and they all praise the professionalism of their Irish counterparts.”

### **The NGOs**

“In civil society there is a groundswell of nonofficial opinion that sympathizes with the idea of a boycott of Israel. The Irish branch of the International Solidarity Movement, an anti-Israeli organization, is among the most active in the world. In 2004 they handed a petition to the foreign minister with twelve thousand Irish signatures, 275 of elected officials across Europe, and fifty of elected officials or public figures in Ireland, calling for an economic boycott.

“As Ireland has a population of three and a half million, this is far from insignificant. At that time the leader of the Irish Senate, Mary

O'Rourke, said she would support an economic boycott of Israel unless the country improved its treatment of the Palestinians.

"There are other anti-Israeli NGOs such as Christian Aid and the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign. These have relatively more support among the population than in other European countries. One might define it as an unthinking, visceral sort of attachment to Palestinian suffering.

"Many people neither understand the facts nor want to know them. Their gut feeling is that an economic boycott is the answer to the Palestinian suffering. Academia as an institution is overwhelmingly pro-Palestinian. But while some organized parts of British academia want an official boycott of Israel, there has been no similar move in Ireland. Only a few Irish professors have signed boycott appeals."

## **Muslims**

"The local Muslim community is small at close to twenty thousand. As Ireland is on the geographical margins of Europe, developments such as radicalization are much slower. The local Muslims are far less extreme than many in Britain, France, or Germany.

"When the Mohammed cartoons appeared in Denmark, a few hundred Muslims marched through the streets of Dublin. Their placards were relatively mild by Muslim standards, carrying texts such as: 'You must respect the Prophet.' I have no doubt that in a few years they will carry placards saying, like elsewhere, that people should be killed, or that Europe is dead.

"Since much of Irish Muslims' funding comes from Saudi Arabia, Wahhabi extremism must be creeping in. The Saudis have subsidized a major mosque and community center in Dublin. The idea is that once the facility is there, more people will use it. Yet while the number of Muslims is increasing fast, as a community they are still finding their feet.

"The Irish government and many others are worried that the country may become a stepping stone for Muslim radicals to mainland Europe. The Irish hope there will not be any major attempts to destabilize Ireland because it is not an important country. Yet it may become a transit base for radicals and terrorists. Once one is in

Ireland, one can travel elsewhere in the EU freely.

“The Irish discussion of radical Muslims focuses on money laundering as well as forging documents for use by extremists across Europe. Although until recently the Irish security services were preoccupied with events in Northern Ireland, there has been an attempt to refocus resources on this new threat. As yet, though, the capability needed to deal with the radical Muslim threat is underdeveloped.

“One major fault of much of the Irish population is a sincere belief that their experience of colonial rule and their policy of neutrality makes them morally superior to other countries. Racism is on the rise and focuses on Muslims as well as on Indians and the rapidly growing Chinese population. I was recently listening to a radio program on local racism. An Indian rang up and said he had been in Ireland five years, and there had not been a single day at work where he had not been abused for the color of his skin.”

## **The Jews**

“The Jewish community in Ireland numbers around a thousand. There are also about six hundred Israelis. Many are active in the community; a few, however, are leaders in anti-Israeli activities.

“The Jewish community has a policy of not sticking its neck out. Very rarely will it come out on behalf of Israel. Individual members of the community do write to the newspapers or express unhappiness with the situation whereby Israel gets a bad press and an unfair hearing in parliament.

“Although, for a large part of the last few decades, the Jews of Ireland have been well represented in parliament, the Jews were always insignificant in Ireland. They were not involved in the politics of the Northern Ireland crisis between Catholics and Protestants, or ‘the Troubles’ as it came to be known. Over the last fifty years there have been some people in the public eye who were anti-Semites. They had no effect, however, on Irish Jewish life.”

## **Judaism, a State Religion**

“When Ireland became a republic upon leaving the British Commonwealth in 1949, it was written in the Irish constitution that Judaism was a state religion. It thus had the same rights as Catholicism and Protestantism. The constitution says that whenever there is a state function, for instance for a foreign president, the order of presentations is: the Irish president, the head of the Catholic church, the head of the Protestant church, and the Chief Rabbi.

The Jewish community then numbered four thousand to five thousand. The former Chief Rabbi Herzog was a very good friend of the legendary Irish leader Eamon de Valera and other leading Irish officials. They respected Judaism very much. The Muslims now claim that they are much larger in number than the Jews, and they too want to become a state religion. One cannot much argue with that, except that many do not integrate and they will use this status for their own interests. It is almost inevitable that Islam will eventually replace Judaism as the country’s third religion.

“For over twenty years there were three Jewish members of parliament and only one Protestant one. When one asked how this was possible, the usual answer was that the Catholics, who accounted for 98 percent of the population, had nothing against the Jews. They were, however, opposed to the Protestants who had ruled the country in the past.

“Yet the official Catholic church was a major source of anti-Semitism until deep into the twentieth century. My mother has a very good Catholic friend who used to go to church on Sunday. In sermons, until the 1980s, some priests would talk about how the Jews killed Jesus and in later centuries stole money. My mother’s friend would challenge them. Yet thousands of people heard this every Sunday. Nowadays the Irish Catholic church has lost much of its influence. Few people go to church and hardly anybody joins the priesthood.”

## **Violent Anti-Semitism Is Rare**

Miller says violent anti-Semitism is rare in Ireland. “In 2005 the main synagogue in Dublin was daubed with swastikas. When that happened

the police assigned patrols and plainclothes policemen to investigate the matter. It turned out the graffiti were the work of a loner who believed that Jews caused all the problems of the world.

“Although the Irish government has a strong political anti-Israeli bias, it cannot be faulted as far as protecting the Jewish community is concerned. The current justice minister, Michael McDowell, is one of the most outspoken enemies of the IRA. He has helped stamp out terrorism in Northern Ireland as much as he could. When the Jewish community complained about the graffiti, he received their representatives for an hour. McDowell made it clear that he will not tolerate any anti-Semitism.

“Like everywhere else, there are also neo-Nazis in Ireland, but they are very marginal. Much more of a threat to the Jewish community is the continuous defaming and demonizing of Israel. People start to think the Israelis are like Nazis while the Jews in Ireland support them. In this way you create an environment where the Jews become guilty by default. If one does not oppose such a Nazi regime, one must be a fascist as well.

“The real problems for the Jews in Ireland come far more from the Left than from the extreme Right. Probably, in the coming years, the Palestinian issue will not be used as a foreign policy issue but rather to push the Muslim agenda in Ireland. That cannot be good for the Jews, and as the Jews are a very small group, people often forget about them.”

## **Lebanon Crisis, 2006**

“Since Israel responded to Hizballah’s kidnapping of two of its soldiers and bombing of its northern communities, the reaction of Irish politicians of all parties, the *Irish Times*, and pro-Palestinian NGOs in Ireland has largely been predictable. Like most of its EU partners, the Irish government has called for an immediate cease-fire, condemned Israel’s allegedly disproportionate military response, and also appealed to Hizballah to return the kidnapped soldiers and end the shelling of Israeli territory.

“But this understates the wide-ranging anger against Israel across all sectors of society since it began its military operation in



Lebanon. Most of the media, and not simply the *Irish Times*, has been highly critical of the level of force Israel has employed and the losses among Lebanese civilians. Anti-Israeli groups have even called for expelling the Israeli ambassador and closing the Israeli embassy, where there have been several protests and a 'die-in' staged by anti-Israeli activists.

"The Irish preoccupation with Israel's disproportionate use of force in Lebanon has triggered one of the country's main spikes in anti-Israeli sentiment over the years. As far back as the early 1970s the Irish media condemned Israeli raids against the PLO in Lebanon as disproportionate, and this continued following the 1982 invasion and in 1996 during Operation Grapes of Wrath, when the mistaken Israeli attack on a UN post in Qana killed over a hundred civilians. That sparked an unprecedented outcry among the Irish media, political elite, and public and damaged bilateral relations for months, and current events are following a similar path."

## Notes

1. Rory Miller, "We Dare Not Forget What Hamas Is About," *Irish Times*, 13 February 2006.
2. David Vital, *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe, 1789-1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 296-97, n. 1
3. Quoted in "The Israeli Connection," *Irish Times*, 18 September 1999.
4. Rory Miller, *Ireland and the Palestine Question, 1948-2004* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005), 168.

Nidra Poller

## An American Watching Anti-Israeli Bias in France

“Few people abroad realize that the French media are government-influenced in a subtle manner. Don’t misunderstand me: this situation is in no way comparable to that of the Soviet Union under communism. The French system operates in a different way. It is hard for a journalist to find work. If one gets fired, it is difficult to get another job. This is a powerful incentive to stay in line, and almost all journalists do. That line is left-wing orientation, Third Worldist, anti-American, and anti-Zionist.”

Nidra Poller observes France through vignettes. She is an American who came to France in 1972 and has worked since as a writer of fiction and translator from French to English. A few years ago she switched to journalism. Poller writes for various American publications, both hard-copy and online.

“It took me many years to realize that I had left the United States, a highly-developed and powerful country, and gone to live in a declining one. For decades I translated French texts into English, and only slowly understood that the language and its philosophical configuration also reflect this reality.

“An author who writes in English usually wants to make a point. Step-by-step he reaches his goal. In French texts the author often raises an issue, dances with it a bit, drops it, raises it again, dances again, drops it once more. It is a circular process. In my translation work, I once came upon a major exception: the writings of the Lithuanian-born philosopher Emanuel Levinas, which reflect Jewish thinking. I consider this the most important of all the translations I did.”

### **Loving Anti-Israeli Israelis**

Poller returns to the subject of the press. “The French elite and the

media love Israelis and Jews who strongly criticize Israel. Some are hardly known in Israel, such as Michel Warshavsky. Filmmakers such as Amos Gitai and Eyal Sivan are other examples of Israelis against Israel. Many French media present these people, who are on the margins, as mainstream Israelis.

“On the other hand, an important French Jewish intellectual like Daniel Sibony, who is a psychoanalyst, mathematician, and essayist, is hardly published anymore in major media. He has done important research on relations between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and also comments on current affairs. Another balanced commentator on the Middle East, Alexandre Adler, fell out of favor in the major media.”

Poller says that a biased press can use many methods. “The daily *Le Monde*, for instance, reported on the findings of the IDF commission that investigated Palestinians killed by an unidentified source on a Gaza beach. The paper writes in a style of ‘What do you expect them to say? Of course, they say they didn’t do it.’

“Although the IDF report stated that the Palestinian deaths were not caused by Israeli shelling at the time these people were killed, it said the commission would investigate further to determine whether the deaths could have been caused by an unexploded Israeli shell fired on an earlier occasion. This meant Israel was making an all-out effort to investigate the matter. *Le Monde*, however, insinuated that the report was unfinished, using the word *inachevé*, which can mean ‘half-baked.’ They also continued to post their earlier articles, such as the one falsely titled ‘Israeli Gunboat Shells Gaza Beach, Killing 8 Civilians.’”

### **Highly Selective Reporting**

“This example from *Le Monde* is typical. During the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in summer 2005, some French television reports focused on Palestinians telling what happened to them during the intifada, as if Israel had started it. They interviewed people who said they were going to take back their land, their vineyards and olive trees, fix up their homes and live happily ever after. Later, the media showed brief images of the torched synagogues. From then on, Gaza was off the screen.

“French television could not show the happy ending, couldn’t show

the man now living in his home. Because most likely he isn't. Probably terrorists were using it as a base to shoot rockets at Israel. When Islamic Jihad and Hamas do this, or when Al Qaeda establishes a base in Gaza, it does not get media attention. Hamas and Fatah fighting each other is also not television news, even if there are deaths. But the beach incident brought Gaza back onto the screen."

Poller says that most French get their news from television. She points out that against this distorted background, the Palestinian reactions in Gaza to the Mohammed-cartoon jihad came as a great shock. "French television showed a European cultural center being burned and violent calls from the population for the French to leave Gaza. This did have an effect on French public opinion."

Poller notes that the impact is slow. "One could probably mobilize a larger, reasonably pro-Israeli sector of public opinion if the French media were more diverse. Many people are ashamed to say something if they think that everybody disagrees with them and that it is bad to make their opinions heard. Nevertheless, the pro-Palestinian organizations are slowly discrediting themselves.

"There is one important French journalist who doesn't toe the general line with regard to Israel, Yvan Riofoul of *Le Figaro*. His approach is uncommon for France. He doesn't practice access journalism, which means hanging around with political figures. Riofoul is independent, writing what he thinks without courting people. Initially he was hesitant about the Middle East, but now he is more outspoken on the subject. Other journalists in the same daily, however, follow the dominant line."

### **Little Independent International Newsgathering**

"There is very little independent newsgathering internationally. Much of the foreign news comes from Agence France Presse, a news agency that is partly owned by the French government and is biased against Israel. The French government is proud to have banned the Al-Manar television station with its many anti-Semitic programs. Yet an authorized French Muslim radio station, Méditerranée FM, broadcasts a two-hour Sunday talk show where callers virulently bash Jews, Americans, and the French.

“Why is this permitted? Because there is an increasing fear in France of what the Muslims may do. This leads to much self-censoring. Before the war in Iraq started, there was a big peace march in Paris. Many of those who marched were jihadis, anti-Semites, and phony pro-Palestinians. The French media represented them as if they were all angels.

“And there was a big protest march in May 2005 when President Bush came to France for the D-Day commemoration. I watched the marchers go by. You could divide them into three broadly-equal groups. The first were airy-fairy angelic people, left-wing politically inclined individuals, ecologists, and antiglobalizationists. The second third were jihadi-type people. The last third were a kind of scruffy anarchists, high on drugs and alcohol, with Rotweilers and pitbulls. Most journalists only looked at the angelic people at the beginning. I have photos from that march that show the others.”

### **American Journalists Misreport**

“The misreporting is not limited to matters concerning Israel or Jews, but is global. One finds it even among American reporters. A well-known *Washington Post* correspondent wrote that you couldn’t see the kind of people who participated in the autumn 2005 riots if you were sitting in a trendy bistro in the Marais, a central Parisian district. This is untrue. Every type of person who lives in France can be seen there: North Africans and Chinese, people from the suburbs, including women in hijab, and juvenile delinquents. Yet false images of the central districts of Paris as protected elite enclaves are diffused worldwide. I’m not saying, however, it’s the same as the *banlieue*.

“There is little criticism of France in national media. It seems to be a deep-seated cultural problem. One can only speculate on its origin. Perhaps it has to do with French education. French people are constantly criticizing their children, and the same attitude prevails in the schools. Perhaps French people feel so threatened by any sign of disapproval, because of the carping criticism they hear in their youth, that they reject it. Children who have been educated in a supportive, loving, warm, and simultaneously disciplined environment may handle criticism more easily.

“The French societal system, though, shows many signs of breaking down. Many teachers are physically maltreated by pupils. Courts often treat criminals like poor innocent victims. There is a shortage of jails. The autumn riots, and some minor outbreaks since then, showed that you can attack the police for hours and they will not make you stop. For me as an American, who knows that my country is violent but also that it has strong police forces, laws, and jails, this is hard to comprehend.

“During the autumn riots, a high-ranking police officer said on television that the police had to be very careful because if, by chance, they should harm one of the youngsters from the *banlieue*, the disturbances could get out of hand. I cited this explanation recently when I gave a talk at a school in Boston. A pupil interrupted me and exclaimed: ‘How can you say that? You are interpreting.’ I had to repeat that I was quoting a police officer, and added that they are afraid it would trigger an uncontrollable outburst of violence. As usual, the taxpayers are paying most of the cost of the destruction caused by the rioters.”

## **Violent Climate Affects the Jews**

“A violent climate like this affects the Jews. The most pronounced example was in June 2006 when a group of black supremacists, who call themselves Kemites of the Ka Tribe, marched aggressively through a Jewish quarter of Paris. The Ka focus their hatred on Jews. They have received an order to disband, but say they won’t comply. These are big husky men, several are ex-convicts, and they wore brass knuckles. They did not do anything, just walked through the Rue des Rosiers, threateningly as if they were ready to commit a pogrom. The police were called but didn’t come until twenty minutes later.

“The next day I went to speak with some Jews there. Several said that it was perhaps better that the police didn’t come. Their arrival would have provoked the marchers into violence, and the police would not have been able to stop them.”

Poller remarks that when talking to French Jews, many mention that they do not see a future for Jews in France. “Yet people make individual decisions, as always in human history. They may say ‘I’ll stay a bit longer,’ or ‘Nothing is really as bad as it looks and I’ll stay,’

or 'Our children will leave.' In particular, the strongly religiously identified Jews, the more traditionally observant ones, and the Zionists all think about leaving. When Jewish children are beaten up, mainly by Muslims, their parents start to make decisions. There is a clear trend among Jews to move their children from public schools to private ones."

Poller says she does not want to generalize. "Many Jews are not directly confronted with these problems. There are good public schools as well. Many Muslims are fine people with good children who are friendly to each other and with non-Muslim schoolmates. There is considerable integration in France and many immigrants are not subject to discrimination. The majority are far from being thugs."

### **Soft-Speaking Jewish Community Leaders**

"As an American I find French Jews to be too conciliatory and trusting. They are very happy that they have access to the authorities. Roger Cukierman, who heads the CRIF, the umbrella body of French Jewish organizations, is received by President Jacques Chirac on request. But, no matter what measures the president promises, it is useless, they will not be implemented. The Jewish community speaks softly about many matters that should be forcefully exposed.

"A French Jew, Sebastien Selam, was murdered in November 2003 by a Muslim neighbor for apparent ideological reasons. The mainstream press played the story down and so did the Jewish media. When in February 2006 another Jew, Ilan Halimi, was kidnapped by a gang led by a West African Muslim, the media gave it more attention than is usual for murder cases. They had to do so because a group of about forty people were directly or indirectly involved with the crime.

"Even then, one heard voices saying 'It wasn't really anti-Semitic. The kidnapers were looking for a Jew to attack because they think Jews have money.' The anti-Semitic character of this stereotypic statement becomes even clearer when one makes a paradigm shift: 'It wasn't really anti-Semitic, they were looking for a Jew because Jews poison the wells.' Or, 'It wasn't really anti-Semitic, they were looking for a Jew because Jews killed Jesus.'

"Observing from the outside, one has the feeling that the Jewish

leaders always go along with the general mood, even if in the Halimi case it was less so because the shock was so great. This going-along, however limited, will give the government the chance to lie low and avoid the issue on the pretext that nothing can be confirmed until the case comes to trial, which will be two or three years from now.

“There are many other ways French Jewish leaders go along with French government policy. For instance, they reassure American Jewish leaders about anti-Semitism in France, saying it isn’t that bad.”

### **Inviting Israeli Leaders: A Sop**

“Another sop the French government offers French Jews is inviting Israeli leaders, such as President Moshe Katsav and former prime minister Ariel Sharon, for state visits. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is the latest in this series. The visiting Israeli politicians go along with the prettied-up version of reality.

“Olmert, during his official visit to France in mid-June, said Jacques Chirac is one of the greatest leaders in fighting anti-Semitism. If one looks back at the first intifada years this is not true. Many observers explain that Chirac cares for ‘his’ Jews but doesn’t care a fig about Israel. He feels badly about the Shoah and publicly acknowledged France’s responsibility for the actions of the Vichy government. But, considering that much of today’s anti-Semitism is anti-Zionism, Chirac’s attitude becomes clear.

“One recent positive development is the France-Israel project for technological and cultural collaboration. It is another sign that French authorities may realize they have allowed the Israel-bashing to go too far.”

### **Is Change Possible?**

Poller says that any future switch in the French attitude toward Israel will not be impelled by the media but will have to come from other directions. The same is true for other issues such as anti-Semitism in French society.

“In private conversations, one increasingly hears non-Jews say they are shocked by the blatant verbal attacks on Jews, such as the



diatribes by the half-African comedian Dieudonné. Even some people on the far Left are becoming aware of this, and seeing the alliance of their movements with anti-Semitic radical Muslims as a mistake.

“However, Jews and Israelis who claim that the French Jewish community is just imagining anti-Semitism reinforce anti-Jewish attitudes. As do foreign visitors who tell about seeing men wearing kippas on the street, unmolested, as if that sums up the general situation in France.”

### **Indicators for Society at Large**

Poller considers the Jews as indicators for what happens in French society at large. In early 2005, during a major high-school student protest against educational reforms proposed by the then minister of education François Fillon, demonstrators at Place de la République in Paris were attacked by North African thugs who kicked them and stole their handbags, iPods, and cell phones.

She wrote:

What does it mean when the smashers start smashing the demonstrators? Voices have been warning that the passions unleashed by the virulent anti-Zionism fostered at all levels of French society since the autumn of 2000 would not stop with Zionists and Jews; they would turn against the society as a whole. The warning was majestically ignored. As anti-Zionism morphed into anti-Semitism and joined hands with anti-Americanism, we witnessed an increasing trend to self-destructive histrionics. The connection with reality is easily damaged in a culture that tends to take the word for the deed, the posture for the position, the pretension for power. The public has been fed heavy doses of propaganda from the very media that should have been helping responsible citizens understand the great upheavals taking place in the Middle East, with repercussions in their own daily lives. Instead, conflict is blamed on Israel and the United States, while conflict in Europe is stubbornly denied.<sup>1</sup>

“It turned out this was only the beginning of ethnic unrest fomented almost exclusively by Maghreb and West African Muslims. During the

French autumn riots more than ten thousand cars were torched and many shops, schools, and kindergartens were burned or vandalized. In spring 2006, again, thugs attacked demonstrators who marched against employment reforms.”

Attacks by violent young Muslims targeting French society at large are becoming more frequent. Poller considers that her 2004 analysis presented in a lecture in the United States remains valid for the present reality and future of French Jews. She summed it up:

Jews cannot sue; they cannot speak out; they cannot write about what’s happening. If one does, one is accused of “upsetting the harmony of France.” Jews are in a “virtual ghetto”: their choice is either to be publicly anti-Zionist or to face exclusion or victimization. And the Jews think it will blow over! They are very Frenchified, have lived there for generations, and also they are afraid that if they make too much “noise,” they will lose the limited police protection they have now.<sup>2</sup>

## Notes

1. Nidra Poller, “The Death of France’s ‘Multiculturalism,’” *FrontPageMagazine.com*, 30 March 2005, [www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Printable.asp?ID=17511](http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Printable.asp?ID=17511).
2. Debbie Levison, “Novelist Nidra Poller Delivers Chilling Message: No Solution in Sight to French Anti-Semitism,” *Jewish Ledger*, 5 May 2004, [www.jewishledger.com/articles/2004/05/05/news/news07.prt](http://www.jewishledger.com/articles/2004/05/05/news/news07.prt) (talk at Congregation Beth El in Fairfield, CT).

Giuliano Ferrara

## Marching for Israel against Ahmadinejad

On 26 October 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, president of Iran, made a genocidal call for the elimination of Israel at the “World without Zionism” conference in Teheran. Other speakers were terrorist leaders Hassan Nasrallah of Hizballah and Khaled Mash’al of Hamas.

Ahadinejad’s murderous statements prompted many condemnations, *inter alia* from the UN Security Council and the European Union. One of the West’s strongest reactions was in Rome where, on 3 November, a torchlight march was held near the Iranian embassy. This protest was initiated by Giuliano Ferrara, editor of the conservative daily *Il Foglio*. An estimated 15-20,000 people took part in the demonstration, among them cabinet minister Roberto Calderoli who said he represented both the government and his Lega Nord party.

Ferrara, when asked why he took an initiative that was unique in the world, replies: “I felt it a political, cultural, and civil duty to organize a protest against Ahmadinejad’s call for genocide. I wanted this demonstration to have a simple goal: to proclaim that we uphold Israel’s right to exist and object to a head of state who denies this.”

### **A Great Political Success**

Ferrara elaborates: “The demonstration was a great political success: it went beyond a gathering of about twenty thousand people who were determined to affirm their principles. Among those who marched or supported the demonstration almost the entire Italian political spectrum was represented, from the Center-Right to the Center-Left. The Rifondazione communists were the only party with a parliamentary faction that did not participate. Like other forces of the extreme Left, their prejudice is to support the national struggle of the Palestinians and their ideology tends toward anti-Zionism.

“Yet the party’s leader, Fausto Bertinotti, said that even he would have participated if the demonstration had as its motto ‘two states for two peoples.’ I replied that since we were not marching for a political goal, we were not interested in negotiating compromises on wording to gain unified backing. I told him that the demonstration’s motto was a simple one: to defend Israel and its right to exist against whoever threatens it.

“We succeeded in holding the demonstration one week after Ahmadinejad’s initial anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist declarations. Our support went far beyond the political parties. *Corriere della Sera*, Italy’s largest daily, came out in favor of the demonstration along with many other papers. *Repubblica*, the second largest daily, treated the rally benevolently, which was the maximum one could expect. The communist daily *Il Manifesto* opposed the demonstration but some of its journalists marched nevertheless. Numerous associations also came out in support and so did various other bodies of Italian civil society, from the Catholic sector and elsewhere. Many intellectuals and public personalities also expressed their backing.

“Also important, this was the first major demonstration of Europeans before the embassy of a Muslim country. We marched as close to it as we were allowed by the authorities. I called it a ‘hybrid torchlight march’ because persons and groups with very diverse views were present. But they showed unity in upholding Israel’s right to exist.”

Ferrara sums up: “The strong underlying message of the march against Ahmadinejad was that Israel had with its own forces defended its existence. Even for the Italian Left that has a great fascination, which is undeniable after all these years.”

### **One Precedent: USA Day**

“The demonstration in favor of Israel was only possible because on two previous occasions I had taken similar initiatives. *Il Foglio* is a small opinion daily that informs about 20-30,000 readers among Italy’s elite. I founded it with little money and a great liking for adventure. We have shown that we can intensively promote cultural and civil opinions within the Italian political system. We lead battles on

cultural, political, economic, and social issues at the Italian, European, and global levels.”

Ferrara founded *Il Foglio* in 1996. “The first time we organized a public demonstration was on 10 November 2001, less than two months after the attack by Bin Laden’s followers on the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington. It seemed shameful that all one heard about the thousands of American victims of terrorism was cheap rhetoric. At the same time, other people were burning American flags to protest the bombardments in Afghanistan at the start of the military operation to dismantle Al Qaeda’s training camps. This burning of American and also Israeli flags is an ongoing vice of small left-wing groups that are tolerated in Italy.

“We decided to organize a demonstration called ‘USA Day’ to show solidarity with the United States after 9-11. Italy’s newly elected prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, spoke in Rome’s Piazza del Popolo. Former U.S. president Bill Clinton sent a message as well, speaking on CNN. He called it a beautiful idea and said Americans needed more Europeans in the streets to express their support. This was a new type of political event, a newspaper that took the initiative as an opinion-leader to bring people out into the public square.

“*Repubblica* came out against USA Day saying it wasn’t a bipartisan demonstration. Thereafter they were greatly embarrassed by the fact that Clinton, the so-much beloved former American president, so strongly endorsed what we did.”

## Israel Day

“On 15 April 2002 we organized a second, even more important demonstration called ‘Israel Day.’ A year before the attack on the Twin Towers, the Palestinians had launched the Second Intifada with its murderous suicide bombings. The Israeli government reacted by suppressing terrorism in the West Bank and Gaza.

“It was very difficult to call for a pro-Israeli demonstration in Italy in the days after the battles in Jenin. People were shown on television what were called ‘the tanks of Sharon.’ These besieged the *mukhata* in Ramallah where Yasser Arafat was almost a prisoner. Israel’s legitimate aim was to eliminate terrorism in the territories it had

occupied for more than thirty-five years after winning a war of self-defense.

“We had anticipated well in advance how the media would react to Jenin. When the Israeli military action began, we warned that it would be strongly denounced. We explained that it would be very problematic to fight the terrorists in Jenin. We also knew how the anti-Israeli propaganda war functioned. We thus started to warn immediately that there would be newspaper headlines announcing the ‘Jenin massacre.’

“Subsequently, Human Rights Watch found that fifty terrorists had been killed and the Israelis had also sustained many losses. Within the limits of what was possible, Israel had made an effort to avoid civilian casualties in the very difficult combat conditions of the Jenin camp. It was clear that Israel had behaved honorably. We were happy that the truth had come out. Rather suddenly in Italy, even an extreme left-wing journal such as *Il Diario* was inspired to send a journalist to Jenin who reported the truth.”

## **A Very Successful Demonstration**

“In those days it was not easy to organize a pro-Israeli demonstration, but we decided we had to do it. This event was again a great success, gaining the support of personalities from both the Right and the Left. The prime minister of the present left-wing Italian government, Romano Prodi, then president of the European Commission, expressed his sympathy. Among the backers on the Right was Deputy Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini, leader of the Alleanza Nazionale party.

“On Israel Day there was a massive show of Israeli flags. Already on USA Day there had been many such flags alongside the American ones. People gathered on the square of the Capitol and descended the steps. It was a massive, beautiful procession. We marched to the synagogues on the Tiber River, where the participants deposited small stones. There was a short speech. I must stress that all these demonstrations have been organized with little money by a small newspaper.

“The success of the first two demonstrations helped me decide that a similar one was necessary against Ahmadinejad’s anti-Israeli

and anti-Semitic campaign. We had to express intelligently our indignation toward the Iranian president and his political madness. Besides the Israeli flags there were also Italian and Iranian ones. A group of Iranians in exile took part in the protest and one of their slogans was, in the Persian language, 'Zendebab Israel'—wishing Israel to live.

"Initially many ministers of the Berlusconi government intended to participate. However, the afternoon before the march in Rome there were counterdemonstrations before the Italian embassy in Teheran. Italy is Iran's leading trade partner in Europe, and the Iranian government let it be known that there would be consequences for the countries' bilateral trade.

"There was also pressure from the Confindustria, the Italian manufacturers association, and from some in the government. Berlusconi hesitated and did not reply forcefully. This led to the decision of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Fini not to participate. Also Defense Minister Antonio Martino chose not to come to the demonstration. Still, it was an event of major political importance."

### **Why Did We Do It?**

When asked why Ferrara was the only non-Jewish person in the world to organize such a demonstration, he replied: "I have no answer. What I can say is that prominent French intellectuals such as Alain Finkielkraut and André Glucksman were astonished by what we had done. They said it would never have been possible in France."

After some reflection he remarks: "Perhaps it can be explained by a mix of our national reality, the history of *Il Foglio*, and my personal experiences. Italy has a certain liberty of action that other European countries do not have. Furthermore, *Il Foglio* is not so sensitive to the market. We do not have a certain quota of people whom we have to please. For other papers this usually includes the pro-Palestinians and the pro-Israelis, as well as the left-wing and right-wing intellectuals."

Ferrara says it was very important that the pro-Israeli Berlusconi government was in power. "Fini's role was also significant. As leader of a postfascist party he needed Israeli legitimization. His attitude

toward Israel was the main indicator that he had changed his political outlook. At the founding congress of Alleanza Nazionale he had the party condemn anti-Semitism and the prewar racial laws of the Mussolini government, which were an important element of fascism. As a result, Fini ultimately succeeded in being invited to Jerusalem. His trip there inspired much debate in his party. Mussolini's granddaughter Alessandra left the party and took with her a small group of members."

### **Israel's Strategic Role**

"Berlusconi understood that Israel should play an important strategic role in Italy's foreign policy. Pro-Arab prime ministers in the previous decades, such as the Christian Democrat Giulio Andreotti and the Socialist Bettino Craxi, had created an imbalance in Italian positions toward the Middle East."

In the current coalition government led by Prodi, the socialist DS party consisting mainly of former communists is the largest. When asked what position it will take on the Middle East, Ferrara says it is too early to tell. "When Berlusconi was talking to Javier Solana, the European high representative for foreign and security affairs, or to people like the then French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin or his Spanish colleague Miguel Angel Moratinos, it was a dialogue of the deaf. Berlusconi was pro-Israeli and they were anti-American, anti-British, and anti-Israeli. Berlusconi's refusal to go along has prevented this position from advancing too much in Europe."

### **The Prodi Government**

"Now Berlusconi is no longer prime minister, and the opposite tendency has returned. We will have to wait and see where Italy will stand. When our DS foreign minister, D'Alema, was in the opposition, he did realize that he had to march against Ahmadinejad. Will he now cave in entirely on Israel and become a loudspeaker in Italy for Europe's dominant anti-Israeli line? Or will he, which is much more in Italy's interest, be a brake on the fanatic anti-Israelis who form much of the European bureaucracy? Anything is possible, yet the key man in his



party, Secretary-General Piero Fassino, has shown himself to be a very balanced person. He is convinced that defending Israel is a matter of priority. Thus it won't be easy for D'Alema to overcome that stance.

"Prime Minister Prodi has the habits of the old Christian Democrat politicians. He comes from a left-wing Catholic school. He believes in ecumenism and interfaith dialogue. He rejects the idea of a clash of civilizations. He can best be defined as a navigator. Prodi is no fighter against terrorism and Islamic fanaticism. He is unlikely to create great surprises that will detach him from the Brussels and Strasbourg orthodoxy.

"As president of the EU Commission he made some far-reaching anti-Israeli statements. This helped him in his relationship with Paris and Berlin, protecting him, in turn, from the evident contempt he faced from London and Washington. As Italian prime minister he is likely to navigate more carefully."

Ferrara repeats: "It is certainly possible that the Prodi government will take an anti-Israeli line. We do not yet see the first explicit signs of it, but as noted, it is too early to say."

In mid-July during the fighting in Lebanon, Ferrara attacked the Italian government and the parties that supported it. He charged that they were taking a summer vacation from their responsibility. In an article titled "The Tears of the European Crocodile Destroy Israel," Ferrara wrote that "they feigned not to know that Palestinian nationalism—polluted by the political and civil corruption of the revolutionary elites—was being substituted by the political Islamism of Ahmadinejad, a Holocaust-denying head of state."

Ferrara ended with a call to the Italian Left: "On one side you have people like Olmert, Livni, Peretz, and Peres. On the other side there is Sheikh Nasrallah and Mash'al, who is a fugitive in Damascus protected by the worst despots of the Middle East. For once, do-gooders, make a choice that reflects proportional use of intelligence and political dignity."<sup>1</sup>

## Notes

1. Giuliano Ferrara, "Le Lacrime del cocodrillo europeista annegano Israele," *Il Foglio*, 17 July 2006. [Italian]

Irit Kohn

## The Suit against Sharon in Belgium: A Case Analysis

“In 1982 during the Lebanon War, Lebanese Christian militias murdered hundreds of Palestinians in refugee camps in Sabra and Shatilah. In June 2001, several survivors and family members of the victims submitted a complaint in a Belgian court that was not directed against the murderers, many of whom were known. The claim instead named as defendants Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, the Israeli chief of staff in 1982 Rafael Eitan, and the then head of Northern Command, General Amos Yaron.”

Irit Kohn at the time was head of the International Department of the Israeli Ministry of Justice. This department is responsible for, among other things, extradition issues and legal assistance. She headed the Israeli defense team.

“At the time of the submission Belgian law had universal jurisdiction as far as crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide were concerned. It did not require any connection to the country involved. Any private citizen, in Belgium or elsewhere in the world, could submit a complaint against anybody to the Belgian court system that could serve as a claim for criminal prosecution there.”

### **A Political Act**

“After the complaint, a committee of Israeli experts was formed. It included Danny Shek, who was director of the Western Europe section at the Foreign Ministry, Daniel Saada, a lawyer and Israeli diplomat in Belgium, Allon Geilert, a lawyer from the Prime Minister’s Office, and myself. We worked together very well, and nothing was leaked of our deliberations. After some time Efraim Halevy also joined us. He had been Israeli ambassador to the EU in Brussels and had many contacts there.

“Nineteen years had passed since the mass murders by the Lebanese Christian militias. The complaint seemed a politically motivated act. The complainants waited until Sharon became prime minister of Israel. They wanted him to be subject to a criminal prosecution for alleged war crimes. They saw him as responsible for the murders by Israel’s Christian allies in the two refugee camps. They claimed that as Sharon was Israeli defense minister in 1982 and collaborated with these militias, he should have known that if they came to these camps there would be a massacre.”

Kohn says there was a major discussion among Israeli government lawyers as to whether Israel should relate to the complaint or not. “Some experts from the attorney general’s office initially recommended that Israel should not react. Also some executives from the Prime Minister’s Office said we should not relate to those who brought the complaint against us.”

## **European Extradition Laws**

“I strongly supported the position that we should defend our prime minister. The extradition laws in Europe meant that if Sharon would want to go to a European country, Belgium might take out an arrest warrant. As other European countries have extradition treaties with Belgium, this would mean in practice that Sharon could not visit Europe. If the matter went to trial in Belgium, and we did not contest it, the judge might decide to base himself on the facts as presented by the other side. Finally we reached agreement that we should defend the prime minister.

“We had originally assumed that, as in most democratic states, in criminal cases the Belgian state prosecutor has discretion as to whether or not to prosecute. This assumption was based on the traditional sanctity of independent prosecutorial discretion, which relates to the principle of separation of powers that is inherent to democracy. As the case evolved it became clear that in this instance this principle of Belgian law was not upheld.

“In Belgium’s judiciary, being part of the continental system, there is an investigating judge. At this stage, upon the recommendation of the experts’ committee Israel hired a local lawyer, Michèle Hirsch,

who had experience in prosecution under these laws. She had been involved in the prosecution of murderers on behalf of victims of the Rwanda massacres.

“Our claim was that the complaint was politically motivated. The Sabra and Shatilah massacres had been investigated by a committee headed by the president of the Israeli Supreme Court, Judge Yitzhak Kahan. This committee had been established following a large demonstration in Israel by four hundred thousand people demanding that the truth about the massacres be revealed. Whenever I later lectured about the issue, I always mentioned that I was one of the demonstrators. I felt at the time that we had heard a variety of rumors and the matter had to be clarified.

“We now know that there was not one Israeli soldier in Sabra or Shatilah during the time of the murders. While we were later in Belgium preparing Sharon’s defense, a Palestinian woman appeared on television. She claimed Israeli soldiers had been in the refugee camps as she had seen a soldier wearing a helmet with a Star of David. Israeli troops, however, do not have such helmets.”

### **The Kahan Committee**

“According to the Law of Investigating Committees, the Kahan committee had very broad investigatory powers. Its three members were highly respected individuals. Besides its president it consisted of Supreme Court justice Aharon Barak and General Yona Efrat. Many witnesses appeared before it. The committee recommended that Sharon should be removed from his post as defense minister, and this was done. I do not know of any other state that would take such steps at a time of war.

“Israel had handled the issue in a highly professional manner. There was thus no reason for somebody else to apply universal jurisdiction. The basic idea of universal jurisdiction is to address those cases of war crimes where the country involved either did not want or was unable to prosecute. Another country can then assume the role of the court.

“The Belgian investigating judge accepted our position at the time and decided that there was no reason to prosecute. He concluded

that the murderers were the Christian Lebanese militiamen who were not being brought before the court. On that level, we won. The complainants appealed to a Belgian court. To defend ourselves, we took another lawyer who was a university professor and an expert in these matters, Prof. Andrien Masset. Based on the same reasoning, we also won there.”

## **The Court of Appeals**

“The complainants then turned to the Belgian Court of Appeals. We hired yet another lawyer who was a specific expert on courts of appeal. The Belgian procurer general, who appears before the Court of Appeals, spoke in favor of us. He argued among other things that it would not be possible to collect admissible and verifiable evidence. This important legal argument was summarily dismissed. The procurer general also posited that the investigation of the complaint would not begin as long as the subject of this investigation was not present in Belgium. Also this position was dismissed.

“In 99 percent of the cases, the procurer general’s opinion is adopted by the Belgian Appeals Court. On 12 February 2003, however, the court decided against us. To our lawyer and us this seemed a politically motivated decision.

“Independently of our case the question of immunity came up. There had been a decision by the International Court of Justice in The Hague in a case that involved Belgium and the Congo. The Hague court decided that a country’s prime minister and foreign minister, while they are in office, are immune from prosecution. This also applied to Sharon as long as he was prime minister. Thereafter, however, he could be prosecuted. Meanwhile, the case against the two other accused Israelis could go ahead.

“During the court procedures, we were frequently in contact with the Belgian Ministry of Justice. We explained to them that their law was a fiction and their legal system could not achieve anything. If they were indeed to indict Sharon in Belgium, they could not get any evidence. They could only get information from the other side as Israel would not cooperate with them.

“In preparing the case I had reviewed the universal jurisdiction

law in many countries, including European ones. All, except Belgium, required the presence of the subject in the country where the case would be judged before the investigation began.

“Another perspective comes from the practice of extradition treaties. These stipulate that the final decision to extradite somebody is made by a country’s justice minister, who is a political appointee in the executive branch of the government. The rationale for granting him this authority is that such a decision involves the weighing of political factors of foreign policy. These are not within the competence of the prosecutorial authority.”

## **Legal Considerations**

Kohn explains her views on the matter of universal jurisdiction. “Law expresses the political approaches and will of a society. International law reflects those of international society. It should not become an instrument to impose the political aims and desires of one group of nations on others, especially not if both groups represent democracies.

“Furthermore, applying unlimited universal jurisdiction by individual states can generate tension and crises between states and can cause conditions that destabilize regimes in specific countries. Friction indeed built up between Belgium and Israel and later even more so between Belgium and the United States. These were paradigms of problems that could have considerably worsened if the Belgians had not backtracked. International law is designed to create accepted rules of conduct between nations. If the result of international law is to heighten tensions and foster crises it defeats one of its basic justifications.

“In the Sharon and Bush, Sr. (concerning the first Gulf War), cases, it was obvious that if a state such as Belgium would assume the jurisdiction to try the leader and citizens of another state for acts that were committed outside the prosecuting country’s borders, this was a sure recipe for raising tensions. If it had ever come to trial it would have impacted Belgium’s relations with the United States and Israel in a major way.

“Thus the Belgian prosecution and judicial authorities could have caused major damage to their country on matters that were

entirely outside their area of competence. Belgium would have made a dangerous mistake if it had left the discretion on whether to proceed in the hands of the judicial authorities. They realized that, albeit late. Then the legislative branch of government intervened.

“There were other important legal aspects. Judges in nation-states reflect their cultures. If national judges sit in judgment on events that have taken place far away in a cultural environment they know little about, there is a high probability that they will reach faulty results.”

### **Belgian Justice: A Poor International Image**

“The Belgian ministry officials were well aware that their universal law was becoming a target for complainants from everywhere. This was happening at a time when Belgian justice had an increasingly poor image internationally. One case that was mishandled concerned the pedophile Dutroux. The court case took place only eight years after the events he was accused of.

“The prosecution of Sharon did not go ahead because of a development that had nothing to do with him or Israel. Under the universal law, as mentioned, a complaint was also brought against President George Bush, Sr., Secretary of State Colin Powell, and retired general Norman Schwarzkopf concerning the first Gulf War in Iraq. The United States was more powerful than Israel. They told the Belgian government that if their legal authorities were to go ahead with the process, NATO’s headquarters would be moved away from Brussels.”

### **Belgium Bows to American Threats**

“This threw the Belgians off balance. They now finally started to understand that they had created problems for themselves. The parliament rushed to change the law, and amendments to it were passed that would create obstacles for future plaintiffs. These included provisions that a future plaintiff or victim would have to have lived three years in Belgium. There would also have to be real linkage between the alleged crime and Belgian interests and several other such clauses.

“Initially they wanted to exclude the United States from the universal law but not the three Israelis. Till the last moment there was a major Belgian parliamentary effort to retain the original complaint as to them having committed a war crime. That, however, would have proved that the entire motivation of the process against Sharon was political. It would also have shown that the Belgian parliament could legislate against a particular country, which would have publicly revealed their one-sidedness toward Israel. In the end they also understood that such a move would not hold up judicially.

“The Belgians bowed to the American threat and changed their law. The principle of the revised law was different. In Belgium from now on, only cases can be brought that have a linkage to the country. In the case of Sharon, neither the complainants nor the accused had such linkage. In addition, as I indicated before, Sharon had immunity as long as he was prime minister. Those two factors ended the matter.”

## **Legal Arguments**

Kohn says that subsequently she has often lectured about the case. “We felt we had strong legal arguments and should put them forward. We did not want to digress from these arguments.”

When asked why the Israeli side did not stress Belgium’s poor human rights record and weak legal system, Kohn answers: “We made a major effort not to attack the Belgian legal system. We received many letters about the terrible crimes committed by the Belgians in the Congo over a long period. Nor did we ever bring up their failure in dealing with their major pedophile case. We felt we should use such arguments only as a last resort.

“We focused on the fact that the Belgian universal law was a fiction. If they applied it, they would be swamped with complaints from all over the world. The procurer general also understood this when he recommended to the court not to prosecute.”

When asked why the Belgian judicial system took what were, with great probability, political decisions, Kohn replies: “Concerning the politicians, there are many Muslims in certain parts of Belgium, and those who want to get elected there seek their votes.

“As far as the Appeals Court judges are concerned I do not have



an answer. I discussed the matter in Belgium, and said to people that I did not believe that in a West European democratic country such as Belgium, judges could be influenced. When I said that, several people acquainted with the Belgian system started to laugh.”

### **The Media’s Hostility**

Kohn observes that the Belgian media played an anti-Israeli role. “Every time, shortly before any court proceeding or meeting took place, the television showed movies on Sabra and Shatilah. These were difficult to watch because what happened there was indeed terrible.

“We wondered whether the films were not influencing the judges. When we wanted to raise this issue with the local newspapers, they did not give us an opportunity to explain our position. We were clearly operating in a hostile environment. We felt that the press was against us and did not give us a chance to say our piece.

“Later also in Sweden a complaint was brought against Sharon. A Swedish prosecutor, Thomas Lindstrand, decided on 23 October 2002 not to proceed with it. He argued that it would not be possible for the Swedes to gather evidence on crimes allegedly committed in the West Bank and Gaza. He understood that these constraints could influence a possible trial’s outcome.”

Kohn concludes: “After a relatively short period of inactivity, laws for universal jurisdiction have developed in many countries. Recently there was an attempt to bring a criminal complaint against an IDF general and the defense minister, both in the UK. After the second Lebanese confrontation, various sources report the readiness of NGOs to file complaints against IDF officers for war crimes.”

## About the Interviewees

**Rafael Bardaji** studied political science at the Madrid Complutense University and specialized in international relations in London, and at Harvard and MIT in the United States. He was a lecturer at ICADE, a private university in Madrid, from 1990-1993. In 1989 he became adviser to the Parliamentary Group of José María Aznar, then leader of the Popular Party. In 1996, when the Popular Party came to power, he was appointed strategic adviser, based in the Defense Ministry, to Prime Minister Aznar. After the March 2004 elections, he became head of International Policy Studies at FAES. He remains a personal adviser to Mr. Aznar.

**Prof. Frits Bolkestein** was a member of the European Commission from 1999 to 2004, responsible for the internal market, taxation, and the customs union. He is a former Dutch defense minister and foreign trade minister on behalf of the VVD Liberal Party. He was president of the Liberal International from 1996 to 1999. He is visiting professor at the Universities of Leiden and Delft and a member of the Supervisory Council of the Dutch Central Bank. He has authored many books.

**Rijk van Dam** is executive director of the European Coalition for Israel. He is a former Member of the European Parliament, representing several Christian parties from the Netherlands.

**Ambassador Dr. Oded Eran** was born in Israel in 1941. He obtained his BA from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and his PhD in Oriental and Political Studies from the London School of Economics. He joined the Israeli Foreign Ministry in 1966. Since December 2002 he is the Israeli ambassador to the European Union, also covering NATO. Before that he was ambassador to Jordan and head of the negotiating team with the Palestinians.

**Giuliano Ferrara** is the founder and editor of the daily *Il Foglio*. He was born in Rome in 1952 to a family of longstanding communists, and remained a communist until the age of thirty. He was a political columnist for *Corriera della Sera* and has published in several Italian

weeklies. He has been the director of many television programs, first for the state-owned RAI and later for Mediaset of the Berlusconi Group. For five years he has been anchoring a daily news program on the independent network La7 owned by the Telecom group.

**Ambassador Efraim Halevy** was born in London in 1934 and came to Palestine in April 1948. He graduated cum laude with a master's degree in law from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He joined the Mossad in 1961 where he remained until 1995. He was Israel's ambassador to the European Union from 1996 to 1998. From 1998 to 2002 he headed the Mossad. He then became head of the National Security Council and national security adviser to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon during 2002-2003. At present he heads the Center for Strategic and Policy Studies of the School of Public Policy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 2006 he published his memoirs *Man in the Shadows* (New York: St. Martin's Press).

**Ayaan Hirsi Ali** was born in Somalia. With her parents she was in exile in Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. She fled to the Netherlands in 1992 and obtained political asylum there. She authored books and wrote the script for the movie *Submission*. She was a member of the Dutch Parliament from 2003 to 2006 for the VVD Liberal Party, and in 2006 she joined the American Enterprise Institute in Washington.

**Prof. Josef Joffe** is publisher-editor of the German quality weekly *Die Zeit*. He is also adjunct professor of political science at Stanford University, where he teaches U.S. foreign policy and co-teaches a seminar on terrorism. At Stanford, he is Distinguished Visiting Fellow of the Freeman-Spogli Institute for International Studies as well as Abramowitz Fellow of International Relations at the Hoover Institution.

**Irit Kohn** joined the Israeli Ministry of Justice in 1989 and from 1995 to 2005 was director of its International Affairs Department. She has been a member of various governmental committees and has published on several legal subjects. In 2004, she was elected to the Vice-Presidency of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists. She holds an LLB degree from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

**Prof. Ruth Lapidoth** is Greenblatt Professor Emeritus of the Hebrew University, professor at the Academic Division of the College of Management, senior researcher at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, and a fellow of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. She specializes in international law. Prof. Lapidoth was legal adviser to the Israeli Foreign Ministry from 1979 to 1981 and has been a member of Israel's delegation to the United Nations. She was the Israeli arbitrator in the Taba case. She has received many awards including the Israel Prize.

**Zvi Mazel** was born in Israel in 1939. He obtained his BA and MA at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris. He has been with the Israeli Foreign Ministry for thirty-nine years, and was ambassador to Romania, Egypt, and Sweden. The many other positions he held included that of the ministry's deputy director-general for Africa. He has extensively studied the Muslim world.

**Dr. Rory Miller** was born in Dublin in 1971. He has a BA in history from Trinity College, Dublin, an MA in war studies, and a PhD in Mediterranean studies from King's College, University of London. He is a senior lecturer in the Mediterranean Studies program there, and teaches on U.S. and EU involvement in the Middle East and the wider Mediterranean. He has published two books, *Divided against Zion: Anti-Zionist Opposition to a Jewish State in Palestine, 1945-48* (London: Frank Cass, 2000) and *Ireland and the Palestine Question, 1948-2004* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005). He is also the associate editor of *Israel Affairs*.

**Prof. Anton Pelinka** is an internationally known political scientist. He is director of the Institute of Conflict Research (Vienna) and professor of political science at the University of Innsbruck. His work has appeared in many languages and he has written widely about both Austrian and European politics. His most recent books in English are *Austria: Out of the Shadows of the Past* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998); *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria* (ed. with Ruth Wodak, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 2002); and *Democracy Indian Style: Subhas Chandra Bose and the Creation of India's Political Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 2003). He has held

many distinguished fellowships, visiting professorships, and academic positions in Europe and the United States, including at Harvard University, Stanford University, and the University of Chicago.

**Nidra Poller** studied history at the University of Wisconsin and has a Master of Liberal Arts from Johns Hopkins University. She has been a writer of fiction for most of her life, earned her living as a translator from French to English, and turned to journalism in recent years. She regularly writes for media such as *Commentary*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *National Post*, *TCS Daily*, *Atlas Shrugs*, and *Makor Rishon* and has published in the *New York Sun*, *FrontPageMagazine*, *National Review Online*, Israel Hasbara Committee, Guysen Israel News, and Metulla News Agency.

**Ambassador Dr. Robbie Sabel** received his law degree and PhD from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He joined the Israeli Foreign Ministry in 1972, served in the embassy in Washington, and was the ministry's legal adviser from 1985 to 1993. Thereafter he was deputy director-general for arms control. He has written several international law books in English and Hebrew. His book on *Procedure at International Conferences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed., 2005) was awarded the coveted annual award of the American Society of International Law. Dr. Sabel teaches international law at the Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, and the Interdisciplinary College at Herzliya.

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# About the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs is an independent, nonprofit institute for policy research founded in 1976. Since then, the Center has produced hundreds of studies by leading experts on a wide range of international topics. Dr. Dore Gold, Israel's former ambassador to the United Nations, has headed the Center since 2000.

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- **Jerusalem in International Diplomacy**—Dr. Dore Gold analyzes the legal and historical rights of Israel in Jerusalem according to existing agreements and UN documents. A companion research study by Justus Reid Weiner looks at *Illegal Construction in Jerusalem: A Variation on an Alarming Global Phenomenon* (2003).
- **Changing Jewish Communities**—This program of seminars and publications focuses on developments in Jewish communities around the world.
- **The Israeli Economy and Privatization**—This comprehensive, ten-year project has studied the application and impact of privatization policy in Israel. Sponsored by the Milken Institute, the project includes nine published volumes in Hebrew and English.
- **Israel-Europe Project**—This project seeks to present Israel's case in Europe in cooperation with European research institutions.

# About the Konrad Adenauer Foundation

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation's mission in Israel is to contribute to the following three goals:

1. The continuing improvement of the German-Israeli relationship and the further development of the cooperation between Israel and the European Union.
2. The harmonious coexistence of people of different origins and different beliefs in Israel and, thus, the further strengthening of Israeli democracy.
3. The support of all efforts for peace in Israel and the Middle East.

As a German political foundation, our aim is to present the Israeli public with a realistic picture of modern, democratic Germany. Equally, we want to convey to our partners and friends in Germany a realistic picture of the situation in Israel and of the special problems linked to the Middle East conflict. Israeli-German relations are particularly burdened, particularly sensitive, and particularly strong as well. The past confers on us a special responsibility toward the State of Israel's right to exist as well as the achievement of justice and peace in the Middle East. We assume this responsibility through our work in the Middle East.

Israel is a land of immigration, and has accomplished remarkable feats of absorption since its creation. However, significant problems linked to integrating immigrants from all over the world continue to exist. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, but sometimes there are difficulties in sustaining democracy and a state of law, which in part reflect the fact that large segments of the Israeli society immigrated from non-democratic societies. Therefore, we work in cooperation with Israeli partners to compare the legal systems of our respective countries and develop new legal bases for the minority groups within the State of Israel and especially the Arab minority, while searching for models of conflict resolution. Strengthening Israel as a democracy and a state of law is a primary goal of our work.

Despite intensive efforts, it has not yet been possible to achieve a long-lasting framework of peace for the Middle East. Hatred, violence,



and terror have prevented political solutions to the conflict. Thus we work in cooperation with Israeli and Palestinian NGOs as well as ministries in attempting to increase the readiness for peaceful solutions through educational activities, political and interreligious dialogue, and community projects.

Even in the hardest of times, our Foundation has proved that it can serve as a catalyst for both sides.

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# **Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss?**

(Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs/Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2005)

## **Manfred Gerstenfeld**

*Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss?* explores the complex, tense, and historically loaded relationship between Europe and Israel. Over the years a fissure has developed between their political views. Many believe that it continues to widen and has become an abyss.

The introductory essay and the following interviews combine together as a reconnaissance mission into the essence of European-Israeli political relations. In the essay, the author illustrates how Israel and often European Jewry have been made to pay for Europe's major strategic mistakes in defense, energy, and immigration policies.

Europe has acted against Israel through voting for one-sided UN resolutions, political statements from EU and member countries, and EU financing of NGOs hostile to Israel.

Israelis and Europeans should not, however, give up hope for better understanding. Israel should take the initiative to see how the damage can be limited without endangering its vital interests or remaining silent about European injustice toward it.

In the second part of the book, fourteen interviewees from Europe, Israel, and the United States discuss major aspects of the European-Israeli relationship.

# Contents

- *Manfred Gerstenfeld*: Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss?
- *Yehezkel Dror*: The EU and Israel: Radically Different Worldviews
- *Hildegard Muller*: Israel and Europe: The Positive and the Negative
- *Dore Gold*: Europe's Consistent Anti-Israeli Bias at the United Nations
- *Johannes Gerster*: Confronting European-Israeli Misunderstandings
- *Shmuel Trigano*: The European Union: Continuously Creating Problems for Israel and the Jews
- *Robert Wistrich*: Something Is Rotten in the State of Europe: Anti-Semitism as a Civilizational Pathology
- *Gerald Steinberg*: European NGOs Against Israel
- *Andrei Markovits*: European Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism: Similarities and Differences
- *Jeffrey Gedmin*: Experiencing European Anti-Americanism and Anti-Israelism
- *Avram Pazner*: Choosing between Israel and the Arabs
- *Freddy Eytan*: French History and Current Attitudes to Israel
- *Zvi Shtaubert*: British Attitudes toward Israel and the Jews
- *Trevor Asserson*: The BBC: Widespread Antipathy toward Israel
- *Mark Sofer*: Israel and the New Accession States of the European Union

## **From the Interviewees**

*The EU and Israel have radically different worldviews as well as value systems. This leads to fundamental disagreements.*

Prof. Yehezkel Dror,  
founding president of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute

*It is very important that Israelis do not have the false perception that their country is being attacked by everybody. Israel has friends in Europe who generally support it.*

Hildegard Muller,  
chairwoman of the German-Israeli Parliamentary Friendship Group

*Europe's voting record at the United Nations shows a longstanding anti-Israeli bias. France plays a particularly negative role in the formation of this position.*

Dr. Dore Gold,  
former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations

*In every society there are opinion leaders. Israel should ask itself how it can reach the heads and the hearts of the European population again.*

Dr. Johannes Gerster,  
representative in Israel of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation

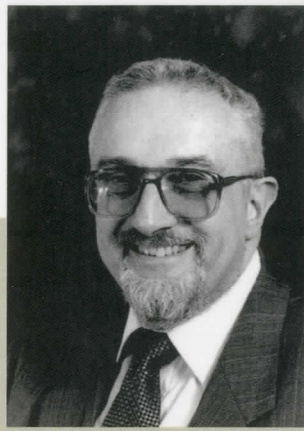
*European public opinion projects its own fears onto Israel, which has to face the Arabs. Europe tries to exorcise these fears by condemning Israel.*

Prof. Shmuel Trigano,  
professor of sociology at the University of Paris-Nanterre

*One serious problem for Jews and Israelis is that part of the slowly gestating European identity is being forged against the United States.*

Prof. Robert Wistrich,  
director of the Hebrew University's Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism

*Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss?* is available from the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs - Price: \$20 - NIS50.

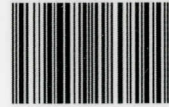


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Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld is chairman of the Board of Fellows of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, an editor of the *Jewish Political Studies Review*, and copublisher of *Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*, *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, and *Jewish Environmental Perspectives*.

Gerstenfeld has been an international business strategist for forty years. His background is in chemistry, economics, environmental studies, and Jewish studies. He is a former director in an international business consultancy whose other shareholders included four of the world's largest banks. He has worked in twenty countries and his clients have included the boards of several of the world's largest multinational companies, as well as governments. He has also been a board member of several public companies including a large investment firm.

Gerstenfeld has authored ten books and edited one. Books of his have been published in five languages, including the Italian bestseller *Revaluing Italy*. He has also published articles in leading newspapers and journals in various countries on political, economic, environmental, religious, and historical subjects.



## From the Interviewees:

*Muslim terrorism against Europe is not the result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even if that dispute were settled, it would go on. This terrorism is directed against Western culture, which many Muslims see as a threat.*

Prof. Frits Bolkestein  
former European Union Commissioner

*I noticed many times that for the Europeans to appear as if they were a factor in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was much more important than playing a real role.*

Efraim Halevy  
former Israeli Ambassador to the European Union

*To hate Jews is a no-no, but to loathe Israel is apparently not. Has Israel become the über-Jew, a legitimate target, while Jews as such are not?*

Prof. Josef Joffe  
publisher-editor of *Die Zeit*

*I do not know any other Arab city in the world that is as democratic as Nazareth. All Arab cities can learn from it, and that includes Amman and Cairo, let alone Riyadh and Damascus.*

Prof. Anton Pelinka  
director of the Institute of Conflict Research at Vienna University

*The standards for judging the Palestinians, however, are very low. Most outsiders remain silent on all the problems in their territories. That helps the Palestinians become even more corrupt than they already are.*

Ayaan Hirsi Ali  
former member of the Dutch Parliament

*Berlusconi understood that Israel should play an important strategic role in Italy's foreign policy. Pro-Arab prime ministers in the previous decades, such as the Christian Democrat Giulio Andreotti and the Socialist Bettino Craxi, had created an imbalance in Italian positions toward the Middle East.*

Giuliano Ferrara  
founder and editor of *Il Foglio*