

ISRAEL, AMERICA, THE JEWS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

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For all the coverage given recently to the resurgence of antisemitism in Europe, one key component of the picture has been missing: the European Union itself. Whether it is the Union's relationship with Israel, its relationship with the United States, or the mindset of EU officials and policy makers, it is impossible to make a judgement on the nature and causes of the so-called 'new antisemitism' in Europe without looking at the influence of the European Union. This chapter attempts to do that.

Whereas it is a relatively straightforward task to pinpoint antisemitic acts in the various member states – the most difficult element is simply one of categorisation – attempting to delineate the influence of the European Union itself on European antisemitism is far more nebulous. For one thing, before assigning responsibility to the European Union for elements of the wider European antisemitism, one has first of all to analyse the broader picture. That means – assuming for these purposes that there is indeed a resurgence of antisemitism – looking at its origins.

The European Union certainly has deep – and often good – relations with Israel. Trade comes close to \$24 billion dollars annually – two-fifths of Israel's total foreign trade. On 13 December 2004, for instance, Israel and the European Union agreed to a twenty-two-page 'Action Plan', developed as part of the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The Action Plan is intended to deepen not merely economic ties, but also political links. Yet there could be no clearer example of the basic EU mindset than the immediate response of almost all of Europe – governments, civic society and media alike – to the collapse of the Israel–Palestinian peace talks in 2000. It was decided immediately who was to blame: Israel. Indeed, when the Palestinians returned to violence and terror, it was Israel which was seen as the guilty party for its oppression of the Palestinians.

There is, of course, nothing to be gleaned, in itself, from the fact that the European Union has been the single largest financial backer of the Palestinian Authority (PA), donating some \$10 million a month to the PA – a total since 1994 of around \$1.5 billion. What is disturbing, however, is the Union's repeated failure over many years, until very recently, to respond to documents and investigations which have shown that the PA abused these funds, using them to finance terror.

Die Zeit, for instance, which discovered consistent misuse of EU money, reported that 'the politicians in Brussels are ignoring what the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) chief (Yasser Arafat) is doing with EU development funds. They have also financed Arafat's security apparatus, which was trained by the German Federal Intelligence Service and is now suspected of terrorist activities'.¹ *Die Zeit* showed that the European Union supported the Palestinian Authority Television Service, PA-TV, for years. The support was intended to promote 'the creation of an open and pluralistic information system, and thus the establishment of a democratic Palestinian society'. In reality, PA-TV has always shown inciting sermons on behalf of the PA, including vitriolic antisemitic remarks and encouragement to terror.²

Die Zeit found that the PA paid salaries to public employees in Israeli currency based on a much lower than actual exchange rate. The result was that the PA earned \$2.5 million a month from EU aid and that some 14 per cent of the PA's monthly budget of \$85 million was unaccounted for. PA officials acknowledged the discrepancy in exchange rates but said that the practice is used to maintain a cap on public-sector salaries.

In the summer of 2001, just as the European Union was reaching a decision to support Arafat directly, the chairman of the PA was caught red-handed in the planning of an arms shipment. The

Karine-A, discovered by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on 3 January 2002, originated in Iran and was carrying weapons destined for the Gaza Strip. In addition, in May 2002 Israel released documents seized during raids on PA buildings in the West Bank.³ The documents showed how the PA financed terror by funnelling money from its official budget, financed mainly by Arab and European states, to Fatah and Tanzim branches in the West Bank. The PA thus created an infrastructure of terror activists in dozens of local branches. The money was drawn from the PA's salaries account and transferred via the office of Marwan Barghouti, Fatah's leader in the West Bank, to tens of provincial Fatah branches and sub-branches in the West Bank.

Although EU assistance was suspended following the discovery of these documents, and Chris Patten (the Commissioner then responsible) decided that there was insufficient control of the use of EU funding and appointed the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to oversee it, he nonetheless decided to resume funding immediately afterwards. In November 2000, Olivier Dupuis, a Belgian MEP, inquired whether the EU Commission 'considers it acceptable that EU financial assistance is being used to stir up hatred of the Israeli people'. Mr Patten replied blithely, 'We have found no evidence of EU funds being used for any purposes other than that for which they were intended.'⁴ The Rotterdam *NRC Handelsblad*, a left-of-centre Dutch newspaper, put Mr Patten's insouciance into context, reporting that the European Union deliberately refrained from monitoring the misappropriation of its funding. It quoted EU diplomats as saying that the Union quite deliberately ignored the issue of the diversion of European aid money to finance terrorism and corruption because it feared that to do otherwise would jeopardise the resumption of the Middle East peace process. An EU diplomat also said that the monitoring of Arafat's budget by the IMF could not prevent European money from being used for terrorist purposes either: 'Everybody has known for quite some time now that money ended up in the wrong hands. Officially, however, they feigned ignorance so as not to jeopardize attempts to revive the peace process. The IMF, too, did not want this to happen,' he told the newspaper.⁵

In contrast to the European Union's *modus operandi*, the United States stopped funding the PA after the start of the September 2000 uprising, when the PA was unable to account for where the money went. The United States provides \$75 million a year in humanitarian aid to the Palestinians, but it is channelled through NGOs, not via the PA. Such an option seems not to have occurred to Mr Patten.

In September 2003, the IMF reported that between 1995 and 2000 Yasser Arafat diverted £560 million from the PA's budget into a special bank account under his personal control. The IMF statement was the result of the first indisputably authoritative investigation. Karim Nashashibi, the IMF's representative in the West Bank and Gaza, reported that an audit had 'uncovered the diversion of revenue from the budget to a special bank account controlled by President Arafat'. Chris Patten repeatedly expressed the European Union's approach towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and thus repeatedly showed up the inconsistencies in that approach. Speaking to the European Parliament on 12 December 2002, he stated, 'The only way of returning to meaningful negotiations is to embark once and for all on the path laid out in the Mitchell report . . . I confirm our strong call for the parties to implement the Mitchell report without delay.'⁶

Fine words, with just one small problem: the Mitchell Report stated that the Palestinians must end the violence, and that after this is done, the two parties should carry out confidence-building measures in order to facilitate efforts towards the implementation of the agreements they have signed. Yet many of the suicide bombings have been carried out by terrorists connected to Fatah, the PA's terror department. In December 2000, Sakhr Habash, a Fatah official, told the PA daily *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida* that the uprising was being orchestrated by Arafat:

The leadership of the PA remained the source of authority, and it alone was the factor capable of leading the operations of the Intifada throughout the homeland. I can say for certain that brother Abu-Ammar [Arafat] is the ultimate authority for all operations, and whoever thinks otherwise does not know what is going on.

The European Union has consistently chosen to overlook such inconvenient facts. Indeed, Mr Patten's attitude to the conflict typifies EU elite opinion. In this view, Yasser Arafat was guilty, at worst, of failing to denounce suicide bombings with sufficient vigour. Israel, by contrast, as a democracy, 'contradicts much of what it stands for', as Mr Patten put it. That confidence-building measures are indeed now indeed being carried out, with Israel having left Gaza and with the PA under the new leadership of Mahmoud Abbas, should not blind us to the behaviour of the European Union in less propitious circumstance – behaviour, and an attitude, which will resume should the situation deteriorate once more.

The fracas in November 2003 over the suppressed report into antisemitism by the European Monitoring Centre of Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) is a further illustration of EU attitudes. The story is clear, even if the motivations of the EUMC board members are far from that. At the beginning of 2003, the eighteen members of the board, which includes representatives of EU states, the European Parliament and the European Commission, decided, for hotly disputed reasons, to shelve publication of a report which it had commissioned from sociologist Professor Werner Bergmann and historian Dr Juliane Wetzel of the Centre for Research on Antisemitism (ZFA) at Berlin's Technical University.

Unauthorised copies of the report were, inevitably, made available almost immediately on the web. Not only did EU leaders back the decision to suppress the report, but the centre then threatened legal action against those MEPs who attempted to have it published. Only in the face of overwhelming pressure did the EUMC back down and agree to release it.

The authors found that hatred of Jews is flourishing in Europe across all boundaries and ideologies, including the extremes of both left and right. The breakdown of the peace process has allowed antisemitic leanings, long suppressed among senior Church officials and the intelligentsia, to break free. The report notes that an increase in the extent of antisemitic activity has been observed in most EU countries since the beginning of the present intifada, which they conclude

points to a connection between events in the Middle East, with criticism of Israel's policies, on the one hand, and mobilization of anti-Semitism on the other. This trend makes it difficult to differentiate between legitimate criticism of Israel and expressions of anti-Semitism.

The authors based their conclusions on examination of thousands of newspaper articles and documents on antisemitism that were held by the EUMC-affiliated Information Network of National Focal Points from the then fifteen EU member states. But board members refused to accept the report. In the words of one, quoted in *Ha'aretz*, it was seen as 'biased, inflammatory and prejudiced.'⁷ Another member, Danish law professor Ole Espersen, said the study was regarded as 'unsatisfactory', with some members considering that it ought to have addressed anti-Muslim sentiment. 'Anti-Semitism is nonexistent in my country,' Espersen declared, 'but we have a lot of problems with hostility toward Muslims'.⁸

The public reason given for the cancellation was an inconsistency in reporting the data. The data from Austria, France and Germany were comprehensive, but those from other countries, such as Great Britain and the Netherlands, were partial (as if that in itself were not eloquent testimony to the seriousness, or lack of it, with which anti-Jewish attacks were treated). The EUMC's director Beate Winkler, said that the period May–June 2002, the time period which the researchers had been instructed to study, was in fact 'unrepresentative'.

The authors, however, had a different story to tell. They said the explanation was simple: the EUMC was dissatisfied with their findings, which contradict the view that violent antisemitism is the preserve of the right. Indeed, the EUMC had, since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, already published three reports dealing with 'Islamophobia', in which use was made of similar data on hate crimes against minorities with no qualms about the reliability of those data. Bergmann reported EUMC representatives as telling him that

it might be counterproductive in fighting racism in Europe to report the Moslem responsibility for attacks on Jews, and that they were uncomfortable with the link being

established between opposition to Israel and anti-Semitic violence. We detailed the motives of anti-Semitism, and noted that there was a close connection between criticizing the U.S. and Israel, that anti-Americanism was closely connected to anti-Zionism and criticism of Israel. This was a point they clearly did not like.⁹

Wetzel concluded that 'they refused to publish it because it clashed with political correctness'.¹⁰

But it is not enough simply to harangue the European Union, and its policy makers, for their attitudes, however blatant they may be. We need to look at what lies behind such behaviour, and why they behave as they do towards Israel. It is my contention that the anti-Israel slant (we will leave accusations of antisemitism until later) of much of the European Union's policy, and its citizens' views, stems directly from a profound, deep-seated anti-Americanism.

This is not the place for a detailed retelling of the origins of the European Union, but it is undeniable that much of the philosophical and political underpinning of the European project is – quite explicitly – based on constructing a 'counter-balance' to the United States' otherwise unchallenged global dominance. German and French politicians have consistently viewed, and spoken of, the United States as representing the epitome of crass materialism and what David Marquand refers to as 'casino capitalism', in contrast to the more cultured, equitable politics of Europeans.

Rosenfeld describes how German anti-Americanism has deep roots:

Urbanization, commercialization, secularization, social mobility, mass culture, meritocracy, democracy, feminism – these and other components of modernity were considered unwelcome encroachments on traditional ways of life. In opposing them, German critics of the United States tended to conflate fears and resentments regarding America's alleged imperial hegemony with similar fears regarding imagined Jewish money, power, influence, and control.¹¹

Indeed, as Max Horkheimer put it decades ago 'everywhere that one finds anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism is also prevalent'. In seeking the cause of the cultural and political malaise at the time he wrote, he argued that people 'find the Americans and, in America itself, once again the Jews, who supposedly rule America'.¹²

Dan Diner writes that, after the German defeat in the First World War, it became commonplace to characterize America, according to the words of Werner Sombart, as a 'state of Jews' (Judenstaat). In particular after Taft's presidency, this view saw the 'Jewish' influence on public life in the United States as having gained the upper hand. Jews were thought to be pulling the strings in the trade unions, which were also centres of power and influence. During the war they succeeded in moving into big capital and supposedly profited substantially from Allied war loans. Jews were also believed to have considerable intellectual influence. In early nationalist literature, for instance, Wilson's Fourteen Points were depicted as a product of Jewish minds. The 'enslavement' of Germany was also ascribed to the Jews.¹³

One can only speculate as to the extent to which such deep-seated views of Jewish 'control' of the United States buttressed the support which Gerhard Schröder received when he turned on the anti-American tap in his desperation to win the 2002 election for the Chancellorship. For most of the run-up to the election, Schröder trailed his Christian Democratic Union rival, Edmund Stoiber. Two factors lay behind his resurgence and victory: the domestic issue of a severe flood in the east, and the sudden vehemence of his anti-Bush rhetoric. President Bush was, he said, 'playing around with war'. He would not 'click his heels' to an American commander-in-chief or support 'adventures' in Iraq. In speaking like this, Schröder was simply tapping into an existing feature of German culture, although he did seem to give licence to even wilder rhetoric from others, such as the justice minister, Herta Däubler-Gmelin, who compared President Bush's tactics in Iraq to those of Hitler: 'Bush wants to divert attention from his domestic problems. It's a classic tactic. It's one that Hitler also used.'¹⁴

The unspoken assumption behind such views, and the link between anti-Americanism and antisemitism, was brought out into the open by Rudolf Scharping, Schröder's former defence minister, who, at a meeting in Berlin on 27 August 2002, was reported as having argued that President Bush was being encouraged to go to war against Iraq by a 'powerful – perhaps overly powerful – Jewish lobby'.¹⁵ (When Scharping sent a denial to the *New York Times*,¹⁶ he said he did not 'blame American Jews' for President Bush's Iraq policy but then referred to the 'understandable' interests of American Jews – conceding the very point which he denied, that there was a particular and separate Jewish interest, as if there was one uniform 'Jewish' view of Middle East policy.)

Aha! The Jewish lobby. Perhaps the most widely used trope of European 'anti-Americans' is their obsession with the Jewish lobby which apparently runs US foreign policy. Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, Elliott Abrams, William Kristol and assorted 'neo-conservatives' (shorthand in the lexicon for 'imperialist Jews') have all been accused and convicted at the bar of EU opinion of pushing the moronic George Bush into implementing their Manichean plans to subordinate the rest of the world to the United States, and the rest of the Middle East to Israel.

In which vein, step forward Gretta Duisenberg (wife of Wim Duisenberg, the outgoing president of the European Central Bank), who notoriously draped a Palestinian flag from the balcony of her home in Amsterdam. Mrs Duisenberg had previously waved the flag at a pro-Palestinian rally in April 2002 – at which, according to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, such delightful chants as ' Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the Gas' were given voice.¹⁷ After putting up with this for weeks, some Jewish neighbours asked her to remove it, to which she responded with the comment that 'rich Jews' are responsible for 'the oppression of the Palestinian people'.

Or so she was reported as saying in the Dutch press. Mrs Duisenberg sought to clear up a 'misunderstanding' and published her own account of the conversation with her Jewish neighbours: 'I did not say that rich Jews but rather that the rich Jewish lobby in America maintains the oppression of the Palestinians. Every President who is elected and who wants to be re-elected must do what this lobby wants.' Her critics 'will have to come up with something better than childishly accusing me of being guilty of anti-Semitism'.¹⁸ Clearly, the idea that a 'rich Jewish lobby' determines US policy is so uncontroversial and so obvious a statement of fact that no reasonable person could possibly take offence. (When Mrs Duisenberg was asked how many people had signed an anti-Israel petition she was organising, she replied, 'six million'.)

In November 2002, Otto von Habsburg, heir to the former Habsburg monarchy and a long-standing MEP from Bavaria's Christian Social Union, revealed why the United States was threatening Saddam:

If we consider America's internal politics, then we find that it is split in two halves. On the one hand, the Defence Department, in which the key positions are held by Jews; the Pentagon is today a Jewish institution. On the other hand, the blacks are in the State Department: for instance, Colin Powell or especially Condoleezza Rice. It is an internal conflict between hawks and doves. Currently, the Anglo-Saxons, that's to say the white Americans, are playing a relatively minor role.¹⁹

A matter of days after these rantings, the 90-year-old Habsburg was being feted in the European press for his longevity, with not a word of criticism for his odious views. Munich's *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published a glowing tribute.

This theme – that the Jews/neocons/imperialists/warmongers are on the march and are running the United States – has become ever-present in the European media and is taken as read by the European elites. Take the *Financial Times*'s contribution – headlined 'America's Democratic Imperialists' – in March 2003: 'Some people say' (the journalistic formulation which means that anything, however lacking in evidence, can then be printed) that Iraq policy has been determined by neocons. 'Most of the first generation of neo-conservatives were Jewish; just about all of the later neocons were.'²⁰ Have a guess what comes next. John Rosenthal describes the piece:

[T]he alleged internal opposition to the ‘neocon’ faction in the White House was supposed to be provided by none other than Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice – here gropingly identified as ‘realists’ rather than ‘blacks’ – and, furthermore, in complete harmony with Otto von Habsburg’s account, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, and John Bolton – in effect, the presumptive ‘white Americans’ or ‘Anglo-Saxons’ – were explicitly set apart from the ‘neocons’.²¹

On the same day as the *Financial Times* piece was published, the French foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin, was quoted attacking the ‘pro-Zionist lobby’ of Paul Wolfowitz, Elliot Abrams and Richard Perle in the Bush administration. Those scheming Jews; they really do run everything.

The range and extent of these beliefs shows that such a view of US policy is not merely the preserve of extremists but is shared by mainstream European political figures, Christian Democrat, Gaullist, Social Democrat alike.

As Rosenfeld puts it,

[A]nti-Semitism and anti-Americanism reveal certain structural similarities and often take recourse to a common vocabulary of defamation and denunciation. While their developmental histories may differ, the hostilities they release may converge, driven as they are by the same negative energies of fear, anger, envy, and resentment.²²

Josef Joffe, editor of *Die Zeit*, sees the links:

Images that were in the past directed against the Jews are now aimed at the Americans: the desire to rule the world; the allegation that the Americans, like the Jews in the past, are invested only in money and have no real feeling for culture or social distress. There are also some people who connect the two and maintain that the Jewish desire to rule the world is being realized today . . . by the ‘American conquest’.²³

Indeed, one cannot look at recent events without being struck by how the expressions of virulent hatred directed at President Bush tend to be accompanied by similar antagonism towards Ariel Sharon, portrayed either as the president’s willing accomplice or even as the cause of all problems in the first place. In his penetrating analysis of this phenomenon, Alvin Rosenfeld refers to a slogan seen on banners at European anti-war rallies: ‘Hitler Had Two Sons: Bush and Sharon’.²⁴ These attacks often take the form not just of denunciations of the leaders, but delegitimation of their countries themselves.

But it is not just Sharon. He is representative of his country, a brutal society ruled over by war criminals.²⁵ The Vatican’s *Osservatore Romano* refers to ‘Israel’s aggression turning into extermination’. Norbert Blum, a former German cabinet minister, speaks of ‘Israel’s ruthless war of destruction’.²⁶ In this respect, Israel has much in common with its bedfellow, the Great Satan – the United States. The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk recently described the United States and Israel as the world’s only two ‘rogue states’.²⁷ As the French thinker Alain Finkielkraut puts it, the doctrine of ‘original sin’ has become the doctrine of ‘original oppression’. America and its agent Israel can never be redeemed. The two must both die for their crimes of ‘original oppression’.²⁸ Given the US–Israeli relationship, with their shared political values, their shared enemies and the \$2.7 billion a year in economic aid, it is clear where blame for the world’s troubles lies: the Jews, and the Jewish lobby in the United States, which is working towards Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilisations as a matter of policy.

One of the most thoughtful analyses of the European context is provided by John Rosenthal.²⁹ In pointing to the ‘ethnicization’ of political discourse and political life which is at the heart of the European Union’s development, he offers a convincing (albeit partial) explanation for the rise of the new antisemitism. As he puts it,

The introduction of ‘ethnic groups’ as virtual actors in political life has taken place largely under the innocuous-sounding covers of ‘regionalism’ and ‘minority rights.’ The traditional states of Europe are supposed to be inhabited, apart from the members of their ‘majority’ nations, by those of any number of other ‘nationalities’ or ‘national minorities,’ each

reputedly concentrated in regions to which they are 'autochthonous' and some being in principle just 'branches' of the 'majority' nation of a neighbouring state. As they are evidently not constituted by political membership in the state – or, in other words, by the *citizenship* of their countries of residence, which the putative members of these 'national minorities' in any case hold – such 'nationalities' must, then, be conceived in 'ethnic' terms, that is, as being constituted by real or imagined commonalities of 'culture' and ancestry.

Rosenthal describes how the development of a 'law of ethnic groups' (in German, '*Volkgruppenrecht*') in many ways supersedes existing state boundaries, as seen in documents such as the European Charter on Minority and Regional Languages and the Framework Convention on Minority Rights. This can be seen most clearly in the Balkans.

Systems of government have been devised and are in the process of being implemented that compel parliamentarians and government officials to act, in effect, as the guardians of the interests of their putative 'ethnicities.' Ethnic Croat officials in Bosnia are thus supposed to represent 'Croat interests', or ethnic Albanian officials in Macedonia 'Albanian interests', and so on. The so-called Annan Plan for the reunification of Cyprus, devised in consultation with European officials and incorporating existing European norms in anticipation of Cyprus's accession to the EU, exhibits analogous features. While it promises the administrative 'reunification' of the island, it would in fact guarantee a permanent spatial and institutional segregation of the island's residents within their respective ethnic 'communities'.

(Indeed, Peter Glotz – the German representative to Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's 'Constitutional Convention' – suggested forms of such ethnic-national representation as a substitute for 'one man-one vote' across the European Union.) As Rosenthal writes,

The racist dementia reflected in Otto von Habsburg's supposition that Paul Wolfowitz represents Jews or Condoleezza Rice represents 'blacks' is, in short, a dementia with which Europe as a whole is increasingly afflicted – so severely that it is attempting to translate its affliction into political practice.

Here is the crux of it:

According to the advocates of a Europe of regions and ethnicities, a European nation or nationality must be 'autochthonous' – meaning presumably that members of it have lived on the European continent for a very, very long time – and be concentrated (i.e., its members must be concentrated) in some 'relatively well-demarcated traditional area of settlement.' Jews obviously, at least as they are usually viewed, meet neither of these criteria. In the terminology of the 'law of ethnic groups,' they are not 'autochthonous' but rather 'allochthonous' or, more simply put, *foreign*. The same goes for the members of more recent immigrant groups, such as Turks or Algerians, who, inasmuch as they are 'allochthons,' are likewise conspicuously excluded from the protections laid down by the European conventions on 'minority rights.' European 'regionalism' and the 'law of ethnic groups' represent a threat to Jews. They convert an individual's 'Jewishness' from a private matter of personal history (or, indeed, pre-history) into a matter of public interest . . . All of this amounts, in effect, to a renaissance of the 'blood and soil' ideology whose disastrous consequences for Jews and other 'non-indigenous' persons in Europe in the past century are well enough known . . . The dangers represented by a resurgent ethnicist or ethnic-national ideology for Jews in Europe are especially grave in light of the simultaneous resurgence, under the banner of 'anti-globalization,' of a vaguely 'leftist' ideology that stigmatizes cosmopolitanism – that traditional marker of the 'uprooted,' 'wandering' Jew in the anti-Semitic *Weltanschauung* – and blames the 'anonymous power' of financial markets – that most important channel of supposed 'Jewish influence' according to the same – for much of the world's problems.

In this context, the hold of the anti-globalisers on much of European opinion is especially pertinent. As Dan Dinar writes,

People are losing their compass. A worldwide stock market, a new form of money, no borders. Concepts like country, nationality, everything is in doubt. They are looking for the ones who are guilty for this new situation and they find the Jews.³⁰

The French Jewish leader Roger Cukierman refers to an antisemitic 'brown-green-red alliance', which links together all previous forms of antisemitism: the right's idea of a fifth columnist, with no loyalty other to him- or herself and undermining of national culture; the left's idea of capitalists controlling the international economy; and the blood libel of Jews who murder.

The anti-globalisers and extremists of right and left have a common cause: they loathe the very idea of Israel. There was nothing more natural for the French activist José Bové than visit Yasser Arafat in Ramallah in 2002. 'They're trying to impose an apartheid system on both the occupied territories and the Arab population in the rest of Israel,' Bové said. 'They are also putting in place – with the support of the World Bank – a series of neoliberal measures intended to integrate the Middle East into globalized production circuits, through the exploitation of cheap Palestinian labour.'³¹

But as Mark Strauss asks:

Why only Israel? Why didn't Bové travel to Russia to demonstrate his solidarity with Muslim Chechen separatists fighting their own war of liberation? Why are campus petitions demanding that universities divest funds from companies with ties to Israel, but not China? Why do the same anti-globalization rallies that denounce Israel's tactics against the Palestinians remain silent on the thousands of Muslims killed in pogroms in Gujarat, India? Israel enjoys a unique pariah status among the antiglobalization movement because it is viewed as the world's sole remaining colonialist state – an exploitative, capitalist enclave created by Western powers in the heart of the developing world.³²

It is, of course, not merely the activists who regard Israel thus. The very culture of Brussels is suffused with a form of superior contempt for Israel. Explanations abound, from Israel's supposed uncouth militarism and readiness to use force to the perceived decline in Israel of secular politics and the rise of Jewish religious extremists. But – even without the added extra of the antisemitism explored here – the most fundamental is also the most obvious. The European Union is still viewed by many, if not most, of its major individual players as an alternative bloc to the United States, providing a more egalitarian – and thus civilised – pacific and 'social' model. Israel's close identity with, and support from, the United States marks it down *ab initio* as something very different. Add to that the way the two respond to the defining issue in Israeli politics – terror – and the picture is complete. Where Israel and the United States seek to defeat terrorism, the European Union seeks to explain and appease it. As Keridis puts it,

Since 1945 Europe has evolved into a space where the use of force in inter-state relations has not only become illegitimate but virtually unthinkable. Out of the devastation of two world wars, a strong peace camp emerged in all West European nations. While particularly strong among the Left, the peace camp encompasses the whole political spectrum in West Europe and no counter-balancing war camp exists, unlike in the United States . . . Over the past decades, Europe has gone 'soft,' under-investing in defense and withdrawing from foreign commitments in order to support an expanding social welfare state at home under the benign protection of the U.S. This is the fundamental policy choice upon which the whole project of European integration rests, thus generating the thorny problem of how Europe will manage to develop a robust international voice. Law and an intricate web of regulations have taken the place of force, negotiations have supplanted the role of coercion, and cooperation and trust in international institutions have replaced unilateralism. This set of trends is increasingly putting Europe at odds with the U.S.

On the contrary, to many European eyes, Israel, a nation confronted with a pronounced security threat, remains a militarized society . . . The arrival to power of a new European generation, marked not by the experiences of the Second World War and the Holocaust but by the revolutionary 1960s, has put a distance between Israel and the European

consciousness. This reality, when coupled with Israel's victories in battle and its present overwhelming military superiority, makes it hard for Europeans to justify Israeli militarism. Currently, Israel's military is no longer engaged in 'gallant' wars of survival like in 1948, 1967, or 1973. On the contrary, its operations in Lebanon in 1982 and against the Palestinians possess all the dirty aspects of counter-insurgency and have galvanized vehement opposition even within Israel itself, let alone within Europe.³³

This is how the Brussels culture of an elite which regards itself as above base politics, above base electorates and above base history – which sees itself, in fact, as the instrument of human progress (defined as the European economic and political model) – intertwines with deep-seated prejudice, ignorance and didacticism. So convinced is the Brussels elite of the rectitude of its own worldview that, by definition, anything which departs from it is flawed, if not morally wrong.

This is the context in which formal EU–Israeli relations need to be viewed. There have been a number of agreements, such as the 1995 Association Agreement and the same year's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (the Barcelona Declaration). And although much has been made of Israel's inclusion in the European Neighbourhood Policy, the fact that it also includes Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine – and the Palestinian Authority – means that Israel could hardly not have been included. Of all of these, Israel is the only one which could readily, in theory, be admitted to the European Union.

The 'Action Plan' signed in 2004 certainly presses all the right buttons. According to the most detailed report,³⁴ the European Union and Israel are poised to enhance political dialogue and cooperation. The inclusion of political dialogue is actually a key new feature of the agreement. It is also one of the ENP's most challenging novelties. Previously, 'political dialogue' was a European euphemism for severe criticism of Israel and a means to create inroads for involvement in the Oslo peace process. Although Israel was reluctant to include this provision, it was introduced in a manner acceptable to Israel, including such sensitive areas as human rights and nuclear proliferation. This can be seen through the number of ways in which the two sides are committed to building upon their shared values and interests:

1. Cooperating in the battle against racism, xenophobia and antisemitism through the dialogue between cultures and religions
2. Emboldening the fight against global terrorism
3. Curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
4. Promoting the protection of human rights and improving judicial and police cooperation
5. Identifying ways to cooperate vis-à-vis the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, particularly through using the Roadmap peace plan and working towards a permanent two-state solution.

Fine words, and fine intentions. But we have been here before. It will require actions, not words, to demonstrate that the European Union is not, in fact, unbalanced in its view of the Middle East and is indeed an honest broker.

There are two measures of whether that is the case. The first – a more general cultural shift – is imperative but far more difficult and far less likely. But the second – specific actions – are a matter of immediate political choice. In this, at least, there have been some better signs. In the aftermath of the February 2005 Sharm el-Sheikh summit, for instance, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the EU's External Relations commissioner, responded thus to developments in Israeli–Palestinian diplomatic progress:

The European Commission is also contributing to the peace process with the European Neighbourhood Policy, our new initiative to bring our neighbours closer to the EU and create a region of peace, stability and security . . . Through these [Action] Plans we will support confidence building measures between the two sides, and provide a wide range of political and economic incentives, including trade facilitation and cooperation on practical issues such as water, energy, transport and the environment.³⁵

The Industry Commissioner, Günter Verheugen, recently expanded on the possibility of Israel joining the euro bloc: 'Israel will become substantially integrated into European and economic structures, a fully-fledged partner in its single market. In the very long term, I wouldn't even rule out monetary union.'³⁶

The European Union needs, however, to learn to walk before it can run. Whatever the long-term possibilities in some more enlightened eyes, generations of prejudice and ignorance need to be tackled. And in that, the European Union is not the mechanism of progress but its enemy.

NOTES

1 *Die Zeit*, issue 24, 6 June 2002. For an English translation, see <http://www.usefulwork.com/shark/arafatbombs.html>.

2 Examples of PA-TV incitement can be found at Palestinian Media Watch, <http://www.pmw.org.il/report-30.html>, <http://www.pmw.org.il/sitem-010801.html>, <http://www.pmw.org.il/sitem-080801.html> and MEMRI, <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=antisemitism&ID=SP37002>.

3 <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0lom0>.

4 <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/A/JPArticle/Full&cid=1023716522175>.

5 <http://www.imra.org.il/story.php3?id=1195>.

6 http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/news/patten/sp01_627.htm.

7 Sharon Sadeh 'Where Right Meets Left', *Ha'aretz*, 5 December 2003.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Alvin H. Rosenfeld 'Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism: A New Frontier of Bigotry', <http://www.ajc.org/InTheMedia/Publications.asp?did=902&pid=1873>.

12 Cited in Dan Diner *America in the Eyes of the Germans. An essay on Anti-Americanism*, Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner, 1996, pp. 26, 21.

13 Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans*.

14 *New York Times*, 20 September, 2002.

15 William Safire, 'The German Problem', *New York Times*, 19 September 2002.

16 *New York Times*, 4 October 2002.

17 John Rosenthal, 'Anti-Semitism and Ethnicity in Europe', *Policy Review*, no. 121, October–November 2003.

18 Deniz Yücel, 'Palituch am Dekolleté', *Jungle World*, 5 June 2002.

19 The Austrian weekly *Zur Zeit*, November 2002.

20 *Financial Times*, 5 March 2003.

21 Rosenthal, 'Anti-Semitism and Ethnicity in Europe'.

22 Rosenfeld, 'Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism'.

23 Joffe's words cited in Yair Peleg, 'Enemies, a Post-National Story', *Ha'aretz*, English edition, 9 March 2003.

24 Rosenfeld, 'Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism'.

25 Taken from American Jewish Committee report, 'The Mideast Coverage of the Second Intifada in the German Print Media, with Particular Attention to the Image of Israel', June 2002.

26 Paul Iganski and Barry Kosmin (eds), *A New Antisemitism? Debating Judeophobia in 21st Century Britain*, London: Profile, 2003, p.95.

27 Remarks in an interview in the Austrian journal *Profil*, 24 September 2002.

28 Alain Finkielkraut, 'C'est reparti comme en cinquante!', *Le Figaro*, 16 March 2002

29 Rosenthal, 'Anti-Semitism and Ethnicity in Europe'.

30 Mark Strauss, 'Antiglobalism's Jewish Policy', *Foreign Policy*, November 2003.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Dimitris Keridis, 'Europe and Israel: What Went Wrong?'; Gerald M. Steinberg. 'The European Union and the Middle East Peace Process', *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, no. 418, 15 November 1999.

34 'Europe at Israel's shores: The European Neighbourhood Policy and Israel', BICOM, 16 March 2005, <http://www.bicom.org.uk/cgi-local/research/research.pl?id=179>.

35 Benita Ferrero-Waldner, 'What Europeans Want to Tell Israelis and Palestinians', *Le Monde* (French edition), 8 February 2005; see the European Institute website for the English version.

36 Interview: 'An Epoch Is Beginning', *Internationale Politik* (Transatlantic edition), vol. 6, Spring 2005; Avi Temkin and Ronen Lev, 'EU Official: Monetary Union with Israel Possible', *Globes*, January 2005.

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