The Israeli–Palestinian road block: can Europeans make a difference?

ROSEMARY HOLLIS

To begin by answering the question posed: Yes, Europe can make a difference: by adopting a proactive stance on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict which acknowledges, but reconfigures, the estrangement between the parties now rendering peace by integration unworkable. On offer should be an attractive package deal for Israel, stipulating that it give up claims to the West Bank and Gaza including Arab East Jerusalem in return for a special relationship with Europe, including economic and cultural integration with the European Union and NATO guarantees for the security of the Israeli state. This would capitalize on the Israeli preference for separation from the Palestinians and western orientation. The Palestinians would meanwhile achieve statehood in the West Bank and Gaza in return for renunciation of violence against Israel.

There could be a separation fence between the two states, but rerouted from its present course to approximate the ‘Green Line’ and with no Israeli settlements or forces to the east of it. The Palestinian refugee question would be subject to resolution under an international umbrella that embraces all the stakeholders in this issue.

This formula resonates with some existing proposals for a European or UN trusteeship over the nascent Palestinian state, but it is based on separation, not codependence—and, more distinctively, on inducements for Israel extended by Europe. The Arabs in general would be expected simply to tolerate Israel and renounce resort to violence, in keeping with the ‘Arab Initiative’, but would be relieved of any imperative to integrate Israel into the region.

European paralysis on the peace process

Contrary to claims that regime change in Iraq would pave the way for Israeli–Palestinian peace, the two antagonists remain locked in deadly combat. The unilateral implementation by the Israeli government of a separation plan that sections off Palestinian population centres behind a combination of walls and fences will exacerbate rather than resolve the conflict. Yet because the United
States has its hands full with Iraq and electioneering on the home front, Washington is letting the situation ride. In these circumstances Europe could actually break the impasse by reframing its relationship with Israel.

As they stand, relations between Israel and Europe are deteriorating. Anti-Semitism in Europe is an increasingly pressing problem, whether or not it is attributable to the existence of a growing Muslim population. European recipes for solving the Arab–Israeli problem tend to focus on the need for Israel to change policy and the importance of persuading Washington to make it do so. Little thought has been devoted to how to reframe Israeli thinking by inducements rather than pressure, and certainly not as an incentive to detach from the region.

In addition, European thinking about the conflict is dominated by what can best be called ‘the Oslo mentality’—after the process initiated in Oslo that paved the way for Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza in the 1990s as a prelude to a negotiated peace agreement—which makes peace dependent on the Israelis and Palestinians learning to trust each other and finding a way to live together. But the situation on the ground has moved on, and separation is now the dominant principle. Better, therefore, to seize on this and make it work in the interests of a two-state solution, with a state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel, than to lament from the sidelines as the situation drifts towards apartheid.

There are other reasons to be proactive rather than let events take their course. The Israeli leadership refuses to accept European criticism of its policies as anything other than anti-Semitism, which bodes ill for normal diplomatic relations or constructive engagement. The onus is on Europe to find a way to defuse the tensions, disentangle the issues at stake and tackle them constructively.

Meanwhile, the Americans are weighing in with charges that their querulous European allies are part of the problem rather than the solution. The received wisdom in Washington is that it is the Palestinians who, by their failure to curb terrorism, are blocking the prospects of peace. By extension the Americans have little tolerance for what they see as European passivity over the activities of the Lebanese Islamist movement Hezbollah, whose influence they now say extends into the Palestinian community in the West Bank and Gaza.1 They also charge the European Union with allowing funds to pass from the Palestinian Authority (PA) into the hands of Palestinian militants, be they associated with the secularist Fatah movement or with Hamas and other Islamists.

Europe needs to stake out a new position to head off such charges and take an initiative commensurate with its understanding of the problem, both in the interests of peacemaking and to counter Washington’s proclivity for defining the issues in a way that actually limits the options. Both Europeans and Americans

---

1 For an illustration of what the United States may come to demand of the Europeans in this regard see Geoffrey Kemp, ‘Europe’s Middle East challenges’, *Washington Quarterly* 27: 1, pp. 163–77. The author argues for a closer relationship between Europe and Israel but arrives at this prescription from a totally different line of argument to the one presented here. To follow his line would require Europe to accept a string of US recommendations and prescriptions which would not promise the same benefits for peacemaking as are posited here.
The Israeli–Palestinian road block

are now wedded to the notion of a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict; but, contrary to the US assumption that this can come about only if the Palestinians change their spots, the Europeans see Israeli policy as the problem. They should concentrate their efforts there, but in a more constructive way.

Deferring to Washington

One issue on which Europeans have managed to find a common foreign policy is the Middle East peace process. In adopting the Venice Declaration of 1980, the European Community endorsed the right of Palestinians to self-determination, and over the next two decades its members led the way towards articulation of a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian dimension of the conflict. But it took a US initiative for this prescription to take precedence over other formulae for achieving peace.

In a ground-breaking speech of June 2002, George W. Bush was the first serving US president to make Palestinian statehood, alongside Israel, the officially preferred US recipe for conflict resolution. Yet there was a caveat. The president made realization of his vision conditional on political reforms that would remove veteran Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat from the centre of power in the PA in the West Bank and Gaza. Notwithstanding the fact that Arafat had been elected president of the PA in an election largely funded and monitored by the European Union in 1996 under the Oslo accords, the EU opted to go along with this requirement in the interests of reactivating the peace process.

The EU decision to seize on the Bush vision and work with other members of the so-called Quartet (the United States, the United Nations and Russia) to devise a plan for realizing it led to the creation of the plan known as the ‘road map’ which has replaced the Oslo process as the internationally supported route to peace. The trouble, of course, is that each of the key players has a different interpretation of how to implement it and all believe that unless and until the United States is engaged it could languish in abeyance indefinitely.

Meanwhile, the Israeli government of Ariel Sharon, while paying lip service to the road map, has signalled that if the Palestinian leadership fails to implement Israel’s demands, it will take unilateral steps to impose a settlement which the Palestinians will not like but cannot prevent. Sharon’s plan involves completion of a security fence that will separate Palestinian population centres in the West Bank from Israeli-held territory and Jewish settlements. Some settlements will be removed, according to Sharon, starting in the Gaza Strip, to make the separation complete.

As originally conceived—by figures on the left of the Israeli political spectrum—the new security fence was expected to follow closely the Green Line or armistice line of 1948 between Israel and the West Bank. It was intended to build confidence between the protagonists, by reducing the incidence of terrorist bombings by Palestinians infiltrating into Israel, and thereby assist the cause of peace. As it has turned out—under the auspices of the right-wing Likud
leadership—the fence does not approximate to the Green Line, but rather digs deep into the West Bank and is expected completely to encircle the Palestinians in areas amounting to only about 40 per cent of the whole West Bank.

Sharon’s scheme does not accord with the spirit of the road map and short-circuits the prospects for a viable Palestinian state. The qualification ‘viable’ is central to European thinking on the requirements for peace. US officials have also expressed disquiet at the implications of Sharon’s strategy, but the general view prevails that Washington will not act decisively to confront the Israelis in the period leading up to a US presidential election. If it does not, Sharon will have another year to create facts on the ground.

According to past form, when the United States is not engaged the peace process atrophies, and the Europeans have seemingly resigned themselves to this. So too have the Arabs and Israelis. If they make any effort at all at such times, it is usually to try to persuade Washington to do more. That was what the road map was all about. The governments of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia helped the Quartet to fine-tune the formula. A Palestinian Task Force worked with EU and World Bank officials throughout 2002 and into 2003 to meet US demands, and Palestinian aspirations, for more financial accountability and to streamline the decision-making process in the PA.² The British government tried to use its leverage with Washington in the run-up to the Iraq war to press for the launch of the road map, once it was ready, in December 2002. When the United States held back in deference to Israeli qualms, Prime Minister Tony Blair even branched out on his own, court ing Sharon’s then-rival for the Israeli premiership, Amram Mitzner, and convening a London conference between the protagonists; but only the Palestinians took this seriously, Mitzna lost his election bid and Sharon’s government attacked Blair for interfering in Israeli domestic affairs.

When finally the road map was formally launched, by the United States on 30 April 2003, it announced that reform of the Palestinian political system was to include the appointment of a prime minister—the obvious purpose of which was to circumvent the role of the president of the PA, Yasser Arafat. The first incumbent, Mahmoud Abbas, a veteran negotiator, received US and Israeli support on the grounds that he would be prepared to confront and curb Palestinian militants in a way that Arafat had failed to do; and indeed, a period of calm did follow agreement by leaders of the Islamist movement Hamas to a temporary truce or hudna which Abbas promoted.

However, it was at that juncture, in late summer 2003, that the moment of opportunity to restart the peace process was lost, and with it all the hard work which had gone into the road map and Palestinian reform. When the hudna failed to prevent another Palestinian suicide bombing against Israelis, the latter cracked down anew and assassinated one of the leading Islamist proponents of

² The Middle East Programme at Chatham House recently completed an EU-funded project on the issue of corruption and reform measures in Palestine, conducted in partnership with Palestinian and Jordanian research institutes and pollsters.
the truce. In retrospect, US officials and others acknowledged that they had neglected to press the Israelis sufficiently for goodwill measures on their side to assist Abbas in making his position credible with the Palestinian public. Instead, he was pilloried as a vassal of the Americans and the hudna collapsed.

The explanation offered for US hesitation at the time cited American sympathy for the plight of the Israelis living under the threat of terrorism. As analysts Steve Simon and Dana Allin have written, the Americans believe it is Palestinian violence and the acquiescence of the Palestinian leadership in this which is blocking a negotiated peace. By contrast, they contend, the Europeans hold the Israelis principally to blame for their tactics in maintaining the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Consequently, they argue, even though the United States and Europe are agreed on the desirability of a two-state solution and on the road map as a way to realize this, they are pulling in different directions.

What now prevails is fatalism and paralysis, in both the United States and Europe. The Americans are waiting for a change on the Palestinian front, the Europeans for a shift on the Israeli side. Meanwhile Sharon is proceeding with his schemes and everyone else is hoping in vain that the United States will do something to hold him back.

Clutching at signs of movement on the Israeli front, the Europeans have greeted with enthusiasm the two recent Israeli–Palestinian initiatives undertaken to demonstrate that agreement is possible. One, a putative two-state agreement, was sealed in Geneva by a team of former Israeli officials led by Yossi Beilin and prominent Palestinians, headed by Yasser Abbed Rabbo who still retains the ear if not the support of Arafat. The other is more an agreement in principle, concluded between Ami Ayalon and Sari Nusseibeh, which purports to trade implementation of the right of return of Palestinian refugees—to homes from which they or their forebears fled in what is now Israel in the 1948 war—for statehood in the West Bank and Gaza. Washington has made encouraging noises but not adopted either plan in place of the road map. The Europeans are apparently reluctant to do otherwise themselves, no doubt on the assumption that without US endorsement it would not make much difference anyway.

The stakes for Europe

There is some debate in Europe about what to do next. In official circles the view prevails that continued failure to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is detrimental to regional stability and a spur to the recruitment of Islamist terrorists. Given Europe’s proximity to the Middle East and the presence of both Jews and a growing Muslim minority inside the European Union itself, the implications are if anything more immediate and dangerous to social stability in Europe than in the United States. However, even if EU members can agree on the road map, they cannot concur on what to do about it in the absence of an

---

American lead.

As was demonstrated in the crisis over Iraq, there are strong differences between European governments on how to manage the transatlantic alliance. Among the new EU member states there is still a strong sense of gratitude to the United States for its stand against the former Soviet Union and support for their independence following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1999. Fear of Russian resurgence influences their judgements on defence issues. Meanwhile, not all the veteran members of the EU agree on how to respond to US assertiveness, disenchantment with multilateral agreements and strong-arm tactics. Tony Blair may have been out in front in choosing to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Bush administration after 11 September 2001, especially over Iraq, but the Spanish and Italian leaders were also on board for the war.

Perhaps more to the point, the Europeans have their own more pressing preoccupations now that Iraq has been occupied, since the whole EU project is in flux pending agreement on a new treaty. Acquiescence by France and Germany in the postwar UN resolution 1511 of 16 October 2003 regarding Iraq and more recent diplomatic moves towards reconstruction speak of a desire to repair their rift with America and move on, even if they cannot summon much enthusiasm for Washington’s approach to remaking Iraq.

Yet along with their preoccupation with expansion of the Union and lack of appetite for another crisis in relations with the United States, the Europeans have been shocked into recognition that the whole European project requires a more decisive and effective foreign policy stance. In the absence of an EU mechanism for coordinating their collective positions more effectively, the French, German and British foreign ministers joined forces in autumn 2003 to defuse a crisis with Iran over nuclear proliferation. The three went to Tehran to persuade the Iranians of the importance of signing the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and their success was broadly welcome in Washington.

Herein lies the key to what Europe could do to break the road block on the Israeli–Palestinian front. In their diplomacy towards Iran the Europeans have offered a combination of inducements as well as threats, carrots as well as sticks. They apply the same principles elsewhere. On various occasions, including with respect to Iran, Syria, Libya and the Palestinians, the Europeans have played ‘good cop’ to Washington’s ‘bad cop’—except with Israel, where the roles have more or less been reversed. The Europeans could transform the chemistry of European–Israeli relations and thence the configuration of the conflict if they gave serious consideration to finding their own inducements for Israel instead of relying solely on threats.

More pressure could backfire

Latterly, in so far as there is a debate in the EU regarding measures which might send a message to Israel, only negative ones have been considered, revolving around whether or not to impose some sort of sanctions on the Israelis and for
The Israeli–Palestinian road block

how long the PA should be propped up when that effectively means financing the Israeli occupation.

Europe is Israel’s most important trading partner and some in the European Parliament talk of using this as leverage to apply pressure on Israel. So far this approach has produced some results, but nothing decisive for peace. Under the terms of Israel’s partnership agreement with the EU, Brussels has sought to distinguish between goods made in Israel and those produced in Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, on the grounds that the latter should be penalized with customs duties waived for the former. Application of this politically motivated policy depends on accurate labelling of the origins of goods. When Israel obfuscated on this, the EU threatened to suspend all tax breaks on imports from Israel, which eventually prompted it to introduce clearer labelling.

Another possible measure mooted in Europe would involve withdrawing financing for the PA so as not to facilitate the occupation. Conscious that European taxpayers are doling out millions of euros monthly to pay PA salaries and fend off starvation in the occupied territories, and aware that under the Geneva Conventions responsibility for the population under occupation should lie with the Israelis, some Brussels bureaucrats have ruminated on the possibility of withdrawing that support to force the Israelis to admit their responsibilities. The International Red Cross has already moved in this direction.

Yet if the EU were to take such drastic steps, they would invite a humanitarian catastrophe; and more direct and punishing trade sanctions could backfire totally. There may be some Israelis so committed to Palestinian statehood as an antidote to their problems that they would encourage the EU to take tough measures to force their leadership to respond. However, judging by what happened to the Israeli peace movement when the Palestinians resorted to suicide bombings—which decimated the peace camp, disillusioned many on the left and drove some into the arms of Sharon—the majority of Israelis can be expected to respond to EU pressure by closing ranks in a mood of defiance and alienation. They could also look to the United States to stand by them in an hour of crisis that would compound transatlantic tensions.

Were the Europeans to apply the same logic to Israel that they tend to use with the Arab states and Iran, they would presage their diplomacy on the actual prevailing concerns among Israelis rather than on wishful thinking. When dealing with Iran’s nuclear programme the Europeans knew that they should offer an alternative security framework for Iran if they demanded that it renounce a nuclear deterrent. Similarly, they assume that the PA needs some evidence that curbing terrorist violence will bring rewards in order to give them credibility with the wider Palestinian community.

By the same token, a rigorous analysis of Israeli fears and security considerations will produce a parallel logic. Already feeling besieged and threatened by a Palestinian population increasingly dedicated to the elimination of the Jewish state, the Israelis can hardly be expected to respond to EU pressure by volunteering to evacuate the West Bank and Gaza and so (in their view) enabling the
Palestinians to do their worst.

More crucially, Israeli views on Europe are obviously mixed, reflecting dark memories that do not apply in its relations with the United States. Zionism was founded as a response to anti-Semitism, principally in Russia, but took off when the worst nightmare of the Jews transpired in western Europe under Nazism. Feeling beleaguered as they do now, many Israelis, including Ariel Sharon, not only equate European criticism of contemporary Israel with anti-Semitism but also discern a resurgence of what some describe as an endemic European hostility to Jews.

The accusation of an inherent European illness of anti-Semitism is a misrepresentation and a distortion, but it is fuelled by and confused with European left-wing and Muslim solidarity with the Palestinians. It is therefore incumbent on the Europeans to acknowledge how Jewish history in Europe informs Israelis’ thinking today about their statehood, the Palestinians and their relations with contemporary Europe. In other words, the Europeans have to confront the fact that, whether they themselves see it this way or not, they are part of the problem and a player, both historically and currently, in the Middle East conflict. The Palestinians have said so all along.

**Time for a new approach**

The Europeans could usefully reflect on what they are asking of the parties to the conflict and consider how they would react if they were in receipt of such advice. Since the foundation of the state of Israel, if not before, the Europeans have asked of the Arabs, including the Palestinians, not only that they accept Israel and live in peace with it, but also that they learn to trust the Israelis. In other words, not only should they lump it but they must like it too. In the context of the US-declared ‘war on terror’ and intervention in Iraq, and given the hatred between the Israelis and Palestinians as a result of the intifada and Israel’s response to it, this is simply unrealistic.

When the Europeans argue that it is in Israel’s best interests to end the occupation and negotiate a two-state solution, even with the international engagement in the process envisaged in the road map, the Israelis are not impressed. On the contrary, they tend to deride the Europeans as pro-Palestinian, incapable of appreciating what it feels like to be in their position, hopelessly naive and/or anti-Semitic. Given the EU’s own paralysis without an American lead, not surprisingly it is also seen as ineffectual.

So the Europeans, along with others in the international community, including the United States, need to abandon the ‘Oslo mentality’—namely, the fixation with getting the parties back to the table, confidence-building measures and a negotiated peace. The Israelis want to be rid of the Palestinians, either by imposed separation that corrals the Palestinians into walled enclaves or by expulsion, be this by stealth, by making their lives intolerable or by force. The remaining Israeli proponents of a bilaterally negotiated peace are too marginalized to counter this prevailing preference for forced separation, and even they
The Israeli–Palestinian road block

look to the international community to make negotiations work.

For their part, the Palestinians want an end to occupation. But those wanting more than that, namely the elimination of the state of Israel and revenge, are growing in number and influence as the violence continues. Belief in a negotiated solution that produces two states, side by side, has eroded. The combination of continued expansion of Israeli settlements and non-cooperation with the various peace moves, including the road map, has convinced Palestinians that the Israelis want them defeated and will not give up the West Bank and Gaza. Believing that when Sharon speaks of statehood for the Palestinians he means their acceptance of his walled enclaves, they prefer continuation of the fight. They see what happened with South Africa and dream of turning Israel, along with the West Bank and Gaza, into one state with a Palestinian majority that must eventually be recognized.

However, Sharon has pre-empted them. Palestinians are not one community in Israel’s midst. Some are second-class citizens of pre-1967 Israel. East Jerusalemite Palestinians have a separate status. Those in the West Bank and Gaza are a third category—and then there are the refugees, some in the occupied territories, others in camps in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, and many more with citizenship or residency in Jordan and beyond, across the region and the world. They are divided, with separate struggles and priorities. And Israelis would countenance expulsion and war rather than give up the Jewish state. So the Palestinian vision of a binational state is no recipe for resolving the conflict. Hence the constituency in Israel for some sort of two-state solution, provided they can get the guarantees they crave that this would end Palestinian ambitions to take them over.

A combination of war and peacemaking in the second half of the twentieth century did point the way to a general accommodation, on the basis of a two-state solution. This was the underlying logic of the Oslo process, and the last best hope of resolving the resurgent conflict is to rescue the two-state formula now. But not only does the Palestinian state have to be what the Europeans mean by ‘viable’; for the foreseeable future, separation rather than interdependence or integration with Israel also has to be part of the formula.

What Europe can do

By volunteering to take some innovative steps and risks themselves, and to share the burden of reconfiguring the prevailing regional dynamic with both the Arabs and the Israelis, the Europeans could turn what is at present a zero-sum configuration into a win–win situation.

Europe and Israel have the option of reshaping their relationship in recognition of their shared history and fraught relations; but if this is to happen the initiative has to come from Europe. It can reconfigure Israeli thinking by volunteering to integrate Israel into Europe’s economic and cultural space instead of demanding that it integrate with the Arab world. More, Europe can undertake to be Israel’s strategic depth, in security terms, thus enabling Israel to disengage
from the Arab world instead of asserting its presence there. NATO would be the obvious guarantor of Israeli security in this reconfiguration. The quid pro quo for Israel would have to be withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, i.e. separation to a sufficient degree to enable the creation of a viable Palestinian state.

What is proposed here is a package deal for Israel: a new and much closer relationship with Europe, forged and formalized with both the EU and NATO, in return for an end to the occupation. There would be a parallel proposal to the Palestinians: acceptance of statehood in the West Bank and Gaza in return for renunciation of claims to all historical Palestine—something already achieved under the Oslo process, but lost during the intifada. The future Palestinian leadership would be determined by new, internationally monitored elections, but all contenders would have to accept the two-state solution. State-building would be assisted by the EU and the United Nations. The security arrangements, and supervision of the separation between Israel and the Palestinian territories, would be overseen by NATO.

It is no use thinking that the rights of the Palestinian refugees can be traded away without consulting them—they and the Arab host countries would be under no legal obligation to agree to this. But while all these stakeholders need to have a voice and internationally backed choices, the Palestinians under occupation, refugees among them, are in more immediate physical peril; so it would make sense to aim for statehood first, and institute a separate international process for resolving the refugee issue.

This strategy would inevitably alienate and isolate those Israelis dedicated to holding on to the West Bank and Gaza, and those Palestinians and their backers in the region dedicated to the destruction of Israel. But it would support and enlarge the constituency in Israel that wants separation and an end to conflict, while Sharon’s separation plan promises only indefinite confrontation and conflict. Similarly, the strategy would enhance and expand the minority which was once and could be again a majority among Palestinians who would compromise on their maximalist aspirations and quest for revenge against Israelis in return for viable statehood, international recognition and peace.

A policy that is responsive to the currents of opinion and sensitivities in Israel would seem more appropriate than one that alienates the general populace. The peace camp may have been thrown into disarray by Palestinian terror tactics, but it has not disappeared completely. The unofficial Geneva agreement and Ayalon–Nusseibeh initiative bear testament to this. So too does the Right to Refuse movement among Israeli soldiers and conscripts who have refused to serve in the occupied territories. Some air force pilots have also refused to carry out bombing missions in which civilians are likely to get hurt. There has even been criticism from senior ranks of the Israel Defence Force at the tactics used to suppress the Palestinian intifada on the grounds that these are counterproductive, radicalizing the population and creating more recruits for the extremists. However, the peace camp in Israel is too weak to predominate without help. More pressure would only undermine that camp. Its members need arguments
The Israeli–Palestinian road block

to bolster their position, proposals which would substantiate a vision of peace. Europe can provide these.

The emphasis on separation, of course, has implications for intra-Arab relations. Most peace proposals take for granted Palestinian economic dependence on Israel. The new approach posited here assumes that this will have to end. Israeli security concerns have reduced and limited the number of Palestinians able to find work in Israel, and unemployment among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza has rocketed to between 50 and 80 per cent. Prices of goods are determined both by prevailing prices in Israel and additional costs imposed as a result of loading and unloading at security checkpoints and general inaccessibility. The Palestinians do not have a real economy. They cannot realize their comparative advantage in the wider region through low labour costs.

Separation from Israel will necessitate alternative outlets for labour and goods. If not through Israel, the Palestinian economy in the West Bank must function through access to Jordan, and for Gaza the only alternative to interchange with Israel is commerce with Egypt. Jordan is not going to welcome economic competition with the West Bank. An answer would be to open up a new economic area, ideally driven by the Iraqi economy as it revives. The most innovative approach could be to create a common market between Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine, supported by the EU. Initially uncompetitive businesses would go under, but in the longer term economic activity could thrive and drive growth. The attractions for inward investment would be enhanced.

Further down the road, economic interchange with Israel need not be ruled out, but this would be a matter of choice. Both Israel and the Arab states, the latter ideally linked into a common market, would continue their partnership agreements with Europe, under the Euro–Mediterranean Partnership Programme, with Iraq joining the fold.

Conclusion

The proposals made here are designed to address two pressing issues simultaneously: the danger of Israeli separation policies rendering the Israeli–Palestinian conflict more intractable; and Europe’s need to rethink its relations with Israel in the light of rising anti-Semitism in Europe. The intention is to reframe the problem and inject new thinking. At the very least, this could prompt the Europeans to confront some of their reluctance to face facts; at best, it could inject new life into the Israeli and Palestinian peace camps.