

GERMAN AND AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES
ON ISRAEL, PALESTINE, AND THE
MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

AICGS GERMAN-AMERICAN ISSUES

06

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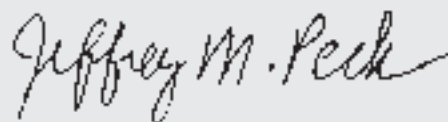
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FOREWORD

Perhaps there is no issue today that better reminds us of the link between culture and politics than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East. Our decision to address this topic within the German-American context in two workshops—one in Washington, D.C. and one in Berlin—from which these essays are drawn, adds a further cultural and political dimension. As we all know, this long-standing transatlantic partnership suffered setbacks in the wake of the Iraq War, another Middle East flashpoint. While Chancellor Merkel seems to be on her way to mending this tarnished alliance, the incisive Israel-Palestine struggle in the Middle East remains more contentious than ever.

AICGS has made a unique commitment to include discussion of values, interests, and behaviors in its attention to politics, as Lily Gardner Feldman's introductory essay points out. As the Director of the Culture and Politics Program at AICGS, I think our Institute sets an important tone by its willingness to include, along with traditional empirical research from Political Science and Economics, cultural and historical interpretations. Even conservative journalist David Brooks, in a *New York Times* editorial reprinted in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung's* English insert (6 March 2006) entitled "Questions of Culture" writes, "If the big contest of the 20th century was between planned and free market economies, the big question of the next century will be understanding how cultures change and can be changed, how social and cultural capital can be nurtured and developed, how destructive cultural conflict can be turned to healthy cultural competition."

In this new millennium, there will be in fact no greater challenge or "competition" in Brooks' more capitalist terminology, than solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a fair and balanced way. Germany/Europe and the United States have an enormous investment in a peaceful solution. Both sides must recognize, as is pointed out in these essays, how the interests and values of policymakers and journalists frame and shape the discourse about this topic. Additionally, in this case, they need to take into account the cultural and religious values that condition and determine the decisions that are made. In particular, as is shown increasingly in Europe, they should acknowledge that international tensions and domestic interests mutually affect each other—for example, the tense and sometimes violent relationships of minority Arab Muslims in France or Muslim Turks in Germany to the national majorities, anti-Semitism directed against Jews in France or Germany because of anger over Israel's policies, or the caricatures of the prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper that causes violence in the Middle East. In both the domestic and international realms, it is essential to understand the differences between Muslim and Judeo-Christian cultures, often simplistically represented today as a pre-modern tribal world against the modern civilized West. As the conflict plays out around questions of integration or assimilation of two different cultural and religious value systems, differentiation, specificity, and sensitivity are required on both sides. Broadly speaking, taking account of culture contributes to understanding how meanings and interpretations of words and images moving back and forth at unprecedented speed assume the power and significance they have to move people to either peace or violence. As contentious and difficult as the Middle East conflict is, it may serve as a model, or at least an impetus for Germans/Europeans and Americans, as well as Israelis, Palestinians, and the rest of the world divided along such lines to recognize how culture matters, particularly for coping with deeply felt emotional beliefs and values that move individuals and groups to action. I think that this collection of essays by internationally recognized scholars and journalists will contribute to this understanding.



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

STEVEN ERLANGER became the Jerusalem bureau chief of *The New York Times* in August 2004. Previously he was the Culture Editor of *The New York Times*, and before that, *The Times's* Berlin bureau chief. He was bureau chief for central Europe and the Balkans, based in Prague, from 1999, after having served as chief diplomatic correspondent, based in Washington, since 1996. Before that, he had served nearly four years in the Moscow bureau, first as a correspondent, from 1992, and then as bureau chief, from 1994. From 1988 to 1991, he was Bangkok bureau chief and Southeast Asia correspondent. After joining *The Times* in September 1987, he spent a year as a metropolitan reporter. Before coming to *The Times*, Mr. Erlanger worked for *The Boston Globe* for eleven years. From 1975 to 1983, Mr. Erlanger was a Teaching Fellow at Harvard University, first in the College and then at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He also was the assistant editor of the Nieman Reports, the journal of Harvard's Nieman Foundation for Journalism in 1975. He shared in a Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting for a series on Al Qaeda and global terrorism awarded in 2002 and received ASNE's 2001 Jesse Laventhol prize for deadline reporting for his work in the former Yugoslavia. He won the German Marshall Fund's Peter Weitz Prize in 2000 for excellence and originality in reporting and analyzing European and transatlantic affairs and the Robert Livingston Award for international reporting in 1981 for a series of articles about eastern Europe. Mr. Erlanger received an A.B. degree, magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, in political philosophy from Harvard College in 1974.

LILY GARDNER FELDMAN is currently a Senior Fellow at the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS)/The Johns Hopkins University where she is completing a book entitled *The Principle and Practice of Reconciliation in German Foreign Policy: Relations with France, Israel, the Czech Republic and Poland*. Since coming to Washington in 1988, Gardner Feldman served as the first Research Director of AICGS and as a Resident Scholar at Georgetown's BMW Center for German and European Studies. From 1978 until 1991, Gardner Feldman was a professor of Political Science at Tufts University in Boston, and a Research Associate at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs and Center for European Studies. Her research and writing have focused on German-Jewish relations, specifically the German-Israeli relationship and the growing ties between American Jewry and Germany. Much of her work, which includes Germany's role in the European Union, examines the interplay of morality and pragmatism in German foreign policy. Recent publications in this vein include: "Aussöhnung und Versöhnung in der deutschen Aussenpolitik: Das Beispiel Israel," in Gerhard Beestermöller and H-R Reuter, eds., *Politik der Versöhnung*; and "A Three-Dimensional View of German History: The Weight of the Past in Germany's Relations with Jews in Germany, Israel, and the Diaspora" in James Sperling, ed., *Germany at Fifty-five: Berlin is Not Bonn*.

HELMUT HUBEL has held the Chair of Foreign Policy and International Relations at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena, Germany since 1998. Before taking this position, he held the positions of Professor and Visiting Professor at the Universities of Dresden, California at Irvine, and Koblenz-Landau, Visiting Lecturer at the Universities of Jyväskylä and Tampere (Finland) and Research and Senior Research Fellow of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) in Bonn and the Institute of East-West Security Studies in New York City. Prof. Hubel has researched and written on, among other topics, the end of the East-West conflict, regional conflicts, North European security problems and relations with Post/Soviet Russia, EU Enlargement, and on U.S. and European policies towards the Middle East.

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TONY SMITH is Cornelia Jackson professor Political Science at Tufts University. His fifth book, *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy*, was published by Harvard University Press in 2000. Smith also has published books on world affairs with Cambridge, Cornell, Norton, and Princeton. His next book, to be published later next year by Routledge, Taylor-Francis, is entitled: *A Pact with the Devil: The Bush Doctrine, Liberal Hawks, and the Betrayal of International Liberalism*.

BASSAM TIBI is Professor of International Relations in Göttingen and also A.D. White Professor at Large at Cornell University. Before moving to Germany in 1962, he received his education in Damascus in Islamic and western style schools and completed his high school education there with the French Baccalaureat. His academic training in Social Science, Philosophy, and History was at the Goethe University of Frankfurt a.M., where he received his Ph.D. in 1971. Tibi received his Dr. habil. from the University of Hamburg. After teaching in Frankfurt and at the University of Heidelberg, in 1973 Dr. Tibi was appointed as Professor for International Relations at the University of Göttingen, where he has been the Director of the Center of International Affairs since the late 1980s.

ANGELIKA TIMM received a Ph.D. in the History of Palestine from Humboldt University, Berlin where she was the head of the Seminar for Israel Studies until 1998. She was a recipient of the Volkswagen fellowship at the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies in Washington, D.C. (1994/95) and had a research position at the Free University, Berlin, from 1999 to 2002. Timm is now teaching as a DAAD guest professor at the Department of Political Studies at Bar-Ilan University in Israel. She is author of *Jewish Claims Against East Germany: Moral Obligations and Pragmatic Policy* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1997); *Hammer, Zirkel, Davidstern—Das gestoerte Verhaeltnis der DDR zu Zionismus und Staat Israel* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1997); *Israel—Geschichte des Staates seit seiner Gründung* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1998); and *Israel—Gesellschaft im Wandel* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2003).

CLEMENS WERGIN has held the position of Editorial Writer/Assistant Opinion Page Editor for *Der Tagesspiegel*, in Berlin since 1998. He also writes a foreign policy blog (flatworld.blogg.de) for *Tagesspiegel Online*. Wergin also writes foreign policy columns and editorials for media outlets including the *Jüdische Allgemeine* (the weekly paper of Germany's Jewish community), and the *Financial Times*. He provides foreign policy commentary for Deutsche Welle (German public television and radio, broadcast worldwide) and also appears occasionally on BBC World TV and Radio. Wergin was an Arthur F. Burns Fellow at the *Chicago Tribune* in 2003 and held internships in Rome and Tel Aviv. Wergin holds an M.A. in History, Islamic Studies, and Journalism (1998) from Hamburg University. His Master's thesis was on "The Relations between Israel and the European Communities 1958-1989."

INTRODUCTION: WHOSE VALUES? WHOSE INTERESTS? THE MULTIPLE INFLUENCES ON U.S. AND GERMAN/EUROPEAN POLICIES TOWARD THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

LILY GARDNER FELDMAN

“Germany’s foreign and European policy is based on values and interests.”
Angela Merkel, inaugural address, 30 November 2005

“The United States has long championed freedom because doing so reflects
our values and advances our interests.”
George W. Bush, National Security Strategy, 16 March 2006

Our search for compatibility and cooperation in U.S. and German/European policies should heed leaders’ declarations that actions in the international arena are driven by both values and interests. The identification of twin motives, however, begs the question of whose values and whose interests propel American and German/European policies toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The following essays refer to both governmental and non-governmental actors, to both regional and third-party players. The purpose of this essay is to augment their findings by highlighting the values and interests that operate at multiple levels. Understanding both differences and similarities as to motive is crucial to the exercise of projecting the likelihood of transatlantic alliance-building on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Domestic Determinants

Angelika Timm focuses on a range of German interest groups whereas Tony Smith centers on the “Israel lobby” in the United States. Timm emphasizes the role of the “special relationship” between Germany and Israel, determined by both moral imperative related to the Holocaust and to pragmatic interests. This combination of motives is also evident in two sets of German economic players: the trade unions

and business, both of whom are significant for Israel, which counts Germany as its second most important trade partner after the United States. Active links between the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* and the Israeli *Histadrut* started already in 1950 and predated official relations, established in 1965. The salience of the union connection for official relations has been expressed in the position of a Social Affairs attaché in the German embassy in Israel and the Israeli embassy in Germany. Via seminars, exchanges, and visits, with particular emphasis on the younger generation, German-Israeli union encounters address common economic and social problems of industrialized societies, as well as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the creation of connections to Palestinian unions.

As Timm points out, German economic interests in the Middle East are dominated by the lure of the large Arab market, but major German companies, such as DaimlerChrysler, Lufthansa, and Siemens, have also invested significantly in Israel in the last few years. Their motivation is mainly economic (the advantages of Israeli strength in science and technology), but values also play a role, for example, in the decision not to withdraw in times of political crisis as an expression of historically-determined solidarity with the Jewish

state. German companies have also promoted triangular relations among German, Israeli, and Palestinian economic actors as a vehicle to support peace.

While important, German non-governmental actors such as these economic entities do not approximate the vibrancy of American interest groups when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as Timm notes. There is, however, a real growth potential given the post-Cold War and post-9/11 acceptance by the German government of a key role for civil society in foreign policy.

Smith also alludes to both values (Israel as a democracy; Israel as a post-Holocaust state) and interests (Israel's security and intelligence contributions) when discussing the power of the "Jewish lobby." While observing a decline in this cachet since the end of the Cold War, Smith does not share the Walt-Mearsheimer perspective that support of Israel violates American interests. The excessively Realist perspective of Walt and Mearsheimer denies interest-group and value-based behavior as a basic tenet of American foreign policy, and thus offers room to neither the religious right as a source of support for Israel independent of the Jewish lobby nor to the nascent Arab lobby. The Arab lobby cannot match the traditional role of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) (its current influence may be waning due to the criminal indictments for espionage against two former staffers), but it should not be overlooked. For example, the Arab American Institute, created in 1985 and headed by James Zogby, offers twenty-one pages of names of Arab Americans at the national and state level involved in "public service and political life." The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee was founded in 1981 by former Senator James Abourezk, and is led today by former Congresswoman Mary Rose O'Kearney. Both organizations are vigorous advocates of Arab American interests on both domestic and foreign policy issues, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Beyond organized and institutionalized groups, attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are revealed in surveys in both the United States and Europe/Germany. Here we again see differences across the Atlantic, with American opinion supporting Israel and European opinion more critical of the Jewish

state and favoring Palestinian positions. A Pew poll in 2004 indicated that 40 percent of Americans surveyed were more sympathetic to the Israeli side in the conflict, with only 13 percent more sympathetic to the Palestinian side. A February 2006 Gallup poll put those figures at 59 percent and 15 percent respectively. In the Eurobarometer 151 poll of fall 2003, mentioned by Bassam Tibi, the EU-15 ranked Israel first as a threat to world peace; the German result of 65 percent was the third highest and larger than the EU average of 59 percent, and confirmed a 2001 poll of the Institut für Demoskopie that placed Israel second to last in a sympathy ranking (equal to China). In the Pew and EU polls, there was an additional difference regarding degree of involvement of the government, with a plurality of American opinion at 46 percent sensing the United States was doing enough and 81 percent of EU-15 opinion calling for more involvement (the German figure was 77 percent).

American data reveal ethnic views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a way that is absent in European data, perhaps illustrating the routinized role ethnicity plays in American foreign policymaking. A 2003 poll by the Arab American Institute and Americans for Peace Now showed comparably high figures on the part of Jewish American and Arab Americans regarding support of a two-state solution (82 percent and 92 percent respectively for "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree"). Majorities of both ethnic groups gave "fair" and "poor" grades to the Bush administration for its handling the conflict (69 percent of Jewish Americans and 57 percent of Arab Americans). Religious views on the conflict are also available, but not from these two ethnic groups. For example, the 2005 Zogby poll of Catholics suggested that 69 percent of respondents felt that Israel should be a fundamental goal of American foreign policy and 71 percent thought the establishment of a Palestinian state should be a central aim.

Events in the Region

Domestic factors in the form of sectional organizations and public opinion help shape policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but events in the region also provide impetus. In both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, there have been recent "tipping points," inaugurating new political trends. Tibi under-

scores the emergence of political Islamism in the January 2006 legislative election of Hamas and its subsequent formation of a government. Hamas' central goal, as delineated in its 1988 charter, is permeated with religious language, calling the land of present-day Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza a religious endowment (*waqf*) open only to Muslims, and the struggle (*jihad*) to liberate the land a religious obligation. By contrast, the president of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Al Fatah head, Mahmoud Abbas, represents the secular, interest-based Palestinian perspective, which now seeks an accommodation with Israel on the long-term issue of peace and an immediate arrangement with western donors to reduce the deleterious consequences of their financial isolation of Hamas by funneling aid directly to the Palestinian people. Hamas and Al Fatah are now locked in a bitter dispute as to who represents the Palestinian people and who is the face of Palestinian democracy.

The religious identification of Palestinians with Hamas is unclear, whereas Hamas' popularity as a past source of social and economic welfare is highly transparent. As an indication of the resonance of Mahmoud Abbas' message among the Palestinian population, his followers refer to a recent public opinion poll of Palestinians that shows support for agreement with Israel and a two-state solution at over 65 percent, consistent with a January 2005 poll conducted jointly by the Palestinian Center for Policy Research and the Harry S. Truman Institute at the Hebrew University under the auspices of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

The joint poll also revealed that 55 percent of Israeli respondents supported a two-state solution, foreshadowing the public support for the new Kadima party in Israel's March 2006 election. The November 2005 creation of the centrist Kadima and Sharon's disavowal of Likud ideology toward the West Bank and Gaza marked the second tipping point in the Israel-Palestine region. The Kadima-led coalition government of Ehud Olmert has assigned high priority to the implementation of his "convergence plan" that would exchange withdrawal of settlers from isolated West Bank settlements for reinforcement of the large settlement blocs, and to completion of Israel's security barrier. Likud's disappearance from government

suggests a decline in the influence of the religious-ideological settler movement, but religion will still play a role as Olmert needed the ultra-religious Shas party to forge his coalition, and Shas has not accepted the convergence plan.

Olmert, like Sharon with the 2005 Gaza disengagement, has been motivated by a pragmatic recognition of demographic realities in the occupied territories. Olmert is ready to talk to Palestinians who acknowledge Israel's existence, such as Abbas, but not to Hamas, which vows never to recognize Israel. The likelihood of Israel's unilateral redrawing of borders remains high. Olmert responded to the new Hamas government by ceasing to pass on the tax and customs revenues it collects for the Palestinian Authority. Some Israelis, such as Avi Primor, the former Israeli ambassador to Germany, argue that a pragmatic Israeli approach dictates interaction with Hamas on functional issues to prevent a further growth in its popular support.

U.S., German, and EU Policies

The statements by President Bush and Chancellor Merkel at the May 2006 centennial celebration of the American Jewish Committee were a reminder of the similarities and differences in approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both championed Israel's inalienable right to exist in secure borders, but Merkel also demonstrated Germany's policy of balance (*Ausgewogenheit*) by alluding to the need for a Palestinian state (a goal Bush has identified elsewhere but not at this Jewish event). Both stressed the importance of freedom and democracy: Merkel underlining Germany's commitment to these values as a result of its Nazi past; Bush characterizing Israel as a "vibrant" democracy, a point often made by German officials. Both emphasized the special quality of relations with Israel, but Bush introduced an additional dimension that made the United States and Israel "natural allies": the importance of religion permeating both societies and polities.

Religion is increasingly a feature of U.S. policy toward the Arab and Palestinian worlds. The United States, especially in the person of Karen Hughes, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, now ranks as one of its main missions the

promotion of “common interests and values between Americans and peoples of different cultures.” A primary focus is interfaith dialogue with Islam, and isolation of Islamism and the terrorists who pursue it, such as Hamas. The German Foreign Office has a similar bureaucratic position—the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Dialogue with the Islamic World—but the emphasis rests on understanding differences rather than commonalities and promoting cultural rather than religious dialogue. In response to the cartoon controversy, EU foreign ministers committed themselves to more intense dialogue with Islam, and in a recent speech, EU External Affairs Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner underscored the need to “enhance cooperation and deepen understanding between peoples, cultures and faiths.” There is the danger of both the American and European approaches proceeding too far in their preferred direction, with American policy obsessing over religion and European policy underestimating its power, as Tibi hints in his reference to religious illiteracy in Europe.

The American and European efforts at dialogue with Islam go hand in hand with initiatives for democratization, but again differences emerge: U.S. policy often amounts to imposition of democratic values from the outside, whereas Germany and the EU aim at the development of civil society from within. The United States appears to be learning in this arena, for example its continuation of aid to strengthen indigenous democratic alternatives to Hamas in the Palestinian Authority, despite a termination of aid to the Hamas-led Palestinian government.

The cut-off in aid, a policy also pursued by the EU, is the primary western response to Hamas’ refusal to adhere to the three principles enunciated by the Quartet (the United States, EU, Russia, UN) in January and March 2006 for continuation of interactions with the new Palestinian government: “[commitment] to the principles of non-violence; recognition of Israel; and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map.” The initial unified view of the four members of the Quartet on non-recognition of Hamas seems to be crumbling, as evidenced by the March 2006 visit of Hamas representatives to Moscow and the April 2006 talks

between European envoys and Hamas leaders in Syria, as well as the May 2006 encounters between EU parliamentarians and Hamas deputies in Gaza. However, Bush and Merkel reiterated their joint, steadfast commitment to the Quartet principles in their May 2006 meeting, which may mean, as often in the past, that Germany is the outlier of EU-member positions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The EU may repeat for the Palestinian Authority the pattern of “constructive engagement” it developed regarding Iran and the Balkans, in contradistinction to the U.S. policy of exclusion.

Dalia Dassa Kaye and Helmut Hubel project the trajectory of U.S.-European cooperation in light of the patterns of the past and the relative weight of what Kaye calls “pragmatism and principle.” Both assessments are measured given the changeability of interests, foreign policy frameworks, developments on the ground, and the structural differences between the two sides. Hubel foresees the EU as a divided actor, and as a junior partner whose soft power mechanisms cannot compete with the hard military power of the United States. Dassa Kaye identifies the EU as an emerging, serious actor in the region whose soft power strengths are being accompanied by hard power initiatives, such as its border assistance mission at the Rafah crossing point between Egypt and Gaza (in which Germany participates). Both Dassa Kaye and Hubel identify the need for new security structures, but differ as to the importance of links between Israel and NATO. The December 2005 Israel-EU Action Plan has solidified and enlarged cooperation between the two sides, and the EU had developed a parallel mechanism with the Palestinian Authority (and with a number of Arab countries). Both agree that while the Road Map is moribund, the Quartet should survive as the main framework for third party policy toward the region.

Media Perceptions of Policy

How is policy, whether U.S., European, Israeli, or Palestinian, received? Public opinion can help shape policy, but it in turn can be molded by media reporting on policy. Clemens Wergin outlines the nature and origins of bias in German print media reporting on the Middle East, whereas Steven Erlanger offers a

personal perspective on the lenses that filter his understanding, as a journalist, of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Wergin's conclusions confirm the findings of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish bias detailed in an earlier study, by the Duisburger Institut für Sprach- und Sozialforschung, of German media reporting on the second *Intifada*. Similar criticisms have been made against American media, for example the *Jerusalem Post's* call for a boycott of National Public Radio for its anti-Israel bias. Perceptions of bias in the American media on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are found equally on the Arab side, for example in a recent *Al-Bawaba* article leveling charges of anti-Palestinian sentiment against *The New York Times* and CNN.

Erlanger's essay demonstrates his effort to report both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by employing both "coldness and compassion," made excruciatingly difficult by the spin doctors on each side of the conflict. He detects no bias, particularly not anti-Semitism, in the attitudes of his fellow journalists. He reminds us of the reality of interests and values, of military power and religious fervor, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict "where both armies and souls contend," as they did many centuries ago.

Conclusion

As Israel develops its policy of unilateralism and Hamas pursues its policy of non-recognition, now more than ever unified, creative external proposals for movement toward peace appear necessary. Differences between the United States and the EU do not preclude cooperation, as long as they are differences in degree and not in kind, and as long as they are respected and understood. Those differences will be colored by both values and interests. In an era of negative coexistence on the ground between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the real danger is one of U.S. and European inattention to this conflict, especially in light of the priority assigned to Iraq and Iran. Germany's role as intermediary between the United States and the EU could be crucial, especially as a guardian of the centrality of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for reasons of both morality and pragmatism.



ESSAYS

THE INFLUENCE OF DOMESTIC FACTORS ON GERMAN MIDDLE EAST POLICY

ANGELIKA TIMM

Most political scientists agree that the Federal Republic of Germany has failed to develop a consistent Middle East policy despite its good and, in some cases, even close relations with most states in the region. From the 1950s onwards, German governments tried to construct a “policy of even-handedness” (*Politik der Ausgewogenheit*) with Israel and the Arab states but could not ignore the impact of the Cold War and the Middle East conflict, the legacy of the Nazi past, and German economic interests. In the 1990s the parameters changed. German reunification, the establishment and enlargement of the European Union, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process influenced and challenged German foreign policy. The Middle East policy of post-reunification Germany is mainly driven by the policy of the European Union, Germany’s economic, political, and security interests in the region, as well as its special relationship with Israel. It is, however, important to explore the extent to which domestic factors influence or try to influence governmental politics.

While the impact of domestic factors on U.S. Middle East policy is well researched, no serious research exists on this subject regarding Germany. Books and articles dealing with German Middle East policy focus mostly on official German politics but rarely analyze domestic aspects. This essay will not provide a complete picture, but will raise some questions that warrant further research.

The Middle East did not play a significant role during the 2005 election campaign, leading some to conclude that either the public is not interested in the subject or that there are no relevant domestic groups involved in Middle East affairs that politicians consider to be important in terms of votes. Even if both assumptions are correct, one should not preclude the existence of domestic interest groups in the future.

Economic Interest Groups

With regard to the Middle East, Germany is interested in securing both unfettered entry into the regional markets and in securing energy resources in the Gulf region. German industrialists must therefore pay attention to the development of economic ties with Arab countries. It thus seems likely that representatives of the business sector would try to influence German foreign policy in the Middle East and—with the help of German politicians—European policy in the region.

The North Africa Middle East Initiative of German Business (NMI) is an example of such an initiative. This Initiative was set up in March 1996 by the Federation of German Industries (BDI), the

Association of German Chambers of Commerce (DHIK), the Federation of German Wholesale and Foreign Trade (BGA), and the German Near and Middle East Association (NuMOV). It was later joined by the Africa Association (AV) and the Association of German Banks (BdB). The chairman of NMI is Axel Wippermann, member of the board of MAN Ferrostaal AG. The initiative views itself as “the guardian of German business interests in the Middle East” and its mission is the expansion of economic cooperation between Germany and twenty-two countries of the region. In February 2005 the initiative held its first financial conference and discussed the ways that German private companies could invest in Arab countries. Although the slogan of the conference was “more security with the help of investment,” Wippermann stated in his opening speech that German investors needed security and stability in the region for it to be viewed as an area attractive to investors. As mentioned on its website, the initiative enjoys “the support of top officials in the German government, [...] chambers and delegates of industry and commerce, as well as German embassies and consulates.”

Other organizations and associations interested in the fostering of economic ties with Arab countries are the German-Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Arab-German Association for Trade and Commerce (GHORFA). Another organization, the German-Arab Economic Forum, holds its annual meetings under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labor. At its seventh meeting in June 2004, more than 600 German and Arab business leaders and politicians discussed possibilities for further cooperation.

Political Activists

There is a broad political consensus regarding Germany’s Middle East policy in general and its special relationship with Israel in particular. All of the political parties represented in the *Bundestag* accept the special German responsibility toward Israel because of the Holocaust. In addition, the parties agree that the Middle East conflict endangers not only the whole region but also impacts security in Europe. For this reason, they encouraged the Oslo

peace process, support the Road Map, and back a two-state solution. While differences of opinion regarding the Anglo-American war against Iraq became obvious in 2002/2003, the guidelines of the Schröder-Fischer government for a balanced German Middle East policy were not questioned.

At the same time, one cannot ignore the voices critical of Israel that emerged during the years of the second *Intifada*. It was, among others, *Bundestag* member Jürgen Möllemann, one of the leaders of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), who attacked Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon during the German election campaign of 2002. Möllemann was at that time FDP chairman in North Rhine Westphalia and stood for twenty-two years as head of the German-Arab society. His hostile stance against Israel and his attempts to appeal to Muslim voters through anti-Semitic rhetoric were part of the FDP effort to win at least 18 percent of the vote in 2002. The Free Democrats failed and Möllemann was expelled from his party in 2002. He was, however, re-elected for a new term as president of the German-Arab friendship society.

Among the political actors to emerge are friendship associations that take a stand for one of the sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The German-Arab Society and the German-Palestinian Society both oppose close political, economic, and strategic relations between Germany and Israel. The German-Arab Society has especially close links to business circles interested in the Arab world. On the other end of the spectrum, the German-Israeli Society seeks to strengthen German-Israeli cooperation and protests any criticism of Israel. All of these associations raise their voices in public and cooperate with the German-Israeli, the German-Arab and/or the German-Palestinian parliamentary groups in the *Bundestag*.

Religious, National, and Ethnic Groups

The churches in Germany do not play a public role comparable to that of the biggest congregations in the United States. Germans tend to be less religious and less interested in religious issues than Americans. Only two thirds of the German population consider themselves to be members of a

Christian denomination; about 30 percent of Germans do not belong to any religious community. The churches participate in political debates but do not pursue lobbying activities in foreign affairs. During the past few years, they more or less supported the Middle East policy of the government and have not made themselves out to be critical opponents. Fundamentalist Christian circles that could try to influence government policy in this respect are not visible and are not expected to play a role in the near future.

Out of the German population of 82.45 million, 7.3 million are foreign citizens (among them 3.5 million Muslims from 41 countries). 750,000 Muslims are German citizens; about 500,000 were allowed to vote in the 2002 national elections. This number has increased during the last few years and will continue to increase in the future. Turkish Muslims form the largest group of immigrants, followed by immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, the Arab states, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

A quarter of all Muslims living in Germany are members of Muslim associations and organizations. Most of these groups operate mosques and support the religious needs of their members but do not play any public political role. At present, no organization can claim to represent the majority of Muslims living in Germany. The largest non-profit umbrella organization is the Turkish Islamic Union for the Institution of Religion (DITIB). It was established in 1985 and had 870 member organizations in 2005. Other umbrella organizations are the Islamic Council for the Federal Republic of Germany (established in 1986) and the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (1994). While the Islamic Council represents mostly ethnic Turkish Muslims, the Central Council defines itself as an organization of Muslims of different nations and attitudes.

The Federal Center for Political Education, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and the private Körber Foundation in June 2004 established a Muslim Academy in Hamburg. One of the main reasons behind this move is the rising number of Muslims in Germany and their growing political potential. The institution considers itself to be an educational institution, not a religious one. Its activities are aimed, first

of all, at Muslims living in Germany. The Academy wants to give these Muslims a platform and inform them and their fellow Germans about all facets of Muslim life in the country. The chair of the academy is Abdul Hadi Christian Hoffmann, a former member of the federal leadership of the CDU who converted to Islam. He is also the Berlin representative of the Central Council of Muslims.

According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Verfassungsschutz*), about 32,000 people are members of the over 200 fundamentalist Islamic organizations in Germany. The security authorities observe them for fear that they could be linked to Al Qaeda or other terrorist groups. On the one hand, if the influence of extremists on the Muslim community in Germany is strengthened, Germany's Muslims could become a serious domestic threat in terms of terrorist attacks and anti-Semitic incidents. On the other hand, one has also to take into account German attitudes toward the Muslim community. Xenophobic tendencies cannot be ignored and are very often linked with anti-Islamic attitudes. Presently, Muslim groups do not influence German Middle East policy and no such influence is to be expected in the short run.

The Jewish community in Germany is comprised of about 120,000 members, and a large number of these are immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Jews in Germany are, as in other countries, emotionally linked to the state of Israel and follow the developments in the Middle East region with interest, sorrow, and fear. Representatives of the Central Council of Jews in Germany also raise their voices when they feel that German politicians or journalists are overly critical of Israeli policies or extend their remarks in a general manner to the Jewish people in Israel and the diaspora. They work to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive in the German public and fight anti-Semitism wherever it occurs. The German Jewish community can be considered an important domestic factor insofar as the German-Israeli relationship is concerned. Jews in Germany attempt to bridge the emotional gap between the two countries, but they have not established strong links with Israeli politicians and/or American Jewish leaders in order to influence German Middle East policy. It is

mostly members of the extreme right in Germany who talk about a “Jewish lobby” and try to explain official German policy toward Israel in this way. The German commitment to Israel is a result of the Holocaust and its tragic legacy, not the result of influence of a “Jewish lobby.”

Conclusion

One should not ignore the influence of domestic factors on German policies in the Middle East. They exist but are not as important as domestic factors in the United States. Whether they can successfully influence policy in the short or long run remains to be seen. Nevertheless, some questions should be raised:

- What is the likelihood that, in the near future, pragmatic business interests become more important than the special responsibility Germany has accepted vis-à-vis Israel? What will be the priorities of the new generation of German politicians and business leaders in the Middle East?
- When, during the second *Intifada* and the last Iraq war, demonstrations in major German cities were held, a large number of Muslims—Turks, Arabs, Palestinians—not only declared their solidarity with the Palestinians and the Iraqi people but also shouted extremist slogans and burned American and Israeli flags. Does the growth of the Muslim population in Germany signal the rise of a new pressure group? Which domestic and foreign factors influence the political thinking and actions of the Muslim minority in Germany? Are there any differences between Turks and other Muslim groups with regard to their attitude toward the Middle East conflict? Is there a generation gap? To what extent does governmental policy influence the political attitudes of Muslims living in Germany? What role do the media play?
- With regard to domestic factors, political movements on the right and left sides of the German political spectrum must be taken into account. There are three political parties and several organizations on the extreme right spreading anti-Israeli

propaganda with clear anti-Semitic tendencies. On the left, we find political organizations vehemently supporting the Palestinian case without taking into account the real situation in the Middle East or Germany's responsibility toward Israel. In addition, the Anti-Deutsche, a leftist group, supports Israel without any reservation and categorizes every critique of the Israeli government as anti-Semitic. What is the potential impact of these groups in Germany? Whom do they attract? Could they become more influential in the future?

In the face of recent developments in Europe and the Middle East, finding answers to these questions is becoming increasingly important and German politicians and civil society activists should not ignore them.

THE DOMESTIC SOURCES OF AMERICAN POLICIES ON THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

TONY SMITH

The beginning of wisdom for anyone studying the domestic sources of American foreign policy is to understand that ours is an interest group society. This means that actors in civil society who articulate their interests through political representatives and parties seldom lose their collective character through a narrow partisan identification that would put all their eggs in one political basket. Instead, interest groups tend to keep a clear sense of their corporate autonomy, which allows them to work at the local or national levels, with a variety of policymakers, and to cross party lines, quite often with ease, in the pursuit of their goals.

The vigor of American democracy noted since Alexis de Tocqueville's time is that civil society remains vigilant against the government by virtue of a keen sense of self-interest and an equally sharp appreciation of what is necessary to change interest group preferences into national policy. The coins of the realm in these movements are money and votes; those who can deliver one or both of these payoffs have access to policymakers and influence on policy outcomes provided they possess a third characteristic: organizational unity.

The power of money arises because the United States does not have more than token amounts of publicly funded campaign finance and contributors can disperse funds nation-wide. The power of the vote arises from a weakly disciplined party system. Such an arrangement allows the public control over its representatives in many ways but, first, through popular primaries, and second, through organizing governmental life according to "checks and balances" such that citizen advocacy groups can always find an attentive ear in some part of the government, especially in the House of Representatives. Yet even

money and votes are not enough if an interest group lacks unity and purpose, goals that are far harder to achieve than may at first seem to be the case.¹

The variety of special interest groups that compete to influence public policy is thus vast but highly structured. Pride of place in obtaining the ear of those in office most certainly goes to economic interests, especially those of corporate America. Still, corporate America is checked by labor, class, and environmental organizations, as well as by deep cleavages within its own ranks as to what public policy should be. Aside from these actors there are those with sectional, religious, gender, or ethno-racial concerns who rally to make their interests heard. The result is a push-and-pull over policy that often results in compromise solutions that themselves are open to amendment in due course. In a word, American democracy is a never-ending struggle of personalities and interests that occurs in a highly institutionalized form, providing stability whatever the mayhem of the moment.

Not that mayhem is always the case. For in some instances, special interests have wrapped things up

for themselves in a manner that allows them virtually to dictate what public policy will be. In such circumstances, their allies in civil society are many, their opponents remain few, and their means of contacting policymakers through their power of the purse and the vote are impressive. Agricultural interests, pharmaceutical corporations, and the insurance, defense, and energy industries are a few of these associations that immediately come to mind.

In the arena of foreign policy, there is wide agreement that the most influential of these special interest groups is the Israel lobby. Observers are in general agreement that this lobby has no significant domestic opponents, that it enjoys the support of powerful allies especially among evangelical Christians, and that its power of the purse is second to none in the American political arena. It also enjoys organizational unity conferred on it by support for Israel through thick and thin, following as matter of course (even if the American organizations sometimes act begrudgingly) measures called for by the Israeli government. The result for nearly forty years now—most students of the matter would date the development with the Six-Day War in 1967 when Israel crushed its Arab enemies, although some would move the development back earlier to the time of the Kennedy presidency—has been a virtual blank check issued by Washington to Israel so far as defending the Jewish state's security needs in the Middle East are concerned.

To be sure, there have been some contentious divisions. Israel has always been worried that American military sales to its Arab neighbors might upset the balance of power in the region (the sale of AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia in the early 1980s is the most celebrated of these cases), while the United States has on more than one occasion reprimanded Israel for the sale—impending or concluded—of advanced technology developed by cooperation between Israel and America to China. Or again, the United States has always seen Jewish settlements in Arab land conquered by the Israeli army in 1967 as a violation of international law and as a major obstacle in the normalization of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

These sometimes serious differences noted, in practice Israel has been handsomely served by its ties with the United States. The \$3 billion in military and financial aid sent annually by Washington to Israel is complemented by preferential purchases of Israeli military equipment by the United States, by tax deductions received by American citizens who act philanthropically toward Israel, and by billions more disbursed to Israel's Arab neighbors annually, in good measure to buy their peace with the Jewish state. Moreover, Israel benefits enormously from the security guarantee implicitly extended to it by the United States. Whether it is by votes in the United Nations, special arrangements for the procurement of advanced weapons systems, or the implied use of American military power to assure Israel's security as in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the most valuable aspect of relations with the United States for Israel has ultimately been in the realm of military security.

The special relationship between these two countries could not have existed so long and run so deep without the ability of the Israel lobby to work in American domestic politics to bring this situation about. During the Cold War, Israel did provide some security advantages for the United States, and there was always a widespread sympathy with the country because of the Holocaust and its vigorous life as a liberal democracy. Nevertheless, with the end of Soviet communism, Israel's net contribution to American security has turned into what many think of as a net deficit. Whatever the respect due the Jewish state for its origins and character, Israeli hard-line policies under Likud governments and the relentless expansion of Jewish settlements on Arab territory have raised doubts as to wisdom of America seconding Israel at every turn.

This said, the immediate reaction to the 9/11 attacks was to suppose that Israeli and American security interests were as one. In the face of Islamic terrorism, how could any distance be put between these two liberal democracies? For a time hard-line arguments were in ascendance: the American attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan could be compared to the Israeli repression of terrorism supported by Hamas in the areas under the Palestinian Authority.

However, the American invasion of Iraq in March 2003 complicated this simple equation. When the weapons of mass destruction the Bush administration had asserted to exist in Iraq were not found, and when the connections it alleged between the regime of Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda were concluded to be practically non-existent, the question of “why the rush to war” arose. While it was unquestioned that Saddam was a violator of human rights without equal since the days of Pol Pot, it was nonetheless difficult to justify the conquest of Iraq on these grounds alone, especially as it became painfully clear that the United States was not prepared to win the peace in that country as easily as it had won its war of “liberation” in the first place, and with the scandals of torture in its various prisons becoming known far and wide.

Why, indeed, had the war been waged? Within short order attention turned to the neoconservatives in high policymaking positions in the Bush administration. Because most of these individuals were not simply Jewish, but American Jews with strong connections to the Likud party in Israel, and because both the Israeli state and its Jewish population strongly supported the Iraq War, some drew the conclusion that the United States had attacked Saddam because such a strike served not so much American as Israeli security interests.²

To be sure, there are excellent reasons to suppose that the Bush administration acted on its own and was not following the councils of the neoconservatives in the Pentagon, the National Security Council, and the Office of the Vice President. Whether it was Richard Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, or the President himself, the leadership team in power after 9/11 was firmly of the conviction that no one should “mess with Texas”—much less tangle with the United States as a whole.³ That said, the terms of the Bush Doctrine as it emerged in the course of 2002 (and as best summed up in one place by the National Security Strategy released in September of that year) are widely agreed to be the product of neoconservative thinking formulated in the 1990s in the aftermath of the Cold War and the Gulf War. In other words, while the policymakers were quite determined to act aggressively after 9/11, just what this meant would

appear to have depended on the vision brought to them from earlier years by the neoconservatives.⁴

So the question remains: were these “Likudnik” American Jews thinking as they did because their foremost concern was the well-being of the United States, or had they “hijacked” policy for the sake of a certain idea they had of what would serve Israel’s interests?⁵ The question is sure to be one that consumes a great amount of ink in the years to come. A reference we are sure to hear often will be to President Washington’s Farewell Address (and to sections of its draft version that were not in the formal document as finally published).

In the execution of [foreign policy] nothing is more essential than that permanent inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for other should be excluded. Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence, I conjure you to believe me, fellow citizens, the jealousy of a free people are to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of Republican government.

We must be careful not to jump to conclusions. Certain right wing American Jews may indeed have been thinking about Israel first and foremost. And presumably all of the neoconservatives would have agreed that the expansion of American power in the Middle East was in the interest of Israel. But to say this is not to agree that the neoconservatives were thinking primarily, much less exclusively, about what was good for Israel when they suggested the terms of the Bush Doctrine and called for an attack on Iraq as a consequence. To apply the strictures of the Farewell Address to most of them would be an unacceptable form of neo-McCarthyism.

In short, it seems to me very doubtful on the basis of the information that we have at our disposal in mid-2006 that the charge can be maintained that the neoconservatives who suggested to President Bush the course of action he ultimately pursued in March 2003 were guilty of “dual loyalties”—putting their concerns about Israel ahead of their vision of American security. A look back at the neoconserva-

tive track record in arguing about how Washington should formulate policy demonstrates that they consistently supported positions opposed to totalitarian governments and in favor of liberal democracies that involved them on many issues aside from that of Israel. Their opposition to dictatorial governments in Iraq, Iran, or the Palestinian Authority for reasons of American security has been in line with a longstanding policy bias on their part with respect to the Soviet Union before its fall, and toward Serbia, China, and North Korea since 1991.

For all these struggles, which they assumed to be existential and global, they favored, as American patriots, American primacy in world affairs. One may disagree with them, whether on Iraq, or on policy toward the Hamas government that came to power as the Palestinian Authority in early 2006, or on the correct stance to take toward Iran's efforts at developing a nuclear capacity. Yes, the Israel lobby remains by far the single most important movement to be studied to understand the domestic sources of American policy in the Middle East. But that this orientation makes it inimical to American security interests as well is a proposition that needs to be proved, not simply asserted.

NOTES

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3 Michael Lind, *Made in Texas: George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 2003) Chapter 7.

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THE EU FACES CULTURE AND RELIGION IN THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

BASSAM TIBI

In an article by German historian Michael Wolffsohn published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, the Europeans, in particular the Germans, are accused of being “*Religionsanalphabeten*” (religious illiterates), unable to grasp the role and the place of religion in the Middle East Conflict. In a March 2006 lecture to high ranking officers and diplomats at The NATO Defense College in Rome on religion, Islam, and world politics, I was asked to explain why despite the decline of religiosity throughout Europe (in both of the old and new EU member states, even in Catholic Poland), religion is playing an increasingly important role in politics in many parts of the world, a phenomenon referred to by some as a “return of the sacred.” In this essay I will address this phenomenon in the world of Islam. The conflict in the Middle East can be seen not only as a case in point, but also as a reflection of the world of Islam *en miniature*. The policy implications of the landslide victory of Hamas in the 2006 Palestinian elections will serve as the focus of this essay.

First, the highjacking of the Palestinian parliament by Hamas is not an isolated event, but part of an emerging pattern. One must consider other results: the Islamist AKP ruling Turkey since 2002, and the Iraqi Shi'i Alliance of three Islamist parties (Da'wa, SCIRI, and Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Movement) dominating the country after winning the majority of all seats against the secular Iraqi parties. In Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood succeeded in sneaking into the elected parliament despite the tampering involved to deny the Islamists access to power. In contrast to the fraud in Egypt, the Palestinian elections were monitored. Two high ranking European politicians who served as monitors, former Spanish foreign minister Anna Palacio and former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt argued most naively in a jointly written *Financial Times* article: “One can no longer speak of Israel as the only democracy in the Middle East, one has now to add the Palestinians.” Is it so? Is democracy only

a ballot replacing the bullets? Or is it also a political culture of pluralism?

- First, the electoral victory of Hamas has changed the Middle East as much as the Islamic Revolution in Iran changed the region in 1979;
- We live in an age of a global “return of the sacred.” This is not to be confused with a “religious renaissance.” At issue is giving a religious flavor to politics in conflict situations. This process is addressed in terms of a “religionization” of politics and a politicization of religion.

Based on these two assumptions I make two contentions. First, religion is always, in its capacity as a belief system, an expression of the absolute. Applied to politics, it can result in positions that may not be compatible with political pluralism because no

“absolute” is negotiable. Thus, democratization is not only about voting procedures, but also and above all a commitment to a political culture of which pluralism is part and parcel. Political culture and voting procedure are indivisible. Upon closer examination, neither in the case of Hamas, nor in Iraq’s Shi’i Alliance, is there a real process of democratization taking place.

The other contention is related to a “religionized” political power in a conflict situation. In politics almost everything is negotiable, but in religion this is not the case. In a belief system nothing is negotiable. European politicians are, as Wolffsohn states, “religious illiterates” and therefore barely understand that political accommodation negotiations do not apply in “religionized” politics. Religious beliefs cannot be put on the table to be negotiated and this rule does not change when a religious power enters politics. In the Hamas Charter (historical) Palestine is viewed as *Waqf Islami* (Islamic holy property), both in the indivisible and non-negotiable sense. The application of this belief to the Middle East conflict results in the clear conclusion: the peace process is dead.

Religion and culture alter the character of the politics of the conflict, making it difficult to find reasonable solutions. The following three points shed light on this issue:

- First, it is neither “culturalism” nor “essentialism” to emphasize the role of religion and culture in the Middle East conflict. The Palestinian Islamists are motivated not only by the will to seize power, but also by a religious-cultural worldview determining their actions. The reference to Islam is neither a cover nor a pretext but, rather, an expression of non-negotiable belief in Palestine as *Waqf Islami*;
 - Second, Islamism (not Islam) is a political ideology based on the politicization of Islam in pursuit of a divine order, *Hakimiyat Allah* (God’s Rule), to be established locally, regionally, and internationally;
 - Third, in view of the two directions of Islamism—institutional-peaceful and jihadist-terrorist—a new approach for dealing with political Islam is needed. Such an approach must involve both dialogue with the peaceful Islamists and an emphasis on security with the jihadists among them.
- Based on these ideas, the following deliberations may provide answers to the questions arising from the present conflict situation:
1. Peace in the Middle East is the pronounced goal of all parties involved, even Hamas, but in substance, the EU’s search for a peaceful resolution of the conflict within the framework of a Euro-Mediterranean peace is of foremost concern. Despite the need to maintain the transatlantic alliance, Europe’s position and interests are, in many ways, unique, and different from those of the United States. In addition, it is important to know that the western and Islamic understanding and definitions of “peace”/“*Salam*” are different in their substance. Europeans seem to misunderstand this issue because they fail to grasp the new role of religion in general and that of Islam in particular.
 2. What changed in this situation in 2006? The outcome of the Palestinian parliamentary elections of January 2006 was described as a “Middle Eastern Tsunami,” a political earthquake. In the aftermath, all parties of the Middle East conflict are challenged by political Islam. Hamas is now the actor claiming to represent the Palestinian people through a religious ideology. With the exception of Syria (a country that shelters members of Hamas) and Iran, who claims to be a participating actor and provides funds for Hamas, none of the officials in the Arab states in the region are happy about the outcome of the recent elections. The United States is also unprepared to deal with the challenge posed by the results of a democratic process it had encouraged. The EU is already burdened by the charge of being silent about the anti-Semitism of political Islam in its own territory (e.g. the suppression of a study by the Berlin-based Anti-Semitism Research Institute in 2004). The electoral victory of Hamas is embedded into a chain of events that began with the Iraq war and culminated in Iran’s nuclear proliferation. The global outrage over the Danish cartoons of Mohammed has triggered an international crisis whose repercussions have been felt as far as Palestine, with the assault on the EU

mission in Gaza. These are not isolated events. The fact that the Palestinians receive €500 Million in aid from the EU did not prevent them from burning EU flags.

3. For a variety of reasons, the EU member states are the closest partners of Israel in the political, economic, and cultural spheres, and are also partners of the Arab states to a much lesser degree. Despite this fact, the EU is often charged by Israel of being pro-Arab and biased against Israel, not only because it supports the Palestinian Authority (PA) annually with €500 million, but also with respect to its foreign policy. The articulation of the conflict in a language of religion and culture complicates the issue for the Europeans.
4. Given the fragmented nature of EU foreign policy expressed through a variety of voices due to the lack of consistent and cohesive common approach, the overall goal shared by all Europeans with regard to the region is peace. This policy goal is, however, not substantiated in concrete EU Middle East strategies. The EU is the source of the funds, also for Hamas, now in power, but does not provide solutions. Under the conditions of religionized politics, monetary contributions may have a calming effect, but they are unlikely to generate any change in the mindset and attitudes.
5. The rejection of the EU constitution by France and the Netherlands, in addition to the lack of concrete foreign policy concepts, lead many to believe that the EU is a weak actor. This weakness is reflected in the bargaining processes of the EU and it is not likely to change in the foreseeable future. The impact of the Muslim diaspora in Europe and the pressure to consider Islamic sensitivities constrain EU foreign policy, leading to further inaction.
6. Despite all odds, the EU is one of the pillars of the Road Map strategy presenting a solution, a solution that has been rejected by Hamas on religious grounds. EU politicians have difficulty understanding this issue. For Hamas, the goal of an "Islamic Palestine" is an alternative to the Road Map solution. There is a need to keep the Quartet alive in order to put pressure on Hamas to renounce

terror, acknowledge the right of Israel to exist, and honor existing legal agreements approved by the former PA of Fatah. It is doubtful that Hamas will accept these terms.

7. Given the history of the Holocaust in Europe, the EU feels under pressure to side with Israel despite the need for a balanced policy. In light of the fact that Israel is continually disappointed by the Arab embrace of the EU, the EU is under pressure to take a stand. The EU must also contend with Arab maneuvering that often results in strains with its transatlantic partner. The Arab states view the United States as an ally of Israel and hope to win the EU as an ally of the Arab states against Israel. There is a need for real balance, despite the Euro-Mediterranean environment and the pressure put on the host states by the Muslim diaspora.
8. The existing imbalance is exacerbated by public opinion polls in the EU member states, which show populations with views that are more favorable to the Palestinians and most critical of Israeli occupation. One outrageous EU poll found that most Europeans view Israel as "threat number one to world peace." Some European anti-Semites used Sharon's policies as pretext to express their anti-Semitic attitudes, leading some to view every critique of Israel as a new variety of anti-Semitism, thus worsening the situation tremendously.

In light of the "religionization" of the Middle East conflict, both the EU and the United States now face a conflict articulated in Islamic terms. Although the transatlantic partners share the goal of peace, it is clear that the interests and the positions of the United States and the EU are different. A Muslim population of 20 million in Europe with a strong Arab segment, oil, and the geopolitics of the Mediterranean are factors underlying different European positions and concerns. European decision-makers cannot overlook these constraints on their decision-making.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the above analysis:

1. The lack of a regional security structure in the Middle East hampers any useful policy and no

future policies will succeed unless this security structure is established.

2. In its present shape the EU does not carry any real weight. Being an annual donor of €500 million to the PA, money that is not really attached to the necessary strings, Europeans must live with this weakness. The inability of the EU to be competitive leads to the conclusion that the principal role it can play is that of influential partner of the United States.
3. The “religionization” of Palestinian politics, combined with the continuing rise of political Islam and the related politicization of religion, result in a conflict in which the claim that “Palestine is a non-negotiable *Waqf Islami*” and deadlock in the Middle East are realities. “Religious illiterates” fail to understand a Middle East constrained by this situation.

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THE MIDDLE EAST AND TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS: WHERE ARE WE HEADING?

DALIA DASSA KAYE

Can the U.S. and Europe Cooperate?

A fundamental question continuously arises in any discussion of transatlantic relations and Middle East policy: Can the United States and its European allies cooperate on critical security issues given their longstanding (and not so long-standing) differences and contrasting approaches to this region? U.S.-European relations during President Bush's second term in office suggest that cooperation is possible. Despite one of the most bitter transatlantic disputes since the formation of the western Alliance over the war in Iraq, transatlantic relations appear to be back on track.

A "unity of purpose and perception"¹—or at least rhetoric—seems to have won the day on issues as difficult as Iranian nuclear capabilities and a new Hamas-led government following the January 2006 Palestinian elections. Polite joint policy statements and the careful coordination of positions have replaced accusations and recriminations across the Atlantic. Current headlines might suggest that the United States and Europe have overcome their transatlantic rifts—prevalent long before the Iraq war—as they confront violent extremism, or the "long war," together. As Jim Hoagland argues, "While the distances between them remain large, the European and American plates of perception begin to move in the same direction again... the real story of the new transatlantic togetherness has been the spreading public concern in Europe about Islamic extremism, at home and abroad."²

However, further analysis and understanding of the deeply embedded differences between the United States and Europe suggest that such optimistic assessments are at best premature. Even if the transatlantic allies have reached common understandings about the challenge of Islamic extremism—

and there is good reason to question whether this is indeed the case—such shared perceptions do not necessarily lead the United States and Europe to approach other Middle East policy issues in similar ways. Certainly the transatlantic climate has significantly improved over the past few years, and a growing convergence of strategic understandings is possible and could further strengthen transatlantic partnership on key Middle East questions.

That said, it is important to keep in mind that the extent and nature of transatlantic cooperation are not fixed and will vary over time depending largely on three critical factors: American foreign policy orientation, European foreign policy orientation (Germany's position is a critical factor here), and regional developments on the ground. The constellation of these factors before the Iraq war led us apart; the constellation of these factors after the war seem to be bringing us closer together. But will this constellation hold? Given that some of these variables are already changing, the answer is not entirely clear. Indeed, there are signs in all three areas for potential—though by no means inevitable—sources for renewed transatlantic friction.

U.S. Foreign Policy Orientation: Temporary or Fundamental Change?

The second-term Bush foreign policy team, most visibly represented by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, seems to be taking multilateralism more seriously—even if by default rather than by desire—and has made the improvement of transatlantic relations a top priority. The U.S. preoccupation with Iraq has no doubt influenced its more favorable attitude toward a growing European role on sensitive regional issues, including the EU-3 negotiations with Iran and the unprecedented EU involvement in Palestinian-Israeli diplomacy with its positioning of border monitors at the Rafah crossing.³ Difficulties in Iraq have even led the United States to agree to bilateral consultations with Iran on the specific issue of Iraqi stability, a move that is certainly welcomed in European quarters where many believe that only U.S. engagement with Iran will ultimately solve the nuclear issue.⁴

But as the United States moves toward disengagement in Iraq, it may wish to resume its lead on other core regional security issues, particularly if the United States views European capabilities and diplomacy as limited. This trend already seems to be at play in the case of the Iranian nuclear issue. The formation of a Hamas-led Palestinian government may also underscore the limits of European involvement and differences in approach. For instance, the EU's ability to continue its role at the Rafah border crossing is questionable, since it requires communication with Palestinian officials that cannot occur if the prohibition on EU contacts with Hamas—designated a terrorist entity—continues. Likely European attempts to get around these dilemmas may create tension with the United States. Some analysts predict a similar transatlantic split on Hamas as we have seen with Cuba, with the Americans preferring to “strangle Hamas so that it either moderates or dies” and the Europeans preferring to “keep as much aid flowing as possible, perhaps with incentives for good behavior and sanctions for bad.”⁵

The failure of the EU-3 negotiations with Iran has also served to underscore the limitations of European diplomacy absent effective American leadership and participation. If the Bush administration believes it

must ultimately resort to unilateral measures in order to deal with this issue—a military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities would be the most notable move in this direction—tensions with European allies, including the United Kingdom, are likely to re-emerge.⁶ A unilateral American strike against Iran would particularly damage the recently improved bilateral relationship with Germany, as Germany is the weakest link in European support for more forceful action against Iran.⁷ But no European government is comfortable with the U.S. administration's expressed desire, and recent funding, for regime change in Tehran, so Germany would not be alone in condemning an American (or Israeli) military attack that might be viewed as designed to overthrow the regime.

European Foreign Policy Orientation: Pragmatism or Principle?

In the past two years, key European players have displayed more pragmatism toward dealing with regional challenges like Iran—showing a willingness to cooperate with the United States to address the problem at hand rather than adhering to the principle of an independent European position for its own sake. The combination of such pragmatism and an American willingness to seek out European partners has significantly improved transatlantic relations. The new German government under Chancellor Angela Merkel has displayed particular interest in repairing U.S.-German relations and putting differences over the Iraq war behind the allies.⁸ Indeed, Europeans have consistently stood by the United States in pressing Iran to reverse course on uranium enrichment and firmly supported the referral of Iran to the UN Security Council (the rift lately has been more between the U.S.-Europe, on the one side, and Russia and China on the other, than between the transatlantic allies).

But European calculations may shift again if there does not seem to be a big pay-off for supporting U.S. positions. The European desire for an independent, unified foreign policy has not receded, even if capabilities have not yet matched expectations. The Europeans may be willing to go the American way if they are treated as respected partners and believe a unified transatlantic position is yielding results. But if

such results are not apparent or the Bush administration reverts back to unilateralism, the transatlantic partnership will weaken.

The possible European readiness to deal with a Hamas-led government through some creative diplomatic formula—Quartet statement or not—and its likely unwillingness to accept future borders unilaterally drawn by Israel (Secretary of State Rice indicated that the United States may consider this) is certainly a source for transatlantic tension. But in some ways the Hamas victory has made it easier for the U.S. administration to avoid a heavy investment in Arab-Israeli peacemaking as is its preference and harder for the Europeans to complain about the lack of American involvement.

As a consequence, the more likely source of a potential transatlantic falling out would arise over a U.S. military strike against Iran (sanctions will not be easy either, but if targeted they have a good chance of gaining European support given European frustration with Iranian behavior since the break-off of the EU-3 process). Europeans are likely to listen seriously to IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei's call for calm regarding Iran, particularly given the intelligence failures surrounding Iraqi WMD and public sentiment on this issue.⁹ At a security conference in Israel this winter, European officials and analysts responded to Israeli "alarmist views" with "less concern, preferring the diplomatic track and suggesting that an attack on Iran would not be effective."¹⁰ As another analyst observes, "Despite all the talk of transatlantic comity, differences remain. For the EU-3, the referral of Iran to the Security Council clearly came as a kind of last resort. But for the Bush Administration the Security Council referral appears to have been the goal."¹¹ With the possible exception of the UK, no European government will support an American military strike against Iran, and if one occurs, we can expect a serious setback in transatlantic rapprochement.

Regional Developments: Unifier or Divider?

After the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in the summer of 2005, what appeared to be new openings for a renewed peace process temporarily renewed activism among the Middle East Quartet and led to

greater U.S.-European coordination about how to consolidate and capitalize on the new realities on the ground. U.S.-European coordination and consultation regarding democracy promotion efforts has also improved, underscoring common agendas and a desire to capitalize on growing mass movements calling for greater freedom and independence, as occurred in Lebanon. And the tough rhetoric emanating from Iranian President Ahmadinejad—including calls for Israel to be "wiped off the map"—and unwillingness to compromise on the enrichment issue has further narrowed the gap between U.S. and European perceptions and positions on the Iranian nuclear issue.

That said, developments in the region could continue to evolve in a way that will place increasing strains on the transatlantic partnership. Because there are still some fundamental differences between Europe and the United States on the Palestine question, it is not clear that the allies will respond to the Hamas challenge in similar ways, as the previous discussion indicated. If Hamas offers conciliatory gestures toward Israel, even if indirectly, the Europeans may be more willing than the Americans to engage the Palestinian leadership. Similarly, if President Ahmadinejad makes some concessions on the nuclear issue or if more moderate voices within the regime gain the upper hand, Europeans again will be more likely to seek engagement rather than punitive measures.

It is by no means guaranteed that shifts in any of the above three areas—American orientation, European orientation, or developments on the ground—will lead to new transatlantic rifts. Transatlantic cooperation may even strengthen if the trends leading to transatlantic unity continue. But it is important not to be complacent about the extent to which U.S. and European interests align and ignore the sources of potential friction in the coming months and years. The more we anticipate such friction the easier it will be to manage it.

A Few Suggestions

As the United States works with European allies to overcome or at least manage some of the above-mentioned areas of existing or potential division, a few points might be useful to keep in mind:

■ **Using the Middle East as transatlantic therapy.** It is important to keep the focus on the right place; namely, the purpose of transatlantic cooperation should be to address and hopefully solve challenges emanating from this region, not to use the region's problems to heal transatlantic tensions or institutions (e.g., NATO). If the latter were the goal, the allies could certainly find easier regions for therapeutic purposes. But for better or worse, the Middle East will remain the epicenter for transatlantic relations given the nature of security threats today. And thus the allies have to find ways to work together to deal with the challenges emanating from this region.

■ **Recognize Europe's Changing Role in the Region.** The role of Europe in the Middle East has been changing for some time, mirroring changes within Europe itself. Even the constitutional crisis is unlikely to reverse the trend of growing European political involvement in Middle East security issues, even if that involvement may come more from the EU-3 or other European coalitions than from the EU as a whole. European willingness to reverse its traditional good cop role to some extent and flex its muscles in cases like Iran has enhanced its credibility in the region, especially with Israelis.¹² Europe's New Neighborhood Policy is also placing more conditionality on Arab partners if they want to enjoy the benefits of the European Union (short of membership, of course). To be sure, no one is denying the continued primacy of the U.S. role in the Middle East, but regionals are taking Europe's role more seriously, and so should the United States.

■ **The demise of the Road Map should not lead to the demise of the Quartet.** If there were any doubts about the viability of the Road Map, the recent Palestinian elections removed them. Even before the elections, the Road Map looked like the least likely option as Israelis increasingly favored unilateral measures. A negotiated two-state solution appears as remote a prospect as ever. Moreover, if further unilateral moves by Israel in the West Bank lead to chaos, violence, and instability that threatens Jordan, other options may also resurface, like trusteeship or a NATO-led force to

maintain stability. But despite the dismal prospects for the peace process, the Quartet mechanism has proved a useful forum for U.S.-European consultation. The Quartet should thus remain in place for at least this minimal role as the allies assess ongoing regional developments, and it could possibly be applied to other areas, especially future efforts to re-start a regional security dialogue.

■ **Focus on future regional security architectures.** It is easy in the Middle East to get caught up in the crisis of the day. But it is important to keep in mind the larger picture as well; that is, what will a post-Iraq Middle East look like? How will regional security be reconfigured in light of a weak (or even divided) Iraq and a strong Iran? A strategy designed to encircle Iran through a return to balancing strategies would be a mistake; such strategies have failed miserably in the past. Rather, the United States and its European allies (along with Russia if possible) need to emphasize a cooperative regional security environment and the development of regional institutions over the long-term. Developing cooperative regional security structures and regional confidence building should be an easy area for transatlantic agreement, and the United States and its allies should invest heavily in such efforts.

NOTES

1 See Jim Hoagland, "Iran's Gift: New Unity in the West," *Washington Post*, 23 February 2006, 19.

2 See *id.*

3 See Yoav Stern, "EU sending mission to evaluate role at Gaza's Rafah border crossing," *Haaretz* 11 February 2005 (www.haaretz.com).

4 See Michael Slackman and David E. Sanger, "U.S. and Iranians Agree to Discuss Violence in Iraq," *The New York Times*, 17 March 2006. While this dialogue is specifically limited to Iraq, such contacts could potentially lead to greater U.S.-Iranian contact on other issues of mutual concern, including the nuclear question.

5 Gideon Lichfield, "Cuba on the West Bank," *The New York Times*, 23 March 2006, A27.

6 Senior British defense officials reportedly already believe that a U.S. military strike against Iranian facilities is "inevitable." See Sean Rayment, "Government in Secret Talks About Strike Against Iran," *London Sunday Telegraph*, 2 April 2006, 1.

7 Based on author discussions with European diplomats, March 2006.

8 See, for example: Emsie Ferreira, "Merkel raises hopes for US-German détente as FM heads to Washington," *Agence France Presse*, 27 November 2005; Jim Hoagland, "Germany's New Outlook: Friendlier Transatlantic Relations Under Chancellor Merkel," *Washington Post*, 16 October 2005, B07; and Jeffrey Fleishman, "Merkel to Steer Germany Back Toward U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, 3 December 2005, 3.

9 Jeffrey Fleishman and Alissa J. Rubin, "Calm is Urged In Iran Debate," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 March 2006, 1.

10 Rafael D. Frankel, "Combating Iranian Nukes—Israel vs. Europe at Herzliya," FBIS GMP20060123629010 Jerusalem, *The Jerusalem Post* (Internet Version-WWW) in English, 23 January 2006.

11 Connie Bruck, "Exiles: How Iran's expatriates are gaming the nuclear threat," *The New Yorker*, 6 March 2006, 62.

12 Indeed, there are growing calls in Israel for developing a closer relationship with the EU and NATO in today's security environment. See, for example: Ron Prossor, "Israel's Atlantic Dimension" FBIS GMP20050224000135 Jerusalem *The Jerusalem Post* (Internet Version-WWW) in English 24 February 2005; Address by Dr. Eran Lerman at the 5th Herzliya Conference on "Re-Energizing US-Israeli Special Relations" FBIS GMP20041223000223 Herzliya Institute of Policy and Strategy WWW-Text, in Hebrew, 15 December 2004; Address by Oded Eran at the 5th Herzliya Conference on "Upgrading Relations with NATO" FBIS GMP20041215000241 Herzliya Institute of Policy and Strategy, WWW-Audio, in Hebrew, 15 December 2004; and Ronald D. Asmus, "Contain Iran: Admit Israel to NATO," *Washington Post*, 21 February 2006, A15.

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT IN THE EU-U.S. RELATIONSHIP

HELMUT HUBEL

The Changed Context

For the last thirty-five years the Arab-Israeli conflict played a controversial role in the U.S.-European relationship. First, the United States (with an eye to the Middle East's oil resources and on containing the Soviet Union) kept a clear distance from Israel, while France was the Jewish state's most important ally. After the Six-Day War (June 1967), the United States became Israel's staunchest supporter, while France intensively courted Arab leaders and pushed the Palestinian issue. Then, in April 1982, in providing peacekeeping troops to the Multinational Forces and Observers in the Sinai (MFO, the implementation of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979), France and other EC countries explicitly endorsed the U.S.-led "peace process." Later, when the United States began negotiations with the PLO in 1988, the Europeans saw their Venice declaration of 1980 (stressing the PLO's "indispensable" role in representing the Palestinians) materializing. During the 1990s after the Madrid peace conference (1991) and the Oslo agreements (1993), the United States and the EU countries worked hand-in-hand to achieve a lasting settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Yet, since the late 1970s the Arab-Israeli conflict was steadily losing its central importance in Middle Eastern affairs: the two oil crises, the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, and the Iraqi intervention in Kuwait moved international attention to the Persian Gulf. 9/11 confirmed this trend: Since most of the terrorists had come from Saudi Arabia, hitherto close Arab partners of the United States were no longer regarded as reliable. "Democratization of the Middle East" seemed to be the remedy. In its "global war against terrorism," the administration of George W. Bush focused on Al Qaeda and the Iraqi regime's alleged ongoing involvement in programs of weapons of mass destruction and links with terrorist groups. Distancing himself from his predecessor, who had

worked intensively to bring about an Israeli-Palestinian final settlement, Bush decided to neglect this "unsolvable" conflict and to "leave it to the parties concerned." The second *Intifada* seemed to justify such an approach.

The death of President Yasser Arafat, Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and the 2006 parliamentary elections in the Palestinian territories have given rise to new hope, both in the United States and the EU, that the peace process could be revived. Yet, faced with the ongoing "war on terror," the threat of civil war in Iraq, and the Iranian nuclear program, the U.S. government did not see the need to refocus its attention on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

By 2005, despite repeated diplomatic efforts to keep the peace process going, considerable frustration had accumulated among the EU member states. The EU had been the largest sponsor of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements; now, during the second *Intifada*, it saw many of its investments destroyed. Increasingly concerned about Gulf stability and the overall relationship with Islam, particularly after the Danish Mohammed cartoon controversy, many Europeans shifted their priorities away from the Middle East conflict.

The “EU-ropeans” as Foreign Policy Actors

For the parties directly concerned (Israel and the Palestinian Authority) and the United States, the EU has remained a political enigma. This is no surprise, given the EU’s complicated political system and decision-making processes. While the European Commission has gained significant supranational authority in the EU’s “first pillar” (the Economic and Monetary Union), the member states are not ready to transfer similar authority in the field of foreign and security policy. Therefore, the EU’s second pillar continues to be structured according to the principle of intergovernmentalism—despite the efforts towards closer harmonization among the member states, as the creation of a foreign policy representative (Javier Solana) demonstrated. The two major foreign policy players within the EU, France and Britain, are not willing to “sacrifice” one of their last domains of sovereignty, at least in issues of “high politics.” The Iraq crisis of 2002/03, with these two countries taking opposite roles and Germany siding with France, was clear proof of this fact.

Since the late 1960s, attitudes toward the Arab-Israeli conflict in the EC and later the EU member states have come a long way, resulting in adjusted policies and a move beyond national predispositions. Although nuances remain in national outlooks towards the Israelis and Palestinians (Germany remaining explicitly “pro-Israel,” with France, Britain, and others maintaining a distinct “neutral position” with an eye on the Arab actors), the EU member states have managed to act together—at least in “peace diplomacy” and the expenditure of common funds. In displaying “soft power”, i.e. creating incentives and rewarding “posi-

tive” behavior, the EU has indeed become an important, but not a decisive, player.

In its immediate neighborhood, the EU, with its policy of conditionality (offering eventual EU membership for far-reaching adaptations to the EU model), has managed to exert quite significant power. The new central and eastern European member states and Turkey, engaged in internal reforms, are cases in point. However, since the Israelis and Palestinians are living “outside Europe” and thus are not entitled to EU membership, this policy of conditionality cannot be activated. Consequently, the EU’s role towards this conflict has remained limited.

Transatlantic Relations and the Middle East Conflict

The old NATO, with its initial purpose as defined by its first Secretary General Lord Ismay (“...to keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down”) has undergone tremendous changes. With the Federal Republic of Germany entering the Alliance as an equal partner, the issue of German containment acquired a different meaning. German reunification, did, however, take place within NATO and the Alliance continued to be the key framework for managing transatlantic relations.

With the common enemy gone, new (eastern European) members joining the Alliance, and new threats arising, NATO fundamentally changed its character.¹ Out-of-area missions became the focus of its activities, resulting in repeated military interventions (Kosovo, Afghanistan etc.). Although the Europeans contributed forces to these missions, their general outlook was quite different from that of the United States. While the U.S. government, particularly after 9/11, sought to use NATO’s resources without being “bound” by coalition partners,² most European NATO members regarded those military missions with skepticism and clearly preferred NATO to remain a “peace keeper,” instead of a “war fighter.” In Afghanistan, the United States and the Europeans managed to somehow combine these two perspectives. In the case of Iraq, France and Germany made sure that it would not become a NATO mission.

These different outlooks clearly reflect the basic differences in military capabilities and “world views.” While the U.S. government sees itself involved in a “global war against terrorism,” the Europeans continue to regard terrorism as a primary concern for the intelligence services and the police—and above all, for international cooperation within the UN framework. For many EU countries struggling with domestic problems like high unemployment, demographic problems, and national debt, there seems to be very little room for expanding military expenditures and taking on additional military missions for NATO.

Despite occasional “second thoughts,” the Arab-Israeli conflict has never been a serious issue for NATO. For the purpose of peacekeeping, the model of the MFO—i.e. several countries working together—would clearly suffice, as has been discussed in case of an eventual Israeli-Syrian agreement, with an international peacekeeping force in the Golan Heights.

From a European viewpoint, NATO membership for any Middle Eastern country would most probably not be acceptable. The Europeans will continue to regard NATO’s primary mission to preserve stability within their continent. Taking Israel as a NATO member (and ignoring the Palestinian Authority and other Arab states) would clearly not be a European option, particularly as the parties concerned have not managed to settle their differences. Moreover, it would primarily fall to the United States to provide Israel (and the PA) with credible security guarantees. For the time being, it seems difficult to imagine that a U.S. administration would accept such a burden.

A New Combined Initiative Toward an Israeli-Palestinian Settlement?

After countless peace initiatives during the last three decades, it seems difficult to imagine any new, more productive framework than that of the Middle East Quartet. In this Quartet the major external actors have joined forces—and still proved incapable of changing the realities between the Israelis and Palestinians. Although the Middle East is a region under the close scrutiny of outside powers, the crucial decisions on security and peace—i.e. the vital questions of life and

death—will be taken only by the parties directly concerned. Both the United States and the EU have worked hard to support the two-state solution to the conflict, and during the 1990s this goal came close to being fulfilled.

However, after the failed Oslo Process, the second *Intifada* and Israel’s tough reactions, Arafat’s death, and the Palestinian elections, the clock seems to have been turned back. The winner of the recent Palestinian elections, Hamas, does not appear to be willing to accept the agreements of the 1990s. Peace diplomacy will, first of all, have to reverse that attitude. It remains to be seen whether the EU, by using material incentives (i.e., funds to keep the PA going), will suffice. No single EU state will be able to make a difference; only when the EU countries act together will they have a chance to achieve something.

Behind Hamas’ election victory lies the sad truth that a majority of the Palestinian population has lost faith in a negotiated, just settlement with Israel. Israelis too seem to have lost that hope and prefer separation.

Isolating the external opponents of a peaceful settlement may be something toward which external actors like the United States and the EU can strive, while supporting and reinforcing positive action towards peace. Changing the attitudes of Israelis and Palestinians, however, will be a task that only the parties directly involved can achieve.

NOTES

1 For a brilliant summary of the changes, see Helga Haftendorn, “Das Ende der alten NATO” in *Internationale Politik*, vol. 57, No. 4, 2002, 49-54.

2 The now famous dictum of Secretary Rumsfeld: “The mission determines the coalition, and not vice versa,” resulted in this determination.

MEDIA PERCEPTIONS AND THE MIDDLE EAST IN EUROPE

CLEMENS WERGIN

The day after Ehud Olmert won the Israeli elections, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Germany's most respected liberal paper, ran the following headline on its first page: "Election winner Olmert stays on the course of conflict" (*Wahlsieger Olmert bleibt auf Konfliktkurs*). A surprising headline indeed, and if readers wanted to know why Olmert was so inclined to conflict, the article attempted to spell it out. The *Süddeutsche* quoted Olmert stating, "I am ready to give up the dream of a Greater Israel." The paper goes on to say that he wants to negotiate with the Palestinians about a state of their own: "We are ready to compromise." The article also explains, however, that there are preconditions to any negotiations— Hamas must renounce violence and recognize Israel's right to exist.

Olmert's position seems to be a sensible and moderate one, which leads one to wonder what kind of a twisted perspective the editors of the *Süddeutsche* had in order to come up with such a headline. I would argue that such an attitude fits right into the riddle that is the European perspective on the Middle East conflict

The Development of European Attitudes

It seems obvious that the way Germans perceive Israel and the Middle East conflict has changed dramatically over the last forty years. In a society slow to understand the extent to which large groups of Germans had aided Nazi effort to liquidate the Jews of Europe, Israel in the 1960s was seen as the rightful redemption of a people that had been mistreated by history (and to the greatest extent, by Germans) more than any other. Many Germans still recall the mood of fear and compassion in their country in the wake of the 1967 war, when Israel's very existence seemed threatened by the armies of Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. Up to this moment, the conflict had been perceived as one between "David" (Israel) against "Goliath" (the Arab world), and it was the resounding defeat of the

Arab armies and the subsequent occupation of Arab lands by Israel that led to a reversal of the trend and a growing estrangement between parts of the European public and Israel.

The first evidence of this reversal was seen during the student revolts of 1968. Some of the more radical elements of that movement started to identify with the Palestinian cause. In these circles, Israel was no longer seen as the symbol of the national emancipation of a tried people, but as the continuation of western colonialism in the Middle East. At the same time, Palestinian nationalism began to take on a life of its own, distinguishing itself from Pan-Arabism and further altering the prism through which the conflict was viewed. It was at this point in time that the militarily powerful Jewish state took over the role of Goliath and the Palestinians became the weak David. The larger conflict between Israel and the Arab world remained unresolved but was pushed into the background. The perception of the conflict narrowed and with it changed the notion of which side was the weaker and had the right to ask for Europe's moral support.

What was initially the conviction of some leftist students after a few decades began to filter into the German mainstream, just as the students of 1968 themselves later did, when in their forties and fifties, they attained leading positions in the media and politics. Needless to say, some Israeli policies did not help to alter that picture, be it the settlers' movement starting in the 1970s, or the war in Lebanon and the Falangist massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila that the Israeli army did not prevent. Israel began to be viewed as a regional bully that denied the Palestinians the right to self rule.

Human beings are culturally programmed to side with the weak party in a conflict and to believe that their cause is morally justified and worthy of support. Those familiar with the conflict know that at many crossroads it was the Arab or Palestinian side that prevented a solution to the conflict by taking maximalist and unrealistic positions. But although almost everyone in Europe has a strong opinion about the conflict, this opinion usually is not backed by an equally strong knowledge about the history of the region; a history that could change the perception of Israel as the bad side because it has power that the Palestinians do not have.

There is, however, the issue of European identity that is crucial to understanding European/German attitudes toward the conflict. Europeans love to think of themselves as having finally reached the happy realm of post-nationalism. Although the European Union is a huge success story, compared to the ages of bloodshed that preceded its establishment, it can be argued that a post-national Europe is largely an illusion—but a very powerful one, especially for Germans, who are very happy to exchange the burden of their Nazi past with a more acceptable “European” identity.

Inherent in European post-nationalism is a Hegelian notion of history: Many Europeans believe that post-nationalism is the direction in which history is heading. That is why they claim the high moral ground for the European project and tend to look down on societies that still cling to strong national identities. Israel, being the late child of the European idea of nationalism, is regarded as somewhat of an anachronism. It is thus not surprising that many Europeans believe in the idea of a bi-national Palestinian-Israeli state that, in Israel, is only advocated by the leftist fringe.

This dislike for strong feelings of national identity in the European intellectual classes and media often goes hand in hand with a rejection of the idea that, in international politics, states must resort to the use of force. This is the pacifist instinct that Robert Kagan pointed to when he referred to Europeans as living on Venus and Americans living on Mars. This metaphor is even more appropriate to describe the differences between European and Israeli attitudes. Europeans have difficulty accepting that at certain times and in other regions of the world, states may have no other choice but to resort to military force. Israelis know by experience that, in the end, force is the only thing that prevents them from being thrown into the sea. Most Europeans, however, simply do not accept that Israel lives in an environment that resembles nineteenth century Europe rather than the Europe of today.

The politics of power, particularly military power, is something that Europeans do not like to think about. It is for this reason that mainstream European media cannot accept the concept of an alternative to negotiations. This was shown during the Balkan wars—Europe would be attempting yet another round of negotiations to stop Milosevic from genocide if it had not been for the Americans finally taking the lead. Likewise, Europeans never accepted the idea that there could be an alternative to negotiations with Yasser Arafat, regardless of the number of broken promises that accumulated during the second *Intifada*.

The European Media

Having sketched the mental map of Europe, I will now turn to how these attitudes influenced the European media and public opinion in the years of the second *Intifada* up to now, using three examples: the outbreak of the second *Intifada*, the alleged Jenin massacre, and European money diverted to terrorist groups.

THE BACKGROUND AND OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND *INTIFADA*

News stories are seldom only about news, especially when journalists report from a foreign country and have to provide some background to help the reader understand what is happening. Of all news media, wire services are probably among the most conser-

vative when it comes to providing necessary background information. So what is read in the wires as the “history” of an event usually refers to more or less undisputed hard facts. This was not the case, however, when it comes to the outbreak of the Second *Intifada* in September 2000. A typical last sentence in the European wires even today would read like this: “The *Intifada* broke out because of Ariel Sharon’s visit at the temple mount in September 2000,” a statement that is not true. The *Intifada* did not break out because of Ariel Sharon’s visit to the temple mount. There was an uprising of violence as a result of harsh and unwise Israeli reactions to the protests against Sharon’s visit. But the violence resulted in the *Intifada* only because the Palestinian leadership decided to condone the violence.

Sharon’s visit provided an opportunity, not the reason for the uprising. It served the Palestinian leadership as a departure point for a different strategy—undecided about whether to accept Ehud Barak’s offer of a two-state solution, they tried a different strategy—gaining statehood without the painful concessions that come with a negotiated settlement. To be fair, it took a long time for the full extent of the Palestinian leadership’s involvement in the *Intifada* to become clear. It took an even longer time for this evidence to be taken up by the media in continental Europe.

The European narrative for years was that the *Intifada* was a spontaneous uprising that took the weak Palestinian leadership by surprise. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of European commentary advised the Israelis to do everything they could to strengthen Arafat. There is evidence on the Internet of a number of statements by leading Palestinian figures who, early in the *Intifada*, were very clear about the PA’s involvement in the terror campaign. In addition, in 2002 a ship transporting fifty tons of weapons, including Katyusha rockets, rifles, mortar shells, mines and a variety of anti-tank missiles, from Iran paid for by the PA, was stopped by Israeli authorities before it could deliver its load to the beaches of Gaza.

The PA was caught red-handed, but the European narrative did not change. A year later, the Israelis raided the PA offices in Ramallah and found documents that proved that Arafat had ordered money transfers to Palestinian terror groups. Although western intelligence services attested to the authenticity of the documents, the Europeans still had a hard

time changing their narrative. They had their perfect “bad guy” in Israeli Prime Minister Ariel “the Bulldozer” Sharon. Another bad guy would have only complicated the picture and endangered European “moral clarity.”

Looking back today, one gets the impression that the disenchantment with Arafat slowly creeping into European media commentary was not the result of facts on the ground but, rather, the consequence of a change in the mood of several European politicians. One example is former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, who tried to broker a deal between Israelis and Palestinians after the attack on the Dolphinarium discotheque in Tel Aviv in 2001. He realized that Arafat never honored his commitments. Many other European politicians also had the same experience. Sadly enough, Europe’s media was the last to realize that Arafat might not be a reliable negotiating partner.

THE JENIN MASSACRE

Hardly any military action by Israel aroused as many protests as the one in the refugee camp of Jenin in the spring of 2002. The speed with which European journalists, the British at the forefront, believed the Palestinian propaganda that “the massacre of the twenty-first century” took place in Jenin with up to 500 deaths, was breathtaking—and a shame for the whole profession. Jenin was a well known terror nest—it had not been under Israeli control for nine years and had become the centre of Palestinian terror planning in the West Bank. Israeli military action was thus, in principle, justified, and it was conducted under the most difficult of circumstances, since the terrorists had prepared for house-to-house guerrilla warfare and had booby-trapped entire blocks of the camp. In order to avoid civilian casualties, Israel had initially opted for the more dangerous course of street fighting and excluded the option of air bombardments. That is why, in the beginning of the military operation, thirteen Israeli soldiers died in a bomb trap. These deaths led to a change of tactics and the Israelis began to rely more heavily on bulldozers to clear the camp of enemy fighters.

An investigation by Human Rights Watch after the operation concluded that thirty Palestinian fighters, twenty-two Palestinian civilians, and twenty-three Israeli soldiers died in the fighting. There was never

a massacre, even if some Israeli soldiers committed atrocities that were not within the boundaries of the *jus in bello* (law in war). But the false and sensational reporting caused another kind of collateral damage. In the month during and after the Jenin operation, an upsurge of anti-Semitic violence of an unprecedented scale in postwar times swept through Europe. Attacks on Jews and Jewish schools, synagogues, and other community institutions were, for the most part, perpetrated by Muslims of Arab heritage. Needless to say, the Jenin study by Human Rights Watch never got the media attention the alleged massacre had gotten and was not nearly as prominently displayed in newspapers and the electronic media.

DIVERSION OF EUROPEAN FUNDS FOR THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY TO TERROR GROUPS

During the second *Intifada* there were repeated allegations that the PA diverted EU money to terror groups. It thus came as a surprise that the commission established by the European Parliament to investigate the issue concluded that there was not enough evidence to back those allegations. The fact that the commission was evenly split (7-6) on this issue went almost unreported in the European press. Although there had been an order by Arafat to hand over \$39,000 of EU funds to terrorist groups, the majority concluded that this evidence would not stand up in court—due to the fact that the terrorists had not issued a receipt for the funds. The idea of terrorists writing receipts is absurd, but not absurd enough to arouse the interest of the European media on the issue.

So what are we to conclude? It seems evident that European journalists fail to take up leads, follow hints, and start inquiries into facts that might, in the end, force them to change their view of the conflict. We know that this is not unique to journalists. Cognitive science tells us that human beings tend to ignore facts that run counter to how they explain the world, especially when it comes to political convictions. Looking at it this way the question would not be why journalists ignore facts that run counter to their narrative of the conflict but, rather, why are there so few journalists who follow a different narrative and therefore look for leads that could challenge the European mainstream media thinking about the Middle East?

One possible answer to this riddle lies in a study about German journalists conducted in 1993 and 2005 by Siegfried Weischenberg. According to his findings, German journalism recruits itself from an ever smaller social group. "This German journalist is statistically a forty-one-year-old man from the middle class with an academic background," writes Weischenberg in *Die Zeit*. And, in fact, almost 70 percent of German journalists completed university studies; another 15 percent studied but did not graduate. The political affiliations of journalists run totally counter to that of society as a whole. Here is how they would vote (in brackets one can see how all Germans voted in the last elections): Greens 35.5 percent (8.1), Social Democrats 26 percent (34.2), conservatives (CDU/CSU) 8.7 percent (35.2); 19.6 percent of the journalists did not give any party preferences. Given the fact that the European left is overwhelmingly pro-Palestinian, it is hardly surprising that an overwhelming majority of German journalists (70 percent of whom would vote for leftist parties) tend to ignore facts that shed a critical light on the Palestinian side.

Weischenberg writes that the number of journalists who strive to influence the political agenda through their profession declined to a mere 20 percent (from 25 percent in 1993). However, what sounds rather reassuring in fact is not, because among journalists who write about politics, the number rises to 60 percent—a figure that is made worse by the fact that journalists form their view of the world not by looking at it, but by reading other journalists. In the words of Weischenberg: "Reality and objectivity are used by journalists evidently like a street light by a drunk: not to be enlightened, but to hold it tight. As a matter of fact they do not get their orientation from real life or from normal people but, rather, from other media and their colleagues." In a nutshell: German journalism is a story of political inbreeding where the opinions of one's leftist peer group matter more than the facts out there.

FACES OF CONFLICT: A JOURNALIST'S PERSPECTIVE

STEVEN ERLANGER

The war over the media in the Middle East can seem hotter than the real one, with partisans of both sides, many of whom do not even live in the region, hurling thunderbolts from imaginary moral pulpits. It is to be expected, perhaps, given the symbolism of the place, and the confusion in so many minds between religion and tribalism. In fact Jerusalem is a city built on struggle and rivalry—among gods and tribes and those who misuse them.

Peace is much spoken of here. But at times, as I race along the narrow moral precipice, running between a military checkpoint and a suicide bombing, I think of the old Russian proverb: “We shall struggle for peace so hard that not a tree will be left standing.”

There is enough in the Holy Land to confirm any prejudice. But I try to see it as a place where both armies and souls contend, as they contended even before monotheism came, dusty and sunburned, out of the desert to vanquish first the Jebusites, and then the Romans.

And I try to see it through various lenses, to be moved both by the Wailing or Western Wall, with its weight of tragedy and redemption, and by the modern cement one, part of Israel's separation barrier, with its dual messages of protection and occupation.

Even in the most visited places, like the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif or the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, there is an abiding sense of struggle, as tribes and religions fight over the narrative of riven Jerusalem and the custody of its milky tea-colored stones, touched with fire at dawn and sunset.

There is an overlay of modern terminology, about occupation and colonialism and racism and extermination, over what remains an unfinished war that

began nearly sixty years ago, as the British Empire withdrew. And to be sure, the rhetoric about apartheid and terrorism hides a deeply dysfunctional power relationship, where one side, with few weapons, poses no existential threat to the other, which lives inevitably with the nightmare of the Holocaust and the looming worries about Iran, and an abiding mistrust in the assurances of a world that watched six million die.

Yet there is also a level of violence that is in most ways acceptable, however deplorable. Terrorism is terrorism no matter what its motivation, or imagined results; the deaths of unarmed schoolchildren, killed as “collateral damage” to military sweeps, is a shameful goad to further violence.

Being a journalist in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires both coldness and compassion. There are victims on both sides, with legitimate stories of injustice and agony. But being a victim, however tragic, does not make you right.

There is a whole regional industry involved in trying to spin journalists. Here I am not talking about outraged and semi-organized readers with a strong point of view, however impolitely it may be expressed.

The Israelis call it “*hasbara*,” which translates roughly as “explaining,” but it is a form of propaganda and a

key and open part of their diplomacy. They speak proudly of *hasbara* successes and worry, with some reason, that they are losing the “*hasbara* war,” especially in western Europe.

But the Palestinians have their own version: spokespersons who sometimes say whatever comes into their heads, even if unsupported by facts, and who blame every act of horror on the occupation, coupled with a coalition of foreign supporters, many of them from the far left, who badger correspondents ceaselessly with rote emails. Some accurately point out error, but most contain distorted appeals to morality and a very narrow view of the conflict.

In general, the region gets excellent journalists who are not tainted with prejudice, and who are on guard against it. But all of us are the result of our experiences and understanding of the world, and some of us have seen more of it than others. And to some degree, where you stand is where you sit: There are few, if any, permanent foreign correspondents based in the Palestinian territories.

For some, this is the first tribal conflict over land they have ever covered; for others, it is a place to get some quick human-interest in the morning, before the sun gets too hot, and then be able to sleep in their own beds at night.

Still, despite the criticism, the general quality of journalism from the Middle East is admirable, and despite the cries of anti-Semitism that emerge from some Israeli and Jewish throats, I have seen almost none of it among the press corps.

There is instead, among some, a deep disappointment with Israeli policy, and a feeling that the oppressed have swallowed the poison of power too readily and have become self-righteous oppressors, too ready to justify every wrong in the name of security and insufficiently open to the pain the occupation causes to the Palestinians and even to the corrosion it causes among Israelis themselves.

There is, among others of us, a difficulty in breaking through the unsophisticated and largely disinterested Palestinian public-relations efforts—and fierce censor-

ship of the Palestinian press—to see the reality of the territories as its citizens feel it, caught between an occupying power and a corrupt and largely uncaring Palestinian Authority.

There was, I think it is fair to say, not enough reportorial energy and honesty in reporting the chaos of Gaza, the corruption of Fatah, the lawlessness of the streets, and the disgust of Palestinians with their rulers of all kinds. That was a problem more understandable from the local stringers and reporters for the news agencies, but less acceptable from foreign correspondents. Yet the issue is not one of intimidation, as many Israeli supporters love to charge. But ... what? Indolence? Lack of time on the ground? An exaggerated or unprofessional sympathy with the underdog? I am not sure.

Just to provide one example: There had been a series of kidnappings of foreigners in Gaza, normally to demand jobs. One foreigner, a French citizen, had been kidnapped for nearly a week, in one of the most serious cases. He was then mysteriously let go after President Chirac intervened with President Abbas. Absurdly, I think, it was left to me to break the story of why: One particular Gazan clan, the Issa, kidnapped the foreigner and kept him until Mr. Abbas agreed to their demands, against the advice of many of his advisers, and released from prison some members of the clan, including at least one convicted of murder.

That led me to write a story about Gaza's clan structure, and its connections to the security forces and camp gangs, and why the combination of Israeli occupation and Fatah malfeasance had thrown Gazans back on to pre-modern loyalties: the family and the mosque.

I am sure I have my own blind spots. But Fatah's defeat should have been less of a surprise than it seemed. Even though Fatah ran very close to Hamas in the popular vote, despite a horrible campaign and a misunderstanding of the electoral system that split Fatah supporters and exaggerated Hamas's victory.

Fatah won 42 percent of the vote but only 34 percent of the seats, while Hamas won 44 percent of the vote and 56 percent of the seats.

Still, Hamas has won, and to my mind, it is as important a change in the Middle East as the 1978-79 Iranian Revolution, and as transformative. I may be wrong, as ever, but I fear that too many journalists—and diplomats, too—want to see Hamas as just another local difficulty, instead of the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood, in a free election, in the beating (and half-occupied) heart of Islam, over the secular, Nasserite nationalism of Fatah, considered the favored partners of the United States and what Palestinians call “America’s spoiled little boy,” Israel.

It is a reflection of larger regional changes that will have a significant impact on American interests in the region.

As for the Israelis and Palestinians, we have moved to a situation where the old assumption of two independent states based on territorial compromise may no longer be valid, where a cold peace between two “parallel unilateralisms” may be all that is possible, and where lavish western funding of a Palestinian population heavily dependent on aid becomes morally ambiguous and legally impermissible.

Or not. But journalism has barely begun to touch on these issues, or to dig very deeply into the roots of Hamas, or to ask very seriously whether Israel may have already won the war and is dictating—if not the peace, then the long-term future.

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