The EU and the Israel\Palestine Conflict:

An Ambivalent Relationship

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A. Introduction

In the summer of 2002, following renewed and continuing violence between Israel and the Palestinians, the Israeli government began the construction of a security barrier separating Israel from large sections of the West Bank. This barrier, composed in part of a concrete wall and in other areas of parallel rows of barbed wire has recently been relabeled the “terror prevention fence”. The 'fence', or as also named "the wall" produced an intensive debate concerning the route of the wall which annexes 2,800 acres of Palestinian land (Gush Shalom brochure, 2003), the abuse of human rights (B'tselem, 2003; World Bank Report, 2003), the ecological damage (PENGON Report, 2003) and the (in)ability and limitations of the wall in protecting Israeli citizens (Sagie and Sher, 2003). However, one of the significant results of the construction of the wall is the tangible demarcation of the Israeli territory - the unilateral production of a clear borderline - between Israel and the Palestinian authority, deviating from the Green Line, the boundary which was created in 1948-49 and which marks the territorial extent of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, those areas which were conquered by Israel from Jordan and Egypt in the 1967 war.

This act of bordering, we propose, cannot be seen as an autonomous reaction rooted solely in the securitization discourse. Rather, it is also a result of the long history of discussions concerning the territorial nature of Israel and its spatio-political relations with the Arab world. This paper explores the historical background that shaped the border conflicts between Israel and its Arab states neighbours during the past century. This historical description allows us to explore the main themes that have shaped Israel border discourse over time. This discourse does not only relate to the issue of demarcation and territorial configurations of political entities, but also relates to the significance of borders for the nature of the relations between Israel and her neighbours in general, and more specifically between Israel and the Palestinians.

We will argue that the dispute over land and borders lies at the heart of
the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As in other cases of nation building this embodies political and social aspects as well as questions concerning identity, class formation and the symbolic production of space (see: Passi, 1999; Agnew and Corbridge, 1995; Smith, 1985; Anderson, 1983). Notions of political homeland, the symbolic and mythical territory which constitute a central part of national identity and attachment, are central to our understanding of the way in which Israelis and Palestinians formulate their respective border and territorial discourses. Nonetheless, in this paper we aim to limit the discussion to the way in which the borders and territorial dispute has been shaped, transformed and reproduced at specific political junctions. We do not aim to present here a comprehensive and detailed historical analysis here. Rather, we focus on those events which have shaped the main contours and transformations of the conflict through the different phases which have been identified in the theoretical framework of this project, namely: conflict episode, issue conflict, identity conflict and power conflict.

Beyond the description of the major shaping events of the conflict, the paper will also discuss and critically analyse the involvement of the EU in the Israel\Palestine conflict. We will present the development of EU role and patterns of intervention, as well as the merits and disadvantages of the EU constituting an honest broker with a significant third party role in the process of conflict resolution. In this context we argue that Europe’s role in general, and that of the EU in particular, is of major significance, both because of the historic role of European countries in the region - especially the respective British and French mandates awarded by the League of Nations following the break up of the Ottoman Empire and the post World War I control of the region - as well as the geographic proximity and cultural influence of Europe within the wider Levant region.

At the same time, we will demonstrate that, despite the long historical relationship between Europe and Israel/Palestine, and despite the substantial economic involvement in both Israel (in terms of trade and cultural relations) and the Palestinian Authority (in terms of major financial assistance and aid packages) neither of the actors perceive the EU as playing a significant role in
the process of conflict resolution. This is particularly the case with respect to Israel, where there is a deep-rooted and, in recent years, growing mistrust of European intentions towards the region. Israeli attitudes towards Europe have always been harsher and more critical than attitudes towards the USA, even when the respective USA and EU leaders make similar statements about the need to establish a Palestinian State, end the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and bring an end to settlement activity.

Responding to statements of this nature emanating from the White House, Israeli leaders make conciliatory noises about this being no more than a dispute amongst close friends which can be sorted out in the next visit of an Israeli Prime Minister to the Oval Office. A similar statement emanating from London, Berlin or Paris is often greeted with a howl of rage and a statement to the effect that this is just another example of European pro-Palestinian bias and, in some cases, reflects latent European anti-Semitism. The fact that anti-Semitic activity has been on the increase in some European countries during the past decade, has only served to strengthen the socially constructed feeling amongst a growing number of Israelis that Europe is not to be trusted and that it does not have Israeli interests at heart in its own foreign policy making.

Israeli ambivalence towards Europe in general has been a common theme in foreign policy making ever since the establishment of the State in 1948. On the one hand, Europe was the place in which the holocaust took place, on the other hand, nearly all of the State founder generation were European, saw European culture and traditions as being the cornerstones on which a modern State of Israel should be founded, and given the proximity in geographical location, saw in Europe an ally against a hostile Islamic Middle East. Nearly half of Israel’s Jewish population derives its direct ancestry from Europe within the past 2-3 generations. Moreover, an increasing number of Israelis now lay claim to EU citizenship and passports. With the enlargement of the EU in 2004, and in particular the addition of Poland and Hungary (two countries with particularly large Jewish populations prior to World War II) to the member states, it is estimated that nearly one third of the country’s population will be entitled to EU passports, through their parents or
grandparents prior citizenship.

**B. Historical Background and Border Conflict Landmarks**

Let us open the following section with chronological and discursive description of the debate around Israel borders. In our analysis we have broadly identified the following phases that mark changes in the formation of boundaries:

- 1917-1947: the British mandate on Palestine
- 1947-1949: the separation plan and the outcome of the 1948 War
- The consequence of the 1967 War
- Between the 1973 war and the 1979 peace agreement with Egypt
- The period between 1980-2002
- 2002-today The Security Fence\Separation Wall

*The British Mandate in Palestine*

In May 1916, during the World War I, an agreement negotiated by Sir Mark Sykes of Britain and Georges Picot of France, was signed with the assent of Russia. In the core of the Sykes-Picot agreement was the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the division of Turkish-held Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine into various French and British-administered areas. Obviously in this stage the Jewish-Arab conflict was not a major component that affected the decision making.

Towards the end of the World War I, in November 1917, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs Lord James Balfour has sent declaration to the Zionist Federation (ZF) stating that the British Government supports the idea of the Jewish people to establish their national home in 'Eretz Israel'. Yet, no territorial indications or border definitions were mentioned:

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best
endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country”.

To some extent through this declaration the conflict can be seen as a conflict episode; the dispute was quite low and parties express their disaccord.

In 1919 the ZF presented for the first time a map that pointed on their territorial ambitions. This map expressed political goals but also relied on geographical principles, and quite often referred to spatial characteristics. The territory the ZF demanded included around 45,000 sq\km. It is important to note that the 1919 map was the largest territory that the ever demanded formally (after 1967 Israel control 90,000 sq\km). This map was based on some internal drafts circulated within the ZF, and it can be seen as the map of the Zionist aspiration, which was shaped without any meaningful public debate. Yet, the wide territorial definition that included the Transjordan has been presented later as the territory that was "taken" from the Zionist national home. This proposal expresses another level of conflict in which not solely the territorial aspect is epitomized, but rather identity is also a central attribute. The 1919 proposal was consciously blind to the other side of the conflict, claiming for the whole territory from both sides of the Jordan.

In 1920 Britain was assigned a mandate for Palestine and Transjordan, approved by the League of Nations in 1922. This included a specific task of preparing a Jewish national home in Palestine (in accordance with the Balfour declaration). It is worth mentioning here that the border between Palestine under the British control and Syria under the French control was negotiated by the two powers and concluded in 1923, establishing the northern border of Palestine. The eastern border of Palestine was determined the same year. However, Transjordan was separated from Palestine, established within the mandate as an autonomous area under the rule of Emir Abdullah.

Following the violent events in the 1930’s between Jews and Arabs, the Pill Committee started its mission in October 1936, collecting witnesses from
both Arab and Jewish representative concerning the tension and violence in the area. In July the committee published its conclusions: (a) the Mandate in Palestine is not operational and (b) the Jewish-Arab conflict can be solved only through political solution of dividing the territory. Indeed, the 1937 debate and the decision followed it can be seen as a turning point; this was the first time that the ZM was forced to relate to the territorial aspect of the future Jewish state. According to Galnoor (1994:301) it was followed, for the first time, with an extensive public debate that focused on territorial issue.

The main logic behind this proposal was 'territories for sovereignty' and it challenged the maximalists approach of 'everything or nothing' and demanded for a more pragmatic attitude. However, the actual influence of the ZM was limited and it hardly affected the final decision. The 1937 British proposal was so unattractive and most Zionist leaders' reaction was negative. The 'deniers' rhetoric included slogans such as 'the entire Eretz Israel', 'two banks to the Jordan river', 'the promised land' and 'the fathers land', while the supporters arguments advocated 'peace for territory', 'state now' and 'Eretz Israel as the desire of soul only'.

Despite the disagreements with the British, the importance of the 1937 proposal lays in the principal of partition since the advantages of territorial sovereignty were seen as more important than the territorial loss. This instrumental approach in the ZM created the basis for 'step to step' policy towards implementation of territorial sovereignty of the ZM. This stage can be seen as an issue conflict; both sides voiced disagreement about the other parties' statement yet the arguments (at least from the Jewish side) were focused on territory and borders, living the identity issue aside. Furthermore, from this stage disaccord became the expected communication style.

The Pill proposal was formally out of the agenda in 1938, but the idea of partition was still the basis for negotiations between the British Government (Winston Churchill) and Haim Weitzman. In May 1942, the Baltimore Declaration announced in the US Zionist Committee, called for (a) Eretz Israel as a Jewish commonwealth linked to the democratic world structure, and (b) to open the gates for unlimited migration of Jews. This decision was also
authorised by the Vaad Hapoel HaZioni and the Jewish Agency Executive and was considered as the 'maximalists' victory within the ZM. Nonetheless, this declaration has not marked any territorial aspects or borders but it was perceived as the return of the Jewish people to their entire land. The characteristics of issue conflict are also relevant to this case; from the Arab's side the reaction was the completion with national antagonism between Jews and Arabs that cannot be settled (Shapira, 1992:385).

The Anglo-American Committee published its report in April 1946, suggesting to establish a 'trust regime' and not to divide Palestine between Jews and Arabs. They also proposed to enable 100,000 Jews to emigrate from Europe. This contradicted the part of the ZM motivation that official demanded by the Jewish Agency as: (a) to transform Eretz Israel into a Jewish commonwealth and (b) to enable Jewish migrants to come. Any formal discussion of the territorial dimension was absent from the Jewish side, but as Galnoor notes (1994:307) some representative discussed it unofficially with the Anglo-American pro-Zionist members and advocated partition. Raising the importance of Jewish migration to Palestine, clearly signify a shift towards an identity conflict.

In an emergency meeting of the Zionist Agency in August 1946 an important decision was taken; the executive agreed to discuss the establishment of sustainable Jewish state in a proper area of Eretz Israel (Heller, 1987: 436 in Galnoor, 1994:308). This was a reaction to the British scheme to establish a "Provincial Autonomy Plan" known as the Morrisson-Greaidy, inspired by the Anglo-American recommendations published in July 1946. According to this plan Palestine will be divided to four areas: (1) a Jewish territory, (2) an Arab territory, (3) the Jerusalem enclave and (4) the Negev. This was the last British initiative to satisfy the Jews the Arabs and the US that also ended in failure.

At the Jewish Agency conference in Paris (1946), a new initiative was raised that rejected the Morrisson-Greaidy plan and suggested a compromise (at least from the Zionist point of view); i.e., partition for Jewish state. This was the first time that a formal decision was taken advocating the partition of
Palestine. The principle was to have maximum Jewish land with minimum Arab population, while Jerusalem will be under international rule, Jaffa will be an Arab enclave and the Negev will also be part of the Jewish State.

In December 1946, the 22 Zionist Congress in Bazel claimed for establishing in Eretz Israel a Jewish state articulated in the world's democratic structure. This declaration is important since other proposals that were rejected by the majority asked to include in the decision terms such as: "the entire undivided Eretz Israel" (Galonoor, 1994:310).

- **1947-1948: the separation plan and the outcome of the 1948 War**

A significant shift in the border conflict is marked in the partition plan of 1947. Integrating identity into the conflict was clear in this stage; the discussion around Israeli territory – a Jewish state - and borders cannot be separated from the wider context. The end of the World War II and the tragic circumstances of the holocaust are important as background. Yet, it is important to note that while the international community changed its attitude towards the Zionist project, the Jewish Arab conflict in general and within Mandatory Palestine was still dominant. Additionally, the need to find solution to the Jewish refugees in Europe and the struggle of breaking off the British Mandate policy were articulated in the ZM demand to encourage the migration of Jews.

The core of this proposal is to stop the British Mandate of Palestine and to establish a Jewish and an Arab separated states, with economic shared sphere, while Jerusalem will be under a trust regime managed by the UN. The area of the Jewish state was 16,000 sq\km and it included more than 500,000 Jews and more than 40 percent Arabs (380,000). The Arab state included 700,000 Arabs and only 10,000 Jews (less than 2 percent). The Arab leadership rejected this plan and the Arab league decided to prepare itself for a war. For the ZM such proposal was perceived as a victory and indeed in the Vaad HaPoel HaZioni in September 1947 a vast majority supported it. In November 1947 two thirds of the UN members voted for this plan, while
limiting the area of the Jewish State from 16,000 sq\km to 14000 sq\km (the Western Negev was given to the Arab state). Yet, the Arab world rejected the plan, and the 1948 began.

The 1948 war was a clear example of power conflict. It was based on violence as the main communication style; physical force was an acceptable means of dealing with the other side. For the Israeli side the war marked the independence of the new Jewish state while for the Palestinians it is the Al Nakbe (the disaster). At the conclusion of the 1948 all of the Arab countries signed a cease-fire agreement with Israel, starting with Egypt on February 24, 1949 and concluding with Syria on July 20. These agreements specified the interim borders between Israel and the Arab states (the "1949 Armistice Line" that became known as the "Green Line") as the following:

- In the south: the border with Egypt was restored to its previous line, including the Gaza Strip
- In the north: the border with Lebanon and Syria were brought back to its previous line
- In the East: Jordan retained control of the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) as well as to the Old City of Jerusalem.

To some extent, from this stage until 1967 the conflict remained in the identity conflict phase. Yet, the Sinai Operation in which Israel defeated Egypt and conquered the Sinai Peninsula for the period from November 1956 to January 1957 noted the return to the power conflict. Yet Israel withdrew to its old border, and a new UN involvement for maintaining the peace on this line was created, i.e., the UN Emergency Force (UNEF).

- **The consequence of the 1967 War**

In May 1967 the Egyptian army entered Sinai, a move that perceived by Israel as a threat to its existence. After the international community failed to resolve the crisis, Israel went to war on 5 June. The Egyptian army was defeated in two days, and in 4 days Israeli forces stood on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. Jordan joined the war a few hours after Egypt, and was likewise
defeated and the whole West Bank and the Old City of Jerusalem were conquered. A war with Syria followed, and in 2 days the Israeli army also conquered the Golan Heights.

The 1967 War caused many significant changes in Israeli social, political and cultural reality. This power conflict phase involved many issues of identity and historical belonging supported by religious, often messianic, arguments. In the context of this paper it is important to mention the territorial aspect: i.e., vast territories were now under Israeli control including Jerusalem, and demographically, i.e., a large Arab-Palestinian population became under Israeli rule. Most of these changes were not seen as permanent by the Israeli government. After long deliberations for a number of days the Israeli government accepted a decision (which was kept secret) in which Israel was ready to give back the Sinai and the Golan heights in return for a peace agreement. The question of the West Bank remained open.

However a summit meeting of the Arab states in Khartoum in August 1967 established three No's: no peace, no recognition and no negotiations with Israel, and support of the claims of the Palestinians. Indeed, such declaration support the categorisation of this stage as power conflict characterised by the attempt of each party to 'break the will' of the other side. The UN actively attempted a solution, and in November 22, 1967 the UN Security Council passed its Resolution 242 which called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab territories, and the right of all states in the Middle East, including Israel, to live in peace within secure and recognised borders.

Finally, following the annexation of the territories an intensive process of colonisation (in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Height) encouraged by the different Israeli government, using security discourse and often religious reasons for justifying it. The results of this policy are visible; the West Bank, for instance, is broken up by Jewish settlements, Israeli controlled roads and large tracts of Israeli controlled land designated as military areas or nature reserves. Colonisation, indeed, must be seen as a violent act that radically interferes into a previously accepted autonomy of identities.
Between the 1973 war and the 1979 peace agreement with Egypt

The October 1973 War developed rapidly, and the coordinated Egyptian-Syrian offensive caught Israel by surprise. In the early days of the war, the Israeli army suffered heavy losses as Egyptian forces crossed the Suez Canal and overran Israeli strongholds, while Syrians marched deep into the Golan Heights. Israel launched its counteroffensive first against the Syrian front, and only when it had pushed the Syrians back well east of the 1967 cease-fire line did Israel turn its attention to the Egyptian front. In ten days of fighting, Israel pushed the Egyptian army back across the canal, and the Israeli forces made deep incursions into Egypt. On October 24, with Israeli soldiers about one kilometre from the main Cairo-Ismailia highway and the Soviet Union threatening direct military intervention, the UN imposed a cease-fire.

After several months of negotiations, during which sporadic fighting continued, Israel reached a disengagement agreement in January 1974, whereby the Israeli army withdrew across the canal and Israeli and Egyptian troops were separated in the Sinai by a UNEF-manned buffer zone. Israel signed a similar agreement with Syria on May 31, 1974, whereby Israel withdrew to the 1967 cease-fire line in the Golan Heights and a United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) occupied a buffer zone between Israeli and Syrian forces. On September 4, 1975, after further negotiations, the Second Sinai Disengagement Agreement was signed between Egypt and Israel that widened the buffer zone and secured a further Israeli withdrawal to the east of the strategic Gidi and Mitla passes.

In 1978 the Camp David Accords were taking place between Israel and Egypt with the mediation of the US. The Israel-Egypt peace agreement was signed by Anuuar Sadat and Menachem Begin in Washington on March 26, 1979, and it was the first time that Israel and any of its Arab neighbours agreeing on territorial and border issues. The Israel-Egypt peace treaty contains nine articles, a military annex, an annex dealing with the relation between the parties, agreed minutes interpreting the main articles of the treaty, among them Article 6, the withdrawal schedule, exchange of
ambassadors, security arrangements. An agreement relating to the autonomy talks was contained in a letter addressed by President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin to President Carter.

Following this agreement Israel withdrew to the border delineated in 1906 (this line was shaped in 1906 by Lord Cromer, the British administrator of Egypt who ruled the country, and was worried by the possibility of Turkish military forces being deployed in the Sinai peninsula. In 1892 he therefore proposed a borderline to bring the Sinai under British control. After some years and some negotiations the Turkish government agreed in 1906 to the British modified proposal. This borderline was not changed after World War I, and remained the border between the British mandate in Palestine and Egypt). However, the Gaza Strip remained under Israeli rule. The agreement also included giving up military bases, settlements, roads and other infrastructure as well as the Sinai oil fields. Moreover, a process of normalisation began, including exchange of diplomatic representatives and mutual agreements in the areas of trade, economy, tourism and mail. Yet, it must be noted that these relationships are very fragile and influenced by the dynamics of Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- The period between 1980-2002

Officially called the "Declaration of Principles," the Oslo accords were negotiated secretly by Israeli and Palestinian delegations in 1993 in Oslo, Norway, guided by Norwegian Foreign Minister Johan Jorgen Holst. They were signed at a Washington ceremony hosted by U.S. President Bill Clinton on September 13, 1993, during which Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shook hands. From territorial point of view, the Oslo accords included gradual withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and the Palestinians' right to self-rule in those territories.

On September 28, 1995 Israelis and Palestinians signed another deal known as the "Interim Agreement" or "Oslo 2" which enabled for a second stage of autonomy for the Palestinians, giving them self-rule in the cities of
Bethlehem, Jenin, Nablus, Qalqilya, Ramallah, Tulkarm, parts of Hebron and 450 villages, while allowing Israeli-guarded Jewish settlements to remain. In 1998, U.S. President Bill Clinton hosted Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a nine-day summit at Wye Mills, Maryland, that ended with an October 23 signing ceremony in Washington of a land-for-security peace deal, which included:

- A security plan to crack down on violence by terrorists.
- Israeli troop redeployment from an additional 13.1 percent of West Bank land, to take place over a 90-day period.
- A 14.2 percent transfer of West Bank land from joint Israeli-Palestinian control to Palestinian control.
- The revocation of clauses in the Palestinian National Charter that are hostile toward Israel.
- The guarantee of two corridors of safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank.
- Israeli commitment for third-phase troop redeployment from the West Bank.
- The release of 750 Palestinian prisoners in three phases.
- The opening of a Palestinian airport in Gaza.

Yet, Netanyahu froze the deal two months after signing it, saying that the Palestinians failed to meet their security commitments.

On September 13, 1999, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak - who defeated Netanyahu on a promise to move ahead with peace talks - signed a deal with Arafat to implement a modified version of the Wye accords. The agreement set a September 13, 2000, deadline for a final peace treaty. Generally speaking, this phase which was very dynamic transformed the conflict to issue conflict - trying to focus on the tangible dimension of the conflict (territory and sovereignty) while putting aside symbolic aspects that related to both sides identities (the right of return, Jerusalem).

The last initiative, raised by the Quartet and the US, the 'road map', aimed to present phases, timelines, target dates and benchmarks for progress through reciprocal steps by the two parties in the political, security, economic,
humanitarian, and institution-building fields. The idea is that, with the help of the 'Quartet' (the USA, the EU, UN and Russia), Israel and the Palestinians should agree on a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israel-Palestinian conflict by 2005 in the form of two-state solution. The Palestinian side was demanded to act against terror and to create a working democracy based on tolerance and liberty. The Israelis are demanded to do what is necessary for a democratic Palestinian state to be established. Both sides would accept the principle of a negotiation process. This initiative was a result of the US and the European Quartet as noted by the European Council:

"3. The Council reiterated the importance of the Quartet's Road Map for the re-establishment of a positive political perspective in the region. It called on both parties to seize the opportunity offered to put the Middle East Peace Process back on track...Time is of the essence; concrete action and results are needed now.

4. The European Union is ready to step up its co-operation with the United States and its other Quartet partners to advance confidence building between the parties and to assist the implementation of the road map, including by helping to establish an effective and credible monitoring mechanism" (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/med).

- **2002-today The Security Fence\Separation Wall**

In parallel to the diplomatic efforts of implementing the road map, which at the time of writing this paper seems as another failure, a different reality is on the ground. In summer 2002, during an intensive period of attacks on Israeli civilians, the Israeli Government started the construction of the "security fence". The International community demanded a report concerning the impact of this wall on Palestinian livelihoods as well as on the humanitarian aspects of such project. The report was written for the US government as well as for the Norwegian and EU (World Bank Report, 2003).
The first phase of the wall passes through the north-western governorates of Jenin, Tulkarem, Qualqiliya and Salfit. It is important to note, in the context of this paper, that the wall's alignment does not coincide with the green line; in some points the wall is located six km inside the West Bank and as a result, 12,000 Palestinians in 15 villages will find themselves on the western "Israeli" side of the wall, disconnected from the rest of the WB. The report also states that when the construction of the wall will end 95,000 Palestinian will live between the wall and the green line. In the second phase the wall is extended towards the east to Salem checkpoint. Additionally, the wall is also constructed in the Bethlehem and Jerusalem area. The cost of such project is 6.5 milliard shekels and when it will end the length of it will be around 600 km (twice the length of the green line) (Haartez, 30/4/2003). The reaction of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the findings of the report emphasised the need for such wall in order to protect Israeli citizens from terror attacks that originating in the West Bank.

Politically speaking, building a "fence" through the West Bank effectively creates facts on the ground. However, in Israeli discourse the term "fence" is widely use, while in reality a system of fortifications that is currently being erected on Palestinian lands in the West Bank is constructed combined of an eight meters high concrete wall, wire fences and electronic sensors, a path to reveal footprints, an area into which entry is forbidden, a two-lane road for army patrols, and watchtowers and firing posts every 200 meters along the entire length.

The consequences of constructing a "security wall" are highly political; it creates facts on the ground that will define the borders of the future Palestinian state to be dictated in the framework of the road map: three enclaves completely cut off from each other, without the Jordan Valley, without part of the agricultural lands between Jenin and Qalqilyah and without metropolitan Jerusalem. But beyond the political aspects of such one sided act, the wall separates thousands of people in towns and villages along the route from their lands, from the nearest city and from neighbouring villages (World Bank Report, 2003; B'tzelem, 2003). Thousands of Palestinians have lost their
lands, their livelihood and their savings, which had been invested in greenhouses, reservoirs, or houses for their children, because of these fortifications.

The reaction of the US and the EU towards the construction of the wall is quite severe, as noted by the commission:

"The Council underlined the importance of a clear commitment by the Government of Israel on the implementation of the Quartet road map as early as possible. The envisaged talks of Prime Minister Sharon with President Bush will be an important opportunity in that respect. The Council continues to be alarmed at the ongoing illegal settlement activities and land confiscations for the construction of the so-called security fence, which are an obstacle to peace by threatening to render the two-State solution physically impossible" (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations).

Indeed, the EU’s position on the current situation in the Middle East conflict has not changed. It continues to call on Israel to withdraw its military forces and stop extra-judicial killings, to lift the closures and all restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people, and to freeze settlement activities:

"A lasting peace settlement can only be based on respect for international law, including resolutions 242 and 338 of the Security Council of the United Nations. As the European Council has declared, such a settlement requires full recognition of the right of Israel to live in peace and safely inside internationally recognised borders, as well as the creation of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian state and the end of the occupation of Palestinian Territories" (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations).

This phase, indeed, points on the shift of the situation from power conflict into a phase of identity conflict; the responsibility for disaccord is
attributed to and identified with the other side. This "justifies" Israel's one-sided act of bordering which obviously embodies a potential of returning to the power conflict stage.

But beyond the problematic nature of this specific project, we would suggest that it reflects the very notion of historical process described above. It tangibly produces a *separation* between Israel and the territories. The notion of separation was pushed forward to the Israeli public discourse supported by academics (Schueftan, 1999) as well as by different organisations who tried to depoliticise this action, using a securitisation discourse, such as the "Gader LaHaim" (A Fence for Life), neutralising identity dimension and transforming it to an issue conflict:

"... The separation plan does not include the withdrawal of military or moving population, and it does not mean withdrawal from the territories. There is no fear that such act will be understood as a weakness of Israel. The opposite; from an international perspective Israel will win from implementing the plan... It will neutralise the ability of the Palestinians and the terror organisations to damage freely Israelis... It will shape their [the Palestinian] consciousness that the only way is to sit around the negotiation table" (Gader LaHaim brochure).

A different statement by Prof. Yuli Tamir, a Knesset Member, who published a brochure that advocates 'drawing a line', uses the demographic argument as part of the (Jewish) identity political discourse:

"The biggest challenge is to draw a line that will protect on the Jewish majority: the best border is the one that will include the maximum number of Israelis and the minimum number of Palestinian inhabitants"

To this line of argument, a group of academics, politicians and ex-military commanders joined, under the umbrella of the Van Leer institute (Sagie and Sher, 2003:34-35):
"The proposed plan is grounded in a temporary boundary indicated on the attached map. In the first phase – the “transition phase” – Israel will bear responsibility for security in the Palestinian areas, the erection of a physical barrier along the boundary will be completed, planning for the transition of Israeli towns and villages to permanent communities according to broad national policy planning will be concluded, and the role of the international community in reconstructing Palestinian institutions of government will be defined".

Yet, this group relates to the 'physical barrier' as a first stage and in the second phase, they suggest that the 'resettlement effort will be completed, infrastructures will be separated, and an effective border regime between Israel and the Palestinian areas will be established. With international coordination and Israeli consent, an international military-civilian force with a defined mandate may deploy in the Palestinian areas'. Their attitude, we would suggest, can be seen as a continuous line of the historical discussion, as they state (our notes in brackets and Italics):

"The Policy Plan proposed here is not just another “separation plan”. The distinctiveness of the Position Paper is three-fold:... In the proposed initiative, proactive separation [the notion of separation as a borderline] is not an end in itself, but the means for ensuring the national aim of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state [identity]. Its underlying logic is primarily value-based, diplomatic, social and demographic [national border as an ethnic definition] – and also takes full account of security concerns... Unlike other plans that focus mainly on the security aspects of unilateral disengagement, this policy initiative also includes other vital components that have not yet become part of the public debate. These include the importance of the demographic component, the issue of Jerusalem, an international force, and
pointing out the need to deal expeditiously and adequately with the issue of the Arab minority living in the State of Israel [*multi-layered identities, ethnicity*]" (Sagie and Sher, 2003).

This new initiative - beyond its "separation-securitisation" – hypothesis faces the very core questions of the conflict such as: the right of return, the demographic balance and the status of Jerusalem. These issues are very controversial and sensitive to both Palestinians and Israelis, and we would suggest that they often provide the justification on the part of political leaders as the basis for the securitisation of the arguments and the continuation of the conflict.

Finally, at the time of writing this paper, a draft, known as the Geneva Accord is to be signed between Israelis and Palestinians politicians. The Geneva Accord, phrased by Israelis and Palestinians relates to some of the most sensitive issues in the conflict, such as the right of return for Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount. The agreement is based on Beilin-Abu Mazen document, signed in October 1995. In Article 4 which deals with the territorial boundaries of the Israel and the future Palestinian state, it is noted that the international borders will be shaped in accordance with UNSC Resolution 242 and 338, the border between the states of Palestine and Israel shall be based on the June 4th 1967 lines with reciprocal modifications on a 1:1 basis. This initiative also demands that both sides will recognise the border as the permanent, secure and recognised international boundary between them, recognising respectfully "each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence, as well as the inviolability of each others territory, including territorial waters, and airspace". Furthermore, the 1967 territorial expansion of Israel which has been linked to issues of identity has been tackled in this proposal which propose that "the state of Israel shall be responsible for resettling the Israelis residing in Palestinian sovereign territory outside this territory".

Yet, according to a survey conducted by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, 51.4 percent of the respondents expressed opposition to the Geneva
Understandings, while only 32 percent expressed support (Al-Ayyam Palestinian newspaper, in: www.memri.org). Moreover, The Peace Index survey for October, which was conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research shows that despite the fact that majority of the Israeli public have heard of the Geneva initiative, only small numbers believe this has any chance of being realised. This findings are interesting since this research points on the fact that among the Israeli Jewish public there is a concern that if Israel will not withdraw from the occupied territories no solution based on the principle of 'two states for two peoples' is found to the conflict, and the Palestinians will become a majority west of the Jordan and a de facto 'binational' state will emerge(http://spirit.tau.ac.il).

B. European Positions on the Israel/Palestine Conflict

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the parallel creation of the Palestinian refugee problem (for a detailed analysis see: Morris, 1987), Europe has attempted to maintain its influence as a power broker and mediator in the region, although its overall impact has been minimal. During much of this period, there was not a single European policy towards the region, with different countries changing their stances according to specific political and time contexts. In recent years however, the EU has come close to adopting a single policy towards the conflict, unlike its position on other conflict regions, such as in the case of Iraq.

Following the establishment of the State of Israel, it was Germany and Britain who were the bete noir for most Israelis, the former because of the holocaust, the latter because of their attempts to prevent the establishment of
the State and refuse entry to refugees and immigrants in the period between 1945-1948. During the first decade of statehood, France was an important ally of Israel and was seen by foreign policy makers as being the closest European ally. By the time of the 1956 Sinai campaign, France and Britain were working together with Israel against the Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal, while Germany remained beyond the pale of normal diplomatic relations (Aridan, 1994).

This situation changed by the 1960’s, when Germany had began to develop relations with the State of Israel, partly through the leadership of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the implementation of a major reparations package to holocaust victims and their families. During the past forty years, it has been Germany which gradually taken on the role of being Israel’s closest European ally, although Israeli leaders never lose the opportunity of exerting the guilt complex on German governments when their leaders utter statements which may be interpreted as being too pro-Palestinian and not sufficiently pro-Israeli.

The Six Day war in 1967 can be seen as a turning point not only in the Israel\Palestine conflict (see: our paper that deals with the historical background), but also in the European approach to the region. European support for Israel became more tenuous, while the continuation of the occupation and the building of settlements has switched much European support for the pre-1967 underdogs (Israel) to the post-1967 underdogs (the Palestinians). In particular Israeli – French relations have undertaken a significant turn for the worse, while Israeli – British relations continue to experience ups and downs. Ye'or (2003:2) notes that during this immediate post-1967 period, France became "the instigator of a European anti-Israel policy" and voted in international forums in favour of "Arab anti-Israel" resolutions and backed the 1969 unilateral boycott of arms sales to Israel.

The tension between Israel and the European states continued throughout the 1970s. This was expressed mainly after the 1973 war and the Arab oil embargo, which has been used as a tool to put pressure on the Europeans. Some analysts conceive this as the basis for understanding the re-
shaping of European policy in the area:

"Panicked, the nine countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) immediately met in Brussels on November 6, 1973 and tabled a joint Resolution based on their dependence on Arab oil" (Ye'or, 2003:2)

Adopting this critical (though simplistic) perspective led Bat Ye'or to conclude that the Arab world exploited the economy "as a radical means to make the EEC an instrument in a long-term political strategy targeting Israel, Europe and America" (2003:11). This Arab attitude was clearly expressed by one of the Arab delegates, Dr. Ibrahim A. Obaid, Director-General, Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources in Riyadh, at a meeting of the Euro-Arab cooperation organization in Amsterdam in 1975:

"Together and as equals, the Europeans and the Arabs can through a "strategy of inter-dependence" forge ahead to remove the thorn from their sides – the Israeli problem – and attend to the Herculean task ahead of them" (cited in Bat Ye'or, 2003:11).

Farouq Al-Qaddoumi, head of the PLO political bureau and secretary general of Fatah's Central Committee, elaborated this approach in a recent interview, in which he stated:

"Question: "How can Europe be pressured to take a more aggressive and active stand?"

Al-Qaddoumi: "By using the weapon of oil. That is, by raising its price so that the people will feel the pressure, will be angry at their leadership, and will force it to play a more active role..." (Kul Al-Arab, January 3, 2003 published in Israel in: memri.org/bin/articles.cgi).
Over time, the EU has taken on a common policy with respect to Israel/Palestine (see: Alpher 2000). On March 26, 1999, the EU published its "Berlin Declaration" which supports an independent Palestinian state. The "Berlin Declaration" opens the possibility of European recognition in an independent Palestinian state, even if this state is declared unilaterally, following a failure in the bilateral negotiations. In this context, the British General Consul in Jerusalem, in a ceremony in Ramallah said that "the EU is ready to recognize the Palestinian State if it is declared" (Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, April 4, 1999, in: memri.org/bin/articles). These changes in the EU positions were seen as constituting a form of reward paid by the West to the Palestinian leadership for having postponed the intended unilateral declaration of a Palestinian State on May 4, 1999. The EU’s position on the current situation in the Middle East conflict has not changed. It continues to call on Israel to withdraw its military forces and stop extra-judicial killings, to lift the closures and all restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people, and to freeze settlement activities:

"A lasting peace settlement can only be based on respect for international law, including resolutions 242 and 338 of the Security Council of the United Nations. As the European Council has declared, such a settlement requires full recognition of the right of Israel to live in peace and safely inside internationally recognised borders, as well as the creation of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian state and the end of the occupation of Palestinian Territories" (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations).

Given these statements, Israeli leaders do not view Europe as constituting an honest broker, favouring increased American assistance and intervention over that of Europe. This situation is also recognised by the French writer Dominique Moisi who argues that the primary responsibility of the international community, and particular the Europeans is to re-establish trust
between Europe, Israel and Palestine:

"... Europe needs to hold out a more tempting carrot - and wield a tougher stick. It should offer the Palestinians better-planned and properly delivered economic aid. For the Israelis, Europe should hold out the prospect of a "privileged partnership", which would create stronger ties with the European Union" (The Financial Times, 2 July 2001, in: www.sfcg.org).

More specifically, Moisi details what must be demanded from both sides. On the Palestinian side, he proposes, "beyond the calculated manipulation of violence, what is unacceptable is the absence of the rule of law, the corruption, if not stopped, and the continuing use of educational texts filled with hatred". As for the Israeli side, he stresses that "continued building of settlements on disputed land is unacceptable and should lead to trade sanctions, implemented by the EU".

Despite the emergent single European voice concerning Israel\Palestine, Israel continues to pay careful attention to the statements of the three big players – Britain, Germany and France. Statements emanating from other countries, such as the Belgium attempt to put Ariel Sharon on trial as a war criminal, or the Norwegian discussion concerning a boycott on Israeli goods, are seen as being part of a wider European anti-Israel policy, but are not considered as being of importance in the wider picture. It is the policies of the three key European players which determines Israel’s attitude towards Europe in general. In this respect, Israel has displayed a hot-cold relationship with each of the big three, changing over time in line with the political realities and the change in respective governments.

An example of these dynamics is the visit of former Deputy Foreign Minister David Mellor, during the 1990’s, to the Gaza Strip and his harsh comments towards Israeli policy brought relations between Britain and Israel to a new low, while the unquestioned support of British prime Minister Tony
Blair for the war in Iraq in 2003 (a war which was supported throughout Israel) was an important factor bringing the two countries closer to each other. Sharon’s decision to visit London in July 2003 was, partly, an attempt to say “thank you” to Blair for supporting American policy in the global war against terror and in the downfall of Saddam Hussein.

At the same time, Israel sees the USA as being the major, perhaps the sole, third party country whose intervention in the conflict is of any importance. Ambassadorial appointments to many EU countries have not been considered important by the Israeli Foreign Ministry. These positions are often used as means of filling the eleven “political appointee” slots allowed an Israeli Foreign Minister, rather than the appointment of professional career diplomats. In recent years, Britain has experienced a list of political appointees – three in a row - while the positions in both Belgium and France have been filled by appointees who have been rewarded for their political services to a particular Israeli Prime Minister or Foreign Minister, despite the fact that they possess few diplomatic or explanatory skills. This is viewed with much alarm in European countries that see this as an indication of the low esteem in which they are held by successive Israeli governments, although they continue to see the Israel posting as one of the more important in terms of the wider Middle Eastern policy. Israel damages its own cause in many European countries by sending non-professional political appointees to these countries, both in terms of their ability to put over Israel’s case in public forums and in the way that the host governments relate to them.

C. Are There Carrots and Sticks?

In other cases of contemporary conflict – such as Cyprus, the Balkans, Turkey – the EU has been able to offer the much-desired carrot of eventually belonging to the EU as a reward for conflict resolution and political stability. The inclusion of Slovenia in the next round of EU enlargement was a clear indication to the other Balkan states that they too could be part of the EU in
years to come, while the accession of Cyprus, and desired for accession by Turkey, are closely linked to political demands on the part of the EU.

Although there has been some discussion concerning Israel's future membership of the EU (see: Veit, 2003; Tovias 2003; Matern, 1997 in Stetter, 2003), this is seen as a highly unlikely scenario. Despite all cartographic ingenuity, this part of the Levant cannot be defined as constituting part of the European continent even at its broadest geographical or cultural definitions and delimitations. In this context Primor (2003) notes that Israel is unable or not interested in meeting even 60 percent of the commitments required before joining the EU. The example he gives relates to the need to annul the law granting Jews the Right of Return, which contradicts the EU's principle of freedom of movement within the union (www.haaretz.co.il, July 23, 2003).

Yet, Israel already enjoys associate member status in the EU and benefits from a preferred trading Agreement; it is important to note that it is the only country to have preferred trading status with both the USA and the EU at one and the same time. For a time this provided a back door entry for European and USA entrepreneurs into each others’ markets, although this was later restricted. Based on figures for 2001, Israeli exports to the EU represented 31% ($6.9 billion) of total Israeli exports and Israeli imports from the EU 41% ($11.4 billion) of total Israeli imports. The breakdown of trade flows by main sectors, excluding diamonds, is the following: Israel's main exports to the EU are electrical machinery and equipment (39%); chemical products (17%), plastics and rubber (9%) and optical measuring and medical instruments (8%). Its major imports from the EU are electrical machinery and equipment (35%), chemicals (13%) and base metals (6%). Indeed, EU-Israel trade is increasing in importance as a share of the EU's trade. The total trade in services between the EU and Israel increased from 1996 to 1998 (last data available). In 1998 the services balance was slightly in favour of the EU, which that year imported around 1500 million Euro and exported 1743 million Euro (http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/bilateral/israel/index_en.htm).

Though, the attempt to separate economic relations from political positions is impossible as the following example demonstrates; in the last five
years the EU demanded from Israel that that any goods that were produced in the occupied territories will not be labeled "made in Israel". This is obviously an expression of the EU policy claim that the territories are not part of Israel, and goods produced there are therefore not eligible for the customs reductions that Israeli goods enjoy under the free-trade pact with Europe. It is important to note that the export to Europe from the territories is not significant while Israel's total export to Europe, which is about 120 million dollar per year, out of a total of some 18 billion (www.haaretz.com, November 25, 2003).

However, Israel refused until November 2003 to distinguish between goods made in Israel and goods made in the territories. The argument, which stands behind it, is that since the EU recognized the Paris Agreement that created a customs union between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, there are no grounds for treating products made in the territories differently from products made in Israel. These days Israel agreed to adopt a compromise solution of including the city of origin on the label. Yet, Ehud Olmert, the Industry Minister, stressed that the agreement in no way implies a change in Israel's political positions or a willingness to concede those parts of the territories that the government insists must remain part of Israel under any future agreement (www.haaretz.com, November 25, 2003).

The economic collaboration between the EU and Israel is also expressed through enabling the European Investment Bank (EIB) to grant loans for Israeli projects related to the Barcelona Process, including infrastructure and environmental projects. The Agreement thus institutionalized the ties between Israel and the Bank.

Israel is also a member of many other European cultural, educational and sports organizations, not least because of the refusal of the Asian and Middle Eastern countries to allow Israel to become a full regional participant. This is also reflected in the geopolitical self images of many Israelis who see themselves as belonging to a western and European ecumene, as contrasted with a Middle Eastern milieux, and who are not prepared to give up these regional affiliations even if the conflict was to be resolved and Israel were to be
invited to participate in the Middle Eastern and Asian cultural and sporting associations (Newman, 2000).

Another context is that provided by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was established at a Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Barcelona on November 27-28, 1995. Its final Declaration - the Barcelona Declaration - is a far-reaching document, reflecting the joint initiative by 27 partners:

a) 15 EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Spain and Sweden.

b) 12 Mediterranean Partners: Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. This partnership aims "to create peace, stability and development in a region, which is of vital strategic importance for Europe" (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/israel)

More specifically, EU intervention focuses on three objectives. The first is the creation of "an area of peace and stability based on the principle of human rights and democracy; this is "Basket I" - the political and security partnership. The second is the creation of "an area of shared prosperity through the progressive establishment of free trade between the EU and its Mediterranean partners and amongst the partners themselves", namely "Basket II" - the economic and financial partnership. Finally the EU aims to focus on the improvement of "mutual understanding among the peoples of the region and the development of a free and flourishing civil society", this is "Basket III" - which deals with cultural, social and human partnership (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations).

Notwithstanding, beyond this corporation and unlike other conflicts in which the EU plays a third part role, neither Israel or the future Palestinian State are perceived as being future members of the EU and, as such, the EU "carrot or stick" policy is limited to these countries as a reward for bringing violence to an end and implementing a conflict resolution agreement (for a wider discussion of these themes see: Dessus et al, 2000). This view was
cynically expressed in "Nekudah", a popular journal among the Israeli settlers, reflecting the anti-European and anti-external interventionist positions of the Israeli right:

"An international pressure - if at all occurs - will be expressed in two dimensions: the denial of American financial support, and economic embargo from the Europeans countries and some others... Apparently, a European economic embargo is more problematic... but economic interests will always be stronger than political interests. Belgium already called to excommunicate commercial relations with Israel. France, on the other hand, avoids calling an embargo on Israel from the European Common Market side. What is the different between the two? The French like us more? - Definitely not. They just sell us more; Israelis like driving Peugeot, Renault, Citroen and the French people will not give up such a serious market. On the other hand, our commercial relations with Belgium are negligible (Belgian chocolate is good, but "Elit" chocolate [an Israeli chocolate firm] is not bad), and hence the Belgians can state such declarations. Israel imports from the European twice that it exports, and economically speaking - Europe has no interest to cancel its agreements with Israel" (Feiglin 2003: 34-35)

The nature of the trade and cultural relationships between the EU and Israel are different to those between the EU and the Palestinian Authority. While EU relations with Israel are based on trade cooperation between two highly developed first world and modern economies (Ahiram and Tovias 1995), its relations with the Palestinian Authority are mainly based on the provision of significant financial assistance and aid packages. This, according to Stetter (2003) is an attempt to stabilize the weak economic and political structures of this nascent state. This policy is expressed in the fact that the EU has been the biggest donor to the PA, and there is no other country in the world which has
received a similar amount of assistance from the EU as Palestine (Brynen 2000 in Stetter, 2003:57). The political and cultural institutions of the PA benefited from the substantial European funding and financial assistance, especially in the post-Oslo period beginning in 1993.

The available data shows that from June 2001 to 2002 the EU provided 10 million Euro per month in direct budgetary assistance to the PA. The support is directed towards the budget of the PA helping to secure expenditures such as public service salaries, social, educational, health and core functions of the PA. An additional 10 million Euro has been allocated to the World Bank Emergency Services Support Programme to support operational costs in the health sector; and a further 10 million Euro was implemented in a special programme to support services at the level of the municipalities (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations).

During the last 2 years of the Intifada, EU assistance has been aimed at maintaining the daily existence of the PA and, at the same time, using their aid packages to demand internal economic and democratic reform on the part of the Palestinian leadership. Often in the face of sharp criticism at home and abroad, the EU supported the PA with direct budgetary assistance at a time when its revenues were withheld by the government of Israel. According to Chris Patten, External Relations Commissioner, without the EU assistance "there would have been no Palestinian interlocutor for the negotiations now under way" and he also added that "at every step, the EU's help was made conditional on reforms that would make a viable Palestinian state a reality one day and in the short term make the Palestinian territories a better, safer neighbour for Israel" (The Financial Times, 17 July 2003).

However, these EU 'carrots' to the Palestinians are perceived negatively inside Israel, best expressed in a recent paper by Bar Ilan University political scientist, Gerald Steinberg who, in his criticism of the large budgets provided by the EU, as well as by individual member states, to the PA and to Palestinian NGOs, argues that:

"... EU officials spoke repeatedly of “Palestinian state-building” while
the funds went to the corrupt and anti-democratic elite. In the absence of any controls, the money provided by the EU’s taxpayers was diverted into the pockets of and bank accounts of officials and for the purchase of weapons” (Steinberg, 2004: 6-7).

The criticism of the way in which EU money is used by the Palestinian leadership is not limited to Israel. Arab criticism of the misuse of funding has also been aired, such as the report in the Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Watan (June 7, 2002, in: memri.org/bin/articles):

"Yesterday, Al-Watan received documents from private sources in the Cairo branch of an Arab bank showing that Yasser Arafat had deposited in his name $5.1 million into a personal account. According to sources, this is theft of Arab aid funds allocated to the Palestinians through an arrangement between Arafat and his Cairo office head Ramzi Khouri".

Thus the ability of the EU to use its leverage as a means of influencing the process of conflict resolution is limited. Given the USA support of Israel (see below), the fact that Israel is not a candidate for full membership of the EU, and the significant trade between the two, the EU has as much to lose from downgrading its current level of trading and cultural relations, as Israel does. Neither side will benefit, while Israeli antagonism towards Europe would only increase. Regarding the Palestinians, the EU does try to use its influence to push for internal reforms but, at the same time, is aware that any significant reduction in the amount of assistance afforded to the Palestinian Authority will only serve to make a bad situation even worse. The EU perceives its future role as an institution builder in a Palestinian State as of prime importance and does not desire to lose this foothold, however precarious it may seem at present, especially as they are able to counterbalance the American influence amongst the Palestinians, something which will not happen with respect to Israel.
D. Israeli and Palestinian Attitudes Towards the EU

Steinberg's critique of EU involvement in the Israel/Palestine arena expresses much deeper-rooted sentiments amongst the Israeli (Jewish) public vis-à-vis Europe in general. While the Palestinian Authority welcome direct EU intervention as a means of balancing what they see as pro-Israel bias from the USA, Israel has developed an ambivalent relationship towards the EU and, in recent years, have become quite antagonistic towards Europe for what they perceive as a pro-Palestinian bias. This is reflected in anti-European statements from political leaders and anti-European articles in then main media. Leading the way in recent years has been the right wing newspaper, the Jerusalem Post, in continual editorial and leader articles, which demonstrate a strong anti-European bias and polemic.

The deep-rooted anti-Europeanism stems from the historical and emotional associations of most Israelis with the experiences of persecution and holocaust we discussed earlier. Europe is perceived as being anti-Semitic, an attitude which has been strengthened in recent years with the growth of anti-Semitic incidents against Jewish communities and synagogues throughout Europe, especially France. This is expressed clearly in the right wing settler magazine "Nekudah" in relation to the war in Iraq and the difference between American and EU pressure on Israel:

"Before the war with Iraq started, the Americans, the British (and the Spanish) explained the meaning of this war to Israel. Since Israel is perceived as a central element in the conflict between the Islamic-Arabic terror and the US and the West, the West tries to moderate the anger it faces, by means of scarifying Israel's interests. In the case of the US we are talking about simple preference... of its interests; in the European case, anti-Semitism is integrated in its whole package of interest" (Feiglin, 2003:31).
All policy statements on the part of European leaders, which are deemed as being anti-Israel, or pro-Palestinian, are immediately translated into the rhetoric of anti-Semitism. A recent example is the EU condemnation of the Israeli law that prevents Palestinians married to Israelis from obtaining residency permits in Israel as discriminatory. The European Commission envoy to Israel, Giancarlo Chellavard, charged in a statement that the bill "establishes a discriminatory regime to the detriment of Palestinians in the highly sensitive area of family rights". The statement also said that the Commission would study if the law contradicts international law and basic human rights, in a gesture that Israel's relations with the EU might be affected (Jerusalem Times newspaper, July 8, 2003, in: http://www.jerusalem-times.net). These perceptions have strongly infiltrated the public image of Europe, as can be seen in the questions\answers column in Haaretz daily 'leftish' newspaper where Adar Primor, the Foreign Editor, answered readers' questions on Israel's relationship with Europe: (www.haaretz.co.il, July 23, 2003):

"Question: "I deeply distrust the EU, but even more their press that reflects the anti-Semitism of the European population. How can this persistent trend be changed?" Jorge Gross MD San Antonio, Texas
Answer by Primor: "To the best of my knowledge, the European media, or at least the serious media, do not support anti-Semitic propaganda, not directly or indirectly. It sometimes even illustrates greater sensitivity to instances of anti-Semitism than the Israeli media. In addition, when it needs to cover dark scandals in which Jews are involved, the European media does so with kid gloves and with great caution, due to the fear of offending Jews..."

The major issue to have aroused the sense of anti-Europeanism concerns the use of some of the EU assistance to the PA for the purchase of arms, which were then used in terrorist attacks against Israeli citizens. The EU
denied this, although they did admit that not all the funds were used in the way intended and that there had not been an adequate system of control over the use of these funds. The matter could have been resolved had the EU Commission agreed to setting up a Committee to examine the accusations but this was adamantly refused in the first instance by EU Commissioner for External Affairs, Chris Patten. It took a formal request on the part of a large group of EU members of Parliament for such a committee to be set up. Patten himself did not succeed in endearing himself to the Israeli public by his continuous refusal to visit Israel, despite invitations on the part of the Foreign Ministry and a number of Israeli universities which would have provided him with a stage for delivering a statement on EU – Israel relations and ironing out some of the differences and misunderstandings which have developed over the past few years.

Steinberg (2004) further argues that EU money has been used to promote 'offensive political pamphlets that reflect a extremist 'post-Zionist agenda', an expression which is used in a derogatory sense to describe any pro-peace groups of the left.

"[The EU provided] funds (in secret) for Jeff Halper’s housing demolition protest group, EU officials ignore the evidence demonstrating the political biases and inaccuracies in this group’s activities. And the interest group (lobby) Peace Now has also received major funding from the EU, thereby greatly increasing its visibility, if not impact. Radical NGOs in the Israeli-Arab sector, which disseminate false allegations of discrimination and Israeli human rights abuses, are also funded by the EU and the EMHRN" (Steinberg, 2004:8-9).

The fact that the EU sponsors other pro-peace initiatives, be they grass roots such as the People to People programs, or the Partnership for Peace programs, or such groups as Bereaved parents or Rabbis for Human Rights, is only seen by the right wing government and media as an expression of European pro-
Palestinian sentiment and has been used as a weapon in winning over a skeptical Israeli public during the past few years, especially since the return of violence during the past three years.

But despite of the EU image as a pro-Palestinian entity, Palestinian politicians are also critical of the EU positions, leading to disputes between the PA and the EU. A recent example concerns the Palestinian rejection to the European Parliament statement on refugees, which suggested that the Palestinian refugees should return only to the Palestinian State with exceptions that could be negotiated upon freely between the two sides (www.jerusalem-times.net, October 30, 2003). A more detailed study of Palestinian attitudes towards the EU will be the subject of the next research paper in the Euroborders project.

It is the gap between the actual EU policy and statements towards Israel\Palestine conflict and the 'anti-Semitic' image of Europe, which is part of the ambivalent nature of the EU-Israel relationship. EU policy does not differ greatly from the USA policy in terms of their demand for a two state solution, a complete fritze on all settlement activity, the cessation of violence, the cessation of unilateral construction of the separation fence, and the need for internal economic and democratic reforms in the PA. The EU and the USA are equal partners in the quartet (the other two being Russia and Nato) which drew up the Road Map plan for peace and which was formally presented to both the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships immediately following the Iraq war. The EU has stated its preference for the establishment of a "democratic, viable, peaceful and sovereign State of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders, if necessary with minor adjustments agreed by the parties" (Euromed Report, June 25, 2002). But it seems as the EU policy makers are aware of their limited ability to shape and mediate the conflict without American support:

"The European Union will work with the parties and with its partners in the international community, especially with the United States in the framework of the Quartet, to pursue every opportunity for peace and for decent future for all the people of
Indeed the complexity of the situation and the sensitivity of both sides in the conflict to the EU involvement, forces the EU to phrase carefully its position on the current situation in the Israel\Palestinian conflict which aims to emphasise both sides' interests and responsibility:

"Israel is currently heavily affected by the Middle East conflict, including acts of terrorism against Israeli citizens as well as a very serious situation in the Palestinian territories. The EU firmly believes in Israel’s right to live in peace and security. It has condemned, in the clearest terms, terrorism and all acts of violence. In this respect, the EU has pointed out the Palestinian Authority's responsibilities in fighting terrorism" (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/israel).

At the same time the EU continues to call on Israel "to withdraw its military forces and stop extra-judicial killings, to lift the closures and all restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people, and to freeze settlement activities' (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/israel). Politically speaking, the EU's position is based on international law, including resolutions 242 and 338 of the Security Council of the United Nations, mentioned in the first section of the paper. It is also aims to base its policy on partnership and co-operation, hinting on the "economic carrot":

"It is the EU's view that maintaining relations with Israel is an important contribution to the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP). The Association Agreements are the basis for EU-Israeli trade relations as well as for the EU-Israel political dialogue. Keeping the lines of communication open and trying to convince its interlocutors is for the EU the right way forward" (http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/israel).
In this context Steinberg (2004:1) further argues:

"Europe’s policies towards Israel, in the Middle East peace efforts, and in the broader EU Barcelona/Euromed framework have produced few, if any successes. On the contrary, the evidence demonstrates that Europe’s approaches and initiatives have been highly unrealistic, and relations with Israel are marked by sharp confrontation, including politically and ideologically motivated boycotts. Indeed, Europe is accused of playing a leading role in the international campaign to delegitimize Israel and Jewish sovereignty".

Realising that the government had taken their anti-European sentiment too far, current Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom stated, in his first public statement on assuming office in February 2003, that he would make an effort to improve relations between Israel and the EU, while Prime Minister Sharon made a number of pro-European remarks on his visit to British Prime Minister Tony Blair in July 2003, although at the same time castigating European leaders for continuing to make official visits to PA President Yasser Arafat even after the new (already previous) Prime Minister Abu Mazen had been appointed it take charge of peace negotiations. Sharon warned the European leaders that by continuing to visit Arafat they were undermining the status of Abu Mazen and, by association, undermining the continuation of the peace process. But, as though to undermine all efforts at Israeli-European rapprochement, the EU published the findings of a poll take in October 2003, in which the majority of respondents stated that they saw Israel as the single greatest threat to global stability, closely followed by an Italian poll which underlined some strong anti-Israel sentiment on the part of the country’s population. No amount of public statements to the contrary on the part of both French President Jacques Chirac and Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi, went any way to resolving the growing emotional antagonism between Israel and the EU. For most Israelis, the
findings of these two polls demonstrated that anti-Israeli policies were akin to anti-Semitism and that Europe was not to be trusted as a serious third party player in the peace process.

E. The EU, the USA and Other Third Party Actors

The role of third parties in the Israel\Palestine arena is a complex one. Given the importance of the area as the cradle of the three major monotheistic religions, the location of Jerusalem and the holy sites, the history of the Jewish people and so on, the region has always taken on great significance for world powers over and above their obvious geopolitical interests in the regions oil resources. Europe, because of its historical involvement in the region mentioned above, and the USA, because of its geopolitical interests and its feelings of responsibility towards the Jewish State, have continued to play a major role in the region. This is reflected in generous packages of aid and assistance on the one hand, and attempts to influence domestic and foreign policy on the other.

Since the onset of the Oslo Peace process in 1993, there has been greater international harmony and agreement over the perceived resolution of the conflict – a two-state solution – than ostensibly over any other major foreign policy issue. This has become even clearer in the immediate post-Iraq war situation, where Europe and the USA have come together over the implementation of the Road Map aimed at bringing peace to the Middle East.

Israel has always played a double game with respect to third party intervention in the Israel\Palestine conflict. It readily accepts the vast amounts of assistance which come its way – especially from the United States – but is adamant in its determination that its foreign and defence policies must be independently decided and implemented without any external pressures or influence. Israel also views third party active intervention in the conflict as peace keepers with great suspicion, arguing that Israel must determine its own policies and that it cannot rely on third party presence. In particular, as we
noted in the previous section, Israel rejects both United Nations and European active intervention, perceiving both as being “non honest” brokers.

The failed role of past United Nations peacekeeping forces – in Sinai prior to 1967, and the UNIFIL forces in South Lebanon - make Israel highly suspicious of the ability of a new United Nations force to actually fulfil its role over and beyond any questions concerning political bias towards the Palestinians. Much more acceptable, in Israeli eyes, is United States troops or, at the least, an international force headed and controlled by the United States, as has been active in the Sinai since the implementation of the Camp David Peace Accords between Israel and Egypt since the early 1980’s.

The Oslo Agreements of 1993 were negotiated and signed secretly between Israel and the Palestinians. Even the USA had not been a partner to most of the negotiations and they only became involved at a later stage of the process – commencing with the famous White House Ceremony in which President Clinton, Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat signed the Accords. Given the bilateral nature of the Oslo talks, it was felt at the time that the implementation would not require any major third party intervention. Problems could be resolved as and when they emerged, through direct talks and negotiations between the various military and political functionaries on both sides. In principle, this was the right approach but it assumed that such problems as arose could indeed be resolved through direct negotiations.

The reality proved to be very different. As terrorism and violence increased, and as settlements continued to be constructed, the two sides found themselves in direct confrontation, accusing the other of not fulfilling their side of the Agreement, bringing relations to a new low following the initial euphoria of the immediate post-Oslo days. Without a third party acting as a buffer in the middle, the direct bilateral meetings became an arena of renewed conflict, often making matters even worse than they were before the meetings commenced.

A poll of public opinion carried out by the Steinmetz Centre for Peace (http://spirit.tau.ac.il) research in the spring of 2002 questioned Israeli attitudes towards the role of third party intervention in the conflict.
Surprisingly, over 30 percent of the Israeli Jewish population (the Arab-Palestinian citizens of the country, who make up twenty percent of the population, have always favoured greater international intervention on the ground) expressed some support for third party intervention. This ranged from direct peace keeping activities, aimed at keeping Israelis and Palestinians away from each other, preventing acts of violence and terrorism, and acting as a physical buffer between the two sides, to a more active monitoring role which would oversee the implementation of a peace process and ensure that each side is fulfilling its signed commitments. This relatively high support for third party intervention can only be explained against the backdrop of the breakdown of the Oslo process and the return to levels of violence which had not been experienced during thirty years of Occupation. It was an implicit understanding that the bilateral path of implementation had failed, that mutual trust between the two sides had broken down altogether, and that it would not be possible to implement a new round of negotiations without some serious third party intervention, even as active peace keepers, on the ground.

When, as part of the same survey, the respondents were asked who they would be prepared to see as active peacekeepers, the USA achieved first place, followed by Britain – but a long way behind. France was positioned at the bottom of the list of countries. Although this could partially be explained by the fact that the survey was carried out just a few weeks after there had been some major incidents of anti-Semitic attacks against Jewish targets in France and this was uppermost in most Israeli associations with France at that time.

During the ensuing period there has been the beginning of an open discussion in Israel concerning the role of third party peacekeepers – monitors. The Road Map document makes specific mention of active monitoring, with a small number of American monitors being sent to the region in the first stages of implementation. Despite what it seems in present as the failure of the Road map, this is still a long way from active peace keeping and buffer roles, or the presence of foreign troops, but it is a beginning in this direction.

But what remains clear is that the main third party role is reserved for the USA, or a USA led group of international monitors/peace keepers, or
representatives from third party countries which are not perceived by either Israel or the Palestinians as being biased one way or another. This could include people from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, surprisingly, perhaps even from such countries as Turkey or Jordan – the latter having been involved in many peace keeping roles throughout the world and are not necessarily seen by Palestinians or Israelis as being particularly biased one way or the other. Indeed, the Palestinians display high levels of suspicion towards the Jordanian government and its army having, in the past, experienced the full wrath of the Hashemite regime who, in turn, suspects the Palestinians of wanting to take over the Kingdom of Jordan where they represent the majority of the population.

At the most, the European role in a third party set up would be more limited, focusing on the development of governmental, military and civil society institutions as part of the new Palestinian State. Given the fact that they would also probably be the main donors to a new State, this would also be more acceptable to the Palestinians, particularly given the criticism on the part of some European leaders concerning the way in which past assistance has been used. Thus, the Americans are perceived more in the role of peacekeepers and implementers, while the EU is seen more in the role of institution and government builders in the new State of Palestine. This would follow well the active participation of EU funded projects during the past decade in which they have focused on Track II negotiations, people to people grassroots activities, and the funding of bilateral and trilateral research projects between Israelis, Palestinians and Europeans aimed at creating new models of cooperation and other peace related activities.

The discussion thus far has focused on the reticence on the part of Israel in allowing the EU to play a greater role in the region. But this should not detract from the EU itself and its inability to make itself clearly understood within the region. This is reflected in the fact that EU countries do not always speak in one voice, while it is never clear whether policy should be coming from the Commissioner for External Affairs, from the special envoy to the region, or from foreign ministers of constituent countries. Neither does the EU
benefit from good public relations in the region, with no clear public statement of its intentions, even when it argues that it has been misunderstood or misconstrues by the interested parties – especially Israel.

F. Further Research Directions

This paper has outlined the complexity and mutual ambivalence rooted in the EU role in Israel\Palestine conflict. Based mostly on secondary sources, it serves as the basis for a deeper investigation of the nature of EU-Israel relations, as well as a complementary study of the nature of EU-Palestinian relations. In particular, it is necessary to focus on the way in which the EU perceives itself realistically as a player in the process of conflict resolution and peace building, along the lines it has developed in other conflict areas in which it has a greater direct influence. This will necessitate access to primary documentation and a round of interviews with EU policy makers – at both the political and NGO-civilian levels of activity and intervention.

It will also be important to unravel the complex relationship of ambivalence between Israel and the EU. We believe that it is necessary to unravel the growing anti-European antagonism held by Israeli leaders and public opinion by separating there layers of discourse: anti-Israeli policies; anti-Israel; and anti-Semitism. While there are obvious links between them, they are not necessarily one and the same thing. For the EU to attain a status of greater influence in the Israel/Palestine arena, it has to be shown that it can object to certain government policies (such as the expansion of settlements or the unilateral construction of the separation fence) without it opposing the existence of the State as such and / or by openly combating the growth of anti-Semitism within the European continent.

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