



David Cronin, *Europe's Alliance with Israel. Aiding the Occupation*, Pluto, London-New York 2011.

The United States of America sees itself as an honest broker in the Israel-Palestine conflict. This self-perception could not be further away from the truth. What about the European Union (EU) and its role in the Middle East? Is the EU an honest broker when it comes to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land?

David Cronin, a journalist specializing in European politics, demonstrates in his book that the EU over the years has been accommodating to Israel's illegal occupation. Despite its anti-occupation rhetoric, the EU is, unnoticed by the public, sliding into complicity, writes the author. The EU wears the regard of human rights and the respect of international law like a monstrosity in the relationships with other countries, but closes both eyes when it comes to Israel's disregard of both. In his words: "The European Union's cowardice towards Israel is in stark contrast to the robust position it has taken when major atrocities have occurred in other conflicts."

Cronin writes that Europe's "unholy alliance" with Israel has been forged partly as a result of 9/11. Both singled out Islamic militancy as the common enemy and started fighting against the symptoms. Although, Israel is not a formal member of the EU, in reality however, it is treated like a member state. When Javier Solana, then EU's foreign policy chief, visited Jerusalem in 2009 he admitted that Israel is much closer to the EU than Croatia. "There is no country outside the European continent that has this type of relationship that Israel has with the European Union. Israel, allow me to say, is a member of the European Union without being a member of the institutions. It's a member of all the programmes, it participates in all the programmes." The EU speaks continuously of its close attachment to human rights, but its "alliance with Israel is largely devoid of ethical integrity".

The nagging fact that Israel is illegally occupying land of another people is dealt with inconsistently. Referring to the Lebanese journalist Samir Kassir, the author sees Europe's presumed kind of political schizophrenia in its bad conscience regarding the holocaust, in America's unflinching support, and in a nuclear arsenal that was acquired by the help of Western powers that keeps growing and does not bother the West unlike the non-existent nuclear arsenal of Iran. The double standards pervade not only US-American foreign policy but also that of the European Union. Israel refuses not only inspections of its large nuclear arsenals, but is the only country in the Middle East that refuses to sign up to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

That Israel could successfully insinuate itself into the EU is attributed by the author to Israel's charm offensive, its impressive performance in science and technology, and from the massive support it has obtained from Nicolas Sarkozy and other European heads of states, such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel. It is no exaggeration to say that the EU is abetting crimes against humanity in the Middle East. To end this complicity will not be easy. According to David Cronin, the first step to dissolve this "unholy alliance" is to know how it was built.

Among others, Tzipi Livni, the former Israeli foreign minister, deserves the greatest credit for upgrading Israeli-EU relationship. After she became Ariel Sharon's foreign minister, she ensnared not only her colleagues but also the heads of states. Her charm and her look contributed to an image of "Mrs. Moderate". In reality however, she is as tough a rejectionist Zionist as her male colleagues. It was demonstrated by the release of the so-called "Palestine papers". Cronin reports on an incident during a

meeting in Brussels in which she asked all others to leave the room to discuss some aspects with the French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner, who was chairing the meeting. Both of them hatched a deal whereby the upgrade accord would not bind Israel into making peace with the Palestinians. Instead the EU issued a statement that Israel and the Palestinians should grapple with the “unreasonable questions” like Israeli settlements, refugees, and East Jerusalem.

Even after the Gaza massacre in 2008/09 on a helpless and imprisoned civilian population, the EU took sides with Israel and put the sole blame on Hamas. The German chancellor took the bun by declaring that Hamas “clearly and exclusively” bore responsibility for the attacks, writes the author. Unsurprisingly, the EU considers Hamas a “terror organization” as requested to do by Israel and the US. Cronin and many other experts regard Hamas as a resistance movement against Israeli occupation. Without Israeli occupation there would be no Hamas and also no Hizb`allah in Lebanon. In their Middle Eastern policy, the EU elaborates on the symptoms and not the causes. The EU treats Israel like a kind of a Middle Eastern Canada. Israel might be all of that, but it is still an occupying power with a very poor human rights record and it violates numerous international treaties. “Yet instead of treating it as a rogue, Europe has decided to reward it”, writes Cronin.

The author tells an episode which occurred during Benjamin Netanyahu’s first term in office in the mid 1990s. Israel’s Prime Minister agreed to meet with a delegation of the European Parliament. When a Spanish Member of the EP reminded Netanyahu that Israel’s policies in the occupied territories got US-President Bill Clinton into trouble, Netanyahu shot back: “You Europeans only look at what is happening above the table (...) If you looked under it, you would see that we hold the Americans by the balls.” This blunt statement might be a moot point. In March 2010 however, Netanyahu did not only humiliate Vice-President Joe Biden in Jerusalem but he also made a fool of US President Barack Obama when he declined Obama’s generous bribe offered as an inducement for extending the colonization freeze for another 60 days.

Cronin shows how narrow the political margins and maneuverings of the European heads of states are against the will of the US. If Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schroeder thought to demonstrate some sort of independence during Bush’s attack on Iraq, Nicolas Sarkozy and Angela Merkel are more honest in their willing subjugation towards the US, writes the author. Both heads of state try to outdo each other in being in thrall to Israel. At least, Sarkozy has made a token effort to the suffering Israel has inflicted upon the Palestinians. Angela Merkel’s speech before the Knesset however, “was an exercise in unadulterated groveling”, writes Cronin. In spite of Sarkozy’s defense of Israeli aggression against Gaza, France has admitted maintaining secret contacts with Hamas. Both, the US and the EU, are aiding the ongoing Israeli occupation by providing the financial wherewithal for their colonial “divide and rule”-formula, so Cronin.

In the chapter “The Misappliance of Science” the author describes Israel’s participation in all of the European Union’s technology programmes. Some results of these programmes can be used to consolidate the occupation and to abuse human rights. He hints at the interrelationship between the Israeli military and civilian technology sectors and the dominant role played by military personnel in the private sector. In this context, the chapter “Profiting from Palestine’s pain” mentions companies such as Caterpillar, whose huge bulldozers are used for house demolitions or during the destruction of Jenin refugee camp. One of these vehicles overran Rachel Corrie in the Gaza-Strip and killed her. Profiteers

of the Israeli occupation are also the military-industrial complexes of the EU and the US through their intensive cooperation with their Israeli counterparts.

David Cronin sums up his book with an outlook of the establishment of an "Israel Lobby" in Brussels. On the European level, the pro-Israel lobby is by far not yet so well organized as in the United States. Over the years it has, nevertheless, grown in both size and strength, "a phenomenon that has gone unnoticed by most of the mainstream media". The different Israel lobby groups in Brussels are "European Friends of Israel", "Transatlantic Institute", set up by the American Jewish Committee (AJC), "B'Nai B'rith", and "European Jewish Congress (EJC). These lobby organizations have strong links to the nationally based Israel lobbies in the European capitals. The strongest "Israel Lobbies" are found in France and Great Britain. These lobbies have only received scant attention from the mainstream media, "because journalists and editors work within a culture of censorship", writes Cronin. "Most of this censorship is self-censorship motivated by fear that newspapers which criticize the pro-Israel lobby will be branded anti-Semitic." In general terms, the author's findings and conclusions about Israel lobbies in Europe hold also true for Germany.

As a way out of the Europe's indulgence to Israel, the European politicians must overcome their cowardice and say "no" to a policy that makes a Palestinian state impossible and will guarantee that the Middle East will be blighted by violence and injustice for the time being. In order to contribute to a solution in Israel and Palestine the EU became part of the problem, writes the author. As a tactic to change Israeli political behavior, the author supports the BDS campaign (BDS=Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions). Israel and its lobbyists try everything to delegitimize the BDS campaign as "anti-Semitic". This is pure nonsense because the campaign is informed by an "abhorrence of Israeli state violence and of Israel's denial of Palestinian rights".

The book offers deep insights into the Middle East policy of the EU, which the author regards as scandalous, because the EU - when it comes to Israel - violates its own basic values of promoting human rights, freedom, democracy and international law. It seems as if the complexity of the EU and its diversity of political interests have been responsible for its blurred stance towards Israel's violation of human rights and international law. If this development is not arrested by political decision-makers who possess a clear vision of justice and the rule of law in international relations, the EU will end up being as dominated by political interest groups like the US government. This would not be in the best interests of the world's peoples in general, and the Israeli and Palestinian people in particular.

Ludwig Watzal

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