



News from the Nations

The Euro-Arab link

As reported in the *Jewish Chronicle*, Middle East and Islamic expert Bat Ye'or warns of a fundamental shift taking place in European civilisation. She claims that history is being reinvented and offers evidence that leading politicians in France and other EU countries have conspired with Arab leaders over a number of years to develop increasingly closer ties to bring about a "fusion of the two shores of the Mediterranean", a process that involves the demonisation of Israel. She says that people imagine wrongly that the term 'Eurabia' refers only to a vast Muslim immigration movement into Europe. But Eurabia in fact refers to a total transformation and remodelling of a whole continent. This transformation relates to its demography, its perception of its own history and culture, its civilisation, its laws, its institutions, its politics, and the combination of all those elements which shape its present and which will determine its future. Bat Ye'or maintains that a new continent, based upon a shared Arab-European destiny, is emerging unnoticed. It is the Europeans who collectively share the responsibility for changing Europe into Eurabia, a new continent that is emerging in front of our eyes, although most contemporaries cannot yet see it. She says, "It involves not only an intricate web of agreements covering a broad range, it is essentially a political project for the total demographic and cultural symbiosis between Europe and the Arab Muslim world. It is directed and funded by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and their various institutions concerning the Mediterranean Partnership. Multiculturalism, multilateralism and soft diplomacy are integrated in this deep symbiosis. The Euro-Arab agreements are the tools for the creation of a new extended Mediterranean 'continent'. Eurabia is also based on a vision of Christian-Muslim reconciliation, built on anti-Zionism, strongly advocated by major Christian religious bodies, and often espousing the Muslim-Christian replacement theology, such as Palestinian Replacement Theology, which is spreading very fast in European churches".

Militants invited into Palestinian cabinet

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas risked international anger recently after the militant group Hamas said that he had invited it to join his cabinet ahead of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Hamas officials said that leaders of the group were considering the offer. Mr Abbas hoped to involve Hamas in preparations to ensure a smooth exit by Jewish settlers and soldiers this month. But the fragile truce Mr Abbas reached with Hamas and other militant groups is falling apart, and attacks on Israeli targets have increased in recent weeks.

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH AND ISRAEL

The Anglican Church has been warned of the "grave disquiet" among Jews worldwide following its threat to consider economic sanctions against Israel. Board of Deputies president Henry Grunwald and World Jewish Congress vice-president Lord Janner recently led Jewish protests against the move, which they said would "damage communal relations" and "have a negative effect on the drive for peace in the Middle East". Representatives of the 77 million-strong global church, meeting in Nottingham at the Anglican Consultative Council over ten days, called on member churches to consider reviewing investments in companies which were found to support either "the occupation of Palestinian lands or violence against innocent Israelis". A warning of "growing distance between Anglicans and Jews" came from Dr Kessler, director of the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations in Cambridge. He criticised a "one-sided document that was noticeable for its strong criticism of Israel and equally noticeable for its silence about failings of the Palestinians and their leadership".

Bush asks EU to warn Iran

President George Bush recently urged Europe to send a united message to Iran's new hard-line leader that development of nuclear weapons is out of the question. His comments were made during a joint appearance with German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder at the White House. Mr Schröder earlier said that Teheran could not be barred from the peaceful use of nuclear energy, "even though some might not like that".

Aid for the Palestinian Authority

According to the *Jerusalem Post*, in an effort to strengthen Mahmoud Abbas, US President Bush has pledged to channel \$50 million in direct aid to the Palestinian Authority, saying the money will go to build housing and other projects in the Gaza Strip. In a meeting with US Jewish officials in May last, Palestinian Authority Chairman Abbas pledged that the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza would not take place under fire, but claimed Prime Minister Sharon had rejected efforts to open back-channel communications about final-status issues. Associates of Sharon were unfazed by Bush's pledge of direct aid to Abbas, saying they actually welcomed it, backed by approving the release of 400 Palestinian prisoners. Hamas leaders in the West Bank and Gaza had told the *Jerusalem Post* that Hamas will not attack Israeli forces evacuating the Gaza Strip later this summer, and will maintain a "state of calm". Israeli military sources, however, said they were highly sceptical of such assertions, and doubted Hamas could resist the propaganda value of firing on departing Israelis to underline the claim that their "resistance" pushed Israel out of Gaza.

Israel pays the price

President Bush told reporters, following his recent meeting with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, that any final-status changes to the 1949 Armistice lines between Israel and the Arabs would have to be mutually agreed. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, "Analysts have noted the apparent shift in US policy, with Bush in essence saying that continued Israeli control over Ariel, Ma'aleh Adumim, Gush Katif and even eastern Jerusalem (including the Old City) require the approval of the PLO".

UNITED ACTION ON NUCLEAR IRAN URGED

According to the *Jewish Chronicle*, Israel has called for united international action to prevent Iran acquiring nuclear arms after the election of hard-liner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom warned, "It is more probable now than ever before that the Iranian Government will arm the terrorist organisations with nuclear weapons and will thereby distribute the nuclear threat all over the world. Mr Shalom urged the international community to form a "unified and decisive" policy so that the West would not become hostage to an extremist Iran. Uzi Arad, a former director of intelligence for the Mossad secret service, predicted that the West would have to decide very soon whether to continue seeking a negotiated solution or to apply coercion. The "stark choice", he told the *Jerusalem Chronicle*, "is growing closer. The most powerful lever, short of military action, would be a ban on oil exports—their economy is completely dependent on oil revenues. There is no quick fix, but if you forfeit the lever of an oil embargo, we are reconciling ourselves to a much higher likelihood that Iran will proceed to acquire nuclear arms. The consequences of that would be much more far reaching than oil disruptions". One Israeli general has suggested in a private forum that Israel might have to attack an Iranian reactor, as Menachem Begin's government did against Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1981.

Turkey's plea for EU membership

According to a news report, some senior EU officials have argued against giving Turkey full membership and said the lesser status of "privileged partnership" should be offered instead. The need to draft a negotiating framework for entry talks sparked a fierce internal argument among the commissioners who run the EU's executive arm. A small group of commissioners suggested that "privileged partnership" be included as an alternative. Olli Rehn, the commissioner in charge of enlargement, said his colleagues spent several hours on a "lengthy, argumentative and very political debate" over Turkey, which is due to begin accession talks on 3 October. Turkey's accession cannot take place before 2014, and talks can be suspended in the event of a "serious breach of human rights or the rule of law".

TOP ISRAELI GENERAL WARNS OF WAR RISK

Israel's outgoing chief of staff recently warned that, unless Israel committed to further withdrawals after the Gaza disengagement, there was "a high probability of a second war of terror". Lieutenant-General Moshe Ya'alon, in a forthright farewell interview in the *Ha'aretz* daily, said that if Israel undertook to leave parts of the West Bank, it would gain another period of quiet. "If not, there will be another eruption. Terror attacks of all types: shooting, bombs, suicide bombers, mortars, Qassam rockets". General Ya'alon said the establishment of a Palestinian state by US President Bush's target date of 2008 would lead to war "at some stage". The idea that a Palestinian state can be established by 2008, and would then produce stability, was "divorced from reality" and "dangerous", as any such state "will try to undermine Israel".