
House of War

Bat Ye'or

Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis

*Fairleigh Dickinson University Press,
2005, 384 pages.*

Reviewed by Amy K. Rosenthal

Bat Ye'or (a Hebrew pen-name which means "Daughter of the Nile") is a scholar of Islam and a path-breaking researcher on "dhimmitude"—a term that derives from the Arabic *dhimmi*, or non-Muslim peoples subject to restrictive subordination in Islamic states. Ye'or has experienced this subordination firsthand: The victim of persecution and discrimination in her native Egypt, she was forced to escape into exile in 1957.

She has written three books on the subject: *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians Under Islam* (1985); *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude* (1996); and *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide* (2001). Yet in

her latest book she places Europe, and not Islam, on trial, identifying its strains of anti-Americanism and anti-Zionism. Having lived in Europe for decades, Bat Ye'or has witnessed what she takes to be an increasing unwillingness of Western European elites to defend the culture and Judeo-Christian heritage of Western civilization in the face of Islamist attacks. Her book, she explains, "describes Europe's evolution from a Judeo-Christian civilization, with important post-Enlightenment secular elements, into a post Judeo-Christian civilization that is subservient to the ideology of jihad and the Islamic powers that propagate it."

According to Bat Ye'or, one especially salient sign of this subservience is reflected in the European position vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a position which reigns within the European Commission and is echoed in the statements given by those responsible for its foreign policy. She has stated elsewhere, for example, that Javier Solana, EU High

Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, “repeats that reforms in Arab countries cannot begin until the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved.” She correctly points out that “this puts enormous responsibility on Israel and gives the wrong message—that Israel is blocking reforms throughout the Arab world.” Here Bat Ye’or merely underlines a fact that can be verified in the words of many a member of the European elite. Former Italian prime minister and Europeanist *par excellence* Giuliano Amato, for instance, has repeated on numerous occasions in the Italian press that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict “puts the entire world at risk and has a spinoff effect.”

The rhetoric of the kind put forth by Solana and Amato, which permeates much of the European public discussion of the Middle East, is not of recent vintage, but in fact dates back at least three decades. It is here that Bat Ye’or’s book becomes a useful tool in the hands of readers interested in the roots of European policy toward the Islamic world, offering as it does a wide range of historical and contemporary documents for that very purpose. In particular, this book will enlighten those who think that European hostility to the United States and Israel dates only from the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and skillfully demonstrates how, why, and when

many in Europe abandoned a policy of confrontation and rivalry with the Islamic world for one of conciliation and appeasement.

The intimate relationship between Europe and Muslim countries was set in motion by Charles de Gaulle in 1962, shortly after Algeria gained its independence, to allow France to maintain its strategic and economic influence in the Islamic world. De Gaulle pursued a strategy aimed at forging European and Arab countries of the Mediterranean into a single, interdependent economic bloc that would present a viable counterforce to the world’s two superpowers, the United States and Soviet Russia. This policy was introduced within the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973-1974, during the first OPEC oil embargo, when Arab countries attempted to use oil as a weapon to influence Western policy towards the Middle East. As Bat Ye’or points out, Europe failed to take into consideration that unless they were willing to settle for the second-rate exports of socialist economies, Arab countries were dependent on the West for foodstuffs, industrialization, and modernization. Instead of calling the latter’s bluff, Europe consistently capitulated to the Arab demands, resulting in an EEC joint resolution in Brussels on November 6, 1973—one which

followed closely the Arab states' official reading of the Israeli-Arab conflict. The resolution added the following three points to its existing Middle East policy: (i) The inadmissibility of acquiring territory by force; (ii) the insistence that Israel withdraw to the armistice lines of 1949; and (iii) the determination that the legitimate rights of the Palestinians must be included in any definition of peace for the Middle East.

The first point, although admirable, was, as Bat Ye'or puts it, "absurd," since throughout history territories have always been acquired through force. The second point saw the EEC adopt both the Arabs' denial of their 1967 defeat and Brussels' official interpretation of Judea and Samaria as "occupied Arab territories"—even after, it should be noted, Jordan relinquished all claims to the territory in 1988, thereby rendering these areas formally stateless rather than "occupied." The third point, however, carried the direst consequences, since at this moment the existence of a "Palestinian people" emerged for the first time in official European eyes, and the dialogue between European governments and the PLO, which in its charter still called for Israel's destruction, began to be legitimized.

Although the Israeli-Egyptian peace process of 1977-1979 briefly froze what Bat Ye'or calls the "Euro-Arab

dialogue," it re-emerged in 1979 during the Iranian revolution, which led to a second oil crisis. Iran, along with the OPEC countries, reduced its oil production, provoking a worldwide recession and 11.5-percent inflation for the countries within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Consequently, in the 1980 Venice Declaration, the European Community again gave in to the political demands of the Arab countries by confirming the "national rights of the Palestinians." It stated that their status was "not simply one of refugees" and "required the participation of the PLO in all negotiations." In exchange for oil as well as economic and political benefits from Muslim countries, the leaders of European democracies had assented to sell Israel down the river.

Throughout the 1980s, meanwhile, immigration into Europe from Muslim countries increased apace, accompanied by a politically sympathetic policy on the part of European leaders toward the Palestinians in particular and the Muslim world in general. This intensified cooperation culminated in the Euro-Mediterranean Conference held in Barcelona in 1995. The conference gave fruit to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Program (MEDA), which assembled the foreign affairs ministers of the EU, along with those of Algeria, Egypt,

Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and the Palestinian Authority. While their intentions may have been sound, EU leaders persistently chose to ignore the nature of the regimes they were dealing with—and in particular, the fact that ideals such as democracy, rule of law, gender equality, and freedom of speech and religion were trampled in a great many of the participating Muslim states. As Bat Ye’or explains, “Challenged with such a fundamental and religiously inspired hatred [on the part of the Muslim world], which Europe has persistently denied, the political correctness of the Barcelona Declaration on the campaign against ‘racism, xenophobia, and intolerance’ is a manifestation of a profound delusion.”

This delusion continues to have consequences. By the mid-1990s, the EU had become the largest provider of financial and technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority, contributing over 50 percent of its total international aid. From 1994 to 1998, the total EU aid to the PA amounted to 2 billion euros in grants and loans alone. The EU also became the largest single donor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), providing some 38 percent of its budget. Finally, the EU has given this

immense amount of money without any strings attached in terms of political concessions or improvements in the Palestinians’ human rights record.

The most significant consequences, however, have been played out in the heart of Europe itself. While Bat Ye’or’s claims are often dismissed by fashionable European intellectuals as being overblown or even hysterical, the events of the last few years—the emergence of European-bred Islamic terror cells capable of inflicting real harm such as the London bombings; the assassination of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in Holland; and the recent Arab riots in hundreds of cities across France—have proven just how far the conventional wisdom in Europe has strayed from a sober assessment of what threatens the European order.

Eurabia sometimes overreaches. In her determination to prove the naiveté of Europeans in the face of these gathering ideological threats, for example, Bat Ye’or underestimates the economic motivations guiding their policies of appeasement. After all, the Middle East is not only a key oil provider to Europe, but also a lucrative market for the sale of European goods and weapons. It would thus be an error to simply dismiss the purely economic interests that motivate much of European policy.

Nonetheless, her book's lasting contribution is to show how Europeans have unwittingly played into the hands of classical Islamic expansionism by compromising the very foundations of freedom and liberal democracy itself. Bat Ye'or shows how Europe has unwittingly reinforced the Islamic concept of jihad—a culture of hatred and violence against the

non-Islamic world—not only against Israel and the United States, but more importantly, against itself.

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