

# EU could bring peace to Middle East

The union must stop free-riding on US policy on the Israel-Palestine conflict – offering both sides membership could be key

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William Nitze and Leon Hadar  
guardian.co.uk, Friday 4 December 2009 12.00 GMT

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With much of his time and energy being consumed by the enormous challenges of rebuilding the American economy and fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, President Obama is discovering that Washington may be constrained in its ability to engage in unilateral peacemaking in the Holy Land. Indeed, the erosion in US global power in the aftermath of the Bush administration's military and diplomatic mis-steps, coupled with the dramatic loss of American economic status, demonstrates the need for Washington to invite another group of players, the Europeans, to share more of the diplomatic and military burden of Middle East peace processing.

To put it bluntly, Washington should try to end the EU's free-riding on American policy in the region, a system under which the Europeans benefit from the US political-military role, including its responsibility for pressing the Israelis and the Palestinians to make peace, while distancing themselves from the aspects of American policy that run contrary to their interests.

In fact, the EU's interests are even more exposed than those of America to political instability in the Middle East, Europe's strategic backyard. The region is not only the source of 40% of the EU's oil imports (compared to less than 20% of US oil imports) – if and when Iran arms itself with nuclear weapons, its missiles would be able to strike Paris and Rome before they could reach New York and Washington.

Hence, a failure to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict poses more of a direct threat to the Europeans than to the Americans. By offering Israel and Palestine an incentive to make peace in the form of eventual membership in the EU, Europe could proactively help to reverse current negative trends.

The EU is already the most important trading partner and source of capital to Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which are also members of the [Euro-Mediterranean Partnership](#), aka Barcelona Process, which the EU launched in 1995 as part of an effort to strengthen its relations with the countries in the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. In 2008, the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, tried to energise the Barcelona Process by initiating the formation of a [Union for the Mediterranean](#), bringing together

These two interconnected forums could help facilitate an activist European diplomacy to be pursued together with US initiatives to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The EU strategy should involve more than just the application of its "soft power", in the form of economic and other non-military assistance. In fact, the EU would be in a position to use its evolving combined military force to serve in peacekeeping operations along the borders between Israel and Palestine.

But the main European contribution to inducing the two sides to make peace – and to eventually sustain it – would be the offer of EU membership to Israel and Palestine. Joining the EU would not only fulfil the deepest economic, cultural and political aspirations of many Israelis and Palestinians, it would also provide a framework for economic co-operation between the two intertwined states as well as laws, rules and norms of behaviour that would protect both from succumbing to their worst instincts. Indeed, the process of accession into the EU would help tip the balance of power among both Israelis and Palestinians in the direction of the more westernised and secular elements in both societies.

In a way, turning towards Europe would complete an historical cycle for both the Zionism that gave birth to Israel and the Arab nationalist opposition it ignited. If European antisemitism and imperialism helped set the stage for the current conflict in Israel/Palestine, there is an element of historical justice in having Europe play a central role in resolving the clash between Zionism and Arab nationalism.

For the Israelis, a diplomatic package deal that reinforces the benefits of peace with the Palestinians through membership in the EU would help end Israel's unhealthy dependence on the US. Conditioning Israel's entry into the EU on its agreement to withdraw from the occupied territories and dismantle the Jewish settlements there would strengthen the hands of those Israelis who envision their state not as a militarised Jewish ghetto but as a normal state and a liberal and economically prosperous community.

For the Palestinians, the choice is between the vision of peace with Israel as part of a partnership with the EU, of a Palestine as a Middle Eastern Hong Kong, as opposed to the alternative of continuing Israeli occupation and the growing power of radical Islamist forces.

A new Palestinian leadership working with the EU would have to pursue a reform-orientated programme as part of negotiations on accession. This would involve the economic reconstruction of the West Bank and Gaza through investment and aid and the creation of Palestinian-Israeli-EU business partnerships. In the same way that the establishment of Nafta produced pressure for reforms in Mexico, the evolution of trade and institutional ties between the EU, Israel, and eventually Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, could lay the foundations for movement towards peace and economic and political change in the entire Levant.

A key benefit of stronger institutional ties between the EU, Israel, Palestine and neighbouring countries would be a stronger framework for the protection of minority rights. Israel risks becoming an apartheid state with pariah status abroad unless it can find a way to provide its non-Jewish citizens with full civil, political and economic rights. Conversely it will be difficult for the Palestinians to realise the benefits of peaceful co-existence with Israel unless Jews can live and work in a new Palestinian state without fear for their safety or property. Integration of both Israel and Palestine into the EU framework, including EU rules with respect to the protection of minority rights, would make these requirements much easier to fulfil.

Many Americans might resent the idea of losing their dominant role in the peace process. But the non-strategy pursued by several US administrations and based on the notion that the Americans do the driving in the Middle East while asking the Europeans to change the oil and check the tyres has become unfeasible, which explains why Obama needs to ask the Europeans to start taking an active part – and do some driving – in steering an effort to bring peace to the Middle East.

- William Nitze is an adjunct fellow at the Centre for Strategic & International Studies, the chairman of the board of advisers of the European Institute and the president of the Committee for the Republic. Leon Hadar is a research fellow in foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute and the author of [Sandstorm: Policy Failure in the Middle East](#) (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

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**GaryWilson**

4 Dec 2009, 12:06PM

Is this a joke?

I checked my calendar, in case it was April fool's day, but it isn't.

Are these people serious? That the EU should help resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict by offering the Palestinians and the Israelis membership of the EU!!

This is one of the mosr ridiculous articles I have seen in any newspaper.

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**O'Neill70**

4 Dec 2009, 12:08PM

" If European antisemitism and imperialism helped set the stage for the current conflict in Israel/Palestine, there is an element of historical justice in having Europe play a central role in resolving the clash between Zionism and Arab nationalism."

While this is true, I feel the involvement of Europe - directly and indirectly - in creating the problems of the Middle East could prove to be too much of an obstacle for both Israelis and Palestinians.

In any case, the EU can and should do more (and I think noises about the EU recognising that Jerusalem should be a capital for both countries, is an example of that), but for the foreseeable future any progress towards resolving this conflict is going to be more US-driven.

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**GodAintThatGreat**

4 Dec 2009, 12:08PM

A splendid, realistic idea.

Also, some day soon, Palestinians might even send a man or, even better, a woman astronaut to the Moon.

What a wonderful world we live in.

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### **WhattheDormousesaid**

4 Dec 2009, 12:11PM

Many EU members don't think it should make foreign poicy at all.

It would be nice if somebody could persuade that nice Mr Obama to cut of military aid to israel.

To concentrate minds on peace.

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### **Cyphon1988**

4 Dec 2009, 12:11PM

would be the offer of EU membership to Israel and Palestine. Joining the EU would not only fulfil the deepest economic, cultural and political aspirations of many Israelis and Palestinians, it would also provide a framework for economic co-operation between the two intertwined states as well as laws, rules and norms of behaviour that would protect both from succumbing to their worst instincts.

The Israeli **State** has a long way to come in terms of human rights abuses before entry to the EU can be considered.

That said, so do the palestinians, but they need an actual functioning state first to gain entry to the EU.

Also worst instincts isn't fair, continuing to succomb to a vicious cycle of action on both sides (although I think the Israeli **State** has more to answer for at this point).

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### **ONeill7o**

4 Dec 2009, 12:16PM

WhatTheDorMouseSaid

"It would be nice if somebody could persuade that nice Mr Obama to cut of military aid to israel.

To concentrate minds on peace."

Yeah, I'm sure Hezbollah and Hamas would just lay down their arms at news of that!

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**CetCenseo**

4 Dec 2009, 12:17PM

They don't want us, we don't want them. And it would solve nothing.

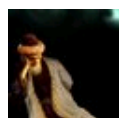
Otherwise, good plan.

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**12pins**

4 Dec 2009, 12:19PM

Ive searched in vain for the punchline and alas it was not forth coming.

Considering that it was Europeans who started this unholy mess to begin with, i think its best they steer clear over this.

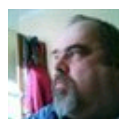
Perhaps the EU could use it whatever clout it has and ask those Americans to stop bending over backwards to accomadate the Israelis over their treatment over the Palestinians and tie both sides to a realistic and lasting peace offer with a viable Palestinian state, not some crumbs thrown off the side of the high table.

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**WhattheDormousesaid**

4 Dec 2009, 12:19PM

The EU can't guarantee peace in Brussels.

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**AlainH88**

4 Dec 2009, 12:20PM

This comment has been removed by a moderator. Replies may also be deleted.



**lalibella**

4 Dec 2009, 12:20PM

I deeply distrust this solution, coming as it does from two neo-conservative thinkers. It seems to me far more of a rescue package for Israel and a shunting off of America's decades of responsibility for the betrayal of the Palestinians, than it is something that could help Palestine. And as a citizen of the EU, I would rather like the EU to remain genuinely European. We have seen what damage NATO has done to Europe.

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**[GaryWilson](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:21PM

**Cyphon1988** 4 Dec 2009: The Israeli State has a long way to come in terms of human rights abuses before entry to the EU can be considered.

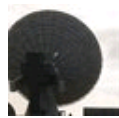
First of all the Israelis have zero interest in becoming members of the European Union. But even if they did, they would be close to the top of the list on human rights records -- there are certainly plenty of European counties with much worse records than Israel (not to mention the current rise of racism throughout the continent).

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**[DrGee](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:21PM

I know that Israel rather oddly turns up in European football tournaments and singing competitions but the idea that EU membership should spread that far east is really pretty far fetched, isn't it? Or maybe the author knows no bounds for Europe. Maybe a few disgruntled USA states might even like to break away.

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**[exiledlondoner](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:21PM

I floated a similar idea a few years ago, but it was pretty much shot down in flames by the pro-Israelis.

The two main objections were that Israel could never accept the free movement of

people within the EU, and that Israel would have a lot of problems with the more federal aspects of the community.

The up-side seems pretty clear. By tying both states into the EU, it would provide a very good economic reason for peaceful co-existence, and give a real impetus for a democratic Palestine (it would be very costly not to be). It could also provide an outlet for the millions of refugees who are not going to be absorbed into any Palestinian state. Can't see it happening though, both because of concerns in Israel, and anti-immigration feelings in Europe.

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**[SantaMoniker](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:25PM

The clumsy interventions in the I/P issue by the EU so far, which make the US look positively professional by comparison, suggest that the further they stay away the better. The endless EU carrot and stick of "yes - we will let you trade with us on preferred terms - no, we won't unless you do what we tell you" has worn pretty thin, and the leverage has got even thinner as Israel's ties to India and China continue to grow and offer replacements for the spineless Europeans kowtowing to Arab oil pressure (did I say "Libya"?).

The current meeting in Stockholm, attempting to force the issue of Jerusalem which is falling apart as the French realize where it is likely to lead is like trying to hit Israel over the head with a blunt instrument on the most sensitive issue in the entire conflict. It will, of course, be totally counterproductive.

Moreover, the rampant anti-Semitism in Europe expressed in endless anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian demonstrations have made the idea that the EU could be an impartial player in the negotiations a joke in the eyes of almost all Israelis, except, perhaps, for the few who write for the Guardian or Ha'aretz and those who lap up their biased reporting.

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**[realsocialist](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:27PM

This article is a joke. If Israel won't listen to the US who pay for their existence what chance has the EU

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**Igel**

4 Dec 2009, 12:27PM

Yes to peace!

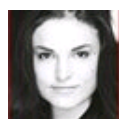
Does this plan require Israel to tear down the wall?

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**imogenblack**

4 Dec 2009, 12:27PM

???????????

"Washington should try to end the EU's free-riding on American policy in the region"

Ok - I agree with that. The EU desperately needs to sort out it policy on I/P.

BUT - the idea of offering Israel and Palestine EU membership, for the sake of peace, seems desperately misguided, however I applaud the almost martyr like inspiration that seems to be behind the idea.

Firstly, would this move not make the EU into a sort of UN style talking shop for international affairs?

The UN has failed in its role in helping the peace, partly because of a feeling that it is a an American puppet: surely by shifting responsibility for this to the EU we are saying directly that America does have too much influence in the UN? Which means we ought to concentrate on reform there - not pass the buck?

It just seems that shifting the problem to another organisation will make accusations of bias/anti-Semitism/islamophobia increase?

Secondly, this seems to presume that a two state solution is best?

I'm not convinced either way, but so far a two state solution appears to be impossible as there is no consensus in the religion? So there may be opposition to the invitation on both sides on the grounds that it is not right to start negotiatons for peace from a false premise.

Thirdly, how will the entrance of two deeply religious states impact on the existing EU countries who have moved markedly towards secularism since WW2?

Israel and Palestine, two distinctly religious states whose values and culture seem far far removed from Europe would sit most uncomfortably in the EU imo, and whilst it is laudable to want to help (I don't actually doubt the political skill of some EU diplomats) I feel it would destabilise the EU and create tensions we simply could not deal with at the same time as helping create a sustainable peace.

(And lastly... would the Palestinians not just tell us where to stick it?)

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**[corrocaminio](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:28PM

non-EU countries that border the Mediterranean, including Israel and the PA

Calling the PA a country. Creative writing, that's called.

peace in the form of eventual membership in the EU

"Eventual", "peace process", winning the lottery tomorrow...

We may ask, what are the chances that a certain nonexistent lobby might intercede in all this?

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**[rufushound](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:31PM

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**[gondwanaland](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:31PM

Interesting article.

Israel is already playing football in Europe, but i don't see the US and it's loony

"rapture" zionists relinquishing the driving seat for many years to come.

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**[exiledlondoner](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:32PM

**WhatTheDoormouseSaid,**

The EU can't guarantee peace in Brussels

I think that's a bit unfair.

The EU is often credited with maintaining the post-war peace in Europe, particularly

between Germany and France, but there is another thing that it can take considerable credit for - the fact that military dictatorship is now pretty much unthinkable.

I live in Spain, which was a dictatorship until the mid 70s - the same is true of Portugal and Greece. In all three countries, the move to democracy was not simple, and threats of coups were ever present.

Now, that is unthinkable. Each country had to maintain democracy to join the EU, and the financial costs of any coup are now impossible to estimate.

I have as many problems as most with the appalling waste, corruption and lack of democracy in the EU, but I don't think it can be claimed that it hasn't achieved a lot as well.

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**[Streatham](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:34PM

No need for anything so drastic. Tony Blair is already bringing peace to the area - and he's only charging £400,000 a year expenses.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-493518/Blairs-Middle-East-envoy-role-costs-Britain-400-000.html>

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**[zabs](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:36PM

So what would full EU membership mean?

The free movement of people. I imagine this would go against Israels aspirations of a 'jewish' state.

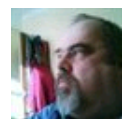
Also if Europe won't accept a liberal eurocentric NATO member - Turkey i doubt they'd accept the Palestinians

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**[WhattheDormousesaid](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:38PM

**Exiled Londoner**

Peace as in EU harmony.

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**[SE26lad](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:38PM

One step at a time eh?

An interesting idea but most people don't even get why Israel is in Eurovision so I am not sure how they would react to the idea of Israel and the Palestinians in the EU.

Whilst I don't deny that Europe (and especially the UK) has played a role in creating this situation in the first place, we also managed to muck up a lot of other countries and many of them seem to have been able to sort themselves out. Singapore peacefully left Malaysia, Bahrein and Qatar have managed to stay independent of the UAE.

The USA and Europe cannot do nothing really help in the Middle East until the people there want peace.

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**[bass46](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:45PM

The whole premise of this article is about as wrong as wrong can be.

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**[lion1](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 12:45PM

Better still, why doesnt Israel and Palastine become the 51st and 52nd states of America  
!!!! Peace will be guarranted!!!

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**Cyphon1988**

4 Dec 2009, 12:49PM

GaryWilson

But even if they did, they would be close to the top of the list on human rights records -- there are certainly plenty of European counties with much worse records than Israel (not to mention the current rise of racism throughout the continent).

So was that a walk in the park with white phosphorus that Israel embarked upon earlier this year?

I don't deny that the UK last Prime minister is a War Criminal. But dont try to apply the Tu Quoque fallacy here. The Israeli state has alot to answer for.

Israel is suffering it's own form of racism, against muslims/arabs/bedouins both within it's state and next door. There's a big old wall, new settlements, and forced removals of Palestinians from their homes. That people support racist actions in the UK and is Israel is morally reprehensible.

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**EscapedfromBratfud**

4 Dec 2009, 12:50PM

From the article:

*With much of his time and energy being consumed by the enormous challenges of rebuilding the American economy and fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, President Obama is discovering that Washington may be constrained in its ability to engage in unilateral peacemaking in the Holy Land*

It is indeed fortunate that the UK has such a thriving economy and isn't involved in fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Oh...

*In fact, the EU would be in a position to use its evolving combined military force to serve in peacekeeping operations along the borders between Israel and Palestine.*

Great. Another conflict involving political Islam we can get embroiled in. It's sounding better all the time. Fortunately Hezbollah can't just wander over to the UK to start a bombing campaign.

*By offering Israel and Palestine an incentive to make peace in the form of eventual membership in the EU*

Well, in a few years they will have complete freedom of movement within Europe. But it's not like they'll bear a grude over having EU peacekeepers in their back yard...

What a fantastic idea, where do I sign?

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**SantaMoniker**

4 Dec 2009, 12:52PM

lion1

4 Dec 2009, 12:45PM

Better still, why doesnt Israel and Palastine become the 51st and 52nd states of America

!!!! Peace will be guarranteed!!!

You're commenting on the wrong website.

On this website, the correct way of saying what you are referring to is:

"Better still, why doesn't Israel make America the 2nd state of Israel"?

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**superscruff**

4 Dec 2009, 12:55PM

Follow the logic of the article and every country in the world joins the EU and all troubles are solved!

I think not.

Why the authors feel that the EU can sort out major differences between two opposing cultures when they can't resolve the issues in Ireland, Spain etc over who should control small parts of the EU is arrogant in the extreme.

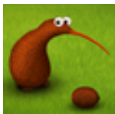
Better to find a negotiated resolution via the United Nations. If the UN is unable to find a solution as an independent third party, a Europe that in the main supported the formation of Israel stands no chance.

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**Logic101**

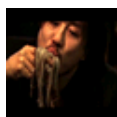
4 Dec 2009, 12:55PM

All the turks need to do now is start a never ending war and tadaaa... You can get EU membership!

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[Link](#)**DocMolotov**

4 Dec 2009, 12:58PM

Why don't they all join the Scientologists instead of the E.U and elect Tom Cruise as their New Great leader. Palestinian and Israeli alike will be much happier when they all become operating Thetans.

[Recommend? \(3\)](#)[Report abuse](#)[Clip |](#)[Link](#)**Rialbynot**

4 Dec 2009, 1:03PM

How about sharing the burden? Making Israel a member of the EU, and Palestine a state of the US...

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4 Dec 2009, 1:04PM

Its easy to shoot holes in an idea like this, but the reality is that there will not be peace in the region unless someone comes up with some sort of radical ideas. If (a very big if) the US were to genuinely pressure the Israeli's to take peace talks seriously, the only possible result would be a seriously weakend Bantustan type Palestinian state that would be chronically unstable. i.e. it would be a bandaid cure for a bullet wound.

I don't see why there is any fundamental objection to Israel and Palestine joining the EU. Israel is as developed as any European country and it would be a relatively easy step to integrate its laws and regulations. I'm not sure the current rules, but I know personally a lot of Israeli's who casually travel and work in Europe without any great problem. From what I know of young Israeli's they would jump at the chance of open EU membership and EU passports - they would be a big enough electoral vote to overwhelm the more conservative elements who would see it as a threat to the jewishness of the State.

Palestine would be a problem, but not an insurmountable one, because the EU is already forking out billions in aid, and would likely be pressurised to do so in any form of peace arrangement. While the country would be far too poor and backward according to the usual criteria, it is small enough (c. 5 million) to be manageable, just like large

desperately poor chunks of Romania or Bulgaria have proved to be manageable - unlike the 70 million Turks.

So would it work? I can see the idea of this sort of bold move proving quite attractive to the egos of some EU leaders, although it would be extremely hard to get a consensus on it. I suspect it would be very attractive to Palestinians - those I've met (and I've travelled quite a bit in the border areas outside Palestine) would I suspect be very enthusiastic - most Palestinians tend to see themselves as more a Mediterranean people than an Arabic one. I think there would be huge scepticism within the Israeli establishment (but maybe less so among ordinary Israeli's).

So, despite the fact that I hate agreeing with the usual sort of global theorising beloved of neocons like the writers, I think its the sort of left field idea that could work. Or at least, its as likely to work as any of the other lousy options that have been suggested

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**[Rialbynot](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 1:08PM

...with Jerusalem run by China (on the Hong Kong model)

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**[deWinter](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 1:09PM

imogenblack 12.27pm.

You are wrong on the Israeli culture, it is very western orientated .

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**[Logic101](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 1:13PM

SantaMoniker

You're commenting on the wrong website.

On this website, the correct way of saying what you are referring to is:

"Better still, why doesn't Israel make America the 2nd state of Israel"?



Thats actually really funny.

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**Mulefish**

4 Dec 2009, 1:14PM

What a good idea!

You may have quietly re-invented the wheel here.

As John Lennon said, "all you need is love."

The Yanks, the current stagnant arbiters of wisdom, have no intention of letting the Palestinians out of their dog kennel existence. They think the rest of us are mysteriously blind and cannot see their rampant abuse. And, as usual, Britain are their silent enablers. (We actually provided Israel with the heavy water to make their first nuclear reactor; and I dread to think of what else we are doing behind the scenes.)

The yanks see Israel as one of their military outposts, a spy to overlook the Arab countries, the lands of their future subjects and aviation fuel. Simple.

Unlike as with Midas, everything the Yanks touch turns to crap; it's all over the place.

Europe is consolidating, and is civilised..

Let's get Merkel, Putin, Hu, and Ahaminejad around a table and reach out to the belaboured Palestinians.

Israel will be given a chance to compete equally in a fair economic tombola..

And, if they can't hack it, or bear to live as equals, then they can always emigrate to the Fadderland among the accommodating Mexicans and Puerto Ricans..

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**Habergham**

4 Dec 2009, 1:18PM

Israel in the EU? Once it becomes a secular democracy maybe. And about a quarter-century behind Turkey, and after the accession of Syria and the Lebanon.

Israel is a US-sponsored colony, founded by Ex-european religeos zealots, and built up by lot of economic migrants who seized the chance to appropriate some prime Mediterranean beachfront estate with development potential. Since the treatment of the former, by Europeans, was, and is, the justifixcation for their treatment of the *indigenous* population of the region then and ongoing, I dont think their sucessful re-integration with Europe is on the cards much before then.

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**[ONEILL70](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 1:18PM

Mulefish

Wow! I love the way you go from "All you need is love...", to that well-known peacenik Ahmedinijad, to suggesting the forced removal of millions of people back to some spurious "Fadderland".

Beyond satire.

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**[afancdogge](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 1:19PM

I certainly think this is an idea worth exploring. I have thought about this as a possibility for several years,

How difficult it would be to reach agreement on this i don't know.

The biggest problem I can see - the future of the refugees, Where would they fit in - and most importantly, live ?

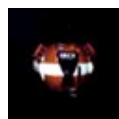
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**[bailliegillies](#)**

4 Dec 2009, 1:19PM

? would be the offer of EU membership to Israel and Palestine.

Israel is not a European country. That the zionist project began it's life in Eastern Europe doesn't make it a European country. If anything Israel owes it's existance and allegiance to the United States that pays for and benefits from its existance.

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**imogenblack**

4 Dec 2009, 1:20PM

dewinter - I wouldn't disagree that Israeli Culture is 'western orientated', however, I do not see an overtly religious country sitting well with increasingly secular Europe? Whilst Israel certainly has more in common with western popular culture than for example Turkey, in terms of its political culture, I feel Israel would have more difficulty squaring the secular outlook of the EU with its faith based policies than Turkey, which even in its supposed secularism is facing opposition for entry?

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**imogenblack**

4 Dec 2009, 1:23PM

Thinking further, what impact would this have on the ongoing issue of who lives where in that region? (presuming it would include the right of free movement and right to live anywhere in the EU?).

If they both had EU membership, surely the restrictions on Palestinians movements would be deeply unlawful, but by same token, it would then be difficult to see how Israel's illegal settlements were illegal?

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**ONeill70**

4 Dec 2009, 1:27PM

imogenblack

Having an Israeli wife and having therefore been to Israel many times, I certainly wouldn't describe it as "overtly religious" - although, then again I spend most of my time in Tel Aviv. I was born and grew up in an overtly religious country - Ireland in the 70s and 80s.

Israel's problem - and it's a far bigger one than the conflict with the Palestinians even - is that there's a faultline in its society which just keeps getting bigger: that between the religious and the secular. That conflict - always simmering - will rage once (hopefully) there's a peace deal with the Palestinians.

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**sarka**

4 Dec 2009, 1:28PM

EU peace-keeping forces on the I/P border once a Palestinian state is set up...Yes, if feasible.

Israel and Palestine IN the EU?

That is crazed, when we can't even decide whether to let in Turkey!!!!

What next?

Oooh, I know...let's have Iraq in the EU. It should sort out all those touchy sectarian and ethnic security problems in no time!

Or else...I know, let's offer the Iranian people EU membership so long as they get rid of that nasty regime of theirs. They'd probably be enthusiastic, so that will solve a) regime change, b) nuclear problems - specially if I/P was already in EU, and lead the way to offering Afghanistan EU membership, which will set everything to rights there. Of course, with Iran in the EU the Saudis will be twitchy, so I think Saudi should be offered membership. All Russia's former satellite states should be offered membership together with Russia, obviously... North African states and then Rwanda/Congo to follow.

Yup, that should do it for the short term.

Blue Peter fade out tune.

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**Batleymuslim**

4 Dec 2009, 1:29PM

Why this will never work;

**EU members**, Hate jews, hate Muslims even more.

**Hamas**, means giving up power

**Israel**, means sharing power, which in time will see Muslims outnumber Jews and thus Jewish Israel goes the way of the Dodo.

**Lebanon** will demand we let them in. which in turn means hezb-allah will get a seat in Brussels , thus by proxy Iran will have a say in European politics.

Then there's Syria,Jordan and Turkey sitting in the wings.

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**Gareth100**

4 Dec 2009, 1:29PM

Habergham,

Israel is a US-sponsored colony, founded by Ex-european religeos zealots, and built up by lot of economic migrants who seized the chance to appropriate some prime Mediterranean beachfront estate with development potential.

If you knew your history, the zionist project was founded by those who were anything but religious zealots, in fact they were proudly secular in the main. It is the still growing influence of the religious parties since the foundation of Israel that is causing increasing problems such as the settlement movement.

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