

**ELIAMEP Annual Lecture**  
**20 September 2007**  
**Keynote Speaker: Lord Patten of Barnes**

**DISCUSSION**

**Prof. Tsoukalis**

The applause deserves no further comment. Lord Patten has kindly agreed to take a few questions. So perhaps, I may help by kicking off the discussion.

The question I would like to put to you, goes as follows. While Europe has been pretty unsuccessful with this Road Map, there have been new facts on the ground as we call them in the Middle East, including, most notably, the continuous expansion of Israeli settlements and the building of the security fence.

My question is very simple and straightforward. Is it perhaps, and this is awful if it is true, is it perhaps too late to think of a viable settlement. What would such a settlement look like?

**Lord Patten:**

I've always been a strong supporter of a two state solution. But there are an increasing number of people I respect, who say that this is going to be impossible. People like the European historian, now living in New York and teaching in the Remarque Institute, Tony Judt. He is one of many academics who argue for the sort of reasons which you have put forward, that a two state solution is becoming impossible.

I don't know how many of you have seen the fence or barrier. It's profoundly shocking, as are the security fences and barriers along the roads that crisscross the West Bank. But for me the most alarming sight, when I was in Israel and Palestine in March, was a trip we had with an Israeli human rights lawyer to the settlements East of Jerusalem.

The debate in Israel about its policy is far more open and far more vigorous than the debate in Europe or America. Israel is a plural society, a real democracy.

I was taken by this human rights lawyer to be shown the plans for the development of suburban settlements, east of Jerusalem. They would make a two state solution well nigh impossible, because they would, if pursued, cut the West Bank in half. They would run from Jerusalem pretty well down to the Dead Sea.

But a one state solution produces its own impossible demographic dynamics.

You can, I suppose today, give 1,3 million Arabs in Israel less than their full human rights. Yet, the more Arabs there are in the Israeli state, the more difficult it is to do that and unless you do that, you start to give upon Israel's value system.

So, I hope that we will help save the day, while we still can for a two-state solution. Perhaps the most worrying thing is one of these remarks made by President Bush on the issue of the Middle East. Of course he accepted the idea of a Palestinian state, but what sort of state remains a little unclear. He and Condoleezza Rice both, made it plain that any Palestinian state, in its delineation, will have to take account of "facts on the ground". And "facts on the ground" reflect what was happening throughout the Oslo process, when we were told there would be no settlement activity. When people denounce Yasser Arafat for not leaping at the offer that he was made at Camp David (and I think in fact it was profoundly unwise to reject it) they might just remember the settlement activity, the facts on the ground taking place under Prime Minister Barak, in the previous few years. They might just remember the sort of reasons for Arafat's skepticism which have been set out by people like Rob Malley, who was one of the American negotiators at that time.

So I think there are reasons to be as pessimistic as you are, but I don't think that it is too late to try to rescue sanity from what we have now.

### **Question**

Your honour, thank you very much. I am the Ambassador of Lebanon designate to Greece. Thank you for your remarks, they were most valuable indeed, because I don't see European's whistle, but there is a British bell ringing for peace in the Middle East.

Most interesting, you spoke about the Swiss cheese, as all diplomats said, but hopefully in the future, there will be a cheese like the Greek feta, one piece, without holes inside.

To pick up on two ideas you said, you mentioned the Arab initiative, you mentioned as well the Geneva initiative. I am aware and familiar with both initiatives, as I worked as representative of Lebanon for the United Nations. There was a question mark in the Geneva initiative. The right of return of Palestinian refugees.

You said, if I'm not mistaken, that Palestinians will have to give up their prospect of returning, or something like this. But I just want to ask you, unless there is justice combined with realism, any Road Map that's not empty, will not succeed unless you bring a solution for the Palestinian

refugees, you will just be shifting the problem from Israel and Palestine to Lebanon.

So my question to you is how you figure out the solution for the Palestinian refugees, bearing in mind that integration, will never work out inside this country. So how do we solve it? Thank you very much.

**Lord Patten:**

No politician, even one experienced as me, can be against justice and realism. And I recognise that the Geneva peace initiative, without actually seeking to circumscribe the right of return, spoke about it in terms which made clear that it should be negotiable.

I'm not one of the negotiators, and I merely tried to state what I believed to be realistic. I don't think that it is realistic to expect the Israelis, not only to give up most of their settlements in the West Bank or a number of them, notably to give up the idea that Jerusalem will be simply their own capital, not only to give up sole control of the Holy Places, but also to accept that hundreds of thousands or millions of Palestinians will be allowed to go and live in Israel. I mean that simply isn't going to happen.

Realism and justice? Well, they are going to cost the international community a very great deal of money and rather more liberal immigration policies than some of us have pursued. But the main homeland for Palestinian refugees has to be Palestine, which is why the feta cheese should be the sort of cheese which people will want to consume, if I can risk abusing the metaphor.

I know how much difficulty the refugee camps have caused in Lebanon. I know that not least, because I was a European Commissioner, I tried to get the Lebanese government to accept more assistance in the camps, not least for economic development. And the Lebanese government said, which was understandable, we don't want people who are not here permanently, to think they are here permanently.

I think worries about the camps in Lebanon must have been increased by the recent violence in one of the camps. But if I'm to sound realistic about what Israel is going to have to do, I don't think it is unreasonable for me to sound pretty realistic too about what the Palestinians would have to accept.

Is it fair? Diplomatic solutions very often aren't fair. And the question is the size of the grievance you leave behind.

**Question:**

Lord Patten, thank you for restoring our faith in rationalism, we were beginning to forget that there is such a thing as that lately. Maybe we have our premises wrong, in the sense that we have three sources of higher authority that our leaders are consulting today.

And by “higher” I mean fundamentally sources of consulting higher authorities.

It appears to me that Europe is the last bastion of rationalism in this strange fundamentalist world and I mean the USA included, Israel, and of course the Arab world in this conflict.

Is it possible for voices, such as your own, and for Europe to form a common rational voice, eminently important in these days of fundamentalism, crying out in the wilderness if it’s that at all possible. Do you see a common European foreign policy, forming a common front in this turbulent world in the Middle East? Is it at all possible or is it another utopia?

**Lord Patten:**

Of course, I would like to identify myself with the Europe of the enlightenment and the Europe of rationalism. I am a practising catholic, but still found myself arguing vigorously against putting God into the European Constitution. It seemed to me that He had enough problems on His hands already, without being given responsibility for the Common Agricultural Policy.

And it seemed to me that such a step would be to be undermining something very important about Europe’s cultural values and traditions.

I think in displaying our rationalism, we have one big problem. Convincing the superpower and convincing some others that we really matter in the world, and that we are occasionally prepared to put ourselves on the line for issues.

Something that matters with the Americans is the fact that in security terms, we seem to be free riders. When it came to drafting the European security strategy, as I recall, there was very little difficulty around the table. I had never seen Foreign Ministers accept a draft quite so quickly.

And the reason why it was simple was because at no point, in the draft, did we talk about the use of force. At no point did we concede that there are times in the international community, when in order to uphold the international rule of law, you actually have to use force.

I deplore what’s happening in Iraq, but I happen to think that what’s happening in Afghanistan is really serious and important and if we back out on that, I think it will be very difficult to persuade America that NATO

is still anything other than a sort of holding company, and that Europe can actually help to deliver multilateral solutions.

I think it's difficult to convince Russia, with a President who brilliantly plays a hand of fives and sixes, as though they were kings and aces, to take us seriously, when we don't behave as one in our dealings with them; when we don't make it absolutely clear that Europe doesn't accept that the countries on our borders should not be kept weak so that they fall within a sort of Russian Tsarist influence. We want strong, stable democracies around us, not fragile countries.

I think is difficult for the Russians to take us seriously when we don't have a European energy policy, without existing polity, and Russia picks us out, one after another.

I think that with China we would have a better chance of demonstrating our credibility if we in Europe would take a lead in environmental diplomacy with them.

All the issues concerning climate change and global warming that we talk about, are mainly issues about China and America. And there is no reason why we, in terms of transfer of environmental technology and in other areas as well, couldn't take a lead and open up a dialogue with China.

So the question, I ask myself is how much do we really think we matter? With 30% of the world's GDP, with the most important trading block in the world still, how much do we think we really count, when all that is threatened by our declining population?

We have enormous cultural assets, what Joe Nye called "soft power". What do we think it's all for? What I think it should be for, is rationalism in supporting multilateralism, the attempt to secure the sort of international cooperation which we know is essential to deal with the dark side of globalization.

What worries me, sufficiently to be writing a book about it, is the disjuncture between economic globalization and what happens politically. I think it's the great challenge ahead of us. So I would like us to be demonstrating the benefits of rational multilateralism which must sometimes have a bark and a bite.

The defence of enlightenment values isn't simply about flapping one's wrist and limply giving in all the time.

**Question;**

It seems we've been a lot discussing about cheese, but very briefly, this is the question here. With Gaza on the map it looks unavoidable to

keep on talking about the Swiss cheese. So I would like to have a comment - how can you view such viable state with two actual diverse areas of land.

The main point I would like to raise here and ask you about it, is that your approach seems to be that the European Union, puts all its pressure on Palestinians. So my question is whether the European Union can increase its importance in Tel Aviv. For the sake of my argument could EU membership, or something like that, be a carrot for Israel? Thank you.

**Question:**

Your Excellency, talking about realism, what would be for Israelis who are currently calling the shots, what is going to be the incentive for them to move to their own rationality as you defined it? The incentive for Israelis. Thank you.

**Lord Pattn:**

First of all, in my judgment, on the initial question, the problem of contiguity is not principally a problem of Gaza and the West Bank. I think the problem is what you see within the West Bank.

With defensive or aggressive ribbons, cutting backwards and forwards over the West Bank, in order to protect the route to the settlements for Israeli settlers, and to make it easier for the IDF to prevent the movement of people, contiguity is a problem. But this is going to be a great deal more difficult to deal with, because the settlements have such an almost folkloric cultural place in Israeli history.

A lot of European Jews, from urban backgrounds, wanted to go to Israel, not only to escape racism and the holocaust in Europe, but also to identify themselves with the soil of Palestine and Judea.

Most of us, as Christians or post-Christians, have read the Old Testament. Reading the Old Testament gives you a great of sense of the attachment of new Israelis to the soil, and the importance of those settlements and farming communities to Jewish immigrants.

In the region, the settlements were regarded not only by the farmers, as important to the new Israel, but by the military also. I think the combination of the military and the farming community is partly responsible for some of the most difficult and most practical problems that we would have to sort out, involving the Swiss cheese on the West Bank.

But I think that actually it's going to be a more difficult issue to resolve the relationship between Gaza and the West Bank. On that, we will have to ensure that there is not a sort of west and east Pakistan settlement, leading inevitably to the division of the state.

Why should Israel want to move? And why do many Israelis want to move? Most of my Israeli friends happen to be in the peace camp. They reflect a much larger opinion in Israel that you would never guess from the way Israeli governments act.

The opinion polls in Israel, suggest quite a strong body of support for a peace settlement. But the Israelis have a political structure, which makes it almost impossible to put together an Israeli government which can actually implement those aspirations.

I think perhaps the recent economic success of Israel, which withstood the dramas of the Lebanon war, success that is partly built on the IT sector, has helped to put many Israeli voters and citizens to sleep over the last year.

But would you really want, if you were an Israeli citizen, to continue to live in a state where your children going to school in the morning can be blown up by an Islamic Jihad rocket? Do you really want to live in a state which could, once again, be subjected to the horrors of suicide bombing?

Is that to suggest that Israel should “surrender”? No. It’s to suggest that it should very badly want the sort of peace which I am sure would have come with Mr. Rabin, which might have come even with Mr. Barak.

Simply leaving things as they are, doesn’t seem to me to be an option. That will eventually, sooner rather than later produce another spiral down. And in a world post the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Europe could do a number of things which would help not only those countries but their neighbours, putting some real muscle in the Barcelona process and the Euro-Med partnership for example.

I think there is a lot for an Israeli citizen to gain. But so long as there is an American administration which assures Israeli politicians that they don’t have to make any compromises, then I think we are unlikely to make progress.

**Prof. Tsoukalis:**

I think I’ll have to bring this meeting a close. As I was walking to this Old Parliament tonight, I was looking forward to an elegant speech, some new ideas, a bit of provocation, and a well-thought-out speech. In the end, I and we, got much more than that and we are deeply grateful to Lord Patten for it and we very much hope that you will come back in Athens. Thank to everybody and thanks to you.

**Lord Patten:**

Thank you very much indeed for inviting me. Thank you for that warm applause, and thank you for the good questions. Maybe next time I

can come back and talk about a real European success story, like our policy on Iran! Thank you.