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Introduction

The Czech-born French writer Milan Kundera suggests in his celebrated 1984 essay "The Tragedy of Central Europe" that "no other part of the world has been so deeply marked by the influence of Jewish genius" as Central Europe. In Kundera's words:

> Aliens everywhere and everywhere at home, lifted above national quarrels, the Jews in the twentieth century were the principal cosmopolitan, integrating element in Central Europe: they were its intellectual cement, a condensed version of its spirit, creators of its spiritual unity.

This is why Kundera appreciates European Jewish heritage and clings to it "with as much passion and nostalgia as though it were" his own.[1] He goes on to explain why the Jewish people is so precious to him:

> [I]n their destiny the fate of Central Europe seems to be concentrated, reflected, and to have found its symbolic image. What is Central Europe? An uncertain zone of small nations between Russia and Germany. … Indeed, what are the Jews if not a small nation, the small nation par excellence? The only one of all the small nations of all time which has survived empires and the devastating march of History.[2]

The "'Good Europeans' *Par Excellence*"?

Like Kundera, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche also pointed out that "the position and functions of the Jewish people in Europe predestined them to

become the 'good Europeans' *par excellence*."[3] Jews were viewed by some as representing Europe's first supranational and multicultural entity. From the nineteenth century onward, they were depicted as the essence of "Europeaness," characterized by cosmopolitanism, anti-nationalism, and the espousal of the principles of the liberal order. In line with Nietzsche's "good Europeans," the Jewish-born, German-American political theorist Hannah Arendt went even further in her 1968 book, *Men in Dark Times*, and depicted the Jews as "Europe's Chosen People." In her words:

> The Jewish middle classes of Paris and London, Berlin and Vienna, Warsaw and Moscow were in fact neither cosmopolitan nor international, though the intellectuals among them thought of themselves in these terms. They were European, something that could be said of no other group. And this was not a matter of conviction; it was an objective fact. In other words, while the self-deception of assimilated Jews usually consisted in the mistaken belief that they were just as German as the Germans, just as French as the French, the self-deception of the intellectual Jews consisted in thinking that they had no "fatherland," for their fatherland actually was Europe.[4]

Yet were such Jews really cosmopolitan, international, and European? Were they Europe's "Chosen People," the "'good Europeans' *par excellence*"? What, if anything, do these qualities tell us about their potential role in the European integration process? Conversely, what role did the Jews play in the imagination of the founding fathers of European integration? To us, it appears that Jews played a special role, not least against the backdrop of the horrors of World War II, in general, and the Shoah in particular.

Only in recent years have EU citizens started to learn to negotiate their different identities: their municipal and local identity and relationship with the region in which they live; their national identity and its relationship with the nation-state; and now their European identity and its connection to the EU and its institutions. The Jew, by contrast, has always been deemed to have competing identities and affiliations, being a member of a religion, an ethnic group, a nation, and for many years, even a "race." To the extent, therefore, that the European integration process is creating a similar crisis at the heart of European citizenry, today, all Europeans are, in some metaphorical sense, Jews.

Interestingly enough, this is not lost on EU leaders, who often speak of the need to learn from the history of European Jews and draw on European Jewry as a model for emulation within the EU. As Romano Prodi, former president of the European Commission and former Italian prime minister, noted:

> I believe we can learn a lot from the history of the Jews of Europe. In many ways they are the first, the oldest Europeans. We, the new Europeans, are just starting to learn the complex art of living with multiple allegiances—allegiance to our hometown, to our own region, to our home country, and now to the European Union. The Jews have been forced to master this art since antiquity. They were both Jewish *and* Italian, or Jewish *and* French, Jewish *and* Spanish, Jewish *and* Polish, Jewish *and* German. Proud of their ties with Jewish communities throughout the continent, and equally proud of their bonds with their own country. In Germany and Eastern Europe, the medium they used for expressing these complex bonds was Yiddish, while Judaeo-Spanish or Ladino was used in the Balkans and the Mediterranean.[5]

No wonder, then, that many proponents of the European integration process have been Jews.[6] This is understandable, argues Steven Beller, a scholar of Austrian history, because

> today's Europe represents the freeing up of Europeans, economically but also intellectually and culturally, from the narrow and restrictive bonds of particular, national forms and systems, much as the Jewish mediating and pluralizing tradition did in earlier times. One of the groups that has benefited from this emancipation from solely national frameworks has been European Jewry, because Jews too gain from the pluralist respect for the other that is implicit in the European project. The *potential* for Jews to be regarded both as Jews and as full members of the community … has now been largely realized in today's Europe, where Jews can be Jews and Europeans and, for example, British (even English) without any conceptual or logical discomfort … [T]he old problems of whether Jews "belonged" in the societies in which they lived no longer have cogency. Jews in this dispensation simply are also European. … In that sense Europe … is definitely good for the Jews.[7]

And yet, if the traditional perception of Jews as the ultimate "Other"[8] was weakened with the emergence of the European integration process, it is resurfacing in the age of populism.[9] In fact, the EU leadership views European Jewry as somehow the constitutive minority of the Union, or in Prodi's words "Europe's archetypal minority,"[10] despite the fact, or rather precisely because, the most patently historical link between the European integration process and European Jewry is World War II and the Shoah. After all, the EU was created in response to the atrocities of the past and as a remedy to the wounded continent, in an effort to reconcile the religious, cultural, and linguistic differences of Europe. As German intellectual Michael Mertes argues:

> The Shoah has had a strong and even increasing impact on European integration indeed—explicitly through post-1989 European politics of memory, and implicitly through the post-1945 paradigm changes it catalyzed in the sphere of German nationalism, the dogma of unfettered sovereignty, and Christian–Jewish relations. Although European politics of memory are subject to constant evolution, I have found little evidence that the centrality of the Shoah to the European collective memory will ever be seriously challenged.[11]

Moreover, to the extent that religious tensions continue to affect the European space—and more specifically, the recent rise of Islamophobia and the public anxiety over Muslim immigration and the integration of Muslim minorities[12]—EU leaders expect Jewish communities to take a central role in improving and promoting inter-religious and inter-community relations within Europe. In practical terms, this implies the expectation that European Jewish communities work to improve their relations with the Muslim communities in all member states, and that Jews living in the EU broaden their struggle against antisemitism to include other categories of racial and religious discrimination, including, of course, Islamophobia. To be sure, encouraging connection and communication with the Muslim communities and working to combat the anti-Muslim sentiment throughout the continent also serves European Jewry. After all, this helps to combat "the logic of exclusion," which ultimately led to the destruction of the Jewish communities of Europe in the Shoah and which "reneges on the promise of the inclusive Europe that … emerged" with the founding of the EU.[13]

The EU also holds expectations of its Jewish communities with regard to Israel. Brussels views the Jewish communities collectively as a broker that brings it closer to the Jewish State, or in other words, as a bridge between them. Although Israel was one of the first countries in the world to engage in a dialogue with the European Economic Community (EEC)—even before the 1957 Treaty of Rome establishing the European Community (EC) entered into force[14]—over the years, Israel and the EU have gradually drifted apart, mainly over issues related to the Arab–Israeli–Palestinian conflicts and the Middle East peace process. Today more than ever, Europeans and Israelis are deeply suspicious of each other's intentions regarding these conflicts and with respect to a wide range of issues pertaining to the Middle East. Hence, Brussels expects European Jewry to assist EU institutions in strengthening the uneasy relationship with Israel.[15]

Normative Power Europe Meets the Jewish "Light unto the Nations" Mission

In 2002, Ian Manners introduced the concept of "Normative Power Europe" (NPE).[16] He argued that the most distinctive qualities of the EU lie in its

mission to promote the values of democracy and human rights worldwide. The "concept of normative power Europe," Manners explained, "is an attempt to refocus analysis away from the empirical emphasis on the EU's institutions or policies, and towards including cognitive processes, with both substantive and symbolic components."[17] Manners went on to emphasize the ideational impact of the EU. He argued that it has shaped its external relations bearing in mind, and has even made them conditional upon, a set of norms closer to those of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) than most other actors on the world stage.[18]

According to Manners, the EU bases its identity on these norms and values, and in the post-Cold War period has deepened its commitment to placing universal norms and principles "at the centre of its relations with its Member States and the world."[19]

The introduction of Manners' concept of NPE inaugurated a new theoretical approach in European studies and generated a lively debate on the constitutive principles underlying the EU's external relations.[20] One of the direct results of this NPE debate is that since mid-2000, the EU has come to see its place in the world as that of a global force for good acting through the promotion of European values.[21]

Yet, as Mertes contends, "one cannot fully understand the EU's current self-conception as a 'normative power' advocating tolerance, fighting discrimination and protecting minorities without taking into account the evolution of the interreligious climate."[22] Indeed, what is lacking in the debate that has emerged over NPE is the role European Jewry may have played as a source of inspiration for the EU to become a normative power.

As it happens, the Union's leadership perceives EU Jewry as a group of European citizens who contributed, and continue to contribute, to the EU, its pluralism, and to peace and tolerance within the European public space. We are of the opinion that to a large extent and in many respects, the very concept of NPE might be said to have much to do with the universal role Judaism has played throughout the ages, not least within European history.

The Jewish aspiration of being a "light unto the nations" is a case in point. According to the Bible,[23] the nation of Israel must ultimately live up to the ethical demands of the Covenant, serving as a role model to others—i.e., Judaism offers a universal ethical culture to the world.[24] Could we not argue the same about NPE, which thus represents a "Jewish version" of Europe's role in the world?

Over the years, the Jewish contribution to the European integration process has been largely neglected. To recognize that contribution is to allow Europe to be known not only as the continent on which the Jewish people was annihilated, but also as the continent that was inspired by its Jewry to become a normative power.

Notes

[1] Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," *New York Review of Books*, XXXI:7 (1984), 7, www.bisla.sk/files/ckeditor/Kundera_Tragedy_of_Central_Europe.pdf.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Quoted in Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (San Diego, 1968), p. 42.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Romano Prodi, "Romano Prodi President of the European Commission. A Union of Minorities. Seminar on Europe Against anti-Semitism, For a Union of Diversity Brussels, 19 February 2004," *European Commission*, February 19, 2004, p. 2, ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_04_85.

[6] See also Sharon Pardo and Hila Zahavi (eds.), *The Jewish Contribution to European Integration* (Lanham, forthcoming 2020).

[7] Steven Beller, "Is Europe Good for the Jews? Jews and the Pluralist Tradition in Historical Perspective," *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*, XLII:1 (2009), 134–55, 150.

[8] Iver B. Neumann, "Self and Other in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations*, II:2 (1996), 139–74.

[9] Michael Mertes, "The Autumn of Our Discontent: Germany Facing Populism," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, XII:1 (2018), 11–19. Populism is a contested concept. For an in-depth discussion see, for example, Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (New York, 1981); Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner, *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (London, 1969); Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism* (London, 1977); Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London, 2005); Gino Germani, *Authoritarianism, Fascism and National Populism* (New Brunswick, 1978); and Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge, 2007).

[10] Prodi, op. cit., p. 2.

[11] Michael Mertes, "Rising from the Ashes: The Shoah and the European Integration Project," *The Jewish Contribution to European Integration*, Sharon Paro and Hila Zahavi (eds.) (Lanham, forthcoming 2020), pp. 109–29, 122.

[12] See for example, Michael Whine, "Journey into Europe: Islam, Immigration, and Identity," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, XIII:2 (2019); Yehuda Bauer, "Moral and Political Aspects of Migration Challenges in Europe," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, IX:3 (2015), 387–95; Juliana Geran Pilon, "The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity,

Islam/The End of Europe: Dictators, Demagogues, and the Coming Dark Age," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, XI:2 (2017), 255–60.

[13] Beller, op. cit., p. 151.

[14] Sharon Pardo and Joel Peters, *Uneasy Neighbors: Israel and the European Union* (Lanham, 2010); Sharon Pardo, "The Year that Israel Considered Joining the European Economic Community," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, LI:5 (2013), 901–15; Gadi Heimann, "The Need to Be Part of Europe: Israel's Struggle for an Association Agreement with the EEC, 1957–1961," *Israel Studies*, XX:1 (2015), 86–109; Gadi Heimann, "The EEC Commission and the Negotiations for a Trade Agreement with Israel, 1958–1964," *Journal of European Integration*, XXXVIII:7 (2016), 775–89; Gadi Heimann and Lior Herman, *Israel's Path to Europe: The Negotiations for a Preferential Agreement, 1957–1970* (Abingdon, 2019).

[15] Pardo and Peters, op. cit; Panayiotis Ifestos, *European Political Cooperation: Towards a Framework of Supranational Diplomacy?* (Aldershot, 1987); Raffaella A. Del Sarto, *Contested State Identities and Regional Security in the Euro-Mediterranean Area* (New York, 2006); Sharon Pardo and Joel Peters, *Israel and the European Union: A Documentary History* (Lanham, 2012); Patrick Müller, *EU Foreign Policymaking and the Middle East Conflict: The Europeanization of National Foreign Policy* (Abingdon, 2013); Anders Persson, *The EU and the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict 1971–2013: In Pursuit of a Just Peace* (Lanham, 2014); Dimitris Bouris, *The European Union and Occupied Palestinian Territories: State-Building without a State* (Abingdon, 2014); Sharon Pardo, *Normative Power Europe Meets Israel: Perceptions and Realties* (Lanham, 2015); Raffaella A. Del Sarto, *Israel Under Siege: The Politics of Insecurity and the Rise of the Israeli Neo-Revisionist Right* (Washington, DC, 2017); Natalia Chaban, Ole Elgström, Michele Knodt, Patrick Müller, and Sharon Pardo, "Perceptions of the EU's Role in the Ukraine–Russia and the Israel–Palestine Conflicts: A Biased Mediator?" *International Negotiation*, XXIII:2 (2018), 299–318.

[16] Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?" *Journal of Common Market Studies*, XL:2 (2002), 235–58.

[17] Ibid., p. 239.

[18] Ibid., p. 241.

[19] Ibid.

[20] See, for example: Richard G. Whitman, *From Civilian Power to Superpower? The International Identity of the European Union* (Basingstoke, 1998); Thomas Diez, "Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering 'Normative Power Europe,'" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, XXXIII:3 (2005), 613–36; Ian Manners, "The European Union as a Normative Power: A Response to Thomas Diez," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, XXXV:1 (2006), 167–80; Ian Manners, "The Constitutive Nature of Values, Images and Principles in the European Union," *Values and Principles in European Union Foreign Policy*, Sonia Lucarelli and Ian Manners (eds.) (London, 2006), 19–41; Thomas Diez and Ian Manners, "Reflecting on Normative Power Europe," *Power in World Politics*, Felix Berenskoetter and M.J. Williams (eds.) (London, 2007), pp. 173–88; Ian Manners, "The Normative Ethics of the European Union," *International Affairs*, LXXXIV:1 (2008), 45–60; Vicky Birchfield, "A Normative Power Europe Framework of Transnational Policy Formation," *Journal of European Public Policy*, XX:6

(2013), 907–22; Richard G. Whitman, "The Neo-Normative Turn in Theorising the EU's International Presence," *Cooperation and Conflict*, XLVIII:2 (2013), 171–93; Ben Rosamond, "Three Ways of Speaking Europe to the World: Markets, Peace, Cosmopolitan Duty and the EU's Normative Power," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, XVI:1 (2014), 133–48; and Marek Neuman (ed.), *Democracy Promotion and the Normative Power Europe Framework: The European Union in South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia* (Cham, 2019).

[21] European External Action Service, "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy," *European External Action Service*, June, 2016, eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf.

[22] Mertes, "Rising from the Ashes," op. cit., p. 121.

[23] Isaiah 49:6.

[24] David S. Ariel, "Chosen People: Some Modern Views," *My Jewish Learning*, www.myjewishlearning.com/article/chosen-people-some-modern-views/; Mark S. Schwartz, "The State of Business Ethics in Israel: A Light Unto the Nations?" *Journal of Business Ethics*, CV:4 (2012), 429–46.