With such an open-ended problematic, the first question to be answered is where and when was the subject of the study, in the event, Europe. The study’s object, Jerusalem, is then derived through the prism of Europe’s policies and imaginary. Beyond the realm of the mythological, and in keeping with the contested assertions of the Pirenne thesis,¹ one can identify the spatial and temporal emergence of a core Europe with the coronation of Charlemagne on Christmas day 800 in Rome. One need only look at the borders of the Carolingian empire to realize that they correspond roughly but clearly to those of the 1957 Rome Treaty establishing the European Economic Community of six countries. Since there is no real continuity here, it can only be labeled a type of secular miracle,² whereby history repeats itself, although in view of the deepening centrifugal cycle in Europe, one wonders whether the second time will not finally be seen as a “farce.”³

Core Europe has thus for centuries consisted of an area encompassing France, western Germany, northern Italy and the three Benelux countries. This widely understood fact was updated recently when the politicized concept of a “core Europe” or Kerneuropa was advanced by the German Christian Democrat (CDU) politicians Wolfgang Schäuble and Karl Lamers in an internal party document published in September 1994, calling for a “two-tier Europe,” in which the political/economic core consisting of the original six minus Italy would take the lead,⁴ while the rest defined their relation to this core as they would or could. Historians, for their part, in particular those inclined to versions of dependency theory, had long recognized this constellation.⁵

In the contemporary era, the northern and western reaches of Europe are kept at bay (De Gaulle’s double veto on British membership) or steer clear of the core (as seen in their
wary refusal to Euro-ize their currencies) while the eastern and southern regions are peripheralized by force majeure. Nonetheless, a distinct and self-conscious European identity is formed over the centuries, made of an alternating mix of warlike and peaceful attempts to define or even unify the entity. Since Christianity historically underpins this quest, Jerusalem is present at every stage. But in the modern period, the process conflicts with the much more powerful forces of the competing European nation-states, each one of which has appropriated Jerusalem as both an instrument and an object of policy.

Conflicting Jerusalem policies prevailed until the late twentieth century, and they still do mark the words and actions of certain states. For France since Napoleon, Jerusalem has been central to a professed Mediterranean identity which saw the Holy Places and more broadly, Greater Syria as part of its mission civilisatrice in line with the imperial idea. The French prime minister stated it ever so clearly during World War One, noting that

…it is proper that this Syria [which France is going to control after the war] should not be a squeezed country, with tight limits, pursuing its precarious existence in the middle of vast foreign possessions and remaining a heavy charge for our country. It must have large borders making it a dependency which can be self-sufficient, and becoming … the true center of the spread of civilization in this part of the Mediterranean. This would preserve for our language the privileged situation which it possesses in the Orient.

For Britain from the mid-nineteenth century, Jerusalem was central to the Christian Zionist mission of Judaizing the land and converting the Palestinian population to Protestantism, both tools for consolidating the road to India, a vital strategic but also an ideological matter. Russian Orthodoxy and its imperial overseers had felt, ever since the Crimean War, that the Holy Places and their Christian inhabitants in Jerusalem and Bethlehem were destined to become subjects of the Czar. This was a logical proposition in view of Moscow’s place in the Orthodox imaginary as the Third Rome (after the fall of Constantinople) since Rome and Jerusalem were from the very first days of Christianity twinned as the worldly cities of God. The Habsburg emperors had (as Holy Roman Emperors) for centuries defined themselves as Kings of Jerusalem (and their descendant pretenders continue to do so to the present time), a rather abstract and symbolic but potent title. The German Emperor Wilhelm II, practicing a typically Westphalian policy in pursuit of Germany’s place in the sun, appeared over the range of the Arab world in the period leading up to the first World War, in Damascus and Jerusalem already in 1898. While Germany pursued a classic balancing policy in courting the Ottoman Empire, the Kaiser did not fail, while in Jerusalem, to strengthen Germany’s religious capital in the city, both Protestant (the Lutheran church of the Redeemer) and Roman Catholic (the Dormition abbey, architecturally inspired by Charlemagne’s cathedral in Aix-la-Chapelle).
The Conundrum of the Present: Jerusalem as Corpus Separatum

Although European discourse varies by country, then, Jerusalem was normally considered by the powers as an internal element before being an external one: an identity and then an objective. Contemporary Jerusalem discourse can only be understood against the historical background, because of the mix of national and supranational policies at hand. At the time of its creation, the European Economic Community had no policy to speak of in the area, concerned as were the Six, then the Nine, with building a solid economic, social and finally political infrastructure. But it was a mistake to think that what had become over centuries a major constituent of both identity and policy, would not again creep into the mix of European concerns. The idea of Holy Jerusalem as a corpus separatum emerged in 1947 from the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), nine of whose eleven members were culturally Christian. And since Holy Jerusalem needed to encompass Christianity’s human beginning (Bethlehem) as well as its cruciform end (the Holy Sepulcher), the corpus extended from Beit Sahour to Shu’fat and from Ein Karem to al-Eizaria. This particular vision was from a nostalgic point of view a stand-in for the territory divided between the Zionists and the Hashemites: core Europe quickly recognized the Jewish state in Palestine; but it never recognized Jordan’s annexation of Jerusalem and the West Bank (although peripheral Britain did).

Europe Officialized

Jerusalem thus recurrently seeped into contemporary European policy considerations, or more precisely, into the discourse of European politicians, even when the Palestinian issue had been apparently transformed into a matter of tending to the needs and integration of refugees into their new Arab exile, its “UNRWAization,” during the two decades which followed UN Resolution 181.14 The extent of Jerusalem as corpus separatum had been defined precisely in 194715 and accompanied by an equally detailed if hand-sketched map.16 It may thus be said that European states which did not, from 1948 to 1980, have a Palestine policy, still maintained the outlines of a policy towards Jerusalem. Its ignoring on the part of Israel and then the United States was a miscalculation explaining in part their failure to get their way after 1967. They had made the usual mistake of not factoring in items of historical importance conflicting with apparently decisive political events. Jerusalem was not to be eradicated in the consciousness of Europeans by something as banal as a war. Preoccupation with Jerusalem continued to find expression even as the EEC-EC-EU sought common ground.

This suddenly became apparent when the European Council, made up of the Heads of State or government of the European Community (EC) assembled in Venice in June 1980 for its twice-yearly meeting, and shocked the little world of the Arab-Israeli conflict with its historical “Venice Declaration on the Middle East.”17 Referring specifically to the new situation created by the recent peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, the Nine insisted that the time had come for a comprehensive solution. Vital in this respect was
the Palestinian problem, “which is not simply one of refugees. The Palestinian people, which is conscious of existing as such, must be placed in a position, by an appropriate process defined within the framework of the comprehensive peace settlement, to exercise fully its right to self-determination.” The Palestinian problem, they continued, “is not simply one of refugees.” And in order for a settlement to be binding on all the parties, “the PLO...will have to be associated with the negotiations.” Furthermore, “[t]he Nine recognise the special importance of the role played by the question of Jerusalem for all the parties concerned. The Nine stress that they will not accept any unilateral initiative designed to change the status of Jerusalem and that any agreement on the city’s status should guarantee freedom of access for everyone to the Holy Places.”

A truly giant step forward was made here by the nine member states, to the astonishment of the rest of the world and the dismay of Israel and the US, both of which counterattacked promptly. The particular interaction of the statesmen of the day, including Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, Margaret Thatcher, Francesco Cossiga and Helmut Schmidt, helped make the exceptional declaration possible. They were prepared at that time and place to assert historical claims linked profoundly to questions of cultural identity and concepts of justice, taking up, in their collective view, where the 1978 Camp David accord between Egypt and Israel had left off, since the section on the Palestinians had been ambiguous at best. One notes in particular, in the Venice Declaration, the insistence on the need for the Palestinians to exercise their right to self determination “fully,” and this in the contemporary era implies through statehood, since they are a people “conscious of existing as such.” In the same context, Jerusalem is accorded primacy of status. This classic definition of the nation in terms of self-consciousness (Ernest Renan’s “daily plebiscite”) goes far beyond the terminology found in the 1978 Egyptian-Israeli Camp David agreements, which nonetheless strikingly lay down the foundations, sometimes word for word, for what would be stated in the Oslo Accords and the Declaration of Principles fifteen years later. There is of course not a single word regarding Jerusalem in the 1979 purely bilateral Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, and so it placed nothing in the way of the city’s annexation, since this could not be construed as a violation of the peace treaty with Egypt. At Camp David there had been nothing on Jerusalem either except in the Preamble where, by hailing Sadat’s visit to the Israeli parliament in Jerusalem, the reference actually strengthened Israel’s claim to the city.18

Now a close analysis of the above paragraph indicates that Europe, and the European countries separately, could be defined as one of the “parties concerned,” which, as we have seen, they most certainly were. The Nine in question explicitly referred to the recent Israeli-Egyptian peace settlement, hoping that it would bode well for progress on other fronts, as they “stress the need for Israel to put an end to the territorial occupation which it has maintained since the conflict of 1967, as it has done for part of Sinai [emphasis ours].” They go on to denounce the settlements, which “are illegal under international law.” Clearly, the very weak agreement regarding Palestinian autonomy reached between Begin and Sadat19 at Camp David had paradoxically re-launched debate on the occupied territories within the European chancelleries.

A vehement reaction came in the form of the Jerusalem law passed shortly thereafter
(30 July 1980) by the Israeli Knesset, formally annexing the city. The new president of the United States, Ronald Reagan, also looked askance upon the Venice Declaration, and his pressure caused the Europeans, if not to retreat on all fronts opened in June 1980, at least to tone down their rhetoric and assure the world that the US was to take the lead in Middle Eastern matters.

In years following, the declarations were therefore less proactive on the Jerusalem question, but buoyed by the heady winds of the intifada and following Arafat’s statements of 1988, hyped as “historic,” the Madrid Council of 1989, now composed of twelve members, made a further jump. Referring to the Venice Declaration, and giving the US due credit for its role, “and particularly the dialogue entered into with the PLO,” the Council called for a lasting settlement, part of which should be the holding of elections “in the Occupied Territories including East Jerusalem,” at a time few other parties were thinking in such practical and consolidated terms of ways of actually carrying out Palestinian self determination, notably in Jerusalem.

There came another period of passive support for others’ initiatives, especially after the signature of the Oslo Accords, when it can be felt that the Europeans thought things might be advancing smoothly towards a settlement. Jerusalem is not especially mentioned, rather Europe’s role as principal financier of the peace process was highlighted. This was a time of measured optimism, as shown by the signature of the Barcelona Declaration by the EU, its member states, and twelve non-member Mediterranean countries, including Israel, Syria and the Palestinian Authority, all of whom committed themselves to seeking peace and security in a broad Euro-Mediterranean context, something which did not at that time seem beyond reach, as the Oslo process still seemed to have some life. It was, in short, a time of wait-and-see in Europe as elsewhere.

One Step Forward Two Steps Back

Upon the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000, very different priorities emerged from Council Declarations, notably calls for calm, backing the Quartet (a European idea), and most of all, condemning terrorism. Jerusalem, when mentioned, something rare, was of course included in the occupied territories, but rhetoric was considerably scaled down as compared with declarations issued in the nineteen-eighties. The external reason for this ebb was the insurgents’ policy of naming, through the identification of Palestinian claims to Jerusalem with Islam. This link reverberated in the very name which immediately emerged from the uprising, the al-Aqsa intifada. The explicit connection was also found in the names of armed groups such as the al-Aqsa brigades (to make it even more embarrassing, they were emanations of the mainstream political group, Fatah, which Europe had long courted and more recently, heavily financed) and the al-Quds commandos of the Iranian-backed Islamic Jihad. There is no doubt that Islam is practiced by many in core Europe, where it claims powerful social collectives (France, Germany, Belgium) and that it constitutes the majority faith in certain non-member states (Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania). But it is most certainly not as yet truly of Europe. And
Islam, in Europe, has long been identified with political Islam, which inspires fear and hostility, never more than during the first years of the third millennium, with governments, as ever, on the lookout for scapegoats. Developments at this time were a reminder if one was needed that Jerusalem is never a universal, it has either a national or a religious connotation: for Europe it is (Western) Christianity.

European disarray was palpable at this time, with recurrent talk in EU council statements of a necessary execution of the “Palestinian-Israeli Security Implementation Workplan,” a “cooling off period,” “rebuilding confidence,” reviving the Barcelona Process, and other measures on the ground, with longer-term goals (except the danger of settlement expansion) not taken up.

With the passage of months, the condemnation of “terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians” becomes the dominant leitmotif, because “[t]he peace process and the stability of the region cannot be hostage to terrorism. The fight against terrorism must go on …” Of course there should be negotiations in the context of an international conference based on the 1967 borders, “if necessary with minor adjustments agreed by the parties … In this context, a fair solution should be found to the complex issue of Jerusalem … Walls, the Council continues, will not bring peace.” And most of all, Europe insists on its loyalty to a process in which it follows rather than leads, since it “will work with the parties and with its partners in the international community, especially with the United States in the framework of the quartet …”

At this time, there is a clear European retreat on all fronts, including that of Jerusalem. By 2003, Iraq is the main preoccupation, with Europe struggling to maintain unity over that issue. Statements on the Palestinian-Israeli questions are brief and relate largely to the need to end “terror and violence,” with needed measures made ever more specific by the Council, stating its unequivocal condemnation of terrorism and determination to cut off all support to “terrorist groups,” offering help to the Palestinian Authority (PA) “in its efforts to stop terrorism,” and seeking “wider action against Hamas fund raising.” Indeed, the European Council “recognizes Israel’s right to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks,” although it asks Israel to “exert maximum effort to avoid civilian casualties,” and to abstain from “extra-judicial killings.” Of course there is ongoing criticism of “the route marked out for the so-called security fence in the Occupied West Bank,” and the EU “calls on Israel to dismantle settlements built after March 2001,” a rather bizarre cutoff date in itself betraying the generalized disarray. The EU had moderated its demands on Israel, and there is clearly no room in this discursive mode for talk on dividing or otherwise dealing with the question of Jerusalem. It is as though the question had been buried by the al-Aqsa intifada. But this passivity was to prove short-lived. After a lull at the end of 2004, and with the death of President Arafat and the accession of Mahmud Abbas to the presidency of the PA, Europe began to sharpen its discursive tools once again, thus proving the deep and longstanding concern with the issue of Jerusalem.
The Role of Institutions

The European Council, for its part, maintained a low profile despite the changing security situation on the ground. This may partly be attributed to the enlarged membership resulting from accessions in 2004 and then 2007, which added a whole series of East European states to the EU, with their resolutely pro-American, pro-Israeli stance, complicating Council decision-making regarding all Arab-Israeli issues, particularly the most sensitive ones. But a more significant and countervailing development made it possible for core Europe to resume and, in fact, strengthen its rhetoric on the Jerusalem question, among others. This was the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 and the creation, *ipso facto*, of the post of a European President and a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, that is to say a foreign minister. On the theoretical level, institutionalism rears its head again as a key paradigm in the specific and thus far unique case of Europe. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs has at her disposal a virtual foreign ministry and a new diplomatic corps, the European External Action Service, an evolution which gives the EU an autonomous voice in the external political field which it never enjoyed before. This voice has been heard ever since, and it relentlessly hammers home the importance of Jerusalem to the European Union, and the reminder that the issue will not go away, no matter what may be the facts on the ground and local and global power relations. The reports and recommendations of EU Heads of Mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah sent to the Political and Security Committee for 2010, 2011 and 2012 are so intransigent with respect to Palestinian rights and Israeli violations that they were “shelved” in Brussels, but their content was widely distributed, and they make the European position crystal clear.

The key document, the *Report on East Jerusalem* by the EU Heads of Mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah, was produced at the end of 2010, and one need only read it to understand that the EU had packaged its historical aims and claims more forcefully than ever, and in an unmistakably heartfelt manner. The EU notes once again here that Jerusalem should be the capital of two states. The *corpus separatum* of yore has been shelved, permanently it would seem. But the inevitable relationship of dependency which would emerge from such a solution means that any Palestinian state now realistically envisaged in the West Bank has borders that do not greatly exceed those of the 1947 *corpus*. Jerusalem is clearly, as the document states, “a strongly emotive subject” for both Palestinians and Israelis. What a reading of its twenty pages shows is that it is equally emotive for Europe. Indeed, given the vacuum created by Israel’s closure of public institutions such as Orient House, one now gets the sense of a discursive production, one of whose purposes is to palliate the absence of indigenous entities, and prevent “Islamic extremist organisations [from extending] their influence.” Identification with (the more “secular”) Palestinian interests is palpable, and the proposal is made to “[e]xplore the use of Palestinian institutions to promote joint EU-PLO interests.” The essential recommendation (other than haranguing the Israeli authorities) is that the EU should mandate Heads of Mission in Jerusalem and Ramallah to continue “to reinforce the EU policy on East Jerusalem.” Successive reports in 2011 and 2012 reiterated the issue,
updated specific problems, and reinforced talk regarding settlements and their products; but the tone had been set as soon as the new foreign policy apparatus had been given voice (if not exactly wings). None of this means, of course, that great concrete policy changes will take place, or that, once decided (such as the requirement to label Israeli settlement products, including those originating from Jerusalem, as such) will be implemented – US countervailing pressure usually stops such initiatives before they are adopted.

What it does indicate, though, is the continuing presence of Jerusalem in EU collective consciousness, as a virtual corpus separatum. Here we observe how cultural, religious, national and European questions of great significance intermingle, and the weight of centuries cannot be barred by political and legal proclamations coming from Israel, despite the deployment of force majeure. The issue has not gone away; nor, where Europe is concerned, is it likely ever to do so, even, one can assume, in the unlikely case the city were to be transformed into the joint capital, or divided into two capitals, of separate states. The political structures of Brussels and the legal structure in The Hague, in addition to the enduring policies of the principal capitals of Europe, guarantee its permanence. That secular regional structure, the European Union, cares too much about its millennial mission to the holy city.


Endnotes
1 Henry Pirenne, Mahomet et Charlemagne (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999 [1937]).
2 It will readily be seen that we are not here engaging in the kind of pedagogical-cum-moralizing exercise characteristic of so much synthetic writing on “Europe,” for example Eric Hobsbawm, “The Curious History of Europe,” in On History (London: Abacus, 1997) ch.17. Rather, the concern is a specific and largely discursive one, that tries not to award crowns, whether of gold or of thorns.
3 “Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.” Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in Marx & Engels, Basic Writings on Politics & Philosophy, ed. Lewis Feuer (New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 1959 [1852]), 320.
8 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, A Lasting Peace through the Federation of Europe, trans. C.E. Vaughan (London: Constable and Co., 1917). This is a translation of Rousseau’s Extrait du projet de paix perpétuelle de M. l’Abbé de Saint-Pierre (1762) which in turn heavily influenced Kant’s Perpetual Peace – A Philosophical Sketch (1795). See Roger Heacock, Towards a New
12 Niles Illich, German Imperialism in the Ottoman Empire: A Comparative Study (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2007); Jonathan McMurray, Distant Ties: Germany, the Ottoman Empire, and the Construction of the Baghdad Railway (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001).

13 “The German Kaiser … combined pietism with a Hohenzollern medieval conception of the divine mission of German emperors … His visit to the Middle East in 1898, although designed to enhance Ottoman-German relations, was couched in Christian religious symbolism.” Eleanor Tejirian and Reeva Simon, Conflict and Conversion – Two Thousand Years of Christian Missions in the Middle East (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 117.


15 UN General Assembly Resolution 181.III.B: “The City of Jerusalem shall include the present municipality of Jerusalem plus the surrounding villages and towns, the most eastern of which shall be Abu Dis; the most southern, Bethlehem; the most western, ‘Ein Karim (including also the built-up area of Motsa); and the most northern Shu’fat.”

16 UNGA Resolution 181.III.B. Annex B.


18 The Preamble speaks of the decisive significance of “[t]he historic initiative of President Sadat in visiting Jerusalem and the reception accorded to him by the parliament, government and people of Israel …”


21 This did not prevent the new French president, François Mitterrand, from advocating for the creation of a Palestinian state in a speech before the Israeli Knesset in 1982, thus opening the political floodgates of statehood advocacy. Here is one reason why pro-Zionist groups in France have consistently attempted to tax him with anti-Semitism.

22 European Council, Madrid, 26-27 June 1989
(Bull. ECD 6-1989), Annex I.


26 Secularist Palestinian elites worked very hard and with some success on replacing this religious denotation with an ordinal number (the second intifada), arguably a misnomer.


28 One gets an idea of European self- and other-projections through the attribution of core Europe’s prime cultural honor, the Erasmus prize, to Sadik Jalal al-‘Azm in 2004, when he was saying that the problem with Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis was its wild overstatement of Islam in relation to the West: “contemporary Islam does not even form a ‘civilization’ in the active, enactive, and effective senses of the term. It may be said to form a civilization in the historical, traditional, passive, reactive, and folkloric senses” (al-‘Azm interviewed in The Boston Review, October-November 2004 http://bostonreview.net/BR29.5/alazm.php. Accessed 7 October 2013).


30 “Presidency Conclusions,” Seville European Council, 21 and 22 June 2002 (13463/02).

31 “Presidency Conclusions, Seville.

32 Note from the Presidency to the Delegations, Extraordinary European Council, Brussels, 17 February, 2003, 6466/03.

33 Note from the Presidency to the Delegations, Thessaloniki European Council, 19 and 20 June, 2003, 11638/03.

34 Note from the Presidency to the Delegations, 19 and 20 June, 2003.

35 Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council, 16 and 17 October, 2003, 15188/03.


37 On the theoretical level, it demonstrates the significance of the institutionalist paradigm.
