



FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
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INSIGHTS FROM THE CONFERENCE:

60 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE EU: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

NOVEMBER 2019



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FOREWORD

FOREWORD AND KEYNOTE SPEECH

LÁSZLÓ ANDOR

SECRETARY GENERAL, FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES (BRUSSELS)

In November 2019, the 5th annual conference conducted by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) in cooperation with the Macro Center for Political Economics, the Israeli National Security Studies (INSS) Institute, the Karl Renner Institute and the Foundation Jean Jaurès was a great opportunity to celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations between Israel and Europe.

Recent developments in Europe are likely to have an impact too on its relations with Israel. Europe's role in the world has been changing, and Brexit is taking place with a serious effect on European identity, policy and values.

With regard to the security aspect, since the times of the Cold War, the security and defence of Europe fell under the responsibility of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and not that of the European Union. The cooperation within NATO has depended on the cooperation and the commitment of the United States. In the years following the end of the Cold War, the American commitment to the treaty and to its European allies remained firm and the cooperation was considered successful. In other words, the United States continued to play an important role in the security arrangements of Europe, which was dependent on its involvement in the region.

However, in recent years this situation has been undergoing significant changes. Although NATO has been enlarged in several rounds, the United States has been looking for ways to reduce its

involvement and presence in the region. This reflects a change in priority for the American government. The alliance between the Americans and Europe could have been reinforced by the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Pact, which eventually did not succeed. In general, the United States administration turning against multilateralism has incentivised the European Union to adapt its policies, regarding economics but also security. These developments inevitably make an effect on Europe's cooperation with other regions, including economic and security relations with the Middle East.

Another major event that has a significant influence on the security situation in Europe is the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union, what is commonly referred to as Brexit. Currently the security cooperation between Europe and the UK remains strong; however, there is a need for vigilance with regard to that cooperation in the future. With the reduced engagement of the United States in the region, the EU and the UK are bound to work together in order to preserve and improve security cooperation and to maintain NATO.

Of course, the security aspect of Brexit is only one element that is worth addressing. Another important aspect, which has also become relevant to Israel in recent years, is the rise of populism, nationalism and xenophobia, which highlight the importance of protecting the core shared values of Israel and Europe. While discussing some of the alarming trends, it should be noted that in the 2019 European elections, only one country experienced a strengthening of far-right parties, and that is Italy. In other countries, the trend is different. In fact, the crisis of mainstream parties and various forms of radicalisation were already observed before the 2014 European elections, due to the economic crisis we went through. After a long period of decline and erosion of public trust in the European Union, we actually witnessed an increase in voter turnout in the last elections (2019), and an overall message of

support for the European Union is better articulated today. The European Union is a project which sees importance in promoting a common European identity. Yet, there is an ongoing attack on that identity and the values that we aim at upholding. The attack on European values should also be a matter of concern for Israel. In order to deal with such trends more effectively, Europe has to better define and defend its values enshrined in the EU Treaty. In recent years, these discussions have been taking place at a high level; yet, much more effort should be given to promoting those values and to maintaining them in face of populist and anti-European tendencies.

While there might be debates between governments of European countries and Israel, it is important to remember that we are connected by common values. At the same time, we are facing entirely different risks and security challenges. The European Union values need more concrete translation into tools that foster solidarity, as well as economic, social and political cohesion.

The European Union is not a political union, unlike the United States or the United Kingdom. It is a community which creates political cohesion out of forms of economic cooperation. Democracy, pluralism, solidarity, the rule of law, minority rights – are all among its core values. Some of the values might be under stress, and some of the European governments clearly disregard the values and the law of the Union, yet we have reasons to believe that our societies are strongly held together by our shared values, European ideals and aspirations.

Europe's integrated single market is one of its greatest assets. The European Union is one of the three largest trading blocs of the global economy, and much effort has been devoted to creating and maintaining the monetary union as well. There is still a need to find ways to take advantage of the single market much more effectively. Our single market is rather imbalanced, and the

shortcomings of the monetary union prevent Europe from becoming a much more significant global economic force. There is a need for more solidarity between the member states.

The EU can also look to other regions and countries for inspiration when it comes to reforming the economic model. Israel is perhaps the most innovative economy in the world and there is a huge potential for cooperation and mutual learning that should be further exploited and is expected to benefit both sides. Exchanges and cooperation on various economic programs, including in the area of the transition to a greener economy, can only have positive effects regarding convergence and understanding in a broader perspective.

60 YEARS OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN EUROPE AND ISRAEL

DR. ROBY NATHANSON

DIRECTOR GENERAL, THE MACRO CENTER
FOR POLITICAL ECONOMICS

Israel's relations with the European Union are long-standing and have unique characteristics and importance. The relationship between the European Economic Community (EEC) and Israel began in 1959, making Israel one of the first countries to forge economic relations with the organisation which constituted the foundation for the European Union. Negotiations for a free trade agreement began in the early 1970s and the first free trade agreement between the parties was signed in 1975, giving Israel a special status in Europe. The agreement established the basis for the burgeoning economic cooperation between Europe and Israel as well as for future agreements that have been signed since. The 1975 agreement focused mainly on free trade for industrial products.

The course set in those years shaped the strong and important economic relations between Israel and Europe. The successful economic relations and the fruits that are currently enjoyed by both Europe and Israel are the product of Israel's special status. The European Union was and remains Israel's main trading partner. As of 2018, 42.4% of the imports to Israel came from European Union countries, compared to only 13.0% from the United States

and 23.0% from Asian countries. Also, when considering exports, the European Union is the main destination for Israeli goods. 32.4% of Israeli exports are sent to the European Union, compared to 23.0% to the United States and 21.6% to Asian countries. Except for 2009, this has been the case for the past 20 years.

Since 1998 the volume of imports from the European Union to Israel increased by 181%. In 1998 the volume of imports from the Union was 11 billion USD compared to 31 billion USD in 2018. In addition, exports to the European Union increased in the same time period by 150%. In 1998, Israeli exports to the Union were 6 billion USD compared to 15 billion USD in 2018.

Yet, the economic cooperation between Israel and Europe is only one aspect of the relations between them. The introduction of the political and strategic aspects of the cooperation came into the picture later than the economic facet, during the 1990s. By then, other Mediterranean countries had been granted a status similar to that of Israel and new players had joined the arena. During the period of the Oslo Accords and the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan as well as the normalization of the relations with Arab countries, Europe took an active and constructive part. Europe used the special relations that were established with other Mediterranean countries in order to encourage negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and extended the process to regional cooperation.

The culmination of European involvement in the peace process in the Middle East was reached during the Barcelona process in 1995 which initiated the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. On the Mediterranean side it includes members such as Israel, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco. The Syrian membership was suspended in 2011 following the civil war that is still ongoing in the country. The idea behind this partnership was to replicate the European Union model in the Mediterranean arena by strength-

ening the economic ties between its members. As a result, Israel and Turkey both signed different economic agreements with the European Union already in 1995 and other countries signed them during the late 1990s and early 2000s (Morocco in 1996, Jordan in 1997, and Egypt in 2001).

In the end, the ambitious target to achieve a free trade zone in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership by 2010 failed. The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, the containment of the Oslo accords during the late 1990s, and the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2000, all led to erosion of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and erosion in the European successful political involvement in the region. Meanwhile in Europe the Union decided to expand and, in the 2000s, 13 new countries joined the Union so that currently there are 28 member countries (27, after Brexit came into being at the beginning of 2020).

As part of the expansion process, and the special relationship with the European Union, Israel has been granted a special status through signing an upgrade to the 2000 association agreement. An association agreement is a treaty that is signed by both the European Union and a non-member state and defines the cooperation between them. The extension of the association agreement with Israel was supposed to further develop the ties between the parties, extend the free trade agreement, and create greater liberalization of trade. Eventually the negotiations failed in 2008 and following Netanyahu's taking office and his policies the process was put on hold. The last Israeli official to have a political and strategic dialogue about the status of Israel with the leadership of the European Union was Tzipi Livni, when she served as Foreign Minister.

This, however, does not mean that the progress in the economic ties was completely discontinued. In 2012 there was a special expansion of the association agreement to the pharmaceutical

sector, and, in 2013, Israel and the European Union signed an open skies agreement. As mentioned above in numerous examples, while the political crisis between Europe and Israel has been ongoing, the economic ties remain strong. Even without the political umbrella of an extended association agreement Israel participates in a number of important cooperation projects, such as Horizon 2020 and other scientific projects that flourish. Yet, the option of realizing the full economic potential of the relationship is strongly weakened by the lack of political cooperation.

Yet, the fact that over the last 10 years no political dialogue between Israel and Europe has taken place, together with the growing perception among the Israeli public that Europe supports the Palestinians more than it does Israel prevents it from being an honest mediator in the perception of many Israelis. In other words, the Israeli public thinks Europe is a biased broker and this weakens its status and influence in the region. Europe's ability to take an active part in promoting peace in the region, as it did during the period of the Oslo accords and the Barcelona process, has eroded over the years.

One example of a European policy which has been widely criticized in Israel is the decision to mark products coming from Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Many in Israel feel that this decision reflects a one-sided approach on the part of Europe. The decision has added to the negative attitude that Israelis have about Europe. In the end, even if the intention was to put pressure on Israel to unfreeze the negotiation process with the Palestinians, the inequity of the move sends the message to the Israeli public that Europe blames only Israel for the lack of progress in the negotiations with the Palestinians. It is hard to say that this step has been auspicious in promoting peace in the region.

So, what about the future? Both Israel and Europe are going through deep political changes that may affect the special rela-

tionship between the parties. On the one hand there is concern that the political rift that characterized the last decade could even increase and damage the economic cooperation. On the other hand, there is potential to change the equation and to try and restore the golden age of the relations that Israel and the EU enjoyed in the 1990s. Here are some suggestions for how the parties could rehabilitate the political relations and also provide a firm framework for economic cooperation:

Reconstruction of the Middle East and redefining the European role in the region – In the past decade, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has experienced significant changes and turmoil that reshaped the region. Since the end of 2010, regime changes occurred in many Arab countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, as a result of the “Arab Spring” civil uprisings. These uprisings have also resulted in regional and domestic instability, mainly in countries such as Syria, Yemen and, more recently, in Lebanon, where the situation has been raising some concerns. Concurrently, shifts in the balance of power between regional superpowers occurred, mainly due to the deterioration of Egypt's standing in the Arab world, the crisis between Qatar and other Gulf countries, Iran's ongoing regional intervention approach, etc. All these geopolitical developments had significant impacts on the region, as well as the whole world. Other events that have influenced the region include the decline in the importance of the region in American eyes, the increasing involvement of Russia and Turkey, as well as tensions between those two countries.

From a European domestic standpoint, recent developments have had a direct effect on countries, mainly due to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis, and the rise of terror threats within the continent. As of 2018, hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees have been seeking asylum in European countries, mainly in Germany, France, Greece, Italy, Austria, Sweden, and the UK. The rapid surge of asylum seekers has resulted in a heated public debate within the

European Union countries regarding the reform of the common asylum policy, a debate greatly exacerbated by the largely unjustified connection, exploited by right-wing and populist political parties and movements, between the refugee crisis, economic hardships and security concerns.

All these developments raise questions regarding relations between Israel and the EU, and the ability of both entities to contribute, separately or together, to reshaping and reconstructing the Middle East. On the one hand, Europe can be a valuable third party, crucial for the development of above-board Israel-Sunni ties, and a partner in battling global threats, be they a nuclear Iran or the rise of global terror. On the other hand, Israel and the EU seem to be growing further apart in their Middle East policies, and it is not clear whether cooperation in the region would be viable without one of the sides substantially reassessing its policy.

In the coming years Europe should take a more active role in the reconstruction of the region and use its soft power and influence in order to promote a more peaceful future in the Middle East and to promote cooperation and multilateralism in the region.

Climate Change – Climate and regional environmental changes have become one of the biggest challenges for humanity in the 21st century, as they affect the environment, the economy and communities worldwide. The political and economic debate on the issue is receiving growing attention. Climate change poses great challenges for both shores of the Mediterranean and for the southern side in particular. There are nevertheless opportunities for economic and political cooperation.

There is no one clear European perspective with regard to climate change. There are different approaches and interests in this issue which has been gaining much more attention in recent years. Green parties have managed in the last few years to increase their

power and influence and, only recently, millions marched across Europe demanding better policies to tackle the climate crisis.

Europeans understand that the effect that global warming has on the MENA region is crucial, first and foremost, for the local population, but also for the European people. Therefore, there is a need to increase the level of European investment in the region, which is currently growing faster than other areas of the world. The effects of global warming such as prolonged draughts, extreme heat waves, and shortage of water supply, diseases, as well as other social and economic indirect consequences are not new to the region but are becoming worse.

International and regional cooperation and dialogue are crucial in order to increase the stability and security of the region. Israel should work together with countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, and the Palestinians in order to promote peaceful dialogue. Europe should be more involved in using the climate change issue in order to promote peace and cooperation in the region.

Energy and Gas – In the last decade, major natural gas reserves have been discovered in the territorial waters of Israel. This creates an opportunity for better cooperation between Israel and Europe, first by making it possible to export natural gas to European countries such as Greece, Cyprus and other south-eastern European countries, and to connect the pipelines to the European network; second, by increasing the cooperation between the gas companies in Israel and European investors and banks, which could benefit from the expected profit from the natural gas reserves. Other energy projects should include green energy solutions.

To summarize, the economic relations between Europe and Israel are flourishing and constantly strengthening. Europe was and remains Israel most important trade partner. Only in the last decade the economic cooperation was extended to new fields, such

as the 'Open Skies' agreement, the participation of Israel in the Horizon 2020 program, etc. Yet, the political deadlock that has characterized the past 10 years is clouding the relationship. There is a need to rethink the different policies towards one another in order to try and defrost the political and strategic dialogue. This would also have an impact on economic relations and enable prioritization of economic cooperation.



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OPENING REMARKS

AMOS YADLIN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY'S
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Currently, the Middle East is in a far more fragile state than it was even one year ago. This volatility is exacerbated by the retrenchment of the United States and its reluctance to use force in the region. Only recently, the United States withdrew its soldiers from Syria leaving its allies, the Syrian Kurds, at the mercy of President Erdogan's regime, and many of them were forced to flee their homes. While Israel's situation bears little resemblance to that of the Kurds – Israel is a strong sovereign country with advanced capabilities for dealing with the changing reality in the Middle East – the lack of American commitment to the region is alarming for Israelis, too.

The Iranians have internalized the new reality and increased their level of aggression and are much less reticent to use force. Their increasingly bold malign actions make the region far more combustible.

Another issue which weighs heavily on the Israeli situation is the country's ongoing political crisis. After two election cycles, no candidate has been able to form a coalition government. Even a third election to be held in March 2020 may not create the conditions to form a stable government. The combination of a deep political crisis and growing external security challenges constitutes a serious threat to Israel. Naturally, the country urgently needs an active cabinet and government to tackle the emerging threats.

Back to the Iranian issue, one of the most worrisome matters is the intensification of Iranian efforts to advance their nuclear capabilities. Following the American withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran, the Iranians have decided to reciprocate, abrogating the terms of the deal and building up their nuclear program. The struggle to prevent Iran from achieving military nuclear capability was and remains Israel's foremost concern. However, Iran is also involved in conventional activities targeting Israel: Tehran is in the midst of a project to transfer weapons with significant technological capacity to Hezbollah, the Syrian regime, the Houthis, and other proxies. Both the 'nuclear arm' and the 'conventional arm' of Iranian strategy pose substantial threats to Israel's national security.

Israel has a number of policies to counter the arming of Iranian proxies with advanced weapons. One of the options that remain on the table is a preventative strike against the precision missile infrastructure of Iran's Lebanese proxy Hezbollah – to deliver a significant setback to Tehran's regional designs. Deciding whether to launch such an operation will be a crucial decision for the next Israeli government, perhaps even more urgent than resolving the nuclear issue. However, the above-mentioned inability to form a government in Israel may further complicate the situation and make the potential execution of such decision more difficult, even when a new government is eventually established.

Another important decision facing Israel's next government concerns the Gaza Strip. It is important that Jerusalem select and implement a policy in this arena which advances its goals of: maintaining quiet for Israel's citizens, preventing Hamas's military build-up, and alleviating the humanitarian situation for innocent Gazans. The current situation in which Hamas sporadically fires rockets and missiles at southern Israel should not be allowed to continue any longer.

U.S. President Donald Trump's 'deal of the century' is a factor that will likely impact the dynamics of the region over the next year. Now that Trump has unveiled his proposal, there is a great debate even within the Israeli Right about how to answer the question of 'what next?'

More broadly, regarding U.S.-Israel relations, in a year from now American citizens will vote for their next president, which very well could mean the election and inauguration of a president from the Democratic Party. That eventuality could pose a serious challenge for Israel after Prime Minister Netanyahu chose to affiliate himself, and thereby Israel as the country he represents, so strongly with the Republican Party.

But Israel's challenges go well beyond its immediate neighbourhood. For example, Israel finds itself trapped in the ongoing struggle between the United States and China. On the one hand, Israel wants to enjoy the benefits of good (primarily economic) relations with the rising superpower, China. On the other hand, it seeks to avoid jeopardizing its "special relationship" on political and security matters with Washington. In the past, Israel cooperated with China in various areas that have since become categorized as 'dual use', meaning fields that have an economic impact and potential security implications. Since cooperation with China in those fields is now considered problematic from the American perspective, Israel must update its policies and practices accordingly.

Anti-Semitism has always been an issue of great concern for the government of Israel, however in recent years it has become a far more urgent matter. Anti-Semitism is on the rise both in the United States and in Europe, and there are three main sources for this phenomenon: the extreme right, the extreme left, and radical Islam. The Israeli government is now working to raise awareness of the issue and to minimize harm to the Jewish diaspora caused by it.

On the domestic front, Israel faces a growing budget deficit at the same time as the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) is demanding greater financial allocations due to the expanding Iranian threat. From 2015-2018, Iran's commitment to the nuclear agreement reduced the urgency of preparing a military solution to the nuclear issue over the next decade. However, Iran's violations of the deal have since returned the nuclear issue to the centre of IDF concerns; to prepare for worst case scenarios, the IDF requires additional budgetary allocations.

As a concluding remark, I would like to note: It is no secret that the relationship between Israel and the European Union is not moving in a positive direction. The Palestinian issue is the elephant in the room. But there is hope to break out of the Israeli-Palestinian deadlock when the next government of Israel is sworn-in. This would not be a comprehensive solution to the relationship's problems, but it could be used as leverage to move forward in parallel on the Israeli-European and Israeli-Palestinian fronts.

Another bone of contention between Israel and Europe is the Iranian Issue. Because Israel and Europe do not share the same assessment of the gravity of the threat posed by Iran, their ideas about what steps ought to be taken in order to thwart its malign regional activities and nuclear ambitions diverge as well.

In spite of these differences of opinion, Israel and Europe must continue to conduct dialogue. They should seek to emphasize shared values and advance mutual understanding of their respective viewpoints, which stem from differences in geography, history, and threat assessment.

OPENING REMARKS

BENOIT CHAPAS

DEPUTY HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION TO ISRAEL

Even at a time when Israeli-European relations are considered cool, Israel holds a special status with regard to the European Union, a status that no other country enjoys. The intensity of trade and research cooperation is incomparable. One of the most prominent examples is the opening and connection of the transport market conducted through the 'open skies' agreement. That agreement had and still has a large impact on the entire population of Israel, making international flights much cheaper. This is just another tangible sign of the strength of the economic and trade relations between Israel and Europe.

Unfortunately, the economic openness between Europe and Israel is sometimes taken for granted. Both sides have their preconceived ideas about the other. Yet, the relationship is very longstanding and has managed to overcome tensions in the past.

The relationship with Israel is one of the oldest of the European Union, and the first free trade agreement was already signed in the 1970s. 35% of Israel's trade is with Europe. The cooperation in the technological and research economic sectors is considered to be a two-way street and produces benefits for both economies. That cooperation promises an important path for sustainable growth for Israel. Israel's decision-makers understand the importance of

this path for its economy, security, and sustainability.

Yet, there are limitations to the relationship and one of the key factors that affects them and constitutes an obstacle for them is the Palestinian issue. This issue is not going to fade away or to become less important. There is a window of opportunity at the moment due to the formation of a new government in Israel in the near future and the newly elected Parliament of the European Union. However, it is important that this window is used. The European Union's position will remain very steady and predictable with regard to the Palestinian issue. In a matter of speaking, Europe is boring. Unlike many other players in the global arena, Europe is a reliable and predictable partner for Israel.

Another important issue for the European Union is the result of the latest election for the European Parliament. The good news is that the populist powers have not managed to win a majority of seats in the Parliament, and the increase in the power of Europe-sceptics has been halted. There is a pro-Europe majority in the European Parliament. In that respect, there is criticism about the role which Israel chooses to play in the European unity issue. At the moment, Israel is taking an active role in dividing the European Union on different issues and in strengthening Europe-sceptic voices. This is against the interest of both Europe and Israel: the two should find a better way to work together to benefit both sides.

With regard to anti-Semitism, Europe understands the importance of tackling this issue. It is doing so not only for the sake of Israel and the relationship with Israel but because this is an abominable phenomenon that must be uprooted from Europe. EU decision-makers are on Israel's side in the fight against anti-Semitism.

On the Iranian issue, the way Europe sees it is that, in the long term, Europe and Israel have the same goals. The disagreements on this issue are mainly on the tactical level. It is of crucial impor-

tance that tactical differences with regard to Iran should not affect the common values that Israel and Europe share and that the cooperation which is based on those values should prevail. Israel has a lot to gain from remaining in the West, in the democratic and liberal camp. There is hope that the majority of Israelis will choose this approach.

Back to the economic perspective, Israel is at a crossroads with regard to new energy forms following the discoveries of natural gas reserves in Israeli territorial waters. In this regard it is important to note that the predictability and reliability of Europe is important. European investment banks could be partners and assist in ensuring economic success for Israel in light of these discoveries.

Other domains in which Israel and Europe could work together include the relationship with China and climate change. With regard to China, Israel and Europe face the same challenges. China is also a competitive force for the EU. As for climate change, this is a global challenge which is considered very important by the European Commission. The European Union has soft power and it is harder to influence the global arena using soft power. Nevertheless, the EU is trying to set global norms with regard to the fight on climate change.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

DR. ALFRED GUSENBAUER

FORMER CHANCELLOR OF AUSTRIA AND FORMER
PRESIDENT OF THE KARL RENNER INSTITUTE

Despite some differences and disputes over the last couple of years, Israel and Europe share the same values. They were friends, are still friends, and should stay friends. Friendship should not end, even in periods of disagreements. In fact, it is a shame that a strategic and political dialogue has not taken place for so long. There is no justification for not having a high-level dialogue between Europe and Israel. Some of the fundamental ideas that formed the cooperation between the parties have not changed over the years, even if many claim otherwise: peace and stability remain core ideas that shape the values of Israel and Europe.

Political and strategic dialogue should focus on tackling one of the most polarizing issues in recent years in Europe, large migration flows from the Middle East to Europe, as well as other issues, such as promoting stable imports of natural gas and oil, and the joint fight against radical Islam. All of the above-mentioned issues were, and are still, important for the European Union and for Israel, and therefore could form the basis for a renewed political dialogue.

So why is this not taking place? What has changed? The answer to this question is priorities. Up until five or six years ago, Europeans thought they would be able to expand their European values to the Middle East and South Mediterranean regions. Yet, in recent years the biggest priority has no longer been applying the shared European values, but preventing migration from the region to Europe. However this has not been deeply thought through. It is important to discuss security challenges in the region. Europe is

still discussing the political implications of this situation, and Israel should be part of this discussion.

Migration flows to Europe are made not only of Syrian refugees. There are also immigrants and refugees coming from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries. Only 25% of the immigrants and refugees to Austria, for example, come from Syria. This is indeed because the entire region is not stable and this instability also affects countries such as Yemen and Lebanon. In Egypt, too, there is a growing call for social and economic reforms and advancement. Without a proper policy and discussion with our friends and allies this could end up resulting in an even larger wave of migration to Europe.

In that respect, it is accepted by many that we are currently living in the age of revolutions. People, all around the world, are always connected to the internet, and that enables them to see how people in other places react to situations of dissatisfaction with their governments' policies. Chile and Lebanon cannot be compared by any measure, yet both just experienced demonstrations at the same time and both are mutually inspiring one another.

This 'age of revolutions' is also good for Israel. In the past, all Arab leaders had to do in order to regain control over their dissatisfied population was to whip up the masses against Israel and the Zionists, and control was achieved. Today, this kind of rhetoric no longer works. Protestors are focusing their criticism against the elite within their own countries. Blaming Israel does not calm the population. On the other hand, the fact that Arab leaders are losing control over their people has a destabilizing effect on the region.

For now, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is able to maintain the situation in Egypt under control, to ensure that Egypt does not become hostile to Israel, and to control migrants' flows to Europe. If this

changes in the next few years, and the revolutionary era in Egypt leads to a different situation in the country, it might develop into a critical one for both Europe and Israel. It is hard to prophesy, yet in the age of revolutions it is not certain that this fragile situation could be maintained forever, and Israel and Europe should work together to give it much higher priority.

It is also hard to address Europe and Israel relations without paying some attention to the political crisis in Israel. In Europe, a new Commission has taken office and we are currently waiting to see what government will be formed in Israel, in the hope that the European Commission and the new Israeli government will be able to renew their political dialogue, which should take place without any prior conditions. Conditioning dialogue on agreement on the Palestinian issue is inefficient and counter-productive. The current situation, in which Europe and Israel prevent any type of strategic and political discussion as long as there is disagreement on the Palestinian issue, is harmful. The equation of the cooperation should be much simpler – if there is agreement on an issue then cooperation should take place without weighing all other issues and agreements. Discussion should take place on issues where there is agreement. Europe and Israel might not be able to agree on all issues at any given moment. Yet, when there is agreement, cooperation is beneficial to both sides.

Naturally, the biggest issue for strategic cooperation concerns security. For example, the situation in Lebanon is very fragile at the moment. Lebanese people are not satisfied with their government. This could be used by Israel as an economic lever that could be applied to Lebanon. In order to achieve this, cooperation with Europe is required. Europe could assist Israel in pushing Lebanon in a more peaceful direction. This is only one example out of many in which both sides could benefit from strategic dialogue.

In Syria too cooperation is much needed. Estimations are that the

reconstruction of Syria would cost somewhere between 250 billion to 1 trillion USD. The Russians are not willing to pay for it, although Syria has been considered their protégé in recent years. China is trying to strengthen its grip on the area and paying for some of that cost could assist them in achieving this goal. Other regional and global forces that could assist in some way are Turkey and the Gulf countries. Yet, when speaking of that amount of money it is hard to see how it could work. Also, the European check book is not big enough to solve the crisis. The dire situation in Syria means that the refugees will not be able to return to their country for an indefinite time. International cooperation is much needed. Europe and Israel could benefit a great deal from discussions on the issue.

It is not only the security issues that can benefit from strategic and high level political dialogue between Europe and Israel. Economic ties and cooperation could also benefit from such a dialogue. One of the issues that require cooperation is China. Israel is in a similar situation as Europe. Both are divided between the influence of the United States and China, the two current world powers. The hostility between them and the unfolding trade war would not only affect them both, but also many other countries and regions. Europe and Israel are no exception. We are watching the reestablishment of the Berlin Wall, only this time it is taking place in the digital arena. The same type of divisions of the Cold War seems to be emerging nowadays in the digital arena – the Western system against the Chinese one. On the one hand, both Europe and Israel want to benefit from Chinese investments. On the other hand, it is important for both to retain their good relationship with the United States. Maintaining this balance is going to become much harder as the trade war between the United States and China develops. Europe, in general, and Germany, in particular, is trying to cooperate with China but to keep the relationship with the United States, and this is going to be a bigger issue in the coming years. One should be concerned about any strategic investment by China.

In choosing a side in the new digital Cold War, countries should choose between the two systems and which side of the new 'Iron Curtain' they would like to be on. If the answer is to be part of the Western world and to choose the American side, then we should not be too dependent on Chinese investment. Europe and Israel should discuss those issues and work together in developing policies in this regard.

To summarize, in trying to find a way out of the current situation between Israel and the European Union, the two sides should not base their approach solely on past interests and on the responsibility of Europe to the Jewish state, but also on current issues and interests that Israel and the European Union share. That approach could be fruitful and beneficial for all of us.

FACING A PEACE DILEMMA? THE FUTURE OF THE REGION THROUGH AN EU-ISRAEL LENS

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Ever since the peace process of the mid 1990s and the signing of the Oslo agreement there has been a linkage between the progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations and Israeli and European Union relations. This policy linkage created by the European Union has a negative effect and, as a result, since 2009 the Israeli-European relationship has been at a halt.

We are at a point in time where we can analyse this decade and determine that this linkage has brought no results in advancing the peace process. But this policy has created a rift between the European Union and Israel. There is currently an ongoing campaign aimed at improving the public opinion about the European Union in Israel. This campaign is most needed among young Israelis, who hold negative opinions about the Union. As a result of the linkage policy, too many Israelis see Europe as a foe. Thus, it is not effective and should be changed.

Nevertheless, from an economic point of view the relationship between Europe and Israel has been greatly successful, a success which has continued over the last decade. This does not make up

for the non-existent strategic relations between the parties. The fact that there is no dialogue in the political sphere means that the economic cooperation is not reaching its full potential. It is unfortunate that Europe is not exhausting the full range of cooperation with Israel, the only democratic country in the region, and a country with an advanced economy that has a competitive advantage in several economic sectors.

Both Israel and the European Union were founded on democratic values, but on a very different perception of nationality, peace, and security. Therefore, both parties hold very different ideas with regard to peace and security. This has become even more extreme since the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu assumed office in the past decade. Unfortunately, although the European Union and Israel are natural partners, the political and strategic dialogue is at a complete halt.

To summarize, de facto Israel has had the most advanced relations with the European Union out of the European Neighborhoods Policy (ENP) countries. From an economic point of view, Israel–EU relations have been flourishing in the last decade. Exports and imports have been increasing, as has Israel's success as part of Horizon 2020. But for over a decade the official political aspect of these relations at their most senior level is stuck, or, to put it more mildly, it is in the doldrums. The political sphere also has some influence on economic relations, which are not progressing. Unlike other ENP countries, no official negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) or Partnership Priorities (PP) are being conducted. The longer the political and legal aspects of the relations are stuck, the harder it is to find a way to get the two sides out of the deadlock and onto a new start. A change is needed. Can the EP elections, followed by new nominations for top EU jobs and a third round of elections expected in Israel, create a new political momentum between the European

Union and Israel? Or will the relations remain politically stuck and mutually frustrating? Judging by the current state of affairs, it is doubtful a change will come about. Israeli diplomats are also sceptical. Still it is worthwhile to examine which challenges and opportunities these elections and nominations present for EU – Israeli relations?



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RE-STARTING THE EUROPEAN UNION

ISRAEL HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

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Background

For almost ten years now, high-level political dialogue between the European Union and Israel has been suspended. There are deep, mutual distrust, conflicting self-perceptions and reciprocal misperception of the 'other'.

The European Union regards itself as a global political and economic actor with interests in the Middle East and its stability. Consequently, it claims an interest and a role in the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It has a dual perception of Israel. There is a deep recognition of the rich yet troubled historical relations between the European continent and the Jewish people. Israel is regarded as an important neighbour with unique and different attributes which merit tailor-made agreements. It is however just one neighbour among others and a problematic neighbour, as the European Union views critically the continuation of Israel's occupation of the Palestinians and its conduct in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israel regards itself as a leading Middle East actor with strong military capabilities that still faces animosity and reluctant and conditional acceptance even by those neighbours. During the years of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israel has rejected external efforts to broker solutions and agreements in the conflict. It reluc-

tantly accepted an active mediation role by the United States but opposed collective or individual European attempts to take up a similar position, depicting Europe as judgmental and biased in its attitude to Israel in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As said, these conflicting perceptions have resulted in a stalled political dialogue between Brussels and Jerusalem on almost all political issues, with Israel finding it more comfortable to deal with individual or small groups of European Union members.

The proposal

The working assumption is that for a variety of reasons, some even unrelated to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a comprehensive solution is unattainable at this time. Since the majority of both the Israelis and Palestinians reject the so-called status quo, the alternative is interim and partial solutions which could lead to a comprehensive one in a structured and agreed process.

The new leadership in the central European Union institutions and the possibility of a new government in Israel with a different political orientation create an opportunity for a new page in their bilateral relations. As stated earlier, the absence of conditions for a comprehensive solutions to all core issues create the possibility of solving important issues with respect to the economic relations, infrastructure, etc. on which the European Union and Israel can agree, thereby restoring mutual trust, and paving the way for an agreed comprehensive solution. Agreement should be promoted based on the following bullets:

1. The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

- A. Assessment of the current situation and the prospects for progress.
- B. Agreement in principle on modalities for European

Union-Palestinian-Israeli cooperation.

2. Regional issues

- A. Syria
- B. Jordan
- C. Egypt
- D. Lebanon

A working assumption could be that Israel and some regional actors (Egypt, Jordan) and the European Union have similar interests in maintaining regional stability, and the United States' apparent withdrawal from the region drives all concerned closer. The European Union can provide a convenient political framework for regional cooperation.

3. Iran

- A. Assessment of the current situation and discussing possible avenues.

The working assumption should be that for several reasons the United States will be preoccupied with its domestic agenda though enforcing sanctions against Iran. The latter will continue to encroach slowly and incrementally on the JCPOA and a possible new government in Israel will continue to ring the warning bells but may be more circumspect in its statements about the use of force.

4. Enhancing bilateral relations

- A. Discussing Israel's deeper and wider participation in the European Union
- B. Programs including European security and defence

Racism and anti-Semitism

Review of the measures taken hitherto and discussing ways to combat more strongly the rise of racism on both sides.



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TOWARDS A MORE SOLID AND MORE MATURE EU – ISRAELI PARTNERSHIP

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Discovering our common past

Diplomatic relations between Israel and the European Union have been in existence for only 60 years. However, the relationship between our two civilizations has gone on far longer.

The Holocaust is a spectre which has for a long time been dominating our collective memory. Indeed, the Nazi regime perpetrated one of the greatest crimes in the history of humanity. Anti-Semitism that developed before the war in various places across Europe was one of the main normative forces driving this crime. Our joint relationship is a strong values-based one, forged through centuries. It is clear that Jewish communities and their descendants (major scientists, intellectual and artists) influenced, if not defined the course of modern European civilization.

When I was serving in the Prodi Commission and we were discussing the European Constitution, the discourse was largely devoted to the pillars of our common culture. Jewish communities were broadly discussed as one of these basic pillars. Respectively, Jewish communities in Europe have very much been influenced by European culture and way of life.

Following the two destructive world wars and the experience of Fascism and Nazism which resulted in a paralyzed continent,

European leaders decided to build a new community based on solid liberal institutions. Their goal was to create the fundamental foundations of a new order, which would act as a major deterrent to future military conflicts in their territories. This new order would be the Western liberal democracy. Israel's founding fathers were significantly influenced by these values when they formed the State of Israel, the major pillar of liberal democracy in the whole Middle East.

The European Union as defender of Jewish values

Even today, anti-Semitism is not eradicated. Especially, in the digital era, in which fake news is a dominant trend, conspiracy theories are flourishing. And hate speech too. The Jewish people have always been an easy target, a docile, or not so docile, enemy. It's true that the European Union never stopped fighting against it, through educational and awareness raising campaigns, legislative initiatives, funding, and political decisions. The European Commission has actually proceeded to significant initiatives to combat anti-Semitism and continues to do so.

Back in 2016, the European Commission initiated a number of initiatives aiming to support member states in their efforts across several policy areas, from promoting inclusive education and common values, to tackling extremist propaganda online and radicalization in prisons. Over 450 million euros have been channelled to supporting transnational projects to support grassroots initiatives and educational programs aimed at eliminating citizens' tolerance towards anti-Semitism

Furthermore, the European Union has been implementing targeted legislation to combat anti-Semitic hate speech. The Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia, initiated in 2008 and transposed into national laws of EU member states, is committed to that cause.

Also, the European Commission in conjunction with leading ICT companies has agreed on a code of conduct to fight illegal hate speech online, including anti-Semitic hate speech. With regard to the code, most of the valid notifications for removal of illegal hate speech are expected to be reviewed by ICT companies in less than 24 hours and the content shall be removed or access to it disabled.

The European Union has not, however, stopped there. A high-level group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance was formed to propel cooperation and coordination among all 28 member states, bringing together international organizations and proactive civil society actors. At the same time, as of 2018, the EU-Israel seminar on 'Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Antisemitism' takes place annually with the purpose of having Israeli and European civil servants, researchers, policymakers, representatives of the private and the non-profit sector, international organizations and civil society agents to discuss the current situation as well as ways forward to address racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism.

Defining the development of our relationship

It is clear that the commonalities in the development of the political systems in the European Union and Israel have resulted in a robust and developing relationship in all sectors.

Since 1976 when our first trade agreement was signed, trade between Israel and the EU has gone from €2 to €36 billion. The European Union is Israel's largest trading partner. The EU's share in total Israel exports reached the historic high of 34%, with the share of Israeli agricultural exports being 50% of that. Also, almost 40% of Israeli imports are from the EU and the percentage of Israeli outgoing investment is the same, making the EU the biggest target.

We also coordinate on security and antiterrorism issues, having proposed the inauguration of negotiations to allow Europol and Israeli services to cooperate on information exchange.

Our educational and innovation synergies are indeed equally important. Israel is examining the possibility of further aligning its qualification system to that of the EU, while half of Israeli universities have thus far participated in Erasmus programs. The year 2018 marked the first year that more Israeli post-graduate students chose to study in the EU than in the US. In the field of research and innovation, our scientific cooperation under the Horizon 2020 program has resulted in awarding grants totalling over €742 to 1062 Israeli projects from the beginning of the program until the end of 2018.

As part of our Union for the Mediterranean, Israel sits with its neighbouring countries at ministerial and governmental levels to promote cooperation and improve cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region through concrete projects.

As recently expressed by Israel's Energy Minister Steinitz, Europe is the natural market for eastern Mediterranean gas. And the EU and Israel understand that our challenges are increasingly common, whether on climate change, contributing to economic growth and development in Africa, or managing global migration flows.

Particularly as regards energy cooperation, apart from the central EU level, sustainable and ever-growing bilateral partnerships are taking place, with Greece's deepening strategic relationship with Israel being one of the most indicative examples. It is worth mentioning here the importance of Israel in initiatives such as East Med and Eurasia Interconnector, as well as, the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EGMF).

Further to that, let's not forget that the advancing cooperation with

Israel both in bilateral and trilateral contexts (Cyprus being the third part of the partnership) and Egypt is not a provisional but a strategic choice. This trilateral scheme, which is being broadened in sectors such as energy, defence, tourism, research and development, environmental security, counterterrorism and beyond is a necessary partnership for regional security and stability.

Israel is a liberal pillar in a region plagued by wars and autocratic regimes. The regional state of play is geopolitically volatile with alliances never being based on values and long-term joint interests. These, along with EU's foreign policy institutional deficits, which block common action, are not the most favourable conditions to uphold a vibrant relationship. However, given the above, we can clearly say that it is obvious that our worlds are interconnected and interdependent.

Present trends undermining our common values (and cooperation) - EU

Over the past few years, liberal democracy and the foundation which it stands upon have been undermined by internal and external challenges.

Even at the very core of today's liberal world, which is the European Union, populist movements have been on the rise while illiberal regimes seem to consolidate their presence.

Europe has been experiencing all kinds and forms of the populist phenomenon, be it radical left-wing populism, or nationalistic populism, as is the case in Italy.

Where populism thrives, the rule of law is undermined. Where populism finds its way into the government, an attempt starts to capture and own the state itself. This is the case in Eastern Europe, Poland and Hungary.

At the global level, it is probably the first time since World War II that we have witnessed elected authorities replacing organized state institutions and separation of powers with one-man executives.

The last European Parliament elections confirmed the trends of increased fragmentation, growing support for populist parties, the relative decline of the traditional center-right and center-left blocs and the increased influence of the far-right.

The traditionally anti-Semitic extreme right remains represented in Brussels despite the fact that the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) lost its one seat, and the Greek Golden Dawn (XA) lost a great deal of its support, neo-Nazi People's Party Our Slovakia (L'SNS) came third in its country with 12.1% (which meant an increase by 10.3%). Also, the National Popular Front (ELAM) in Cyprus, a party ideologically and politically close to the Greek Golden Dawn, won 8.3% - its percentage increased by 5.3% - making it the fifth largest party on the island.

These trends, while making us optimistic about the decline of a totally disruptive phenomenon like the rise of populism, still raise certain questions about the levels of anti-Semitism in Europe.

Present trends undermining our common values (and cooperation) - ISRAEL

However, there are certain alarming elements in Israeli politics too.

Benjamin Netanyahu has begun forming new alliances with central and eastern European countries like Poland and Hungary whose leaders share his robust nationalism and suspicion of Brussels.

Also, Israeli officials use hostile and degrading rhetoric when refer-

ring to the EU. For example, Benjamin Netanyahu has described the EU as ‘hostile and hypocritical’.

Among some Israeli officials there is an impression that humanitarian aid offered by the EU to Palestine is being channelled to militaristic operations. This is nothing new. I was told the same thing when I visited Jerusalem as a Commissioner back in 2002. The EU has a certain humanitarian aid strategy and its intentions have nothing to do with illegal arms financing but only with up-grading the educational and societal level of people living in conflict-affected areas. And this policy applies worldwide, not only in Palestine.

All these elements make us think that the relationship is starting to become a bit cloudy. However, I will not attempt to make projections about our shared future. Predicting the future as regards its form and content is neither a politician’s nor an analyst’s job. Nevertheless, we should highlight that it is vital for both sides to sustain a robust and multi-dimensional relationship, because relationships based on common values are relationships that last.

Europe and Israel should focus on cultivating what binds us, not what divides us. Our future relationship should be built upon a solid cooperation framework on both international and regional affairs in sectors such as energy, smart agriculture, national security, research and higher education.

Renowned Israeli writer Amos Oz has written that his parents were once labelled cosmopolitans, they were labelled ruthless intellectuals, and they were labelled parasites. And they came to Jerusalem hoping to create a tiny little Europe in the heart of the Middle East – a European enclave, which they could not, of course, because there was no Europe, because their idea of Europe was no more than an idea, not a reality. The Europe of their love, the Europe they loved, did not exist, except in their own imagination.



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Ivan Krastev very tellingly says that United Europe is an idea in search of reality. However, this idea is coming closer and closer to realization. And the course of this realization is the best time for an Israeli-Europe partnership to become more solid and more mature.

WORLDS APART? THE FUTURE OF EURO-ISRAELI SHARED VALUES

AMB. SUSANNE WASUM-RAINER

GERMAN AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL

In the European Union and Israel, we are indeed living in ‘worlds apart’ when it comes to security and defence. We have to be aware of this all the time, in order to make mutual understanding possible.

The European Union is a complex supranational union of 27 democratic states that, as a soft power, has been juxtaposed to NATO, the military alliance whose members are thoroughly convinced multilateralists. In contrast, Israel is a sovereign, independent democratic and Jewish state, a military superpower, that is, for good reasons, convinced that it can only rely on itself to ensure its constantly necessary self-defence.

My three pillars are the following:

Israel and the EU are neighbours and friends. The history of how each of our respective entities came into existence started long before World War II. But the foundation of both of them took place immediately after World War II and was profoundly shaped by it. Both of our entities are based on the same values.

The ties based on shared values between Israel and the European Union are a strategic asset and very beneficial for both partners. The importance of these ties should encourage us to invest more attention in preserving them.

Drawing a distinction between values that can be neglected on

the one hand and ‘state-interests’ on the other is not possible, at least it is not in the interest of security. Values and the respect for them have an impact on security. Therefore, the propagation of values is a political interest of Germany and the European Union.

Values

I would like to start by reminding us what precisely we mean when we speak about values that we share. When the EU was established in 1957 by six countries, including Germany, it was founded based on the immediate experience of the atrocities of World War II, the Shoah, and the knowledge of the centuries of bloodshed and wars that had defined the European history.

That is why the EU was never an economic or technical union only. The EU has always been based on values shared and guaranteed by all its member states and by the European institutions. These values include, among others, the respect for the dignity of every human being, the guarantee of human rights, particularly freedom of religion, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, the principle of equality of all citizens and the guarantee of equal opportunities for all.

The common values include that our political systems are defined as free parliamentary democracies based on the freedom of political parties that respect this system, the rule of law, the separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and the protection of minorities.

I strongly object to the call for ‘dropping the useless negative linkage politics’. The peace process with the Palestinians is not just something technical that Europeans use to block a proper dialogue with Israel. The Palestinian issue is also about values. And the call for simply dropping it would be equivalent to dropping our common values. The European Union based on those values is

not only the most important peace project of modern times. It is an extraordinary success story.

No other continent has developed such forms of cooperation: a joint currency, no internal borders, and free movement of workers, services, capital, and goods. The European Union managed to integrate most of the former Central and Eastern Europe into a stable system of democratic government and prosperity. Together we are the biggest economic bloc in the world.

The European Union is the most important trading partner of China and the United States. The European Union is by far the biggest donor of humanitarian aid worldwide. The European Union is the biggest investor in climate protection and conflict prevention, a huge investor in science education and universities and a huge investor in scientific exchange.

Israel and the EU

We pay here tribute to 60 years of close relations between Israel and the European Union. Israel was one of the first countries to establish relations with the European Union (then the European Economic Community).

The depth of historic, political, economic, social and cultural connections between Israel and the European Union is vast and unfortunately often overlooked or neglected in the discourse. Our common future is also sometimes disregarded, even as Israel and the EU continue moving toward each other.

I would like to mention only a few areas of cooperation: Europe is Israel’s largest trading partner. Half of Israeli higher education institutions have participated in Erasmus programs, while in 2018, for the first time, more Israeli postgraduate students chose to study in the European Union than in the United States. The European

Union has been fundamental in supporting the expansion of Israel's research and innovation sector for over 20 years. Israel benefited greatly from the Horizon 2020 program, the European Union research and innovation program. Countless Israelis also hold European passports.

We are working closely together with a view to tackling global challenges such as climate change, the digital transformation, cyber security, migration and border management that cannot be faced by any of us on our own.

Germany would like to see a new European budget that focuses exactly on these topics. We need a modern and future-proof budget. We need to invest in migration, defence, security and the need to enhance competitiveness. We strongly support the European Union research program based on excellence. 100 billion euro is earmarked only for research and innovation in the new Horizon Europe program.

Challenges

The history of the European Union has been marked by deep challenges and crises. In the past we were strong enough to overcome those periods of difficulties. They resulted regularly in leaps forward to ever closer integration. The difficulties the European Union is facing at present are big. There are external pressure and internal pressure. Just to name a few of them:

China has become an economic superpower that is using its influence to divide the EU.

Russia is trying to use military force to create political facts, whether in Syria or Ukraine.

President Trump's administration is turning its back on internation-

al agreements and the Western allies.

It is not the strength of law that is gaining ground, but the law of the strong.

The EU is also facing an unprecedented internal crisis:

The all but endless Brexit negotiations are creating a clear 'lose-lose' situation for the UK and all of us.

The path of nationalists and populists in Germany and many other European countries, who are motivated by a mixture of megalomania, degradation of values, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, contempt for democracy and the readiness for self-destruction.

Looking at Israel and in particular during the present year of election campaigning we notice that this country is also not totally immune to such flawed trends of society.

To respond to such trends, Germany strongly advocates for a more united Europe and multilateral engagement with our partners. We need a strong and sovereign Europe, including qualified majority voting for EU foreign policy decisions, and a more coordinated appearance in multilateral settings.

Future

When speaking about the "future of Euro-Israeli shared values" this is, above all, speaking about clear and responsible policy decisions with a view to shaping our common future!

The achievements of the past and the present in Europe and between the EU and Israel cannot simply be taken for granted. Nothing can be taken for granted. And nothing is irreversible. The contrary is true. We have to work hard not to turn Europe over to

those who want to divide and propagate fear, those who ultimately want to destroy Europe.

The goal must be to exert influence together on a global level. That is why we need more Europe and not less. A 'united Europe' is the only answer if we want to preserve European values such as freedom, tolerance, justice, and social cohesion in this world. Close ties between Israel and the European Union are a strategic asset and very beneficial for both partners. So we have to work for it.

We need to rebuild trust and we need to better understand each other. The EU is a unique multinational body and is sometimes not so easy to understand. I encourage you to increase Israel's understanding and knowledge of the EU, what it stands for, and what it means to people.

Strengthening people-to-people contacts and public diplomacy are central tasks for embassies, including the German one. As Germany will assume the EU Presidency in the second half of 2020, we would like to contribute to a better understanding of each other. I am looking forward to collecting ideas about how we can improve the knowledge of Europe in Israel. And, of course, this is not a one-way road. We can bring more Europeans to Israel so that they get a better understanding of Israel and the region. This year's election of the European Parliament has shown a younger, more pro-European and engaged group voting in high numbers. A majority of anti-EU parliamentarians has been avoided. The new President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, is a committed European. The European Parliament is now more diverse and more dependent on pragmatic approaches and finding compromises.

There is a good opportunity with the new EU Commission and, hopefully, an Israeli government in place to create fresh momentum.



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WORLDS APART? THE FUTURE OF EURO-ISRAELI SHARED VALUES

MK MERAV MICHAELI

MEMBER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF ISRAEL, LABOUR PARTY

There is a growing global sentiment that the governments do not represent the people. There is a growing sense of helplessness among many people. In Israel this process leads to the weakening of the parliament. In the current situation there is no separation between the parliament and the government. The whole purpose of the parliament is to work in order to promote government decisions. This is a very bad situation. The actual negotiations about values are taking place within the coalition, and not between the coalition and the opposition. The consequence is that the government is being squeezed by its most extreme members. The extremists have a lot of power, and currently they are succeeding in dragging the majority in their direction.

As it has been mentioned in earlier contributions, the major political issue that affects Israeli-European relations is still the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet, there is no real discussion within Israeli society about it. Israel has a very different perspective with regard to the Palestinians than the Europeans. Israelis, unlike Europeans, consider the conflict with the Palestinians to be an existential threat. This reflects a very different consciousness in Israel compared to that of Europe. For Israelis, there is an ongoing war with the Palestinians even if it is not active at the moment. This different mind-set justifies all other differences and explains the gap in policies between Israel and Europe. Populist politicians

in Israel abuse this state of mind held by many Israelis and try to gain power through intimidating Israelis with exaggerations about threats and turning them into existential threats. When the European Union does not align itself with the policy of Israeli right-wing politicians with regard to the Palestinian issue, those politicians transform Europe into an enemy.

There is a dual reality – Israel can live with some actions that Europe takes with regard to the West Bank, but others, such as marking products produced in the West Bank are more problematic. When Europe implements such policies, we witness populist politicians using this in order to drive a wedge between the European Union and Israel. Therefore, this harms the common shared values of Israel and Europe. Prime Minister Netanyahu does this not only inside Israel but also exerts his influence to use the same deception inside Europe to try to split the European Union. Netanyahu sees this as a strategic decision that helps him to continue the current situation with the Palestinians.

The rise in anti-Semitism is also a topic of debate inside Israel. The Israeli government turns a blind eye to anti-Semitic and racist world leaders in exchange for their support for its West Bank policies. Progressive politicians in Israel are concerned about this trend and do not find common language with those forces. Some even go further and claim that Israel has sold out the memory of the Holocaust to the Polish government in exchange for its support on the Palestinian issue.

This is just another example of how the standstill in the strategic political relationship between Israel and Europe goes back to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is the most important issue which leads to the deterioration in the relationship. Even the dynamics around the Iranian issue is affected by Israel's position on the Palestinian conflict. The ability of Israel and Europe to work

together on the Iranian issue could have been implemented much more fully if the Palestinian issue had not had control over political cooperation.

On a more optimistic note, it is important to mention that the majority of Israelis support progressive issues – civil marriage, public transport on weekends, a more progressive economy, etc. There is even a majority of Israelis that support the two-state solution (a small majority, but a majority nonetheless). There is a lot of potential to work with. Optimism is a political choice, and the core values that represented the longstanding cooperation between Israel and Europe are still present.

ACTIVITY REPORT

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2019 was a year of significant elections, both in Israel and in Europe. The European Parliament (EP) elections were held on 23-26 May 2019, while Israeli general elections were held twice, on 9 April 2019, and on 17 September 2019. The third round of elections is expected to be held in March 2020.

The EP elections were held in a time of populist and Eurosceptic trends across Europe. The Brexit vote marked the beginning of the trend, or at least its first major electoral effect, but since then many other elections throughout the continent resulted in similar outcomes. Due to this, many feared that Eurosceptic parties would gain wide support in the EP elections, giving these parties the ability to shape the European Union from within. Therefore, the elections were seen as the most decisive elections in the Union yet.

Eventually, the results did not meet the fears of pro-European parties. In fact Eurosceptic parties failed to gain as much support as opinion polls suggested, increasing their support by only 3.4% (from 20% to 23.4%), while pro-European Union parties maintained their overall vote share, and lost only 3 seats (518 MEPs compared to 521). With that said, the fragmentation within the EP has grown considerably, with both the EPP Group and the S&D Group decreasing in size and losing their majority.

In Israel, following the formation of the Blue and White party, headed by former Chief of Staff of the Israel Defence Forces, Benjamin Gantz, for the first time since 2009, Netanyahu's victory sequence came to an end. Nonetheless, the outcomes of two election cycles failed to produce a government in Israel, which is now headed to a third election.

On 17 September, following the second election cycle both right- and center-left-wing blocs did not have a majority to form a government. For the first time since 2009, the center-left parties gained more seats than the right, 57 to 55, while Liberman's party, which announced it would only be a part of a unity government, received 8 seats. Yet, as mentioned, the lack of flexibility in both blocs led to a failure in the negotiations and to a third election cycle.

If the results of the third election cycle do not give rise to real change, three main outcomes are possible:

A unity government led in rotation by Netanyahu and Gantz. Both sides of the negotiations are currently unable to agree on such a government, mainly due to Netanyahu's determination to include all right-wing parties in it, and Blue and White's desire to prevent Netanyahu from being Prime Minister while he is facing criminal charges in court.

A unity government between Blue and White and Likud, after a rival replaces Netanyahu as party chair. At present, this does not seem likely.

A fourth election cycle, to be held in the second half of 2020.

Regarding Israeli-Europe relations, as long as Netanyahu remains in power the Israeli position is not likely to change. With that said, a shift in his coalition might result in a moderate change in policy.

For Netanyahu, the political and strategic dialogue with the EU and the EP is not of great interest, but he might support a different policy if that were needed in order to create a unity government that would allow him to continue as Prime Minister. In any case, he views the economic and technological ties with Europe as very important. At this time, it is noticeable that while economic trade and technological cooperation are prospering, the strategic and political dialogue between Europe and Israel is stagnating. Europeans are putting pressure on promoting the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and this is something that Netanyahu is just not willing to do. Therefore, Netanyahu connects to leaders that want to weaken the European Union like Viktor Orbán, Mateusz Morawiecki and Miloš Zeman. This situation is not expected to change without a drastic change in Israeli leadership, or at least in the composition of the coalition.

For many MENA countries the past decade has marked a significant shift. What started as the 'Arab Spring' in 2010, quickly transformed into a set of revolutions and civil wars that shape the region to this day. The global order which ruled the Middle East 10 years ago has become irrelevant. Syria has been torn by a civil war for nearly eight years; Lebanon has been doing its best to prevent the Syrian war from penetrating into its territory following violence between Sunnis and Shiites. In addition, the Saudi Arabian involvement in and control of local politics in the country increased dramatically; in Egypt two revolutions took place and now, following a military coup, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi is serving as the country's president.

In Saudi Arabia, King Salman inherited the throne in 2015. Together with his son, crown prince Mohammad, he expanded his involvement in regional affairs – the country is taking a much more active role in the Yemeni civil war, their opposition to Qatar increased as they led an international blockade on the country, and they forced the resignation of the Lebanese prime minister. Most recently,

crown prince Mohammad's name has been linked to other global controversies - the assassination of Jamal Khashoggi in Saudi Arabia's embassy in Istanbul, as well as possible involvement in the U.S presidential elections in 2016. In Morocco and Jordan, following the 'Arab Spring', king Mohammad VI and king Abdullah II respectively were forced to transfer extensive powers to their parliaments.

In the past decade the tensions between the Sunni and the Shia have escalated. The Islamic State (IS), an extremist Sunni terror group, enlarged their power and by the end of 2015 reached a peak of influence through their control over large territories in Iraq and Syria, while managing to execute massive terror attacks in Paris, London, New York City, Brussels, Berlin, Manchester, Barcelona, Orlando, Saint Petersburg, Istanbul, and many other places. Nowadays, following a world coalition to combat this terror group, it has lost most of its power and influence. Recently the United States declared its intention to withdraw all forces from Syria, basically leaving control of the area to Russia and Iran. It seems that in recent years the main battle between extreme Sunni groups – such as IS – and Shia such as Iran – is taking place on Iraqi and Syrian soil.

While events take place at a dizzying pace in the region, the European involvement and influence are very limited. Its ability to influence and shape events in the MENA area eroded significantly in recent years. In order to be more involved in the area and in order to shape events such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Syrian civil war, the Iranian and Russian fortification in the region, the Iranian nuclear deal, the battle against IS and other fundamentalist groups, and the improvement of human rights, liberalization and democratization in the region, Europe has to re-analyze its position and actions in all relevant aspects. The situation in the MENA region has a vast influence on internal European politics, decreasing a sense of personal security for many citizens and

copied with a massive wave of refugees that are banging on European doors. This is what makes it essential for Europe to realign on the issue. The two consequences of events in the Middle East are being used by right-wing populist groups.

There is a growing need to re-analyse how Europe sees itself as a global player in the region, to assess the challenges and the opportunities in the MENA area, and for Europe to use its power to influence the region for the better.

During the last decade, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has stalled. Both Israelis and Palestinians are very sceptical about the chances of reviving this process and beginning another round of negotiations. Nonetheless, a few factors might change the balance and create new opportunities for that process.

First and foremost, the Trump administration announced its long-awaited peace plan. While many do not believe that this plan has an actual chance, as the Palestinians have lost their faith in the Americans following their decision to move the American Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, it is expected to create a lot of pressure on both sides. In Israel this became a major political issue in the September 2019 and March 2020 elections. Right-wing parties which feared the possibility of Netanyahu being replaced warned of the danger of a Palestinian state. In the meanwhile, the left-wing parties in Israel oppose annexation of any part of the West Bank..

Another country that is becoming more involved in regional issues and that could play a larger role in the Israeli-Palestinians is Russia. The Russians are already heavily involved in the Syrian conflict and friction with Israeli forces is becoming more common. It would not be surprising if the Russians try to become more involved in other regional issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially at a time when the objectivity of the US as a negotiator is

being questioned. Russia might want to use this as a lever to press Israel on the Syrian conflict.

This calls into question the role of the EU in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Both the United States and Russia are becoming more involved, while the European involvement remains minimal. The possible political changes in Israel might be a good opportunity to re-visit the European stance in respect to the issue and the EU might be able to become a more involved player.

In the context of the issues presented above, an international conference on the subject of '60 Years of Diplomatic Relations between Israel and the EU: Past, Present and Future' was held jointly, for the fifth consecutive year, by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), The Macro Center for Political Economics, and the Israel Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), in cooperation with the Foundation Jean Jaurès and the Karl Renner Institut, in order to discuss the cooperation between the European Union and Israel, how it evolved during the past 60 years, and the prospects for the future.

Approximately 25 distinguished politicians, public officials and other decision makers, diplomats, academic scholars, journalists and high-ranking experts from leading think tanks participated in the seminar and contributed to a series of very interesting sessions.

The first session of the conference was named 'Facing a Peace Dilemma? The Future of the Region through an EU-Israel Lens'. The keynote speaker of this session was Alfred Gusenbauer, former Chancellor of Austria. Panelists included, Amb. Dr. Oded Eran, former ambassador of Israel to the EU and Jordan, and senior research fellow at the INSS; and Dr. Maya Sion-Tzidkiyahu, Co-President of the Israeli Association for the Study of European Integration (IASI).

This session dealt with the decline in importance of the Palestinian issue in the regional agenda, as well as the fact that shifts of the geopolitical landscape amongst the big players in the Middle East, pose additional challenges to the relations between the EU and Israel. Other topics included the dilemmas faced by both Israel and Europe in this new era, the evolving of the triangular relationship between the EU, Israel and the Arabs, and the warming relationship between Israel, Greece and Cyprus.

The second session was named 'Worlds Apart? The Future of Euro-Israeli Shared Values'. The keynote speaker was H.E. Ms. Anna Diamantopoulou, president of DIKTIO (Network for Reform in Greece and Europe), a Former European Commissioner, and Former Greek Minister. The panelists in the session included Dr. László Andor, Secretary General of FEPS, Amb. Susanne Wasum-Rainer, German ambassador to Israel, and MK Merav Michaeli, member of the Parliament of Israel, from the Labour party.

The discussion in the session focused on the common set of fundamental values underpinning 60 years of diplomatic relations between the EU and Israel - democracy, freedom, the rule of law, social justice, respect for minority rights, and so on. It was agreed that those values are under increasing strain. Speakers addressed different possible outcomes of this year's European Parliament elections and elections in Israel and its effect on the future relations of Israel and Europe as well as the impact of the results of these elections on the future of our shared values, and the steps required to stop the erosion of their importance. Another important aspect that was under discussion was the rising anti-Semitism in Europe.

The third and last session was named 'Hitting the Ceiling? The Future of Economic Relations between Israel and Europe'. The Keynote speaker in that session was Peter Niedermüller, Former Member of the European Parliament, Hungary.

PARTICIPANTS



Mr. Grisha Alroi is the Chief Executive Director of the German-Israeli Chamber of Industry and Commerce. He is an experienced Chief Executive Officer with a demonstrated history of working in the international trade and development industry. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology & Anthropology, and Psychology from Tel Aviv University.



Dr. László Andor is the Secretary General of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS). He is a Hungarian economist and former EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (2010-2014). Since stepping down from the Commission, he has been head of the department of economic policy at Corvinus University (Budapest), Senior Fellow at Hertie School of Governance (Berlin) and a visiting professor at ULB (Brussels) as well as Sciences Po (Paris). He also became a member of various think tanks (EPC, RAND Europe, Friends of Europe) in an advisory capacity.



Mr. Andrea Carignani di Novoli is the Minister Counsellor – Head of Research and Innovation Section at the EU Delegation to Israel. He formerly was the head of unit for international cooperation with the European Neighbourhood, Africa and the Gulf as well as head of unit for ITER project and border approach at the European Commission. He holds a Master of Laws – LLM specializing in European and competition law.



Mr. Dan Catarivas is the Director General of Foreign Trade and International Relations at the Manufacturers' Association of Israel and is in charge of International Relations at the Federation of Israeli Economic Organizations (FIEO). He is also the Israeli coordinator of the India-Israel CEO Forum – established during the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Israel in July 2017. The Forum is composed of 30 top CEOs from Israel and India and held its second meeting during the visit of Prime Minister Netanyahu to India in January 2018.



Mr. Benoit Chapas is the Deputy Head of the European Union delegation to Israel. He is a French diplomat serving in the European External Action Service who served as the Political Assistant of the Managing Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Team leader for the Arabian Peninsula and Desk Officer South Africa. He also served as the French commercial counsellor to Yemen



H.E. Ms. Anna Diamantopoulou is a Greek politician, currently President of the Athens-based think tank “DIKTIO” Network for Reform in Greece and Europe. She served as Minister of Education as well as Minister for Development, Competitiveness and Shipping. She also served as European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities in the Prodi Commission, a post she held between 1999–2004. She regularly attends international policy fora, including the Bilderberg Group.



Dr. Oded Eran is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). He served as director of INSS from 2008 to 2011, following a long career in Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He served as the Secretary General of the Israel Branch of the World Jewish Congress, as Israel’s ambassador to the EU (covering NATO as well, 2002-2007), Israel’s ambassador to Jordan (1997-2000), and head of Israel’s negotiation team with the Palestinians (1999-2000). He is an advisor to the Knesset Subcommittee on Foreign Affairs. He holds a PhD from the London School of Economics.



Amb. Dr. Emanuele Giaufret has been Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Israel since September 2017. In 2007 he was appointed Head of Section of the EU Delegation to the UN in New York. From 2011 he was Assistant to the Managing Director for North Africa and the Middle East. In 2013 he was appointed Head of Division for Democracy and Electoral Observation for the European External Action Service. He has a PhD in History of International Relations from the University of Florence (Italy) and a Master’s degree in European Affairs from the College of Europe (Bruges, Belgium).



Dr. Alfred Gusenbauer is the President of the Karl Renner Institute. He was Austria's 11th Federal Chancellor, serving between 2007 and 2008 and the leader of the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) from 2000 to 2008. Since then he has pursued a career as a consultant and lecturer, and as a member of supervisory boards. He studied political science, philosophy and law at the University of Vienna, where he obtained a PhD in political science. He holds an honorary doctorate from the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (Israel) and is an Honorary Senator of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts.



Mag. Maria Maltschnig is the Managing Director of the Karl Renner Institute. The Karl Renner Institute is the political academy of the Austrian Social Democratic movement. She formerly served as the Cabinet Chief of the Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern, and held different positions within the Austrian Federal Ministry of Finance.



MK Merav Michaeli has been a member of Knesset from the Labour Party since 2013. She served as the chair of the Zionist Camp political party following the union between the Labour Party and Hatnu'a Party, between 2015 and 2019, as well as the opposition coordinator. She formerly taught a course in gender studies and the media in several universities and focuses her work on feminist activism.



Peter Niedermüller is a Hungarian politician who served as a Member of the European Parliament, representing Hungary for the Democratic Coalition. Niedermüller also served as the Treasurer of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. He used to serve at the European Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, the European Delegation for relations with Israel, and the Special Committee on Terrorism



Dr. Roby Nathanson is the Director General of The Macro Center for Political Economics. He served as Director of the Histadrut's (Labour Federation) Institute for Economic and Social Research and has been active in preparing programmes aimed at socio-economic structural reform. He has taken part in negotiations on the future of the Israeli economy within the framework of strategic planning teams and think tanks. He holds an MA and a PhD in Economics, specialising in international trade and development, from the University of Köln (Germany).



Dr. Tal Sadeh is senior lecturer at the Department of Political Science in Tel Aviv University and ex-Co-President of the Israeli Association for the Study of European Integration (IASI). He holds a PhD in International Relations and an MA degree, cum laude, in Economics, both from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research and teaching interests include international political economy, and the political economy of the EU, in particular the single currency and EU-Israeli relations, as well as international institutions and governance structures.



Dr. Maya Sion-Tzidkiyahu is an adjunct lecturer at the European Forum, the Hebrew University and at the European Studies Program, Tel Aviv University. Co-President of the Israeli Association for the Study of European Integration, she won the European Commission Jean Monnet Module competitive grant. Formerly a Junior Research Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences (Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen), Vienna, she specializes in European integration, comparative politics of European countries, new institutionalism, European integration theories, and the European Union – Israel relationship.



Amb. Dr. Susanne Wasum-Rainer has been the German Ambassador to Israel since September 2018. She was German Ambassador to the Italian Republic from 2015 to 2018 and German Ambassador to France from 2012 to 2015. Starting from 2002 she held various senior positions at the Legal Department of the German Federal Foreign Office in Berlin, such as Deputy Director General for Legal Affairs, Director General for Legal Affairs, as well as Legal Advisor of the German Government.



Yanai Weiss is the Research Director of The Macro Center for Political Economics. Yanai is actively involved in research related to improving the socio-economic status of different sectors in Israeli society. Yanai holds a B.A degree with honours in the Interdisciplinary Excellency PPE program (Philosophy, Political Science, Economics and Law) from Tel Aviv University and is currently a graduate student in economics in the joint research program of Tel Aviv University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.



General (ret.) Amos Yadlin has been the Executive Director of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) since 2011. Following a term as head of Military Intelligence, he retired in 2010 from the IDF after more than forty years of service. Among his previous positions, he served as deputy commander of the Israel Air Force, Israel's military attaché in Washington, and commander of the IDF Military Colleges and the National Defence College. He has written on national security, force development, intelligence, civil-military relations, and the military ethics of fighting terror.

The International conference on the Subject of 60 years of diplomatic relationship between Israel and Europe: Past Present and Future, which took place on November 2020 in Tel-Aviv, Israel, was jointly organized for the fifth consecutive year, by the Foundation for European Progressive studies, the Institute for National Security Studies and the Macro Center for Political Economics, in collaboration with the Jean-Jaurès Foundation and the Karl Renner Institute.

During the conference we discussed, together with distinguished decision makers and experts from Israel and the European Union, different topics and policies that impact the relationship between Israel and Europe – the economic ties, the geo-political situation in the Middle-East, the shared values, and the hope for better strategic cooperation between the two in the near future.

This booklet contains the speeches delivered by several key participants, as well as enriching concepts and important conclusions which arose from the conference.

- This book is edited by FEPS and the Macro Center for Political Economics with the financial support of the European Parliament.
- ISBN number 978-965-7523-47-6