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The international conference on the subject of **EU-Israeli Relations and the Changing Dynamics of the Middle East**, which took place on November 6th, 2016 in Tel Aviv, Israel, was jointly organised by the Institute for National Security Studies, the Macro Center for Political Economics and the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, in collaboration with the Jean-Jaurès Foundation and the Karl Renner Institute.

We had the privilege of debating with distinguished decision makers and experts regarding the development of the regional dynamics of a changing Middle East and its impact on the prospects of EU-Israeli relations.

This book 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: 978-2-930769-03-5



THE CENTER FOR POLITICAL ECONOMICS



EU-Israeli Relations in Light of the New Middle East

EU-ISRAEL RELATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE NEW MIDDLE EAST

Insights from the Conference on "EU-Israeli Relations and the Changing Dynamics of the Middle East"

December 2016

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THE CENTER FOR POLITICAL ECONOMICS



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The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Macro Center for Political Economics or of FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies.

Tel Aviv, 2017

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Published by:

FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies
Rue Montoyer 40 - 1000 Brussels, Belgium

The Macro Center for Political Economics
Pinsker 21 Tel Aviv, Israel

Edited by: Dr. Roby Nathanson, Itamar Gazala, and Vassilis Ntousas

Language Editing: Sandra Fine

Cover design: Einat Biber and Elad Avraham, WiseBear –
www.wisebear.co.il

Page layout and printing: C-Copy – www.c-copy.co.il

ISBN: 978-2-930769-03-5

This book is produced with the financial support of the European Parliament.

Table of Contents

Foreword.....8

Dr. Ernst Stetter

Secretary General, Foundation for European Progressive Studies

Stocktaking EU Israeli Relations and the Changing Dynamics of the Middle East.....10

Dr. Roby Nathanson

General Director, the Macro Center for Political Economics

Keynote Speech.....20

Massimo D'Alema

President, Foundation for European Progressive Studies

Opening Remarks.....30

Dr. Ernst Stetter

Secretary General, Foundation for European Progressive Studies

Europe and Israel35

Dr. Oded Eran

Senior Research Fellow, the Institute for National Security Studies

The Role of the EU in Creating Political, Energy and Security Frameworks.....39

Avi Gabbay

Former Israeli Minister of Environmental Protection

Building and Managing Peace in Times of Conflict.....	43
Prof. Bruno Liebhaberg Vice-President and Chair of the Scientific Council, Foundation for European Progressive Studies	
Activity Report.....	49
Itamar Gazala Research Director, the Macro Center for Political Economics	
Contributors.....	77

Foreword

Dr. Ernst Stetter

Secretary General, Foundation for European Progressive Studies

Over the past few years, as a tumultuous region traditionally gripped by deep-seated tensions and conflicts, the geopolitical situation in the Middle East has undergone a number of profound changes. Primarily precipitated by (but not exclusively due to) developments such as the ongoing civil war in Syria, what has been long considered a relatively stable status quo of regional cooperation and enmity, is now profoundly altered.

The Iran nuclear deal, the shifting foreign and security policy alignments of Israel, the continuation of a lack of resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue and the relative derailment of the Middle East Peace Process, the new realities following the Arab spring and the establishment of new regimes, the Syrian drama and the exponentially increased migration flows, the rise of Daesh, the more active involvement of Russia and the relative waning of US involvement in the region, the intensifying Sunni-Shia confrontational politics, the shifting politics in Lebanon, and the bumpy EU-Israel relationship, constitute some of the issues that have recently and severely marked the Middle Eastern geopolitical landscape.

As is expected, the current dynamics of this changing landscape are of great significance for what the situation in

the Middle East will be in the decades to come, since old and new actors that are now involved in the region are constantly reassessing their strategic interests, new alliances (either in strategic or purely tactical terms) are being created while old alliances are being called into question by the facts on the ground.

There is a great added value in carrying on the established meaningful relationship between the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), the Macro Center for Political Economics, the Jean-Jaurès Foundation and the Karl Renner Institute and in generating a successful cooperation with the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), for continuing to help in providing an intellectual bridge between the EU and Israel.

Within this framework, we organised a joint project in 2016 that **examined the development of the regional dynamics of a changing Middle East, primarily through an Israel-centred foreign and security policy lens but also taking into consideration the various regional perspectives.** This project primarily evolved around the organisation of a joint event in Israel that brought together policy makers and policy experts from Israel, the EU and the wider Middle East region who analysed and assessed the current and future dynamics of the region's geopolitics. The results of the conference are summarised in this publication which is being disseminated to relevant decision makers and other stakeholders in Israel and the EU.

Stocktaking EU-Israeli relations and the Changing Dynamics of the Middle East

Dr. Roby Nathanson

General Director, the Macro Center for Political Economics

Official ties between Israel and the EU started back in 1957, a short time after the Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community (EEC), and have been strengthened since. Today, the EU is one of Israel's two major trade partners.¹ The European Commission's treaty database lists 52 agreements with Israeli and EU participation.

The intensity of the cooperation between Israel and the EU has increased over the years, facilitated by many treaties; however, three distinct phases can be observed in EU-Israeli relations.

The *first phase* started with the establishment of the European Communities in 1957. Initially, there were no bilateral agreements and the relationship was dominated by loose multinational collaborations.

The *second phase* began in 1970 with the first bilateral agreement, which enumerated aspects of trade liberalisation. In 1975, a new and more comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement between the parties enhanced economic relations. This phase was further affected by the

Barcelona Convention of 1976 commencing cooperation for combating pollution of the Mediterranean Sea.

The *third phase* began, again in Barcelona, with the Barcelona Process, initiated in 1995. This process centred on a vision of creating a free trade area agreement among the Mediterranean countries by 2010. In order to achieve this, a series of bilateral association agreements between the EU and the Mediterranean partners, including Israel, were concluded. The association agreement between Israel and the EU, concluded in 1995 and ratified in 2000, reflects a potentially higher degree of integration between the parties than the former free trade area agreement of 1975, in two major respects: it includes a political dimension and refers to future potential fields of cooperation that have not yet been developed. The Barcelona Process further enhanced mutual discussions and cooperation in three fields – economic, social, and political – among its partners. In 2003, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched. This new policy was developed in light of the expected substantial enlargement of the EU from 15 to 25 Member States in 2004 and to 27 Member States in 2007. It aimed at deepening the cooperation of the EU with its neighbouring countries, at promoting common values such as peace, democracy, security and economic prosperity along the EU's new, long borders. Unlike the Barcelona Process that continued to exist in parallel, the ENP developed an individual action plan for each party, based on its particular profile, needs and desires. The Action Plan

EU-ISRAEL RELATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE NEW MIDDLE EAST 11

for Israel was concluded in 2004 and has not yet been implemented. The establishment of the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008 was the last step of the Barcelona Process so far. However, due to Israel's military action of 2009 in Gaza, Operation Cast Lead, the development of the Union was put on hold.

Much has changed internally both in Israel (and in the Middle East in general) and in the EU between Operation Cast Lead in 2009 and the third military conflict in Gaza in the summer of 2014, Operation Protective Edge. Perhaps the most notable change in relation to the EU was that the Lisbon Treaty entered into force in December 2009, leading, *inter alia*, to the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the position of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP).²

Following the breakdown of the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in spring 2014, the EU maintained its offer of a Special Privileged Partnership extended to both its Israeli and Palestinian partners, while condemning actions which could contravene the stated commitment to negotiations.³

Since then, there have been a number of cases which have adversely affected EU-Israeli relations. First and foremost was the outbreak of Operation Protective Edge, which led

to the following reaction of the European Union, to the dismay of Israel: *"...While recognizing Israel's legitimate right to defend itself against any attacks, the EU underlines that the Israeli military operation must be proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law..."*. Additionally, the decision on labelling settlement products in November 2015 brought about a new low point in the relations. These two events led to an escalation of the rhetoric criticising the EU in Israeli public opinion and on the part of the Israeli administration.

Nevertheless, on February 2016, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini reached understandings, which concluded the quiet negotiations of the previous weeks between Israel and the EU, to resume talks on the Palestinian issue. Yet, up to now, these understandings have not brought tangible results or even real efforts from either side.

Although Europe has been and is confronted by multiple internal crises itself and Israel has experienced significant political and social changes, with regard to Israeli-European relations, not much has changed compared to the situation 15 years ago. Europe is still manoeuvring in the confined space between the desire to have a stronger influence in the Middle East and on the peace process with the Palestinians, on the one hand, and its growing frustration due to the obstacles it encounters, on the other hand. On

the Israeli side, there is a growing lack of confidence and a questioning of the importance of Europe as an ally. In addition, there is also a certain kind of hostility towards Europe for what is perceived by parts of the Israeli public as 'taking a side' in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (siding with the Palestinians). The perception in Israel that Muslim communities in Europe have a growing influence on policymaking is not conducive to improving the image of Europe in the eyes of the Israeli public.

At the same time, some areas of cooperation can be identified. The strongest is definitely economic cooperation. It is followed by enhanced scientific cooperation, which is reflected *inter alia* in Israel's participation in the EU Framework Programmes and in the Galileo programme (Europe's initiative for a state-of-the-art global satellite navigation system), whereas anti-pollution and political cooperation are less structured.

During the last years two main additional areas of cooperation can be identified which are in the fields of energy and security.

Energy: The next decade is going to see many changes regarding European gas production and demand. The need to define the future of the European gas supply and demand in the face of challenging market developments has caused government officials, gas producers, pipeline companies, transmission system operators, regulators,

industry analysts, public-opinion leaders and solution providers to gather each year in order to formulate a combined policy in the European Gas Conference.

The natural gas resources that have recently been discovered offshore in the Eastern Mediterranean are projected to yield massive dividends for Israel in the foreseeable future. These are expected not only to affect the energy market, but may also be considered a game-changer with economic, environmental, and regional implications.

The EU is looking for secure and independent sources for its future gas needs. The demand for gas is so great that the Israeli gas project will not be competing over supply – it will complement it. This may also help reduce the EU's dependence on Russia as a major gas supplier. Moreover, supplying gas to countries that border Europe may help connect Israel to the European grid in the long term.

Hence, the EU should pursue its efforts to deepen its energy dialogue with Israel, as well as with Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey, in order to create mutually beneficial conditions. What the EU can offer is international partnership, support in investments, specialised technology and expertise. Energy collaborations also bring businesses greater investment certainty, access to markets and technology partnerships.

Security: A major factor that will shape EU-Israel relations in the months and years to come is the broader regional situation, including the proliferation and escalation of conflicts, diversification and intensification of threats and shifting regional alliances. Europe is directly affected by the degradation of security conditions in its southern neighbourhood and is increasingly willing to engage in regional cooperation to face some of these challenges.

In recent years, the numerous conflicts in the Middle East have made their presence felt in Europe's backyard. The massive influx of migrants, mainly from Syria and Iraq, and a considerable number of terrorist attacks by Jihadi groups on European soil are forcing the EU to reassess its policy towards the Middle East. Israel as a terror-ravaged country has a lot to offer Europe in terms of necessary **counter-terror** security measures to be taken. A more fruitful security and intelligence cooperation between the two sides is likely, of course, to be of great significance.

Another important aspect in this context is Israel's and Europe's relations with **Turkey**, especially given the current Syrian **refugee crisis** in Europe. Situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia as a natural bridge, controlling the key maritime passages between the Mediterranean and the Black Seas, and possessing a 1,662 km-long border with the Middle East, Turkey deserves crucial attention when it comes to geo-strategy. Turkey's disappointment at the European Union accession process and its desire to prove

its importance to the West has pushed Turkey towards Russia (despite a few bumps along the way which somewhat clouded the relations, for example, the downing of the Russian plane by Turkey and the Russian ambassador's assassination by a Turkish citizen).

Turkey under Erdoğan will continue to use the Syrian refugee card to pressure the European Union to permit a visa exemption that will allow Turkish citizens free movement in Europe. If the Europeans meet Erdoğan's demands, Erdoğan will translate this into a huge historic victory at home, since the issue is very popular and the process will touch the lives of millions of Turkish citizens. However, if Turkey's demands are not met, Ankara may once again become reluctant to control its borders with Greece and Bulgaria.

Relations between Israel and Turkey went through a recent normalisation, following the deteriorating security circumstances in Israel's southern border towns and the incident involving the Mavi Marmara Gaza flotilla's attempt to break Israel's maritime blockade on the Gaza Strip. The latter led to a tense atmosphere between the two states.

Having Israel and Turkey, jointly and severally, as trustworthy allies of the EU is likely to create a win-win-win situation for the three parties involved.

Lastly, it is no secret that the Government of Israel and the E3+3, led by the EU, do not see eye to eye on the outcome

of the negotiations with *Iran* regarding its nuclear plan. The signing of the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) between the E3/EU+3 and Iran invested a lot of hope in a 'new beginning' for European-Iranian relations. However, its phase of implementation potentially creates frictions between Israel and the EU.

Israel is having a hard time accepting the fact that the EU (and the US) are moving toward normalisation with a country that does not recognise Israel's right to exist and even takes measures to back these positions, in the form of supporting terrorist actions against Israel. Moreover, Israel believes the EU is reluctant to recognise major breaches of the arrangements concluded with Iran.

Having said that, it will be useful for the EU and Israel (and the US) to establish an informal mechanism whereby intelligence on the JCPOA is shared, compared and evaluated in an attempt to minimise the potential damage to the bilateral relations. In addition, regional opportunities can be formed following the agreement, both economic and political, which could eventually move Israel and the entire region forward.

The conference was held before the election of Donald Trump as president of the US. Perhaps, after his election, the role of the EU in the Middle East may be even more important. The peace process should be connected to something greater – e.g., the Arab Peace Initiative. There is

now an historic opportunity to combine moderate forces in favour of the process and possibly Trump's election may also support the process by addressing the core issues 'out of the box' and viewing them in a way they have never been viewed before.

The ongoing deadlock in the peace negotiations and the growing mistrust between the parties makes it necessary to try slightly different practices, even if it means reaching interim agreements without first solving the core issues. Regardless, any process of negotiations and a possible solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be in the context of a broader regional settlement of which Europe must be an integral part.

Endnotes

¹ Until 2006 the EU was Israel's major trade partner in terms of export and import. Since 2006, the US has been Israel's major export destination, while the EU is Israel's major import destination. In 2015, total Israeli imports from the EU amounted to USD 22.6 billion, while the total exports to the EU amounted to USD 16.1 billion. Source: Central Bureau of Statistics www.cbs.gov.il.

² Hugh O'Donnell, *The European Union as a Mediator in Israel-Palestine: Operations Cast Lead and Protective Edge*, EU Diplomacy Papers, College of Europe, January 2016.

³ European Commission, *Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Israel Progress in 2014 and recommendations for actions*, Joint Staff Working Document, Brussels, 25.3.2015.

Keynote Speech

Massimo D'Alema

President, Foundation for European Progressive Studies

Hearing from such distinguished speakers, our aim was to go deeper, to better analyse and better understand what is really at stake and how dire is the need for a progressive change in the direction of EU-Israeli relations and in the overall status quo in the Middle East.

I believe that the presence of so many notable guests in the conference, and of course of Mr. Isaac Herzog, whom I have met in the past and consider a significant interlocutor for this change to materialise, is indicative of this realisation.

My hope is that this conference will not represent an end in itself, but will rather be the starting point of a much-needed process of reflection and dialogue, in which all participants will constructively engage with each other in order to foster that unique opportunity for change.

The timing and the title of the conference are not accidental. As shown by many of the discussions, the Middle East is indeed in a serious state of turmoil.

The sheer devastation of the war in Syria, with its more than 400 thousand casualties and the **unprecedented movement of refugees** that it has caused so far, is the most

acute illustration of this turmoil, but it is by no means the only one.

- The ongoing fight against Daesh and the distorting, illiberal and horrifying view of Islam this represents,
- The efforts to bring stability to Iraq that are closely linked to this fight,
- The recent *entente* between Iran and the United States and the realisation of the significant role Iran can play in the fight against Sunni-Wahhabi Islamic terrorism and in shaping the future of Afghanistan and Iraq,
- The instability in certain countries following the high hopes of the Arab Spring,
- Turkey's aspiration of being a more active regional player, and
- the more energetic involvement of certain international players such as Russia in the geopolitics of the region,

are all critical components of this general landscape of instability and growing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. Of course, none of these challenges on this multifaceted backdrop can be dealt with alone.

Neither the European Union nor the United States alone can ensure the strict implementation of the Iran nuclear agreement, or defeat the Islamic State, or stop and reverse

the negative radicalisation trends, or bring a peaceful resolution to the tragedy of Syria, or break the impasse in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians.

Yet because the responsibility that falls on the shoulders of the European Union (and the United States) to assist in all these directions is heavy, it should be clear to everyone that **doing more** is needed on all these issues. The problems are too complex for simplistic and superficial solutions, so any action undertaken needs to be carefully designed and implemented.

In this context of fragility and unpredictability, **what does doing more mean?**

As a first priority, it means dedicating the maximum of our powers to **defeating the Islamic State, containing fundamentalism and creating the conditions for a sustainable stability in the region**. In this uphill battle to fight terrorism, counter radicalisation and promote reconciliation, the European Union, the United States and the international community should avoid the failed recipes of the past whereby internationally decided solutions were 'planted in' or 'dictated to' specific states. Instead, our efforts should be made on the basis of a constructive engagement with the region's states and its people, based not only on our belief in democracy, equality, respect, and the rule of law, but also on the principle of parity between the region and us. And when I say region, I mean the

confluence of the local, state, national, and international levels, including old and new players, Sunni or Shia, Muslim and non-Muslim populations and actors.

Working together in this direction is a critical factor that will ensure that the region sees our efforts as both **valuable and credible**, and not as continuations of past mistakes.

This observation becomes more important when we consider the reinforcement of the presence and position of other regional powers, such as Mr. Putin's Russia or Mr. Erdoğan's Turkey, which are again playing a decisive role in the Middle Eastern theatre.

It also becomes even more important when we think of the constructive role the European Union played last year, despite the expectations of many, in the lengthy negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme. Some of you might be of a different opinion on the viability or effectiveness of this deal, but the positive shift in the perception and the reality on the ground in bringing **Iran** back into the international fold because of this agreement, is of great importance. Iran is now rightly recognised as a necessary interlocutor both as far as the future of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the fight against Sunni-Wahhabi Islamic terrorism are concerned.

As a deeply embedded, pluralistic democracy, what is the **role of Israel** in this ever-changing regional landscape? Over these past years, the country has managed not to be pulled

into the storm that has encircled it, but what will **Israel's fate** be in this environment of upheaval?

It is my opinion that these are two of the most essential questions that both Israel and the international community need to work more actively to address, to **do more**, if we want the result of our actions to be a more secure Israel and a more stable Middle East.

As a long-term friend of Israel, I have to say that the experience of the last few years shows that this perhaps has not been the case.

As I have noted elsewhere, the current leadership of Israel is reviewing closely its perilous regional environment, but mainly from a tactical point of view, considering the chaos that surrounds the country primarily as a way of distracting attention from the very real impasse in solving the Palestinian question.

The severity of the crisis in Syria, the unimaginable human cost of this war, the detrimental consequences of the rise of Daesh for regional stability and for the strategic interests of many international players, the proximity of Europe to the instability on the Levantine coast and beyond, have meant that these developments have absorbed the lion's share of the attention of the international public opinion.

And when the world has looked elsewhere, this has created an opening for the current Israeli leadership to take

advantage of this **momentary lack of attention**, to work subtly but systematically to change the contours of what a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could look like in the future. Continuation and expansion of settlements, plans for annexation of Jerusalem, divisive rhetoric and lack of willingness to work with the international community to break the diplomatic impasse have all created the conditions for undermining the viability of the two-state solution as the only credible solution allowing both Israel and Palestine to live side by side in peace and security.

I believe that this is a **short-sighted approach** for two reasons:

- First, it lacks a long-term understanding of the fact that it challenges the ability of the international community to manage the conflict and **insulate it from regional turmoil**.
- Second, it can ultimately prove **self-destructive for the Jewish state**.

For, as I have argued time and time again, I am convinced that achieving genuine progress towards resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is closely linked to securing regional stability as a whole. Or to put it more directly than that, it is **impossible** to arrive at a state of sustainable regional stability without a meaningful resolution and conclusion of the Israel-Palestine peace process.

As I am sure everyone understands, beyond a candid diagnosis of the problem, this also requires a **frank discussion** of whether the direction Israel has taken under the current leadership is indeed in the long-term interest of the country as the secure and peaceful homeland of the Jewish people.

What interest does Israel have in abandoning the two-state solution prospect? What interest does Israel have in encouraging the progressive weakening and delegitimisation of the Palestinian leadership, which had worked towards dialogue and negotiation?

I am afraid that we are approaching the point of no return and that, if this scenario materialises, it will have **serious repercussions on our reality, Israel's reality, the reality on the ground.**

Indeed, the Peace Process has shown a considerable level of elasticity in the past, depending on the leadership of each side, the urgency of the moment, the pressure of the international community and so on. But if more actions are undertaken to undermine it, **the apparatus of what we call the two-state solution will not be able to absorb the vibrations any more**, and its elasticity will effectively end up broken.

Then the fundamental risk Israel is running is that the so-called '**South African perspective**' will eventually prevail among Palestinians. That is, on the one hand, giving up of

the goal of establishing a Palestinian state, and, on the other, questioning of the Jewish nature of the State of Israel.

Such a prospect might fuel further long-term conflict and instability within Israeli society and might infect – indeed we can already see the first signs – a significant part of the Israeli-Arab community.

The inability to reach a solution and the fading prospect of a Palestinian state would eventually deprive the Palestinian-Israeli question of its national feature, turning it increasingly into a religious conflict and paving the way to the gradual penetration among Palestinians of a violent form of fundamentalism that, so far, has not taken on the characteristics of a mass phenomenon.

Of course, de-escalating the crisis and fighting against time will not be an easy undertaking: there are deep-seated frustrations, a lasting sense of lack of hope, and an entrenched sense of insecurity. Yet, much like the short-termism of the view that no progress is good news for Israel, the exploitation of the absence of a political horizon for a resumption of the negotiations on the framework of a two-state solution might look advantageous for the short-term, but will not be so for the long-term.

If these conditions persist, Israel stands the risk of international isolation.

- It stands the risk of **weakening** further its strong **alliance with the United States** (where relations with the United States, Israel's greatest ally, have been brought by Mr Netanyahu to their lowest level in the last decades), and its partnership with the European Union, despite the ephemeral interest in partnering with other international actors, such as Russia.
- It stands the risk of being isolated from all those voices and forces internationally that understand how complex the situation is on the ground, and how engagement and compromise come at a cost.
- And it stands the risk of undermining the security and ethical foundations of the historic project of the Jewish State.

We have gathered together in the conference for an open discussion, despite the many differences, of what needs to change for Israel, its region, the European Union and the international community to set aside their misunderstandings, and to avoid this scenario of isolation.

But because the conditions on the ground are not such that would allow an immediate resumption of negotiations between the two sides in order to prevent all these risks from becoming a reality, the responsibility of the international community to act as a **fair game-changer** in this stagnant equilibrium is greater and more urgent than ever.

As Europeans, this means recognising our past mistakes and not repeating them, in order to maximise how constructive we can be in promoting a solution.

But it also means assuming our responsibility towards the people of Palestine and Israel, not only due to our deep historical ties, but also because of the simple truth that **peace in the Middle East is a *sine qua non* for security, growth and prosperity, in Israel, the wider region, Europe and the entire Mediterranean basin.**

They say it is always darkest before the dawn, but we need now to **do more** towards shaping the kind of day that will come tomorrow.

As my friend President Shimon Peres used to say 'the most important thing in life is to dare'. A progressive agenda for the future cannot but recognise that. And progressives' voices and forces should **do more**, should work even more stubbornly, passionately, and tirelessly to set a peace-making agenda as their top priority.

Too often in the past we have thought that declarations would suffice and intentions alone matter. **Now** is the time to acknowledge the gravity of the situation. Because daring for peace has never been more closely linked to the urgency of the moment.

Opening Remarks

Dr. Ernst Stetter

Secretary General, Foundation for European Progressive Studies

I would like to state that the Foundation for European Progressive Studies is very pleased that it was possible to set up such a wonderful conference in Israel with the active and valuable support of:

- The Macro Center for Political Economics and its General Director Roby Nathanson,
- Our hosts, the Institute for National Security Studies,
- And, of course, two of the most active members of FEPS, the Karl Renner Institute represented here by its President the former Chancellor of Austria, Alfred Gusenbauer, and the Jean-Jaurès Foundation, represented by Ms. Hélène Conway-Mouret, who is the Foundation's Director of the International Department, as well as a Member of the Senate of France.

I strongly believe that the combination of such amazing expertise on the part of the organisers, such high-level participation on the part of speakers, and such tremendous attendance on the part of the audience is a testament to the amount of work and thought that has been put into making this conference the success it was.

It is rare to find such a confluence of willingness not just to organise another conference, but to make it a meaningful, impactful one, and for this I am truly grateful that FEPS managed to be in Israel and to touch upon such an important issue, following last year's important initiative which was supported by the majority of this year's organisers.

The topic we have chosen for the conference is understandably one of great complexity and perplexity.

Amid a global landscape that is increasingly volatile and fluid, the Middle East features as a place that encompasses this volatility to the maximum.

Indeed, gripped by deep-seated tensions and conflicts, the Middle East, a vast area with boundless human, financial, societal and energy resources, with thousands of years of history and cultural traditions, has experienced and continues to experience a range of dramatic, and highly traumatic, changes.

Primarily precipitated by developments such as the tragic civil war in Syria, and the immeasurable human tragedy that is taking place in the country, what has been long considered a relatively stable status quo of regional cooperation and enmity is now profoundly altered.

Forced by the turn of events, Israel too has been compelled to reassess its strategic arrangements and to re-visit its

threat calculus. The current leadership of the country has even re-assessed its traditional playbook of allies and enemies, in a clear attempt to navigate through this state of permanent mayhem.

Yet, the presence of the most right-wing government in Israel's history has meant that the returns of the policies implemented have been diminishing, and the long-term costs incurred are dire. At times providing moments of comic relief, at times distorting reality to suit its political ends, and at times raising inappropriate straw men for the conduct of its foreign policy, the current Israeli leadership has often caused incredulity and diplomatic condemnation for its rhetoric and actions.

Evidently, no other issue best encapsulates this more than the government's stance towards the Palestinian issue, where there has been an attempt to exploit the state of regional flux to distract attention from the serious impasse in the Middle East Peace Process, while promoting all those measures that erode the viability or sustainability of the two-state solution.

Ultimately, one of the most serious concerns that have arisen in the past few years, has been the systematic use of divisive rhetoric, a constant 'us versus them' dilemma hanging over Israeli politics, which has had severe repercussions not only in the context of peace, but also in the context of discussion and dialogue.

In this process, the European Union has continued to maintain a business as usual approach despite its efforts to stop and reverse the breakdown of the Middle East Peace Process. Perhaps due to suffering from an existential angst of its own after so many crises (financial, economic, migration, institutional, political) within its borders, we at the European Union have not managed to tackle the negative trends in the greater Middle East and, more specifically, vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is still much that can be done on our side to craft a much more conducive climate of dialogue, to condemn the divisiveness, and to push for reconciliation, democratic revival and meaningful talks.

The **Progressive movement** in particular, in both the European Union and Israel, can become the catalyst for a less conflictual regional politics, and can aid in providing long-term, sustainable, convincing solutions to the region's most pressing outstanding issues.

As the Secretary General of the only European progressive political foundation, this is the reason why I strongly believe that initiatives like this conference *can* and *do* help.

The conference programme brought together a range of distinguished policy-makers and policy experts both from Europe and Israel, providing an excellent opportunity to assess, analyse, and – crucially – offer new ideas.

This is very significant at a time when, especially in Europe but also in Israel, we see the rise of populism, of a nationalist rhetoric, and of post-factual politics, and of their very serious consequences for how we discuss (or not), how we compromise (or not), and how we arrive (or not) at solutions.

The discussions have highlighted how important it is to quickly move past this state of non-dialogue, of reduced mutual trust, and of lack of vision in how we approach the whole host of bilateral, and regional issues. I have relished all the insightful discussions about how we can achieve the desired results of securing a more sustainable future for Israel, for Europe, for the region and for its people but also for achieving them in the right way.

Europe and Israel

Dr. Oded Eran

Senior Research Fellow, the Institute for National Security Studies

Relations between the European Union and Israel have reached their lowest ebb. The two sides have given up even the semblance of a dialogue. Clearly nothing has been left of the vision that guided the two sides when they negotiated their association agreement between 1992 and 1995. That vision was best formulated in the 1994 Essen European summit which granted Israel a special status in its relations with Europe on account of its high level of economic development.

Since then, the vision has been eroded, emptied of any concrete meaning and replaced by an empty promise to grant the Palestinians and Israel a preferential partnership – another hollow term – if they reach a comprehensive agreement. That was clear affirmation that the EU inextricably linked any development in its relations with Israel to the developments, or the lack thereof, on the Israeli-Palestinian front. Beyond the affront to Israel, in allowing the Palestinians to hold the key to the progress in the EU-Israel relations, the EU has thus prevented the two sides from fully benefiting from the relations. Even worse, for decades the EU has complained that its role as an honest broker in the peace making process between the Israelis and the Palestinians has not been recognised and

accepted, mostly by Israel. The EU, while entitled to express its disagreement with the Israeli government policies towards the Palestinians, went further in adopting harsh guidelines concerning Israeli exports which may become, albeit unintentionally, damaging to the entire Israeli economy. By doing so, the EU added to the distrust and resentment that many Israelis feel towards Europe's wishes and its attempt to become, as the Brussels EU lingo says, "players and not just payers".

The sad state of affairs between Israel and the EU is just one of the major obstacles to a meaningful development of the relations. Europe, under the current circumstances, is incapable of dramatic changes that even if they do not amount to membership, require conceptual adjustments. In the next few years the EU will be absorbed and preoccupied by the challenges of immigration from the south and the east, and of the terror from within Europe, mostly emanating from ethno-religious minorities, some growing in minority communities who arrived in Europe in previous waves of immigration. Related to these issues is the rise of neo-nationalistic parties in several members of the Union. These parties strengthen the centrifugal tendencies in Europe, threatening the fabric and cohesiveness necessary to hold the Union together. The negotiations with Britain over the future relations between an initial and a key breakaway member will be much more than an interesting intellectual exercise. Relations on the one hand with a new US administration and on the other with belligerent Russia

will demand the full attention of Europe's leaders, leaving almost no space for experimenting with new relations with countries in the south or the east of Europe who wish to deepen their relations with the EU.

An interesting option could however, emerge from the negotiations with Britain and from a potential shift in the paradigm of membership for Turkey. The outcome of negotiations with Britain may produce a new model of relations with a neighbouring state, based on strong mutual political, security and economic interests that currently does not exist. This model may include elements from the Norwegian or the Swiss pattern of relations and it may include innovative ideas to reflect the particular capabilities and dimension of Britain and its economy. If indeed such a model emerges from the EU-Britain negotiation it could lead, with necessary changes and amendments, to another breakthrough in Turkey-EU relations. Few in Europe or in Turkey still hold to the belief that Turkey could become a full member in the EU. Even the solution of the Cyprus conflict may not enable Turkey's entry given domestic political developments in Europe and in Turkey. When the two sides are ready to accept this reality and adjust their expectations, negotiations could develop towards relations which will produce less than a full membership but a lot more than the customs union, the economic regime which currently governs their relations.

These possible developments might create a new possibility for Israel in its relations with Europe as some substantial and clear ideas could fill the currently obscure terms proposed to Israel. The linkage that the EU makes between promotion of its relations with Israel and the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians will not disappear. But there as well, changes could occur to reflect the fact that a comprehensive agreement between Israel and the Palestinians is unattainable and while the goal of two states for two people remains, a new approach, of reaching agreements on some of the outstanding issues in the conflict may arise. Europe could certainly play a significant role if this paradigm is adopted by all parties concerned. In the current climate of Euro-Israeli relations, a dialogue on these and on other ideas and issues does not exist and both sides are incapable of or even unwilling to conduct it and that is a regrettable state of affairs.

The Role of the EU in Creating Political, Energy and Security Frameworks

Avi Gabbay

Former Israeli Minister of Environmental Protection

I went into politics after a long career in the business sector and became a minister shortly after that. So, as a minister, I was more a manager than a politician.

At the ministry we had an International Affairs Unit. Its role was to arrange meetings with ministers from other countries and I have signed many cooperation agreements, knowledge sharing, etc.

The unit's staff used to brief me prior to those meetings regarding the history of the relations, visits, signed agreements, and so on. After a while I asked the basic question for a manager. Results! What transpired from these agreements? It turned out that in most cases the real answer was... not much, just many papers that were stuffed into drawers.

That's not the way to promote real relations between the EU and Israel.

1. I am a great advocate for the importance of Europe to Israel and vice versa. The markets' structures are similar, we are close geographically and mentally and that is why there is much more potential to expand business relations.

2. The Middle East has changed dramatically in the last 5 years, mainly due to the Syria crises. From what I hear, it has led to updates in the European defence strategy – less emphasis on human rights and democratisation and more on security and stability.
3. Israel is an anchor for stability and security in the Middle East with positive potential for improvements in economic relations with our neighbours.
4. In my opinion, the basic duty of states is to enable and encourage more and more collaborations between business sectors on both sides.

I believe that Europe should define business cooperation with Israel as a strategic goal. That can be done by encouraging the public and business sectors to enhance relations with Israel.

In 2016, there are still many companies that tend not to do business in Israel as a result of a past policy that no longer exists and certainly does not represent the current European interest.

5. A few words about environment:

Environmental issues are politically important in Europe, but not here in Israel. No 'green party' has ever been elected to our parliament. Yet, environment and energy issues have great potential in establishing new regional

frameworks. On these issues, Europe is perceived in Israel as an authority.

The environment, naturally, crosses borders, demands cooperation and is, and will be, an important growth engine for European companies. This is why Europe has a great interest in a clean Mediterranean. Israel can and should be a bridge to the Middle East, in this context.

A great example for such cooperation should be the realisation of the new climate agreement. Europe is the main international power that made this agreement happen, intends to invest a lot of resources in it and expects not only an environmental return, but also an economic one.

We, in Israel, are not as 'green' as Scandinavia, for example, but still are not far from the European average. Under European sponsorship, we could expand environmental cooperation with countries like Egypt and Jordan and consequently, with other Arab states.

6. Natural gas: the gas explorations in the Mediterranean are another opportunity for regional cooperation. In my opinion, mainly between Israel, Cyprus and Greece.

Unfortunately I believe that the amount of natural gas in Israel's territorial waters is not as significant as it seems. It is a lot of gas for countries such as Israel and Cyprus, but not enough in order to bring about a strategic

change in the European dependence on Russian gas. At best, Europe will be able to partially diversify its gas sources.

To conclude, Europe is of very great importance to Israel; there is much potential for more business to be conducted. This can happen only by Europe actively encouraging companies to do business in Israel and not by more agreements that will stay safely in drawers.

Building and Managing Peace in Times of Conflict

Prof. Bruno Liebhaberg

Vice-President and Chair of the Scientific Council,
Foundation for European Progressive Studies

I would like to start with a paradox.

Israel is one of the most dynamic countries in the world on the economic front. It has growth rates that, despite not being in the two-digit range, are very enviable from a European perspective.

Israel is a blessed land for start-ups. It is a digital champion, as recognised by the fact that all Silicon Valley giants are present in this country, in Herzliya and elsewhere.

Israel finds itself, however, in a terrible political impasse. And the feeling is that there is no alternative.

A two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is more distant than ever.

In a few months, Israel will have been occupying the West Bank for half a century.

When settlements were initiated, they were for security reasons (the Alon plan), with settlements occupying less than 5% of the territories. That was what I call 'settlements 1.0'.

In 2005, there were already 250,000 settlers, who lived in the occupied territories, excluding East Jerusalem.

Today, they are more than 370,000.

The development of settlements today is no longer driven by security but by other factors, which include a mix of 'fait accompli' policy, economic incentives to settlers and messianic religious Zionism which aims at incorporating what it calls the biblical land of Israel.

It is hard to believe today that such a phenomenon can still be reversed.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has already spent a total of more than 10 years in power. With his well-known disrespect for Palestinians and for dissenting voices in general, he feels comfortable with those developments, as the continuous expansion of settlements demonstrates.

On the Palestinian political front, things are far from being more encouraging. We see on the part of President Mahmoud Abbas ('Abu Mazen') no clear direction, nor any actual readiness to get things moving. The Palestinian Authority sees its legitimacy increasingly challenged by its population, its unity is destroyed by internal conflicts and its power threatened by Hamas. The cancellation of municipal elections in the West Bank and Gaza that should have taken place last month constitutes another sign of internal paralysis within the Palestinian side.

The outgoing Obama administration has lost the last few hopes it had in their ability to restarting the peace process. One can understand them: Israel announced, last month, plans for a new West Bank settlement, just weeks after the United States had concluded a USD 38 billion, 10-year military aid deal.

The provocations and even the insults by an Israeli prime minister getting overtly involved in internal US politics, supporting the Republicans against the incumbent administration, have managed to exasperate the US administration. It is nevertheless doubtful that Donald Trump will, in the foreseeable future, be prepared to make the US support to Israel conditional on a change in Jerusalem's position vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

In addition, the Palestinian question is now having a greater and greater impact on Israel's internal policies and the quality of its democracy: the political and cultural drift is toward ever more intolerant nationalism.

We have heard the admirable words of MK Nachman Shai at this conference, calling for Israel to accept refugees from Syria. We know that Shai's views are far from being shared by the majority of his fellow citizens, and certainly not by the current government.

Today, if you criticise that government, you run the risk of being considered a traitor. Groups like B'Tselem, which identifies and denounces human rights violations against

Palestinians in Israeli-occupied territories, are under violent attack.

The religion-driven nationalism which, as I have already mentioned, more and more drives the settlements' development, is now also gradually pervading the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) up to the highest echelons. This is worrying when you remember that, since the creation of the State, the IDF had, as it should be in a democracy, remained quite immune from politics, from religion and from the link between them.

So, against the background of such a gloomy picture, what is the way forward? Is there an alternative?

Unfortunately, for the moment, if there is one, it cannot come from the Left which is weak, divided and does not express a clear, credible alternative.

In addition, if the two-state solution is becoming a charade, is a one-state, bi-national solution more feasible?

There are all together 4.1 million Arabs under one or another form of Israeli Administration: 1.5 million Arab citizens of Israel (i.e., 17% of a total Israeli population of 8.5 million) and 2.6 million Palestinians in the West Bank.

Therefore, in a bi-national state, Arabs would represent a major portion of the population from the very beginning and, due to different demographics, an even larger proportion, as time goes by.

Already today, if the East Jerusalem-based Palestinians would use their voting rights – which fortunately they refuse to do – Jerusalem would have a Palestinian mayor.

So, how could a bi-national state remain Jewish without giving up its democratic DNA? If apartheid, which is so alien to Jewish ethics and values, becomes the rule, how viable could, in the medium run, that bi-national state be? For me, it could not. So, going that way would be committing suicide.

So, again, what's the way forward to get things moving?

First, in my view, Israel could, without putting its security at risk, take further steps towards significantly decreasing the humiliations it inflicts on Palestinians in the territories. With a view to improving the latter's economic situation, Israel could ease the bureaucratic formalities allowing movements in and out of Gaza, grant more building permits in the West Bank and lift roadblocks.

My second recommendation calls for the US to reconsider their unconditional support for Israel and, as such, use of their veto in the UN Security Council. The success in the US of progressive groups within the Jewish community, such as J-Street, shows that such a shift in US policy would no longer constitute electoral suicidal for the US political leadership.

The third recommendation for Europe and some of its member states is to stop launching new 'peace initiatives'. Experience demonstrates that those initiatives go nowhere and that, on the contrary, they simply provide both parties, i.e., the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority, with convenient diversions from their respective political responsibility.

But, and this is my fourth recommendation, Europe has another crucial role to play. Already for a long time, the biggest aid donor to Palestine, the EU should assert its ambition to be a soft power which plays a constructive, effective role in the conflict. That role is based on cooperation.

There can, therefore, be no limit to the cooperation that the EU, its member states, the civil society should develop with both Israel and Palestine: on the economic front (i.e., infrastructure, energy, digital, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, water, etc.), on the environmental front, on the educational front and on the cultural front.

From that perspective, I do hope that more and more policy-makers and opinion leaders in Europe will recognise that activist groups such as BDS, which promote the infamous boycott of Israeli products, academics and artists, are evil. Those groups act against the very interests of all parties involved, in Israel, in Palestine and in Europe.

Activity Report

Itamar Gazala

Research Director, the Macro Center for Political Economics

At a time when the relations between the EU and Israel are at a critical juncture, the importance of facilitating dialogue and of countering misrepresentations of the situation on the ground is crucial. In this context, an international conference on the subject of "EU-Israeli Relations and the Changing Dynamics of the Middle East" was organised jointly by FEPS, the Macro Center for Political Economics and the INSS, in cooperation with the Jean-Jaurès Foundation and the Karl Renner Institute, in order to try to create new agendas and to coordinate common steps to face the new challenges in the region.

Approximately 20 distinguished politicians, public officials and other decision makers, diplomats, academic scholars and high ranking experts from leading think tanks participated in the seminar and contributed to a series of very interesting sessions.

This chapter will briefly review the main contributions of the respected figures who participated in the conference, focusing on the participants whose complete speeches do not appear in the previous chapters of this book.



Kick-Off Dinner

The opening dinner, on November 5th 2016, was aimed at introducing the main themes to be touched upon during the conference to the distinguished participants of the event.

Participants were greeted by **MK Tzipi Livni** of the Zionist Camp Faction, Former Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs; **Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin**, the Executive Director of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) and; **Dr. Ernst Stetter**, the Secretary General of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS). Their words, *inter alia*, underlined the importance of this initiative towards fostering a framework of dialogue and deliberation on a number of critical topics that concern the prospects for EU-Israeli relations as well as the shifting geopolitics of the wider region.

The keynote speech of **Massimo D'Alema** focused on his wider perspective regarding a number of bilateral and regional developments.

International Conference

Opening Remarks

Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin – Executive Director, INSS: In 2008, the world was in a very different place than it is today. 15 years after the end of the Cold War, Europe was strong, the Middle East was stable and the only conflict

receiving the world's attention was the Israeli-Palestinian one.

Nowadays, the situation looks much different: The US has shifted from over-action to inaction, leaving some 500 thousand casualties in Syria; Russia and China operate under norms that are unacceptable to the US and Europe; Europe is going through a financial crisis, Brexit, and an influx of refugees; states in the Middle East are collapsing (and those surviving are in danger of following other failed states); Turkey is transforming from a secular democracy into an Islamic State; Daesh is challenging borders; Iran is still calling for the annihilation of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict finds itself at a dead end.

Looking at how the situation has changed in the past eight years, it can be seen that the world is moving towards a new world order. While the old world order was based on Western values, it is uncertain what will determine the future. In the midst of these developments, Israel and the EU need to focus on what they have in common. As terrorism is on the rise, we must see how we can join together in bringing about the change in favour of our shared values. Letting go of old paradigms and asking questions will lead us to finding solutions.

Some key questions are to be asked: Are borders so holy? How important are the Sykes-Picot borders? Are we willing to ignore the terrorism-promoting policy of the Palestinian

leadership? Do we wish to encourage the establishment of another failed state alongside Israel? Think tanks such as the INSS exist to identify those new paradigms and discuss in a deeper way what needs to be done in order to bring about stability.

Dr. Ernst Stetter - Secretary General, FEPS: In light of the recent developments of the volatile situation in the Middle East, discussions such as those in this conference are necessary. The progressive political movement can serve as a catalyst for long term solutions. While different populist and nationalist movements in Europe are an obstacle to the progressive developments, we hope to move from a situation of procrastination and non-dialogue to a sustainable future for Israel, Europe and the region.

The full speech of Dr. Stetter appears in an earlier chapter of this book.



Lars Faaborg-Andersen - Head, Delegation of the European Union to Israel: The recent developments in the Middle East leave a void allowing terrorist groups to enter. The role of the EU is mainly as a soft power, providing financial and humanitarian aid in the crisis. Israel is an oasis in a region of chaos. The relations between Israel and the EU, in the midst of that, are failing to reach their full potential due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In terms of counterterrorism, however, cooperation should be increased in the near future. There are five main proposals for the EU on how to move towards its desired future. *First of all*, the EU must build its defence capabilities in order to meet the challenges of the current tribulations, where soft power engagement does not suffice. *Secondly*, the EU needs to increase the personal security of its residents by working together with states and societies towards decent governance and human rights. *Thirdly*, the current crisis in the region and beyond there needs to come to an end. *Fourthly*, conflicts today have a transnational nature and for that reason they need to be solved through regional cooperation. Working with strong powers such as NATO, the EU hopes to stop human trafficking and increase cyber security. How or even whether to engage with Russia needs to be decided as well. *Lastly*, to make a society strong a movement towards sustainable governance, diversity and openness should take place. One needs to admit that the challenges in the current conflict come from within the societies as much as they do from the outside.

First Session: The Role of the EU in Creating Political, Energy and Security Frameworks

Chair: Dr. Roby Nathanson - General Director, Macro Center for Political Economics

The first session was aimed at providing a *tour d' horizon* of what the role of the EU could be in a number of very concrete fields in terms of political cooperation in the region. These could include a reflection on past frameworks, such as the Barcelona process, or the Union for the Mediterranean, which did not deliver the expected results and that need to be adapted to the emergent realities of the region. It could also include an analysis of current major events and developments, such as the ongoing war in Syria and the rise of Daesh. The energy and environmental situation that has arisen following the newly discovered gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean makes this geopolitical picture even more varied, offering the potential of creating win-win scenarios for a range of countries in the region, including Jordan, Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian Authority and others. In this multifaceted context, deeper cooperation in the political, energy, and security domains, as fostered by the EU, could be a common denominator in addressing the complex challenges of the region.

In the current process of stagnation there is room for pursuing economic opportunities.

Keynote speeches:

Dr. Alfred Gusenbauer - Former Chancellor of Austria:

There was a time when a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was almost found, but unfortunately it does not look like a solution is plausible in the near future. For cooperation between Israel and the EU there is a natural ground based on different factors, including the common values. In a world where democracy and respect for human rights are at stake, Israel and European countries which still share these values are obliged to cooperate. All those who share the same values have the obligation to work together. If we do not cooperate we will realise that we are all alone with no influence whatsoever. Today, the US elections are the most fundamental issue determining the future of mankind. If Trump gets elected the bi-partisan approach to international politics will come to an end, leaving a vacuum. If Hillary Clinton becomes the next president on the other hand, the US will continue to work towards cooperation. Russia is falling back into becoming a communist regime in a way that is worse than it was during the Cold War, as can be seen in its engagement in the Syria crisis. The only way to prevent Russia's military engagement is through immense economic pressure. China is trying to control its region, in particular the South China Sea, gradually advancing its influence in a much more strategic manner than Russia does. The EU should conduct an honest evaluation of its ability or inability to act in the past. The Arab Spring brought democracy only to one country,

Tunisia, with immense financial support from the EU. Other than that, the EU must admit that its excitement about democratisation through the Arab Spring has not brought any success, but instead has kept the same kind of regimes in power. Realising this, the EU should start emerging from a soft power into a hard power. The conflict that is likely to take the centre stage in the future in Europe is the Kurdish question. If Turkey continues as it does in becoming an Islamist country, the West will see it as their goal to facilitate the creation of a Kurdish state. In terms of Israeli-EU relations, cooperation could be much better. Common action can be found by including third party nations in economic and security terms. There is so much in common between the two that they cannot afford to split.

MK Tzipi Livni - Former Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, Zionist Camp: We need to understand what changes have occurred in the Middle East and in Europe and how they impact each other. For many years, the region was divided between moderates and fanatics. Nowadays the fanatics are becoming more fanatical. Daesh is changing Europe, through xenophobia, the rise of the right and more. The refugees that are entering Europe have come to change the EU. As a result, some European states are willing to give up some of their longstanding European values.

The extremists in the Middle East are the enemies of the free world. While the outcomes of the decisions of some leaders are not always predictable, the alliances in the region are clearly changing. In the midst of this, the

moderates of the world need to unite. The fact that international players did not get involved from the beginning in Syria is very dangerous. It sent a strong message to moderates that they will not necessarily receive the required backing and aid for positive actions. I have proposed in the past that there should be a universal code for democracy, enabling a clear distinction to be made between democratic and non-democratic states.

The relations between Israel and the EU are strongly connected to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. One needs to remember that the basic interests of Israel are also the basic interests of the EU. In the past, Europe's involvement has not been limited just to observing and monitoring, but involvement such as in the Second Lebanon War, where Europe took a firm position against terror, shows the crucial player they used to be and still can be. In regard to the conflict, Israeli citizens consider Europeans to be naïve, while Europeans consider Israelis to be aggressive. Europe should support Israel's security while freely criticising its laws.

There is a difference between criticising Israel's policy measures and impairing the interests of Europe and Israel in the region. The recent declaration by UNESCO shows how one narrative is enhanced over the other side's narrative. Such decisions make Europe lose the trust of the Israeli public. Europe should be free to criticise but should refrain from clearly supporting one or the other narrative. In that way they can bring about a better future and show their

EU-ISRAEL RELATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE NEW MIDDLE EAST 59

support for the two-state solution. There are steps where Europe and Israel can work together in approaching the Arab world by furthering some of the crucial issues that are not of a zero sum nature.

Gideon Sa'ar - Former Israeli Minister of the Interior and of Education: The changes in the Middle East during the last five years have created new challenges for the international community:

- There is a trend of erosion of states in the Middle East and we do not know when it will end.
- The formation of vast areas in the region without any kind of authority.
- The strengthening and polarisation of terrorism and its organisations, making it difficult to have any kind of order.
- The spread of radical Islam, either Sunni or Shiite, has become dominant and is almost the only force in some areas.
- This resulted in a regional, multi-front Sunni-Shia war.

Israel and the EU are affected by these processes and will continue to be for many years. The most important thing now is to think together how we can enhance the stability of the region and minimise the effects of these processes.

In Europe, terrorism, radical Islam and the number of refugees are increasing rapidly. While Europe is most affected by the situation, it is not much involved in the

solution. The US, has more or less, removed itself from any substantial involvement. Russia's involvement in the region has not been challenged, giving them indirect legitimacy to act in Syria.

While there is currently no stabilising solution, the West needs to find a way to bring stability back to the region. Realistic goals are the definition of the main objective as the containment of radical Islam, protecting minorities and their interests as well as understanding that Iranian control will, by no means, bring stability.

If the states in the region are not partitioned according to ethnic and religious groups, Syria and Iraq will become only names without being states. History has shown that only tyrants such as Saddam Hussain and Assad are able to control the borders drawn by the Sykes-Picot agreement. To bring back stability, minorities need to be protected and investments in reconstruction need to be made. A federal reality with secure zones and a major focus on security by the international community is the future to solving the problems in the Middle East. If no action is taken, the situation will get worse and the Middle East will continue to come to Europe. In the EU-Israeli dialogue, expertise can be shared on managing mass immigration.

The last issue is the educational dimension. With everything that is done in the region, without educational values of tolerance, peace and democracy, we cannot build a better future for this region.



Avi Gabbay - Former Minister of Environmental Protection of Israel: The vast majority of Israeli-European relations is confined to paper, but does not yield results. Europe should come to the understanding that business cooperation with Israel is of strategic importance to them. While Israel does not have a green party in the government, in Europe, green parties are much more powerful, thus Europe is the main promoter of environmental agreements and can use that expertise to advance environmental initiatives in the Middle East. While Israel alone does not have enough gas to make Europe independent from Russia, a combination of gas in the Mediterranean might yield an alternative to Russian gas.

Mr. Gabbay's full speech appears in an earlier chapter of this book.

Second Session: Borders, Refugees, Migration and Relations to Turkey

Chair: Vassilis Ntousas - International Relations Policy Advisor, FEPS

Amid a landscape of changing regional political dynamics, the interconnected issues of borders, refugees and migration flows have emerged as highly significant factors in analysing the wider region's dynamics. Beyond the critical humanitarian situation that emanates from a state of continuing turmoil, these dynamics have had and continue to have an important impact on the policy orientation of many countries in the region. What is the role of the EU in

EU-ISRAEL RELATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE NEW MIDDLE EAST 63

promoting deeper cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean against this diverse political landscape? How can Israel play a more constructive role in terms of humanitarian aid and security? How can recent developments such as the restored bilateral ties between Israel and Turkey or the intensifying security cooperation between Greece and Israel assist in having a stabilising effect in the volatile dynamics of the wider region?

In 2003, Europe was very secure, but it has undergone a change towards increased insecurity marked by terrorism. The struggle in US-Russian diplomatic relations and the rapprochement of Turkey and Israel together with Turkey's involvement in the refugee crisis are crucial in the current debate.

Keynote speeches:

Dr. Nachman Shai - Former IDF Spokesman, Head of the Israel-Germany bilateral Parliamentary group: In response to Germany's interest, Israel has started to share expertise on dealing with the influx of refugees. Germany's acceptance of many refugees brings different challenges to that country, but was a brave decision in the first place. Israel's stand on Syrian refugees comes into question, since it has a role to play in the world and in the region of the Middle East. While Israel has been watching the refugee crisis from far, it has not taken any refugees until now. Being a state of refugees, Israel should absorb some refugees for a period of time until the war is over, to show

support for the human aspect of the crisis. So far, such actions have not been supported by many in Israel, even though Israel is very concerned with the war in Syria. The Zionist dream certainly does not envision a country that is enclosed by a fence, which is the reality today. Bringing in some refugees would be an act of human consideration not a military based decision.

Miltiadis Kyrkos - Member of the European Parliament (S&D, Greece), Vice-Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee: When Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke at the European parliament he was given a standing ovation, the same happened with President Abbas not much later. Both actions were not undertaken out of agreement for all that they said, but stemmed from a European culture of respecting the other. Europe's attempt to export democracy during the Arab Spring was not a very good idea. Similar were the European states' promises to Ukraine which they could not keep. Regarding the refugee crisis, it is important to notice that immigration to Europe is not a new phenomenon. The refugees that came in the past were all integrated more or less into the European countries, but the refugees that are coming today from Muslim countries are failing to be integrated. There were different proposals about how to deal with refugees. While the right-wing want a 'Fortress Europe', the left wing prefer open and secure borders, but the European option is yet another one. The deal with Turkey is an expression of the strategy of keeping

refugees out and dealing with them in a third country. The relations between the EU and Turkey are very much dependent on what is happening in Cyprus and thus it will be an influencing factor on the refugee crisis.

Hélène Conway-Mouret - Director of the International Department, Jean Jaurès Foundation, Member of the Senate of France: In the world today, global issues affect the local reality. With the demographic and climate changes, the refugee crisis of today challenges European democracy and questions the system. It can be observed that a new world order is gradually replacing the old one. Anti-system movements and the rise of the extreme right is a phenomenon throughout Europe. Those parties gain support by playing on the fear of the citizens. Fear of what is different is instilled in people's minds, even though technologies make a global network possible. The refugee crisis has received too slow a response from Europe and might increase even more in the future. Europe's strength lies in its soft power. The solution to the problem actually lies in Turkey, the Middle East and Africa. Restrictions on the Schengen area and setting up quotas are the strategy as of now, but the refugees actually want to return to their country after the war is over. Solutions for the current crisis need to be of a political and diplomatic nature.

Israel, being the only democracy in the region needs to lead by example even in a hostile environment, so Israel's job is to build more bridges than walls.



Third Session: Building and Managing Peace in Times of Conflict

Chair: Prof. Bruno Liebhaberg - Chair of the FEPS Scientific Council

With the need for a meaningful resumption of the Israel-Palestine Peace Process becoming more urgent than ever, given the intertwined challenges and setbacks the process has faced in the past few years, a concerted international push for reconciliation can create the conditions for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. What tools can the EU utilise in achieving genuine progress in this direction, in particular after the release of the new EU Global Strategy? How are the outcome of the US Presidential election and the advent of a new administration expected to shape the situation on the ground? What are the chances of success of the new French Initiative and what role is Russia playing in the region? Considering the massive build-up of the settlements, what is the current assessment over the viability of the two-state solution? The composition of this panel offered a unique qualitative opportunity to try to address these questions.

The full speech of Prof. Liebhaberg appears in an earlier chapter of this book.

Dr. Yossi Beilin – Former Minister of Justice of Israel: Israel is traditionally against EU mediation, and it is definitely true about this government. There is no wide consensus in the

EU about all the issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the Member States cannot agree on a clear policy, so usually EU resolutions address the lowest common denominators. EU 'carrots' do not have a serious impact, while the EU is unable to decide about the 'sticks'.

The EU's role as a 'payer' in this conflict is bigger than it seems and therefore it is not in a hurry to stop contributing monetarily, even if it means that it is not getting the central role it wishes for. Although it does not seem so, there has been a big shift towards the idea of a two-state solution in Israeli society. Abbas, despite all his shortcomings, is a widely acceptable Palestinian leader. Netanyahu is not ready to pay the price of a peace process and to compromise on things that he would have to compromise on in any agreement. However, he is committed to the Road Map. Despite his personal reservations about the Road Map and the involvement of the Quartet, it was agreed by all sides including the US and Russia. We do not have to take the attitude of 'all or nothing' to solve all the core issues of the conflict. Interim agreements can be reached with a clear timetable and a clear determination of the security measures. The EU can promote this path, together with other Arab countries and achieve progress within a short timeframe.

Amb. Fernando Gentilini - EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process: The EU should act on issues where it has a relative advantage, such as creating stability,

cooperation and incorporation. EU politicians have an advantage as they constantly have to negotiate and reach deals. Through negotiations one can understand many things, such as the importance of moving from a zero-sum game to a win-win situation. The main question regarding the Palestinian issue is whether the EU has the necessary political will and confidence to do so.

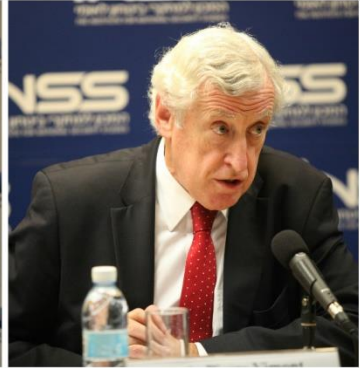
It is clear that peace in the Middle East will unlock new forms of regional cooperation. The 'carrots' for the Israelis are in the regional context – in the form of an Arab peace initiative which, if successful, may form new collaborations with many of Israel's neighbours.

Amb. Pierre Vimont - Special Envoy for the French Initiative for a Middle East Peace Conference: The French Initiative was designed to give a new momentum to the two-state solution after frustration on both sides. The French government was worried that the two-state solution was slipping away.

The French Initiative is NOT perpetuating the status quo. On the contrary, the status quo is pushing the two-state solution out. France wants it back on the international agenda and this is the reason there are so many difficulties. It does not wish to undermine an ongoing process. The French side is aware that the time is not ripe for direct talks. This initiative should not undermine the other processes – Quartet, Kerry, Putin, Egyptian – all is worthwhile in an

inclusive sense. The multilateral involvement is not trying to impose a solution; it is about tapping into the good will of partners within the international community. Since the initiative was launched partners who had never been previously involved have stepped in and asked how they could assist.

If Israel were to attend the conference organised by France, it would show that Israel is genuinely interested in peace. France wishes to encourage civil society to contribute to the peace process, to build the state capacity of the Palestinian Authority, and to encourage economic development. In the political dimension, the Arab Peace Initiative has never received a real answer. This initiative is still on the table and could be used in complementarity with other initiatives. The aim is to have a new genuine process.



Concluding Session: A Progressive Strategy for EU-Israeli Relations and a Changing Middle East

Chair: Hélène Conway-Mouret - Director of the International Department, Jean-Jaurès Foundation, Member of the Senate of France

The concluding session of the conference featured the participation of two prominent progressive leaders who presented their vision of what a progressive strategy for EU-Israeli relations and a changing Middle East can be. Touching upon the issues that were discussed throughout the day, these keynote speeches also focused on determining a progressive agenda that can provide the compass for the future of the region, the Peace Process and EU-Israeli relations.

Massimo D'Alema - Former Prime Minister of Italy, President of FEPS: Mr. D'Alema laid out his doctrine regarding the processes that need to take place and the role of Europe in general and the progressive forces in particular, to achieve a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the other bloody conflicts in the region.

The full speech of Mr. D'Alema appears in an earlier chapter of this book.

Isaac Herzog - Chairman of the Israeli Labour Party: Brexit and the upcoming elections in France in April and other upcoming electoral processes in European countries all

have a direct bearing on the progressive voice in Europe. All of this has to do with the direction Europe is facing. When speaking about a progressive agenda, one needs to understand that Europe is changing and even if it desired to, it would not be able to separate from the Middle East region, mainly due to recent developments of the influx of refugees. Europe is embedded in the Middle East and the Middle East is embedded in Europe.

The region is changing. It will take years and even generations until we fully comprehend the outcome of the war in Syria. The lack of use of force by Europe and the US in Syria is a historic mistake which has led to the current situation.

There is no progress in the process between Netanyahu and Abbas. Direct negotiations are currently virtually impossible and the alternatives are moving towards internal ones – this will be a mistake. Foreign initiatives can be risky and can lead to more violence that would not lead to the right results. Any initiative aiming to impose any kind of policy will not achieve the desired goal. Europe has a strong array of incentives it can use. It can encourage the parties. However, doing so through an EU forum is not likely to advance peace.

Bringing the parties into one room, at this moment, is a regional opportunity. Converging the interests in the region may bring a true vision to the table. A vision that promotes

economic development can both lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state and to the recognition of Israeli interests. The Arab Quartet (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain) has tried various steps and this was the basis for my talks with Netanyahu in May 2016.

Europe is interested in a Middle East peace process and has a genuine interest in achieving it. But for this to happen it must find support within the Israeli public, which is in the midst of an internal conflict between the desire to achieve peace and a two-state solution, and security threats and fear of terrorism. We are dealing in Israel with issues of values. There is a big group in Israel that feels their democratic rights are in danger. That feeling led to a huge attendance at the memorial rally for Yitzhak Rabin.

The regional and the inner politics of the EU and the US determine the agenda towards the Middle East. Progressive partners need not only to offer the hand with the olive branch but also to maintain security interests and use force when necessary.



Contributors



Dr. Yossi Beilin is a former Israeli Minister of Justice.

His lengthy career of public service began with his appointment as Cabinet Secretary. As a member of Knesset for twenty years, and the former chairman of Israel's Meretz party, he has held ministerial positions in several governments.

He is a leading proponent of the Peace Process between Israel and its neighbours, most notably, the initiator and architect behind the 1993 Oslo Accords as well as the Geneva Initiative. He is the creator of the 'Birthright' program, which over the years has brought tens of thousands of Jews to Israel.



H el ene Conway-Mouret is Director of the International Department at the Jean-Jaur es Foundation.

She is Senator of the French Abroad and Secretary of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Armed Forces.

She is a former Deputy Minister in charge of French Abroad and is the Deputy National Secretary of the Socialist Party in charge of the International. She headed the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) School of Languages for fourteen years. Advisor to the Assembly of French Abroad from 1997 to 2011, she founded French-World-ADFE (French Democratic Association Abroad) in Ireland.



Massimo D'alema is the President of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) since 2010.

On October 1998 he became Prime Minister of Italy. He was in office until April 2000. In 2004 he became a Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the EP Delegation for relations between the EU and the Mercosur. On 2006 he was appointed deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in Italy. On 2008 he was elected MP for Apulia representing the Democratic Party. He has been the President of the "Fondazione di cultura politica Italianieuropei" Political Foundation since 2000.



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 negotiations 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. Lars Faaborg-Andersen is Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the State of Israel since 2013.

He has a distinguished career, spanning almost thirty years in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He headed the Ministry's Middle East and North Africa Department (2000-2003) whereas he initiated the original "Road Map for the MEPP", eventually approved by the Quartet.

He served as Ambassador of Denmark to the United Nations (2003-2008) and, most recently, as Ambassador of Denmark to the Political and Security Committee of the EU (2008-2013).



Avi Gabbay is a former Israeli Minister of Environmental Protection (2015-2016).

He worked in the Ministry of Finance, before joining Bezeq (largest Israeli telecommunications group), where he held numerous positions, namely CEO of Bezeq International (2003-2006) and CEO of Bezeq (2006-2013).

Prior to the 2015 elections he was amongst the founders of the new Kulanu party. Despite not being elected to the Knesset, he was appointed Minister of Environmental Protection. On May 2016, he submitted his resignation from the government. On December 2016, he joined the Israeli Labour Party.



Itamar Gazala is the Research Director of the Macro Center for Political Economics.

His focus is on macro-economic research with an emphasis on the labour market, political and regional economics and Israel's economy. He has been active in the encouragement of the public discourse in Israel on a wide range of topics, including cost-benefit analyses of economic reforms, the national budget and social security.

He is a Public Policy and Administration master's student at Ben Gurion University and has a BA in Economics and a BSc in Statistics and Operations Research from Tel Aviv University.



Amb. Fernando Gentilini is the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process.

He is an Italian diplomat with more than twenty years of experience in European, multilateral affairs and crisis management. In 2006 he was appointed Deputy Diplomatic Advisor to the Italian Prime Minister in Rome. In 2008 he was nominated NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan. In 2011 he was appointed as the EU Special Representative for Kosovo and was director for Western Europe, Western Balkans, and Turkey for the European External Action Service from 2012.



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 of Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (Israel) and is an Honorary Senator of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts.



MK Isaac Herzog is Chairman of the Israeli Labour Party and the Zionist Union Party and leader of the opposition.

Member of Knesset since 2003, he served in several ministerial and parliamentary positions, including: Minister of Housing and Construction (2005), Minister of Tourism (2006-2007), Minister of the Diaspora, Society and the Fight against Antisemitism (2007-2009), Minister of Welfare and Social Services (2007-2011) and leader of opposition (since 2013).

He served in the IDF as an officer in Unit 8200 of the Intelligence Corps and is a law graduate from Tel Aviv University.



MEP Miltiadis Kyrkos is Member of the European Parliament (S&D, Greece) and Vice-Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation to the EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee.

He also serves as a substitute for the Delegation for Relations with Israel.

In the 2014 European Parliament election, he was elected one of two MEPs on the list of the newly founded political party The River.

As a chemical engineer, he has been a scientific advisor in the European Parliament and was involved in developing the Greek-language programme for children from the Muslim minority in northern Greece.



Prof. Bruno Liebhaberg is Chairman of the Scientific Council and Vice President of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS).

He teaches at the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management, Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). He is also Director General of the Centre on Regulation in Europe (CERRE), a European think tank founded in 2010 at his initiative.

He has an MA in Management Sciences from the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management, ULB and a PhD in Industrial Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science.



MK Tzipi Livni is Head of Hatnuah faction in the Zionist Union Party.

She serves as a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense (chair of the Subcommittee on International Lawfare) and the Constitution, Law and Justice Knesset Committees.

She has served in eight different cabinet positions, most notably as Israel's Foreign Minister (2006-2009) and Justice Minister (2013-2014), during which she led multiple rounds of peace talks with the Palestinians, setting the record for most government roles ever held by an Israeli woman. In 2015, she joined forces with Labour Party to create the Zionist Union.



Dr. Roby Nathanson is the General Director 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 obtained an MA and a PhD in Economics, specialising in international trade and development, from the University of Köln (Germany).



Vassilis Ntousas is the International Relations Policy Advisor at the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), where he coordinates various international projects and activities and conducts political research.

He received his MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics in 2011, specialising mainly in foreign policy analysis and international security issues. He had previously received a First Class Honours for his BA in International Relations and Politics from the University of Sheffield in 2008.



Gideon Sa'ar is a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) since May 2015.

He served as Minister of Education and Minister of the Interior in Israel's two previous governments. Between 2009 and 2013 he was a member of the political-security cabinet; he likewise participated in this forum in 1999 and 2001-2002 in his role as cabinet secretary. He served as a Member of Knesset for twelve years, prior to which he served in various positions directly linked to decision making and the public sector.



MK Dr. Nachman Shai is a member of the Israeli Labour party, chair of the Subcommittee for Foreign Policy and Public Relations and chair of Israel-Germany Parliamentary Friendship Group.

Until he was first elected to the Knesset in 2009, he has held diverse positions in the military, the media, the diplomatic and the public arenas, including: Director General of the Ministry of Science, Culture and Sport; IDF Spokesperson; Communications Advisor to the Minister of Defence; Director General of the Second Television and Radio Authority and Chairman of the Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA).



Dr. Ernst Stetter is the Secretary General of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) since 2008.

He is also a regular commentator on EU affairs in the media and visiting fellow at University of Greenwich, London. He is an Economist and Political Scientist. He studied in Tübingen and Heidelberg (Germany) focusing on international trade, finance, economic and social policy and development issues. From 2003 to 2008 he was the Director of the EU-Office of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Brussels.

In 2003 he received the French decoration of Chevalier de l'Ordre national du Mérite.



Amb. Pierre Vimont is the Special Envoy for the French Initiative for a Middle East Peace Conference.

He was the first executive secretary-general of the European External Action Service (EEAS), from December 2010 to March 2015. During his thirty-eight-year diplomatic career with the French foreign service, he served as ambassador to the United States from 2007 to 2010, ambassador to the European Union from 1999 to 2002, and chief of staff to three former French foreign ministers. He holds the title, Ambassador of France, a dignity bestowed for life to only a few French career diplomats.



General (ret.) Amos Yadlin is 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 Airforce, Israel's military attaché in Washington, and commander of the IDF military Colleges and the National Defense College. He has written on national security, force development, intelligence, civil-military relations, and the military ethics of fighting terror.