



**Israel National Defense College**

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**Israel's new strategic importance**

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**A chance to upgrade Israel's relations with the North  
Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Euro-Atlantic  
community.**

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## **1. Executive Summary**

The civil war in Syria has drawn both international attention and - since 2015 - active Russian intervention. Russia's motives for supporting Assad are complex and include honoring a long alliance, preserving strategic positions, and great-power aspirations. Therefore, the intervention in Syria allows Russia to leverage its role in Syria and to develop its geopolitical position towards the West, especially NATO and the EU.

Russia appeared as a power and sought to translate its military successes into the role of a geopolitical actor. This leads to the question, whether values in foreign policy are still important or is the new balance of power based only on Realpolitik and the relations between frenemies?

Due to the geostrategic importance of Syria, the large number of actors involved, while most of them could be seen as frenemies and the emanation to the region, the conflict in Syria mirrors this development like in a laboratory.

The USA plays an outside role in Israel's security, and the withdrawal of troops could threaten the regional balance of power. Without American forces in the north of Syria as a counterweight, a once more empowered

Iran with unfettered land access to their Hezbollah allies, poses an existential threat to Israel.<sup>1</sup>

NATO is still standing on the principles of a rule based liberal world order, by stating in 2010 Strategic Concept, “Our Alliance...is based on common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and because our common essential and enduring purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of its members. These values and objectives are universal and perpetual, and we are determined to defend them through unity, solidarity, strength and resolve.”<sup>2</sup>

NATO offers partners around the globe more political engagement with the Alliance and restates the commitment to keep the door to NATO open to all European democracies that meet the standards of membership, pointing out, that enlargement contributes to NATO’s goal of a free and peaceful Europe. The indispensable mission will continue to ensure that the Alliance remains a supreme community of “freedom, peace, security and shared values.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Megan Specia, Winners and Losers in Trump’s Planned Troop Withdrawal from Syria, The New York Times, December 20, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/20/world/middleeast/winners-losers-syria-trumps-troops.html>

<sup>2</sup> NATO, Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon, [www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68580.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm), paragraph 38.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Preface.

Since the founding of the state, Israel's foreign policy has preferentially sought close links with powerful international actors, especially global powers but not implicitly with multi- or international organizations.

Israel's foreign policy, in particular the security aspect, is based on a strong emphasis on political sovereignty. Combined with a reluctance to engage in multilateral organizations, especially those aiming at conflict resolution, the close strategic link with the USA, which is of fundamental importance for Israel's security and the maintenance of bilateral links with individual states, above all in the West including the European Union, but also with Russia, selected Arab states and emerging states in Asia and Africa characterize Israel's international environment and field of play.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, Israel's legitimacy to exist as a state is contested or questioned by numerous actors in the region and beyond. By international standards, the large number of states and social groups that still refuse to recognize Israel is prominent.

The USA has been Israel's most important ally since the late 1960s. Israel enjoys great political support in the US past the political camps ever

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<sup>4</sup> Lidia Averbukh, Margarete Klein, Russia-Israel Relationship Transformed by Syria Conflict, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, September 2018, Berlin, [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2018C37\\_avk\\_kle.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2018C37_avk_kle.pdf)

since. It has been part of the bipartisan consensus for many decades, meaning that both sides of the political spectrum of the USA, Democrats and Republicans, give Israel strong political and emotional support.

Today American support of Israel is no longer bi-partisan in view of the serious drift away from Israel within the Democratic party, which has become increasingly evident. A new group of congressmen and congresswomen where especially the young left-wing Members of Congress no longer want to support the quiet Washington consensus in favor of Israel are the reason for the dispute among the Democrats.

Furthermore, Israel must consider its limitations, and realize the threats Israel is facing today and in the foreseeable future are at such a level that Israel must consider becoming a member of a regional security system. Moreover, Israel must realize that if the Palestine conflict continues, the existence of Israel as a Jewish state will remain to be challenged, as is the case now with Iran. Or as Chuck Freilich a Senior Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School and former Deputy National Security Adviser, defined the current state of play during a panelists discussion on Israel's national security strategy in 2018 :”There are no good military solutions to any of the major issues that Israel faces today: the Iranian issue, the Palestinian issue, even the Hezbollah issue. The bad news is that there may not be

any good diplomatic solutions either.”<sup>5</sup> This basically means, that there are no solutions of any kind not even on the lowest tactical level. Israel is able and prepared to contain the status quo of today’s challenges militarily and diplomatically but has no greater strategy on how to approach questions and problems concerning the future of the state of Israel and its existence. This is not only true for outside existing and emerging problems, but maybe even more important, for Israel’s domestic situation too.

The violent decline of the "Arab Spring" in Egypt, Syria and Iraq underscores the image of modern Israel as a thriving oasis in a war-torn environment. The dream of a Middle East as part of a Euro-Mediterranean economic, peace and security zone will remain a utopian notion for a long time to come. The extent to which Israel will succeed at some point in acquiring full membership of the European Union and NATO within the framework of a two-state solution will also depend on the further dynamics of European-Israeli relations. However, the ending of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a strategic priority for Europe.

Without this solution, there would be little chance of successfully

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<sup>5</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, Strategy and Tactics: Examining Israel’s National Security, Panelists discuss Israel’s national security strategy, including implications for the Middle East and U.S.-Israel relations, Council on Foreign Relations, January 19, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/event/strategy-and-tactics-examining-israels-national-security>

tackling the broader problems of the Middle East. This makes it even more important to realize that the Euro-Atlantic community and Israelis are closely linked not only because of the newly created security environment in the region, but also in the context of common political interests and cultural, democratic and human rights values.

Israel and the Euro-Atlantic community have to think-out-of-the-box and look for creative and lasting solutions, as the so far executed strategies – if there were any – have failed. Israel is not prepared to seriously consider alternative partners, because the USA is still heavily supporting Israel and seems to be anxious to fully disengage from the Middle East.

How far-fetched this might seem today, especially when we look at the outcomes of the latest Israeli elections, NATO is probably the only strategic partner, that could be the solution for Israel's future challenges.



## **2. Introduction**

The civil war in Syria has drawn both international attention and - since 2015 - active Russian intervention. Russia's motives for supporting Assad are complex and include honoring a long alliance, preserving strategic positions, and great-power aspirations. Therefore, the intervention in Syria allows Russia to leverage its role in Syria and to develop its geopolitical position towards the West, especially NATO and the EU. The USA's dominant role in the Middle East slipped under the Obama administration, providing Russia with the opportunity to improve its position and expand massively its influence in the region.

Moreover, the premeditated USA withdrawal from Syria and latest statements announced by the Trump administration regarding the Middle East restrains the USA doctrine of working through expanding coalitions. Concurrently, Iran is supporting Assad because of its pretensions of hegemony in the region. Both developments are of great concern for NATO and the EU.

Israel, being a recipient of US arms since the early 1960's became fully dependent on the US' military, economic and political support, although the USA and Israel do have neither a mutual defense treaty nor any kind of agreement that provide formal USA security guarantees. However, the

USA and Israel do currently have a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement (TIAS 2675, dated July 23, 1952) regarding the provision of U.S. military equipment to Israel, and they have entered into a range of stand-alone agreements, memoranda of understanding, and other arrangements varying in their formality.<sup>6</sup>

The USA plays an outsized role in Israel's security, so the withdrawal of troops could threaten the regional balance of power. A once more empowered Iran, e.g., with unfettered land access to their Hezbollah allies — without American forces in the north of Syria as a counterweight — would establish an existential threat to Israel.<sup>7</sup> Although Mr. Trump seems to be anxious to fully disengage from the Middle East, Israel is not prepared to seriously consider alternative partners.

This newly created environment leads to the question who would supplement, augment or replace the USA. Realpolitik has always been an integral part of the USA's foreign policy. Yet, America was not only a nation but an idea encouraging freedom, human rights, democracy, the

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<sup>6</sup> Jim Zanotti, Israel: Background and USA Relations, Congressional Research Service, July 31, 2018, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33476.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Megan Specia, Winners and Losers in Trump's Planned Troop Withdrawal from Syria, The New York Times, December 20, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/20/world/middleeast/winners-losers-syria-trumps-troops.html>

Rule of Law, and a rule-based liberal world order. All these factors are not reflected in today's US foreign policy anymore.

Israel's recent approaches towards Russia may be based on Realpolitik and pragmatic concerns, as Russia is an ally and arms supplier to Iran and Syria, which are both Israel's sworn enemies. However, this creates a sensitive issue within the framework of Israel's relations with NATO, the USA, and the EU, whose security are inter-connected. In this context, NATO, the USA and Russia, are not independent actors. Instead, their policies oscillate and change, thus effecting Israel's choices and behavior. If the USA remain even partially engaged in the area, and if Russia's policy towards Israel remains ambivalent, it is unlikely that Israel will attempt a realignment towards the EU and NATO. In other words, this development is dependent upon Israel's perception of the situation and its assessment regarding the role of both America and Russia.

After Syria shot down a Russian military aircraft, claiming Israel being responsible for this incident, nobody knows how long the Russian -Israeli "honeymoon" will last. Cooperation and deconfliction worked fantastically on a tactical level, however, they didn't on the strategic one. "Israel hoped that that would create a better understanding in Russia why the Iranians should be at least contained. But the Russians have their own

set of interests. So, they said you can strike them, but we are not going to stop them from deploying.”<sup>8</sup> The Russia Israeli relationship is a true example for Realpolitik.

Additionally, the fact that Trump recently decided to delay the withdrawal from Syria indicates that nothing is fixed or final in this context. Hence, Israel’s Realpolitik may hurt – in the long run - Israel’s power and legitimacy.

As NATO moves towards becoming a proactive security organization, it has become increasingly evident that security can only be achieved collectively. The divide between "Allies" and "Partners" needs to be closed quickly. Security can only be assured by close collaboration with partners both in Central and Eastern Europe and the Greater Middle East.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Strategy and Tactics: Examining Israel’s National Security, Panelists discuss Israel’s national security strategy, including implications for the Middle East and U.S.-Israel relations, Council on Foreign Relations, January 19, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/event/strategy-and-tactics-examining-israels-national-security>

<sup>9</sup> Chris Donnelly, Building a NATO partnership for the Greater Middle East, NATO Review, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/partnership-forward/partnership-Middle-East/EN/index.htm>

### **3. The Changing World Order**

“No truly global “world order” has ever existed”. However, Henry Kissinger describes “world order” as “the concept by a region or civilization about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world. An international order is the practical application of these concepts to a substantial part of the globe - large enough to affect the global balance of power. Regional orders involve the same principles applied to a defined geographic area.”<sup>10</sup>.

Under an international order, conflicts should, if possible, be solved without using military force or at least processed in a way that all parties involved will refrain from violence in the future. Conflict resolution below the threshold of violence is by no means just a normative imperative. If this non-violence threshold is exceeded, it can set in motion an escalation and have unintended effects. An effective world order is thus capable of pushing back and containing wars and, more generally, violence as a form of staging of conflicts and as a means of enforcing collective interests across the spectrum of politics. At the same time, this creates favorable conditions for exploiting the opportunities of global

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

interconnectedness, building trust, and creating predictability. Open markets and open societies must be protected from violence and, at the same time, need security, stability and reliability to reach their full potential. Finally, political orders are based upon a concept of how members of a certain society should and could live together in relative harmony. For a liberal international order, the keywords “free”, “democratic”, “wealthy”, “just”, and “sustainable” denote the core of this vision.<sup>11</sup>

The world order that has governed global politics so far is usually called the liberal international order.<sup>12</sup> For more than 70 years, the world has been subject to this kind of liberal western order.

After the awful experience of the Second World War, the USA and their Western partners constructed a multi-layered international order, organized around economic openness, multilateral institutions, security collaboration, and self-governing solidarity. Over the years the USA provided hegemonic leadership, anchored the alliances, stabilized the world economy, while at the same time promoting cooperation and backing common western values. As the postwar order expanded after the

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<sup>11</sup> Hanns W. Maull (Hg.), *Auflösung oder Ablösung?, Die Internationale Ordnung im Umbruch*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan. The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Cold War, so too did the respective governing institutions. NATO expanded and the World Trade Organization (WTO) was launched. Three basic principles can be identified: (i) liberal democracy as a political model, (ii) economic cooperation within the framework of open economies, and (iii) institutionalized multilateralism within the framework of a rules-based order.<sup>13</sup>

Looking at the world at the end of the twentieth century, one could be excused for thinking that history was moving in a progressive and liberal internationalist direction.<sup>14</sup>

Warnings of an imminent disintegration of the global order are increasing since Donald Trump was elected President of the USA. Shortly after Mr. Trump Took up office, Robert Kagan wrote: “the collapse of the world order, with everything that goes with it, might not be that far away.”<sup>15</sup>

Mr. Kagan added in an even clearer wording that the democratic alliance that formed the foundation of the liberal world order under the leadership of the United States is dissolving. At some point, and probably sooner

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<sup>13</sup> Tobias Bunde, Weltordnung vor dem Zerfall, Ende der Gewissheiten, Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (APUZG 36-37/2018), <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/275096/weltordnung-vor-dem-zerfall>

<sup>14</sup> G. John Ikenberry, The end of liberal international order?, International Affairs I (2018), Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 7-23

<sup>15</sup> Robert Kagan, The Twilight of the Liberal World Order, 24.1.2017, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/the-twilight-of-the-liberal-world-order>

than we expect, the global peace that underpinned this alliance and order will also dissipate.

Mr. Trump, however, is not the reason, but the symbol for a deeper crisis – and, at the same time, he is its most combusive agent. He embodies an almost striking counter draft to the non-partisan consensus that has shaped US foreign policy and the order it has essentially crafted since 1945. Contrary to what is often claimed, Mr. Trump's view on foreign policy is by no means erratic but contains some clear convictions. These include a basic skepticism on multilateral organizations, with Mr. Trump repeatedly expressing that he believes the USA`s goodwill having been betrayed by other states, particularly their allies. His rejection of free trade is a similar constant. For decades, Trump has railed against allegedly unfair trade deals. Finally, Trump has long shown great sympathy for authoritarian rulers.<sup>16</sup> All of which makes him the exponent of the increasingly widespread illiberal nationalistic critique of the existing liberal world order. The institutions established in the mid-20th century, such as the United Nations, the institutions created by NATO in the field of security, as well as the USA`s network of bilateral security guarantees remain the backbone of this very liberal world order.

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Wright, Trump`s 19th Century Foreign Policy, 20.1.2016, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/01/donald-trump-foreign-policy-213546>



Essentially confined to the Western world in the period of the East-West conflict that system was globalized after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Non-Western major powers such as China and Russia were increasingly involved in the liberal order, linked to the hope that they would become responsible associates of this order.<sup>17</sup>

The European integration process gained new pace in the 1990s and led to both, enlargement and deepening of the EU. This was by far the most far-reaching experiment of supranational cooperation. As a result, regional organizations like the African Union copied the European model of regional integration. With the establishment of the International Criminal Court as a preliminary climax, international jurisdiction has also been further developed. Various measures of the international community have been linked to respect human rights. Sovereignty of states has been interpreted more and more restrictively. The world order became more and more liberal.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, this process seems to have been reversed. The current phase can be described more as an “illiberal moment” in which the basic liberal

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<sup>17</sup> et al., G. John Ikenberry, The Rise of China and the Future of the West, in: Foreign Affairs 1/2018, p. 23–37.

<sup>18</sup> Tobias Bunde, Weltordnung vor dem Zerfall, Ende der Gewissheiten, Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (APUZG 36-37/2018), <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/275096/weltordnung-vor-dem-zerfall?p=all>

principles are challenged. They are challenged from the outside, through the rise of authoritarian Great Powers that pursue divergent concepts of order and have not inserted themselves into the liberal order as easily as hoped and from within through the emergence of illiberal political forces in almost all Western countries. After China has long indicated that it has no ambition whatsoever to export its own model, President Xi Jinping praised the Chinese system ahead of the 2017 National People's Congress as a new model for those countries that are accelerating their development and at the same time wanted to preserve their independence. Moreover, for several years Beijing has been trying to build a kind of parallel system with the institutions of the liberal order.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, polls in many countries around the world show increasing dissatisfaction with liberal-democratic norms and institutions, as well as growing support for authoritarian policy styles. The global spread of liberal democracy, understood a few years ago as a kind of natural process, has now come to a standstill. 2017 marked the 12th consecutive year of more countries in the world seeing a decline rather than an improvement in political rights and civil liberties.<sup>20</sup> In world economics this is paralleled as World Trade Organization negotiations

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Michael J. Abramowitz, *Freedom in the World 2018 Democracy in Crisis*, Freedom House, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2018>

have barely progressed for many years as regional trade deals provoke increased severe protests. Not least in the USA, which has long been the driving force behind trade liberalization, Protectionist forces are gaining influence in many countries. President Trump's decision to impose punitive tariffs on China, but also some of its closest allies, will not only lead to major welfare losses, but also has the potential to trigger an escalation spiral that could lead straight into a real trade war.<sup>21</sup>

Multilateral cooperation is also called into question by a wide range of actors. It can be argued that the increasing politicization and questioning of international organizations is also due to their increase in competence and their sometimes far-reaching rights of intervention. In contrast to the 1990s and early 2000s, European Integration today appears to be little more than a one-way street towards an ever-closer union while empowering Brussels. 2016, Britain's Referendum on leaving the EU has made clear that European Integration is by no means irreversible.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, the main organizations in the field of security policy are under pressure. The UN Security Council proved incapable of action on

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<sup>21</sup> Tobias Bunde, *Weltordnung vor dem Zerfall, Ende der Gewissheiten*, Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (APUZG 36-37/2018), <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/275096/weltordnung-vor-dem-zerfall?p=all>

<sup>22</sup> Pol Morillas, *Shapes of a Union: From ever Closer Union to Flexible Differentiation after Brexit*, CIDOB Barcelona Center For International Affairs, January 2017, [https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication\\_series/notes\\_internacionales/n1\\_166/shapes\\_of\\_a\\_union\\_from\\_ever\\_closer\\_union\\_to\\_flexible\\_differentiation\\_after\\_brexit](https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/notes_internacionales/n1_166/shapes_of_a_union_from_ever_closer_union_to_flexible_differentiation_after_brexit)

the most serious conflicts of recent years, most notably Syria. Also, the core institution of the western order, NATO, is openly challenged. For example, if Trump implicitly threatens that the USA could withdraw from NATO or criticizes the principle of Collective Defense in interviews, much that long seemed unthinkable is again a realistic threat.<sup>23</sup> However, to suggest that Donald Trump's policies are condemning the erosion of the post-war order would be both, to overstate the degree of their former unity and to underestimate the factors they were already weakening this order before he took office.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1990s the international community began to carry out successful humanitarian interventions based on UN mandates. At least for a moment, it seemed as if the liberal rule and value-based order succeeded.<sup>25</sup> Suddenly, foreign policy was less about tangible national interests than universal values, democratization and nation-building. Pragmatism was considered a betrayal of moral goals and somehow the

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<sup>23</sup> Scott Neuman, In Interview, Trump Appears To Question NATO's 'Collective Defense' Clause, NPR, July 19, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/07/19/630361006/in-interview-trump-appears-to-question-natos-collective-defense-clause>

<sup>24</sup> Tobias Bunde, Weltordnung vor dem Zerfall, Ende der Gewissheiten, Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (APUZG 36-37/2018), <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/275096/weltordnung-vor-dem-zerfall?p=all>

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Wright, The Return to Great-Power Rivalry Was Inevitable With neo-authoritarianism on the rise, the old assumptions undergirding a common set of Western values just won't do, The Atlantic, September 12, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/09/liberal-international-order-free-world-trump-authoritarianism/569881/>

foundation was laid for the overestimation of international law and the international community.

After 9/11, President George W. Bush based his foreign policy on the belief that Middle Eastern terrorists constituted a uniquely dangerous opponent. In some respects, it appeared that the world was back in the realm of history. The USA administration's belief that democracy could be implanted quickly in the Arab Middle East detailed a profound faith in the western model of liberal democracies.<sup>26</sup>

The Russian blockade in the Security Council with regards to Kosovo and the USA's disaster in Iraq could have been reason enough to think about the limits of value-led foreign policy. The opposite happened, as in September 2005, at the United Nations World Summit, all member states formally accepted the responsibility of each state to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. It has also been agreed that, when any state fails to meet that responsibility, the international community is responsible for helping to protect people threatened with such crimes. Should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities fail to protect their populations, the international community should act collectively in a timely and decisive

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<sup>26</sup> Walter Russell Mead, "The Return of Geopolitics", *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2014-04-17/return-geopolitics>

manner on a case-by-case basis through the UN Security Council and in cooperation with regional organizations as appropriate.<sup>27</sup> However, the Right-to-Protect (R2P) concept has only been used in the overthrow of the Libyan despot Gaddafi and morale seemed to be the main driver of foreign policy.

Not everybody shared this idealism, least of all the Russian President Vladimir Putin. With a sense of realism, he understood that the self-imposed commitments were not particularly important in their implementation. With the annexation of the Crimea, Putin violated international agreements, using Russia's veto, he prevented the resolutions against the Syrian dictator and he participates in the Syrian civil war supporting Assad, a dictator who ignored all the rules of international humanitarian law. One could argue, that Putin brought back geopolitics and Realpolitik as a counter draft to the then liberal rule-based concept and Syria became a clear warning signal for a value-based foreign policy.<sup>28</sup>

The Chinese government is also to be understood that it does not embrace the belief in international law. In the dispute over the South China Sea

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations, Background Information on the right to protect, <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/bgresponsibility.shtml>

<sup>28</sup> Eric Gujer, Die Ära der Werte ist vorbei – Die Welt erlebt die Rückkehr der Realpolitik, Neue Züricher Zeitung, November 18, 2018, <https://www.nzz.ch/meinung/die-aera-der-werte-ist-vorbei-die-welt-erlebt-die-rueckkehr-der-realpolitik-ld.1440411>

China ignores, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and a court ruling based on it. Beijing is less aggressive than Moscow, but just as determined.<sup>29</sup> The US administration is responding to the Russian and Chinese challenge by calling into question foreign policy morals and values and even scrutinizing America's role as a guarantor of the liberal international order. It looks as if the USA perceives national interests more important than the liberal world order. President Trump considers the competition of the great powers, with Russia and, above all, China, the central theme and does not want to be tied up in this dispute.<sup>30</sup> The American publicist Robert Kagan has come up with the appropriate metaphor for this development: "The jungle grows back." The jungle of anarchy is beating back, multilateral organizations and norms are no longer as popular as they have been once. The world is experiencing a rollback of Realpolitik. The era of values seems to be over. It lasted from the end of the Cold War to the day when the hopes of the Arab Spring faded, until in Egypt the military regained power and civil war broke out in Syria.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Robin Emmott, EU's statement on South China Sea reflects divisions, Reuters, July 15, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-ruling-eu/eus-statement-on-south-china-sea-reflects-divisions-idUSKCN0ZV1TS>

<sup>30</sup> Eric Bratberg, Michael Kimmage, Trump and the (liberal) International Order, *The National Interest*, February 26, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/trump-the-liberal-international-order-24659>

<sup>31</sup> Eric Gujer, Die Ära der Werte ist vorbei – Die Welt erlebt die Rückkehr der Realpolitik, *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, November 18, 2018, <https://www.nzz.ch/meinung/die-aera-der-werte-ist-vorbei-die-welt-erlebt-die-rueckkehr-der-realpolitik-ld.1440411>

It has been replaced by interest-led politics with changing coalitions and a great power competition between countries that are both friend and enemy at the same time challenging the existing balance of power.

The ideas and values alive in the ideal of liberal international order are being challenged threefold:<sup>32</sup>

Externally, China, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, all of whom that were supposed to support the international system are instead using their influence to pursue an old vision of great power politics. As the distribution of power shifts, even emerging democracies see the liberal order linked to the dominance of the USA and the West more broadly.<sup>33</sup>

Internally, many Western citizens see openness and international engagement as working against their interests, echoed in a declining support for liberal internationalism in Europe.<sup>34</sup>

Transnationally, new challenges and forms of disorder arose and require the development of new norms. New forms of conflict threaten to loosen the international rule of law. In this newly developed environment, no

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<sup>32</sup> Anthony Dworkin & Mark Leonard, Can Europe save the World Order?, European Council on Foreign Relations, May 24 2018,

[https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/can\\_europe\\_save\\_the\\_world\\_order#\\_ftnref1](https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/can_europe_save_the_world_order#_ftnref1)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Walter Russell Mead, "The Return of Geopolitics", Foreign Affairs, May-June 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2014-04-17/return-geopolitics>



adequate regimes for dealing with migration, refugees, as well as the rapid development of threats coming from the cyberspace are available.<sup>35</sup>

Are values in foreign policy still important or is the new balance of power only based on Realpolitik and the relations between frenemies? Like in a laboratory the conflict in Syria mirrors this development, due to the geostrategic importance of the country, the large number of actors involved – most of them could be viewed as frenemies - and the emanation to the region. Russia emerged as a power and sought to translate its military successes into the role of geopolitical actor.

Therefore, it established a new negotiating format with Iran and Turkey in Astana, Kazakhstan.<sup>36</sup> However, even under Russian mediation negotiations on a political settlement of the conflict did not produce results. The perception that the civil war in Syria was moving toward its end after the Russian intervention prompted regional powers to impose their interests through proxies and direct military intervention. Turkey, with the help of Salafist and jihadist fighters, occupied parts of the Syrian north to prevent a contiguous area along its border controlled by the

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<sup>35</sup> Anthony Dworkin & Mark Leonard, Can Europe save the World Order?, European Council on Foreign Relations, May 24 2018,

[https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/can\\_europe\\_save\\_the\\_world\\_order#\\_ftnref1](https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/can_europe_save_the_world_order#_ftnref1)

<sup>36</sup> Orhan Garfali, Turkey, Russia Resurrect a ‘Concert of Europe’ to Resolve Syrian Crisis, Publication: Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 15 Issue: 154, The Jamestown Foundation, October 30, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/turkey-russia-resurrect-a-concert-of-europe-to-resolve-syrian-crisis/>

dominant Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and to establish loyal local government structures in the future. Iran used its involvement to prepare the ground for a long-term presence, build loyal militias and establish a corridor to provide it with direct access to the Mediterranean via a land bridge.<sup>37</sup> This caused great concern, particularly in Israel, which has been increasingly aggressive in carrying out strikes against the presence of Iran and Iranian-backed militias in Syria to prevent a situation like that in Lebanon. This led to a direct Israeli-Iranian confrontation for the first time in Spring 2018.<sup>38</sup> The Middle East is increasingly becoming a conflict landscape in which competition for regional supremacy based on national interests, long-lasting conflicts and domestic power struggles intertwine and reinforce each other. So far, it has not been possible to establish an effective system of collective security, an inclusive dialogue forum or at least functioning crisis mechanisms. Israel, Iran and Turkey, important non-Arab players, are not members of the regional organizations (African Union, Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council) and therefore not involved in comprehensive and institutionalized dialogue structures. Massive war crimes and crimes

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<sup>37</sup> Seth G. Jones, War by Proxy: Iran's Growing Footprint in the Middle East, CSIS Brief, Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 11, 2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/war-proxy-irans-growing-footprint-middle-east-0>

<sup>38</sup> et al., Isabel Kershner, Anne Barnard and Eric Schmitt, Israel Strikes Iran in Syria and Loses a Jet, The New York Times, February 10, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/10/world/middleeast/israel-iran-syria.html>

against humanity including the use of chemical weapons have been committed in Syria. The unilateral termination of the nuclear deal with Iran by the USA has generally called the value of international negotiations and agreements into question. This is when the failure of the international community to enforce standards severely challenged the rule-based order.<sup>39</sup>

NATO, however is still standing on the principles of a rule based liberal world order, by stating in 2010 Strategic Concept, “Our Alliance...is based on common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and because our common essential and enduring purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of its members. These values and objectives are universal and perpetual, and we are determined to defend them through unity, solidarity, strength and resolve.”<sup>40</sup>

The following chapter describes the new concept in the context of NATO's strategic development, analyzes the new concept and finally discusses whether NATO can thus meet future challenges, remain a relevant security policy actor and still be an attractive partner for partners.

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<sup>39</sup> et al., Muriel Asseburg, *Konflikt- und Krisenlandschaft in Europas Nachbarschaft. Naher und Mittlerer Osten, Deutschland und die Welt 2030*, 2018, <https://deutschland-und-die-welt-2030.de/de/beitrag/konflikt-und-krisenlandschaft-in-europas-nachbarschaft-naher-und-mittlerer-osten/>  
<sup>40</sup> NATO, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*, Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon, [www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68580.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm), paragraph 38.

## **4. NATO**

### **4.1. NATO 2010 Strategic Concept**

The heads of state and government of the 28 NATO member states adopted a new strategic concept at their summit meeting in Lisbon on 19 and 20 November 2010.<sup>41</sup>

The strategic concept of NATO reflects the central common security approach of the current 29 Member States. The current strategy forms the basis for the development of defense policy, the operational concept, the structure of the armed forces and the Alliance's collective defense planning. It is therefore indicative of the basic political and military policy of the Alliance. As each strategy must be unanimously approved by the NATO Council, smaller member states also have a formal say in the design, although the more powerful states - and especially the USA - certainly play a more dominant role.

The first publicly accessible strategy of the Alliance founded in 1949 was the strategic concept of 1991. However, the detailed military policy requirements were always subject to confidentiality. Erratically so-called ministerial guidelines are issued, which contain, especially for the force

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<sup>41</sup> NATO, Lisbon Summit Declaration, Press Release (2010) 155, Issued on 20 Nov. 2010, Last updated: July 12, 2012, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68828.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm)

planning process, detailed, publicly inaccessible instructions. Often there are also non-public attachments to the official document, which contain more detailed strategic and operational aspects.<sup>42</sup>

The first official NATO strategy was dated October 19, 1949. Their conceptual ideas were based on the USA's global strategy of Containment and Forward Defense based on a conventional deterrence. An attack by the Soviet Union on the Alliance territory should be countered with non-nuclear means as far east as possible. However, it was questionable how exactly to react to an aggression, because the European NATO partners in a first phase of the war would have been essentially on their own. Western Europe had barely enough troops, before reinforcements from the USA and Canada arrived on the battlefield. Since 1957, the Alliance has therefore practiced the strategy of Massive Retaliation. It was based on the existence of a strategically invulnerable - USA - NATO nuclear potential, which should deter the Soviet Union and its allies. If deterrence fails, the focus of the asymmetric responses would no longer be on the defense of NATO's territory, but on an immediate nuclear counter-offensive. In NATO's operational planning, the intention of the use of nuclear weapons was

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<sup>42</sup> Johannes Varwick, Das neue strategische Konzept der NATO, Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (APUZ 50/2010), December 8, 2018, <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/32306/das-neue-strategische-konzept-der-nato?p=all#footnode2-2>

assumed, with the result that the threshold from conventional to nuclear war could have been crossed at an early stage of the confrontation.

Conventional forces had only the task of warding off spatially limited attacks and delaying large-scale attacks for a limited time. They should perform NATO's "conventional shield", while USA strategic nuclear potential should be used as a "nuclear sword". Due to the loss of the US nuclear monopoly in the early 1960s, nuclear deterrence to discourage limited aggression was increasingly unreliable. The use of NATO's nuclear force would most likely have triggered a nuclear backlash. The NATO and Warsaw Pact nuclear potentials were neutralized in a mutual assured destruction. In 1962, after the Soviet Union had reached an almost equal level in strategic weapons development, the Americans changed their concepts to the strategy of Flexible Response, which was officially adopted by NATO in January 1968. In particular, the USA expected greater strategic room for maneuver because it was no longer limited to the option of nuclear war.<sup>43</sup>

The upheavals in Central and Eastern Europe, the strategic withdrawal of the Soviet Union from this region and its dissolution in December 1991, the successes in the disarmament process and the beginning of a new era

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

in Europe had now made NATO's strategy obsolete. In view of the far-reaching changes in the European security architecture and NATO itself, it became clear that the concept had to be finally freed from the burden of the East-West conflict. In the summer of 1997, the Heads of State and Government of the then 16 Member States gave the directive to formulate a new concept, which was adopted on 24 and 25 April 1999 in Washington on the 50th anniversary of the summit. The strategic concept of April 1999 - at the same time NATO was waging war on Yugoslavia - finally became a consensus paper in which the Alliance's new tasks and instruments were described in more general terms and thus characterized by a high degree of flexibility and interpretability. The new NATO was to become larger, more powerful and more flexible. <sup>44</sup>

Despite NATO's overall positive development in its environment and the unlikelihood of an attack against the Alliance, it was believed, that there is still a possibility that "a threat may develop in the longer term"<sup>45</sup>. The security of the Alliance would remain "subject to a wide range of military and non-military risks, coming from many directions and often difficult to predict. These risks include uncertainty and instability in and around the Euro-Atlantic area, as well as the possible emergence of regional

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> NATO, NATO Strategic Concept 1999, May 4, 1999, <https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065d.htm>

crises on the Alliance's periphery that can develop rapidly"<sup>46</sup>, as the 1999 NATO concept states in paragraph 20. In this context, reference was made, inter alia, to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, refugee flows resulting from armed conflict, as well as risks of a comprehensive nature such as acts of terrorism, sabotage, organized crime or the disruption of the lines of communication for the supply of vital resources. Crisis management in the Euro-Atlantic region was thus added to the classic core function of defending the Alliance. In cooperation with other international organizations, NATO also wanted "to prevent conflicts or, should a crisis occur, to contribute, in accordance with international law, to their effective management, including through the possibility of non-Article 5 crisis response operations"<sup>47</sup>, as stated in paragraph 31 of the 1999 Concept. Although many of the basic assumptions of this concept remained valid, NATO's strategic framework has changed significantly since then. The threat posed by international terrorism and fragile statehood, global operations such as in Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, the shift in power balances, energy security, the threat to trade routes and the risk of cyber-attacks, but also the enlargement to 29 member states, have made it necessary for the Alliance

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.



to adapt its strategy.<sup>48</sup> At its Riga Summit in November 2006, NATO had already adopted a key document which was conceived as a political guideline for NATO's transformation in the coming years. The Comprehensive Political Guidance sets out the Alliance's priorities for all capability-related issues, planning disciplines and intelligence.<sup>49</sup>

This paper already provided important guidelines for NATO's military transformation. However, the guiding principles were mainly related to military capabilities. But a strategic concept must do more: a vision for the Alliance. NATO Heads of State and Government therefore decided at their summit meeting in 2009 to develop a new concept by the end of 2010.<sup>50</sup>

Compared to the previous concepts, the new strategic concept is significantly shorter and more focused. It thus follows on the NATO Treaty of August 1949, which with 14 articles in no more than 23 sentences was a document of remarkable clarity. With its new strategy adopted on 19 November 2010 in Lisbon under the title "Active

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<sup>48</sup> Stuart Patrick, "Failed" States and Global Security: Empirical Questions and Policy Dilemmas, *International Studies Review* Vol. 9, No. 4 (Winter, 2007), [https://www.jstor.org/stable/4621865?read-now=1&seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4621865?read-now=1&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

<sup>49</sup> NATO, *Comprehensive Political Guidance, Endorsed by NATO Heads of State and Government* on 29 November 2006, updated July 13 2009, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_56425.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_56425.htm)

<sup>50</sup> Johannes Varwick, *Das neue strategische Konzept der NATO*, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (APUZ 50/2010), December 8, 2018, <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/32306/das-neue-strategische-konzept-der-nato?p=all#footnode2-2>

Engagement, Modern Defense", NATO is attempting to counter new threats in a changing world with new capabilities and new partners.<sup>51</sup> The NATO 2010 Strategic concept describes the core tasks and principles of the Alliance, describes the security environment, referencing the importance of common defense and deterrence. A large portion is devoted to the promotion of international security through cooperation, NATO's open door policy and partnership around the globe, as well as to reform and transition, thus preparing NATO for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>52</sup>

The concept points out in its preface that NATO endorsed again "the bond between our nations to defend one another against attack, including against new threats to the safety of our citizens."<sup>53</sup> It obligates "the Alliance to prevent crises, manage conflicts and stabilize post-conflict situations, including by working more closely with our international partners, most importantly the United Nations and the European Union."<sup>54</sup>

NATO offers partners around the globe more political engagement with the Alliance and restates the commitment to keep the door to NATO open

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<sup>51</sup> NATO, Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon, [www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68580.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm)

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., Preface.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., Preface.

to all European democracies that meet the standards of membership, pointing out, that enlargement contributes to NATO's goal of a free and peaceful Europe. The indispensable mission will continue to ensure that the Alliance remains a supreme community of "freedom, peace, security and shared values."<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, the core task and principles of the concept are to safeguard the freedom and security of the member states through political and military means in the three areas of collective defense, crisis management and cooperative security. Although the risk of a conventional attack on NATO territory is considered low, the security environment poses a number of challenges, such as the proliferation of ballistic missiles, nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, including the control of terrorist groups over nuclear, chemical, biological or radiological capabilities, instabilities at NATO borders, attacks on information technology by individual states or the Alliance. It also determines that all states are increasingly dependent on open and reliable lines of communications, transport and transit, and that international trade, energy security and prosperity depend on them. All areas are

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., Preface.

preceded by a brief analysis in order to derive tangible leverage points and measures for dealing with these challenges.<sup>56</sup>

Defense and deterrence are based on a mixture of nuclear and conventional capabilities. It is clearly stated that NATO will remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist. The concept presents a series of measures designed to ensure that NATO has a broad range of capabilities available needed to deter and defend security threats, including the ability to conduct operations with robust, mobile and deployable forces, and the ability to address the full range of conventional and emerging security risks through training, planning and information exchange. It also announces, inter alia, the development of a missile defense system, the capability to defend against chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and cyber-attacks, as well as the capability to combat terrorism and protect critical energy infrastructure.<sup>57</sup>

NATO believes that even crises and conflicts external to the Alliance's territory could result in direct threats to the Alliance's security. " NATO will therefore engage, where possible and when necessary, to prevent crises, manage crises, stabilize post-conflict situations and support

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., paragraph 7-15.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., paragraph 16-19.

reconstruction."<sup>58</sup>. Based on the "...lessons learned from NATO operations, in particular in Afghanistan and the Western Balkans"<sup>59</sup> which made "it clear that a comprehensive political, civilian and military approach is necessary for effective crisis management"<sup>60</sup>, numerous measures are presented, such as the improvement of military counterinsurgency capabilities and greater consideration of civilian aspects of conflict management.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation as well as the commitment to a fundamental willingness to accept new members the paragraphs dealing with cooperative security rendered broad scope to the importance of partnerships. Through closer cooperation with the EU, the UN and non-governmental organizations, NATO aims to promote a comprehensive security approach, which is regarded as indispensable for meeting the new challenges. It expresses also a commitment to partnership with states from all over the world. They are invited to consult with NATO on security issues and influence operations. Concrete states, except for Russia, are not mentioned.<sup>62</sup> NATO enlargement and the development of new cooperation is pursued as part of the core task of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., paragraph 20.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., paragraph 21

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., paragraph 21.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., paragraph 20-25.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., paragraph 26-35.

cooperative security in the 2010 Strategic Concept. Consequently, the Alliance aims to “deepen the cooperation with current members of the Mediterranean Dialogue and be open to the inclusion in the Mediterranean Dialogue of other countries of the region.”<sup>63</sup> as well as to “develop a deeper security partnership with our Gulf partners and remain ready to welcome new partners in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.”<sup>64</sup> This commitment clearly shows, that NATO has proactively engaged itself in cooperative security by creating forums for dialogue in the Middle East and providing bilateral means to accomplish greater legitimacy for the participating countries. Some partners evidently regard such a framework “as an attractive means of countering pressures to undertake democratic reform.”<sup>65</sup>

#### **4.2. NATO and the Mediterranean**

The Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) was launched in 1994 by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) as a result of bilateral political dialogue and practical cooperation between NATO and each of its partners in the Mediterranean to build trust and to increase mutual understanding between NATO and its MD partners. It currently involves seven non-

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., paragraph 35.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., paragraph 35.

<sup>65</sup> Walton, C. (2015). David S. Yost, NATO's Balancing Act, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2014, p. 206, Comparative Strategy. 34. 10.1080/01495933.2015.994409.

NATO nations of the Mediterranean region: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.<sup>66</sup> The multilateral dimension was created to increase security and stability in the Mediterranean region, achieve better mutual understanding and at the same time to reduce distrust of NATO. Consultations and cooperation between NATO and individual MD partners as well as in NATO+7 format, i.e. jointly with all MD partners, are possible. The Mediterranean Dialogue is based on the principles of non-discrimination, self-differentiation, inclusiveness, two-way engagement, non-imposition, complementary and mutual reinforcement and diversity as well as the pillars of political dialogue and practical cooperation.<sup>67</sup> This format was politically inspired by the so-called Oslo Agreement of 1993, i.e. the far-reaching autonomy agreements between Israel and the Palestinians. At the beginning, however, the MD received little attention; it hardly managed to get over the status of a "diplomatic talking shop". It was not until the attacks of 11 September 2001 that NATO members became more interested in the Alliance's southern flank. At the Prague NATO Summit in 2002, the Alliance finally embedded the MD in the context of other partnership formats. Since then, security and stability in the Mediterranean region

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<sup>66</sup> NATO, NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, last updated February 13, 2015, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_60021.htm?](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_60021.htm?)

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

have been regarded as security elements of NATO territory, be it in the context of transnational terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, energy security or the management of refugee movements. Two factors limit the effectiveness of the MD. Firstly, it is a very heterogeneous group of states in North Africa and the Middle East that have little in common in terms of security policy. Secondly, in 2008, those NATO members who are also members of the European Union created the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED), a theoretically complementary, but in fact competing instrument that undermined a thoughtful and exclusively security policy focus on the MD. At the 2004 NATO Summit, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) was added, bringing together the Alliance's relations with Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>68</sup> This format, too, was and is based on the assumption that security policy challenges in the Arabian-Persian Gulf can also indirectly have consequences for the security of NATO members and must therefore be overcome jointly, together with the States of the ICI. Even here, the focus of these considerations was the growing concern about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the fight against transnational terrorism. As in the MD, the partners also can

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<sup>68</sup> NATO, The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), NATO Fact Sheet, April 2014, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2014\\_04/20140331\\_140401-factsheet-ICI\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_04/20140331_140401-factsheet-ICI_en.pdf)



choose between bilateral and multilateral cooperation. So far, however, it has not been sufficiently successful in developing the ICI into a genuine regional security forum. Although other countries of the Arabian-Persian Gulf are seeking cooperation with NATO, they have a predominantly national understanding of their security interests. This reflects the character of a regional order, which is shaped by the Saudi-Iranian hegemonic conflict as well as by the general willingness to use military force. It can be seen, that in the region a primacy of bilateral security policy over considerations of order in collective defense or collective security is being given priority.<sup>69</sup>

In its more than 20 years of existence, the MD has seen an increase in practical bilateral cooperation. The Individual Partnership and Cooperation program (IPCP), which replaced the Individual Cooperation Program (ICP) framework document, aims at enhancing bilateral political dialogue as well as tailoring cooperation with NATO according to key strategic national needs and interests. All MD partners now have IPCPs or ICPs. Israel finalized its first ICP with NATO in October 2006 and a

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<sup>69</sup> Markus Kaim, *Die Neuordnung der Nato-Partnerschaftsbeziehungen*, SWP-Studie Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Berlin, June 2016, [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2016S12\\_kim.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2016S12_kim.pdf)

revised version was endorsed in December 2008. The ICPC is the main instrument of focused cooperation between NATO and MD countries.<sup>70</sup>

In December 2014, then NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen emphasized the common threat perception and, in this context, the Alliance's efforts in capacity-building and military cooperation. Since January 2016, the MD members have been involved in the regular consultations of the NATO Chiefs of Staff.<sup>71</sup>

The collapse of the regional order in the Middle East following the Arab Spring, converting the region “into a basin of persistent instability, negatively affecting the fragile balance between the Allie’s internal and external security”<sup>72</sup> has introduced new challenges but also opportunities for the Mediterranean Dialogue. The need for cooperation while dealing with terrorism, security sector reform, and defense capacity building has advanced. Much is met through bilateral security cooperation with transatlantic partners, hence public acceptance remains a challenge for NATO around the southern Mediterranean and the Middle East. This is not a new phenomenon, and overall is less of a hindrance as it is

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<sup>70</sup> NATO, NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, last updated February 13, 2015, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_60021.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_60021.htm)

<sup>71</sup> Markus Kaim, Die Neuordnung der Nato-Partnerschaftsbeziehungen, SWP-Studie Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Berlin, June 2016, [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2016S12\\_kim.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2016S12_kim.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> Margherita Bianchi, Guillaume Lasconjarias and Alessandro Marrone, Projecting Stability in NATO’s Southern Neighbourhood, NDC Conference Report, Research Division – NATO Defense College No. 3/17, July 2017.

occasionally labeled. Enduring political arguments hindered opportunities for a multilateral dialogue on security questions however, many long-lasting impediments have been overcome. Developing new formats, NATO's Mediterranean partnerships can engage in an increasingly ambitious political dialogue.

Today the Alliance is taking challenges and threats emerging from its southern flank more seriously, establishing new structures, forces, and assets for better understanding the environment. At the 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO approved the development of a framework as an information sharing organization as part of the NATO Strategic Direction South (NSD-S) initiative.<sup>73</sup> Generally, there is a need to newly assess the importance of Mediterranean and Middle East partnerships. The inauguration of NSD-S Hub in Naples 2017 emphasizes the new strategic importance and relevance.

The NSD-S mission statement reads: "Through a holistic and collaborative approach, the Hub connects allies, partners and non-military entities by building networks and relationships with academia and international organizations. The Hub aims to contribute to coordination,

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<sup>73</sup> NATO, NSDS HUB, NATO Strategic Direction South, <https://www.thesouthernhub.org/about-us/mission.aspx>

synchronization, and de-confliction of NATO activities across the South, while optimizing resources and maximizing effectiveness.”<sup>74</sup>

The dominance in politics and especially in the public opinion of migration and terrorism, has given any strategy looking south more space in the discussion and opens new fields for a deeper cooperation in an era of more and more overlapping security spaces.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ian Lesser, Charlotte Brandsma, Laura Basagni and Bruno Lété, The Future of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue - PERSPECTIVES ON SECURITY, STRATEGY AND PARTNERSHIP, GMF, June 2018, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2018\\_07/20180720\\_180713-GMF-future-med-dialog.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_07/20180720_180713-GMF-future-med-dialog.pdf)

## **5. Israel**

### **5.1. Israel's International Relations**

Since the founding of the state in 1948 and its international recognition by the United Nations (UN) and most of its member states, Israel has been integrated into complex worldwide networks, which have changed many times. Israel is a close ally of many states in the world, especially the countries of the West, and above all the USA, but also the European Union and its member states. Israel has many supporters not only at diplomatic but also at social level. It has undergone remarkable economic development from a de facto developing country dependent on external assistance to a leading global technological power. This increased economic weight is reflected at the political level in Israel's prosperous trade and cooperation networks with Europe, America, the Far East and Africa. Today Israel is a key regional power in the Middle East. Together with Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, it is one of the strongest states in the region in military and economic terms, and - supposedly - the only regional nuclear power to date. In addition, it maintains important strategic alliances with Egypt, Jordan and, informally, with various states in the Maghreb and Arab states in the Gulf region. However, this was not the picture during the years which immediately followed Israel's

establishment. For almost a full decade, until its alliance with France was consolidated in 1955, Israel was completely isolated, and its relations with both superpowers were largely strained. Similarly, both India and China were quite hostile. Clearly, Israel's international relations progressively improved later, but the beginning was quite difficult.

At the same time, Israel's legitimacy is contested or questioned by numerous actors in the region and beyond. By international standards, the large number of states and social groups that still refuse to recognize Israel is prominent. At present, these are 31 of the 192 UN member states, primarily members of the Arab League (AL) and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) - but with important exceptions such as Egypt, Jordan and Turkey. Worldwide there are political and social movements like the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign, that are critical of Israel or even hostile to Israel. Though, the spectrum also extends to terrorist groups. The arguments with anti-Semitic stereotypes can also be observed. In this context, the legitimacy of the Jewish state is often questioned - be it in principle or because of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, which was also criticized by friendly actors.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Stefan Stetter, Die internationalen Beziehungen Israels, Informationen zur politischen Bildung, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, May 28, 2018, <http://www.bpb.de/izpb/268922/die-internationalen-beziehungen-israels?p=all>

Like all states in the world, Israel pursues foreign policy in order to achieve central strategic goals: increasing external security, promoting economic growth and promoting its own political positions. Of course, Israeli politicians, like state leaders elsewhere, also use foreign policy to secure their domestic power. In the 1970s, the former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once summed up this domestic component of Israeli foreign policy, which is particularly pronounced in Israel, in a slightly frustrated way: Israel has no foreign policy, only domestic policy.<sup>77</sup>

The central strategic goal of Israeli foreign policy is, on the one hand, to keep its own military, political and economic vulnerability to a minimum and, on the other hand, to find worldwide support for its own political and ideological goals, for example the Israeli interpretation of the roots and possible solutions of the Israel-Palestine conflict. In addition to a strong army and the promotion of a competitive economy, the formation of strategic diplomatic alliances with other states as well as with social groups is a central means of minimizing such vulnerabilities, but also of spreading Israel's own political understandings.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Akiva Eldar, Israel's Missing Foreign Policy, *The National Interest*, October 9, 2012, <https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/israels-missing-foreign-policy-7573>

<sup>78</sup> Stefan Stetter, Die internationalen Beziehungen Israels, *Informationen zur politischen Bildung*, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, May 28, 2018, <http://www.bpb.de/izpb/268922/die-internationalen-beziehungen-israels?p=all>

In line with this consideration and ever since the founding of the state, Israel's foreign policy has sought close links with powerful international actors, especially at least one of the global powers. Even in the pre-state period, the Zionist movement sought the support of international actors. Thus, it was able to achieve that Great Britain promised a national home for the Jewish people with the Balfour Declaration of 1917 of Jewish self-government in Palestine, which was then still part of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>79</sup> This continued after the founding of the state in 1948 with the diplomatic backing that Israel received from both the Soviet Union and the USA. Both superpowers of the Cold War, however, hesitated for a long time with Israel being supported too vigorous. Until the 1967 war, Great Britain and above all France - both also veto powers in the UN Security Council - were Israel's closest allies. Examples of this were the Suez War of 1956, which Israel led together with France and Great Britain, and the Israeli nuclear weapons program since the 1950s, which was largely supported by France. The American-Israeli alliance began in the early 1960's. The turning point was the Hawk arms deal, that was concluded in 1962, which was the first major arms deal between the USA and the state of Israel. After the 6-days war in 1967 and especially since

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<sup>79</sup> Avi Shlaim, The Balfour Declaration and its Consequences, The Balfour Project, January 4, 2012, <http://www.balfourproject.org/the-balfour-declaration-and-its-consequences-avi-shlaim/>



the peace talks between Israel and Egypt in the 1970s, moderated by the USA, that the United States became Israel's central foreign policy ally.<sup>80</sup>

Overall, Israel's foreign policy is based on a strong emphasis on political sovereignty, in particular in the security aspect, combined with a reluctance to engage in multilateral relations, especially those of conflict resolution, the close strategic link with the USA, which is of fundamental importance for Israel's security and the maintenance of bilateral links with individual states, above all in the West including the European Union, but also with Russia, selected Arab states and emerging states in Asia and Africa.<sup>81</sup>

The most recent progress made in Israel's international relations is, however, the newly found cooperation with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and other Arab nations that seem to be rejecting Iran's proposed pan-Arabic coalition against what Iran calls western imperialism.<sup>82</sup> However, this pan-Arab coalition has never been seriously considered in view of the continued Iranian effort to disrupt conservative Arab regimes through

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<sup>80</sup> Stefan Stetter, Die internationalen Beziehungen Israels, Informationen zur politischen Bildung, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, May 28, 2018, <http://www.bpb.de/izpb/268922/die-internationalen-beziehungen-israels?p=all>

<sup>81</sup> Lidia Averbukh, Margarete Klein, Russia-Israel Relationship Transformed by Syria Conflict, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, September 2018, Berlin, [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2018C37\\_avk\\_kle.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2018C37_avk_kle.pdf)

<sup>82</sup> Neri Zilber, Gulf Cyber Cooperation with Israel: Balancing Threats and Rights, Policywatch 3066, The Washington Institute, January 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/gulf-cyber-cooperation-with-israel-balancing-threats-and-rights>

subversion and terror. Arab nations still care about the Palestinian issue and the persistent dispute remains a burden to calm the relations between Israel and the Arab nations. Most Arab states however are mostly worried about the Iranian and jihadi challenges, and some Sunni states are now cooperating with Israel as a silent partner against these challenges.<sup>83</sup>

Realpolitik has played a huge role in this case. It allowed Israel's Prime Minister, Netanyahu, to successfully outplay the Iranians in most encounters, as proven by the recent Israeli attacks on Iranian military bases in Syria. Furthermore, it allowed Israel to establish close relationships with Arab states that were earlier hostile towards Israel. This marks a development that was considered nearly impossible in the past<sup>84</sup>, but still falls short of any formal and open ties.

In summary, the world of Israeli foreign policy is above all a world of intergovernmental cooperation; the diverse multilateral cooperation possibilities of multilateral organizations are hardly used and are often wrongly regarded as irrelevant in Israel.<sup>85</sup> The major part of Israel's

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<sup>83</sup> Itamar Rabinovich, *The Russian-U.S. Relationship in the Middle East: A Five-Year Projection*, Task Force White Paper, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 05, 2016, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/04/05/russian-u.s.-relationship-in-middle-east-five-year-projection-pub-63243>

<sup>84</sup> Open Source Investigation, *Diplomacy in 2018: the return of realpolitik*, 2018, <https://www.opensourceinvestigations.com/politics/diplomacy-2018-return-realpolitik/>

<sup>85</sup> Stefan Stetter, *Die internationalen Beziehungen Israels*, Informationen zur politischen Bildung, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, May 28, 2018, <http://www.bpb.de/izpb/268922/die-internationalen-beziehungen-israels?p=all>

political and security establishment do not believe in the need to advance a comprehensive strategic partnership.<sup>86</sup>

At the same time, Israel is concerned about Russia's military presence in Syria and worried by the outlook of a victory in the Syrian civil war by the Tehran-Assad-Hezbollah axis as Israel's freedom of action in Syria and even Lebanon has already been wedged by the presence of Russian air defense forces and detection capabilities. In that context Russia continues its dialogue with Israel and seems to understand Israeli foreign policy that pursues to branch out its foreign positioning by refining its relations not only with Russia but likewise with China and India as a drift away from an iconic partnership with Washington.<sup>87</sup> Hence, Russia is trying to take advantage of this shift while good relations with Israel may serve both parties, even though it seems obvious for Russia, that they will never be allowed to mature to a level that reasons relevant uneasiness in the USA. A recent illustration of the nowadays Russia-Israeli relations is Putin's gesture to the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu concerning the return of the remains of an Israeli soldier, Sergeant First

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<sup>86</sup> Uzi Arad, Oded Eran, Tommy Steiner, Anchoring Israel to the Euro-Atlantic Community: Further upgrading and Institutionalizing NATO-Israel Relations, Working Paper, Submitted for the Herzliya Conference January 21-24, 2007, p.5.

<sup>87</sup> Itamar Rabinovich, The Russian-U.S. Relationship in the Middle East: A Five-Year Projection, Task Force White Paper, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 05, 2016, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/04/05/russian-u.s.-relationship-in-middle-east-five-year-projection-pub-63243>

Class Zachary Baumel, who was killed in Lebanon 1982.<sup>88</sup> The Russian effort to locate the remains and the timing of the move clearly coincide with the Israeli 2019 elections and indicated a Russian decision to provide significant domestic support to Israel's prime minister on the very eve of the election and, at the same time, try to influence the election results in a way which supplements Russian interests in the region.

Nevertheless, the benefits that Israel could derive from this are blurred and Russia-Israeli relations will "continue to be characterized by a dichotomy of friendly relations coupled with serious disagreements on many regional issues."<sup>89</sup>

Whether the Israeli strategy of diversification is sustainable in a world in which multilateral cooperation and international institution-building and legalization are still evolving must be taken under consideration by the Israeli leadership and public.

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<sup>88</sup> et al., Prime Minister's Office, PM Netanyahu's Remarks on the Return of the Body of Zachary Baumel, who was among the MIAs from the Battle at Sultan Yacoub, Press Releases, April 03, 2019, [http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spoke\\_baumel030419.aspx](http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Spokesman/Pages/spoke_baumel030419.aspx)

<sup>89</sup> Joshua Krasna, Moscow on the Mediterranean: Russia and Israel's Relationship, Russia Foreign Policy Papers, Foreign Policy Research Institute, June 2018

## **5.2. Israel and NATO**

### **Cooperation between 1994 - 2018**

Since 1994 Israel has participated in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and became in 2001 the first participating country to sign a security agreement with NATO. This security agreement provides the framework for the protection of classified information, as defined by all 19 member countries, and is signed by countries that wish to engage in cooperation with NATO.<sup>90</sup>

Operation Active Endeavour (OAE) was one of eight initiatives launched in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States in 2001. It was terminated in October 2016 and succeeded by Sea Guardian.

Because it was an Article 5 operation it firstly involved member countries only. From 2004, partner and non-NATO countries started offering their support, and all offers were considered on a case-by-case basis.

Exchanges of Letters were signed between NATO and Israel, Morocco, Russia and Ukraine. In January 2008, an Israeli Liaison Officer for OAE was established in Naples, and since then, the Israeli Defense Forces

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<sup>90</sup> NATO, Israel signs security agreement with NATO, Last updated: September 02, 2010  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_18727.htm?](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_18727.htm?)

(IDF) cooperate in terms of intelligence exchange through this liaison officer.<sup>91</sup>

In 2008 Israel was the first MD partner to conclude an Individual Cooperation Program (ICP) with NATO, focusing and structuring the Israeli-NATO cooperation. The deterioration of Turkey-Israel relations, due to the Flotilla incident in 2010, had a significant impact on NATO-Israel relations. Since then, the bilateral program with Israel was not updated. As Turkish-Israeli relations slowly improved an ICPC was finally endorsed 2017 by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and by Israel.<sup>92</sup>

In 2009, the countries of the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and those of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) were given direct access to the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC). The Centre is NATO's major civil emergency response mechanism in the Euro-Atlantic region. Operational on a 24/7 basis and involves NATO's 29 Allies and all partner countries including Israel. The Centre has a clearing-house function for coordinating both requests and offers of assistance mainly in case of natural and man-made disasters. For

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<sup>91</sup> NATO, Operation Active Endeavour (Archived), Last updated: October 27, 2016, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_7932.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_7932.htm?selectedLocale=en)

<sup>92</sup> NATO, NATO and Israel have a long relationship and we are longstanding partners, Last updated November 17, 2014, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_114789.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_114789.htm)

example, 2016 Israel requested, through the EADRCC, support by Allied and partners' fixed wing aerial firefighting capabilities for extinguishing wild fires in Israel and EADRCC successfully coordinated the supporting units.<sup>93</sup>

In 2017, NATO and the State of Israel concluded the Administrative Arrangements for the protection of classified information as part of a Security Agreement initially signed in 2001. The Agreements will facilitate the cooperation between NATO and Israel as they serve as common standard to be applied to the protection of the classified information exchanged between Israel and NATO.<sup>94</sup>

In 2016, the first Israeli Ambassador to NATO, Aharon Leshno-Yaar, presented his credentials to the Secretary General of NATO, followed by the official inauguration of the offices of the Mission of Israel at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels in 2017.<sup>95</sup>

In 2018 the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) and Israel signed the Agreement between the Government of the State of Israel and

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<sup>93</sup> NATO, Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre, Last updated: September 25, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52057.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52057.htm?selectedLocale=en)

<sup>94</sup> NATO, NATO and Israel sign agreement on the protection of exchanged classified information, Last updated: November 28, 2017, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_149248.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_149248.htm?selectedLocale=en)

<sup>95</sup> Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Inauguration of office of the Mission of Israel at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, January 24, 2017, <https://embassies.gov.il/eu/NewsAndEvents/Newsletter/Pages/Historic-Day-for-Israel-at-NATO.aspx>

the NATO Support and Procurement Organization on Support Cooperation. The agreement establishes the legal framework and the basic principles for the support co-operation between Israel and the NATO Support and Procurement Organization, which Israel sees as a major and important development in the practical cooperation with NATO that will open the door for closer engagement between Israel and NATO allies. With this agreement in place Israel can explore more formally the capabilities, products and services offered by NSPA.<sup>96</sup>

Also, in 2018 for the first time, Israel took, part in NATO's Saber Strike drill as a Non-NATO member with combat soldiers from the Israel Defense Forces' Paratroopers Brigade.<sup>97</sup>

According to the official NATO MD webpage the main fields of cooperation are the political dialogue through high level visits but also education and military training, which includes enhanced cooperation with the INDC, the NATO School Oberammergau and the NATO Centers of Excellence. Israel and NATO want to work on interoperability with a view to increase the participation of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in NATO exercises, and to foster regular dialogue in areas of

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<sup>96</sup> NATO, NSPA signs Cooperation Agreement with Israel, February 09, 2018, <http://www.nspa.nato.int/en/news/news-20180209-5.htm>

<sup>97</sup> AP and Times of Israel Staff, Israel takes part in NATO's Saber Strike drill for first time, June 4, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-takes-part-in-natos-saber-strike-drill-for-first-time/>



interest to Israel. NATO is also willing to enhance the cooperation with NATO agencies and to look at joint capacity building, while enhancing cooperation in the area of civil emergency planning, cyber defense and the exchange on intelligence. The cooperation shall also include the exchange of views on international law on issues including hybrid warfare, counterterrorism, naval warfare, aerial warfare, arms and ammunition and cyber security.<sup>98</sup>

Cooperation between Israel and NATO can already be described as close and trusting but remains below the threshold and possibilities of NATO's Partnership for Peace Program (PfP).

### **5.3. Israel and the USA**

“We cannot exist alone.” That is Israel’s national security axiom recognized by then President Shimon Peres during a speech given in Jerusalem in 2010. “For our existence we need the friendship with the United States of America...It doesn’t sound easy, but it is the truth.”<sup>99</sup>

The USA has been Israel's most important ally since the late 1960s. Israel enjoys great political support in the US beyond the political camps. It has

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<sup>98</sup> Et al., NATO, NATO Mediterranean Dialouge, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52927.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52927.htm)

<sup>99</sup> JPOST.COM STAFF, PERES: We cannot exist without the United States, October 22, 2010, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel/Peres-We-cannot-exist-without-the-United-States>

been part of the bipartisan consensus for many decades, meaning that both sides of the political spectrum of the USA, Democrats and Republicans, give Israel strong political and emotional support to Israel. However, it must be emphasized that American support of Israel is no longer bi-partisan in view of the serious drift away from Israel within the Democratic party, which has become increasingly evident. The internal party reason for the dispute among the Democrats is the new group of congressmen and congresswomen, where especially the young left-wing Members of Congress no longer want to back the quiet Washington consensus in favor of Israel.

USA support also applies to the strategic area. Israel receives extensive military aid, which from the beginning of military aid in 1962 till 2014 amounts to around 100 billion US dollars. Without the support of the USA Israel's military strength would hardly be as strong as it is today. In addition to this financial aid there is also close strategic cooperation between the American and Israeli security forces - army and secret services - not least regarding the fight against international terrorism. Leading USA and Israeli politicians regularly refer to the close ties between the two states based on common values and, not least, founded on of the widespread belief in the uniqueness and often religiously interpreted "chosen people" of one's own nation both in the USA and in

Israel. Apart from Winston Churchill, no other foreign politician has addressed the Congress as often as the Israeli Prime Minister (1996-1999 and since 2009) Benjamin Netanyahu.<sup>100</sup> The USA`s governments traditionally consider the diplomatic implications that foreign policy decisions regarding Israel might have. This also concerns a long-standing demand by the Congress to move the USA`s embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem the in Israeli view, sole and indivisible capital. After all USA presidents had so far failed to implement this step because they feared international distortions for USA foreign policy, the current presidency under Donald Trump completed this move last year.<sup>101</sup> The uniqueness of the alliance between the USA and Israel is also based on the extremely high social support that Israel enjoys in American domestic politics. This is not only due to the political importance of the Jewish diaspora in the USA and its central lobby organization AIPAC<sup>102</sup>, but also to the religiously motivated support Israel enjoys in Christian-Evangelical spheres, a central domestic factor in the USA.<sup>103</sup> Still, criticism of Israel's occupation policy and its negative consequences for

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<sup>100</sup> Noah Rayman, Netanyahu Will Be Speaking in Winston Churchill's Shadow, TIME Magazine, March 3, 2015, <http://time.com/3727163/netanyahu-churchill-history/>

<sup>101</sup> In 1995 the US Congress officially voted in favour of the Jerusalem-Embassy-Act, which was to be completed by 1999.

<sup>102</sup> American Israel Public Affairs Committee

<sup>103</sup> Stefan Stetter, Die internationalen Beziehungen Israels, Informationen zur politischen Bildung, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, May 28, 2018, <http://www.bpb.de/izpb/268922/die-internationalen-beziehungen-israels?p=all>

the Palestinians' right to national self-determination is growing, especially in the liberal political spectrum and in parts of the democratic party.

Some of Israel's domestic developments of recent years have also been viewed doubtfully. Examples might be the restrictions for non-governmental organizations and the latest legislated Nation State Law.<sup>104</sup>

Even though public support for Israel in the USA is still very pronounced, especially if you compare it to Europe, it cannot be overlooked that in parts of the political landscape of the USA a more critical view emerges and that the almost iron bipartisan consensus of absolute support for Israel by both major parties is diminishing. It cannot be excluded that the comprehensive diplomatic protection that Israel enjoys from the USA in the UN Security Council could be affected by this if not in principle, but at least moderately.<sup>105</sup>

This development, the above described new security environment and the fact that President Trump often acts intuitively and without an overall concept, for example proved by the USA's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the roller-coaster like negotiations with North-Korea and the

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<sup>104</sup> Zaha Hassan, Trump's Plan for Israel and Palestine: One More Step Away From Peace, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 11, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/12/11/trump-s-plan-for-israel-and-palestine-one-more-step-away-from-peace-pub-77905>

<sup>105</sup> Jack Rosen, Withering America's Bipartisan Consensus on Israel, The National Interest, July 1, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/withering-america%E2%80%99s-bipartisan-consensus-israel-24742>

unilateral termination of the JCPOA with Iran, might put Israel in a situation where the question who could supplement, augment or replace the USA could arise. Suzanne Maloney, the deputy director of the foreign policy program at the Brookings Institution described Trump's policy and reliability as "The problem with his strategy is that there is no strategy"<sup>106</sup>.

At the same time, it is becoming increasingly clear for the USA that the Asia-Pacific region will be the strategic and economic Center of Gravity in the 21st century, with the USA substantially increasing diplomatic, strategic and economic involvement in this region over the next decades.<sup>107</sup>

The Middle East is a secondary focus of attention currently occupied with the crisis in the Korean peninsula. The USA's attention is now almost entirely on East Asia, significantly restraining its interest in and influence on the theaters closer to Israel, including Syria and Lebanon.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Suzanne Malony, Order from Chaos: After dumping the nuclear deal, Trump has no strategy for Iran, Brookings, May9, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/05/09/after-dumping-the-nuclear-deal-trump-has-no-strategy-for-iran/>

<sup>107</sup> Ryan Hass and Mira Rapp-Hooper, Responsible competition and the future of U.S.-China relations Seven critical questions for strategy, Brookings, February 6, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/02/06/responsible-competition-and-the-future-of-u-s-china-relations/>

<sup>108</sup> Amos Yadlin and Assaf Orion, The Munich Security Conference: Main Points and Implications for Israel, INSS, Special Publication, February 25, 2018, p.4.

## **6. The New Strategic Security Environment**

The formation of NATO's Strategic Direction South (NSD-S) initiative clearly shows, that the old compartmentalization between the NATO and Israeli security spaces is decomposing, and the security spaces are more and more overlapping. In the context of threats arising from fundamentalist ideologies, terrorism and the possible development and use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) the question of whether and how Israel is included in a wider NATO strategy countering a new strategic security environment has become evident. NATO is the principal multilateral institution of the so-called West and Israel shares its core values with NATO. One could argue, that Israel is a natural partner for NATO and the Euro-Atlantic community.<sup>109</sup>

Five developments characterize NATO and Israel's new security environment.

First and foremost is Russia's changed role. In the 2010 Strategic Concept, NATO's Russia policy is aimed at a strategic partnership.

Russia is described as an actor with whom close cooperation is possible in the fight against terrorism, disarmament, missile defense and the

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<sup>109</sup> Uzi Arad, Oded Eran, Tommy Steiner, Anchoring Israel to the Euro-Atlantic Community: Further upgrading and Institutionalizing NATO-Israel Relations, Working Paper, Submitted for the Herzliya Conference January 21-24, 2007, p.1.

fundamental shaping of the international security environment.<sup>110</sup> With the annexation of the Crimea in 2014 in violation of international law and the continued violence against Ukraine, Russia not only changed the foundations of this policy, but also turned against the values and ideas of a rule-based order. In response, NATO has put a new emphasis on deterrence at its summits in Wales and Warsaw, especially since Russia is also explicitly acting against the interests and values of the West on other issues of international security, such as the war in Syria and Russia's attempt to draw Turkey back from NATO.<sup>111</sup>

Secondly, the situation in the Mediterranean has changed. Regional instability in North Africa and the Middle East has increased as migration is putting the European Union to the test, and the terrorism of the so-called Islamic state is spreading to the capitals of Europe. The Russian involvement in Syria and its broader role in the Middle East, where for example it backs Iran are a new and important factor for both, NATO and Israel.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> NATO, Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon, [www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68580.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm)

<sup>111</sup> Patrick Keller, Ein neues strategisches Konzept für die NATO, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Analysen & Argumente, Ausgabe 274, August 2017, [https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/253252/7\\_dokument\\_dok\\_pdf\\_49930\\_1.pdf/ac19652f-6275-ef6c-c493-17737aa9ca56?version=1.0&t=1539648676328](https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/253252/7_dokument_dok_pdf_49930_1.pdf/ac19652f-6275-ef6c-c493-17737aa9ca56?version=1.0&t=1539648676328)

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

Thirdly, cyber-attacks on states and critical infrastructures have long ceased to be a fiction. In recent years, the quantity and quality of criminal, terrorist, intelligence and military threats in cyberspace have reached a new dimension. The spectrum ranges from data misuse and industrial espionage to damage to critical infrastructures with serious consequences for the civilian population and disruption of government communications. NATO's servers and digitally controlled weapons systems can also become targets. However, the secure and free use of the cyber and information space is an elementary prerequisite for government and private action in the globalized world.<sup>113</sup> Israel is one of the leading nations dealing with cyber security and cyber threats, as therefore is uniquely suited to work with NATO in this field.

Fourthly, the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States has injected a considerable dose of uncertainty into transatlantic security relations. Trump's statements during the election campaign and at the beginning of his term of office raised doubts as to whether the American government would still unconditionally commit itself to supporting under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and sees NATO as a contemporary, useful, value and interest-led alliance, however statements by the USA

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<sup>113</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Neue Bedrohungen im Cyberraum, <https://www.bmvg.de/de/themen/cybersicherheit/digitale-herausforderungen/herausforderungen-cyberverteidigung-deutschland-weltweit/neue-bedrohungen-im-cyberraum-12046>



administration and the president himself have largely contained these fears in the meantime, there is still unease about Trump's ties to the Russian power elite, his misleading impulsiveness and his rejection of other elements of the liberal international order such as multilateral free trade agreements.<sup>114</sup>

Fifthly, the announced USA withdrawal from Syria and latest statements by the Trump administration regarding the Middle East restrains the USA doctrine of trying to get other countries in as the USA reduces its footprint. This could have, over the long term, negative implications on Israel's security situation. A once more empowered Iran with unfettered land access to their Hezbollah allies — without American forces in the north of Syria as a counterweight — poses an existential threat to Israel. The USA plays an outsize role in Israel's security, and the withdrawal of troops could threaten the regional balance of powers.

Furthermore one of the central motivations for NATO to focus more on the Middle East is the need to deter Soviet expansion and thus avoid a dangerous vacuum as a result of the American departure from parts of the region, while Israel has been trying to avoid any open clash with

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<sup>114</sup> Patrick Keller, Ein neues strategisches Konzept für die NATO, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Analysen & Argumente, Ausgabe 274, August 2017, [https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/253252/7\\_dokument\\_dok\\_pdf\\_49930\\_1.pdf/ac19652f-6275-ef6c-c493-17737aa9ca56?version=1.0&t=1539648676328](https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/253252/7_dokument_dok_pdf_49930_1.pdf/ac19652f-6275-ef6c-c493-17737aa9ca56?version=1.0&t=1539648676328)

Moscow, particularly in view of the Russian presence in Syria and the need to maintain rules of engagement with it. So, the question is how exactly to reconcile Israel's growing collaboration with NATO with its desire to maintain cordial relations with Russia, which will enable it to maintain a margin of maneuverability to operate in Syria whenever needed.

Although Trump`s seems to be anxious to fully disengage from the Middle East, Israel is not prepared to seriously consider alternatives.

In the following, this paper will examine the extent to which there is a need, will and potential to further expand and deepen this cooperation. Even to the point of Israel's possible NATO membership.

## **7. Constraints and Benefits**

### **7.1. Constraints - NATO**

From NATO's point of view, this expansion of strategic relations must be seen against the background of the geostrategic change since the Cold War. NATO's role as a collective security and defense alliance is no longer defined by euro-centric and geographical criteria alone. NATO no longer defines itself only by defending the territories of its member states, but increasingly functionally beyond their borders. The stability of the Middle East has become a determining factor for the security of the Western world. In this context, the Alliance could in future play an increasingly important role in regulating and stabilizing the guaranteed power in the region. Good relations with Israel are therefore important for NATO. NATO and Israel share the perception that international terrorism, religious extremism, internal conflicts and not least the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and their delivery systems are the main sources of threats to their security. The danger of a possible Iranian nuclear weapons potential underpins this. Moreover, Israel is a democratic state that shares the free values of the West. To what extent, however, NATO's motivation to substantially deepen cooperation is due to a "sense of duty" towards the Jewish state

remains questionable. NATO diplomats point to the equally necessary promotion of closer relations with the other Mediterranean dialogue countries.

Even from a purely practical point of view, it seems sensible for NATO to establish a close military strategic relationship with the other Mediterranean countries and to join forces with Israel. Jerusalem has decades of experience in the fight against international terrorism and the tactical means to do so. This could be just as useful for NATO members in the exchange of military technology, such as the field of missile defense, where Jerusalem already has a considerable level of development. In the long term, there could also be the possibility of using bases on Israeli territory in the event of NATO military intervention in the Middle East.

However, all this cannot hide the fact that there are considerable reservations about possible Israeli NATO membership in the Alliance. The transformation of NATO into a functionally and globally oriented alliance propagated by Washington is by no means shared by all NATO partners. There are also different views and interests within NATO regarding the role of the organization in the Middle East. In view of equally different views on Israel's security needs, its membership - and

the preceding discussions and negotiations - could prove to be the cause of NATO's internal polarization and probably renewed transatlantic tensions. As an example, France sees NATO first and foremost as a military alliance, not as a political club. Therefore, the central question is whether NATO would really be ready and able to militarily side with Israel in the event of an attack. Moreover, Article 5 of the NATO Treaty does not provide for a mandatory military "duty of assistance", as is often argued, but calls for measures which are "deemed necessary" in the sense of "collective self-defense". NATO members could interpret this just as differently as Article 10, which merely "offers every other European state the prospect of accession".<sup>115</sup> Conversely, legitimate doubts can be raised about Israel's ability to form alliances. Should the NATO members find Israel itself exposed to an existential threat, according to some observers, Israel will in any case not let itself be deterred from unilateral counter- or preventive attacks and from protracted consultations with its NATO partners. Moreover, a formal admission of Israel could contradict NATO's self-assigned role as a neutral trustee in the Middle East conflict. The fundamental offer of partnership with all countries in the region could also be thwarted. This reservation is expressed in the then NATO

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<sup>115</sup> NATO, The North Atlantic Treaty Washington D.C. - 4 April 1949, Last updated: April 10, 2019, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm)

Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer's remark that, in view of the sensitivities of the region, the Alliance must preserve its impartiality in the conflict. The Alliance is already being viewed suspiciously in some Arab countries because of its USA dominance. If moderate Arab elites would feel alienated by the West, this would also contradict the USA's interest in sustainably promoting democracy in the Middle East. In view of all this, it is doubtful whether the goal of promoting peace, regional stability and security could still be achieved in the course of Israel's accession at all. If there is no peace between Israel and the Palestinians, that is a widespread conclusion, NATO might hesitate to establish full relationship with Israel. In that context Prof. Yehezkel Dror argued during a discussion at the Samuel Neamon Institute for National Policy Research in 2017, that, "...without the establishment of a Palestinian state, it would be almost impossible to defuse the conflict, and its grave dangers. Even Israel's foreign relations, including those with the United States, and its general global standing, will suffer in the absence of real progress in reaching an agreement with the Palestinians."<sup>116</sup> This paper argues, that upgrading of Israel's relations with NATO possibly cannot take place without some progress toward a Palestinian settlement. It is

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<sup>116</sup> Prof. Yehezkel Dror, in *Charting a Grand Strategy for the State of Israel, Grand Strategy for Israel: Reflections and Directions*, Samuel Neamon Institute for Policy Research, Tel Aviv, 2017, p. 146, <https://www.neaman.org.il/en/Files/Grand%20Strategy.pdf>

impossible to exclusively focus on the need to establish a joint "security regime" and to jointly address all regional threats without addressing this issue. Especially because the EU would most probably not accept such a decoupling. However, this is not bound to be a precondition, but it may still emerge as an obstacle.

Which leads to Turkey`s special role in the equation. After the recent wave of violence in the Gaza Strip, reconciliation is over for now. In May 2018 Turkey expelled Israeli Ambassador Eitan Naveh, and the Israeli government ordered its representative in Ankara to return home for consultations. Shortly afterwards, the Israeli Consul General in Istanbul was also expelled. While Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu asserts Israel's right to self-defense and President Erdogan accuses support for terrorists, the Turkish president accuses Israel of genocide of the Palestinians. The normalization of bilateral relations initiated in 2016 has thus come to an end. Despite the gestures of reconciliation, President Erdogan always made it clear that he sees himself as the sponsor of the Palestinians and, in case of doubt, also puts economic interests back. This has also shattered hopes that a rapprochement with Israel could advance joint energy promotion in the Mediterranean. In response to America's announcement to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the Holy Land, Turkey convened a special summit of the Organization for Islamic

Cooperation (OIC) in December 2017, which then spoke of an unilateral, illegal and irresponsible step taken by the USA.<sup>117</sup>

Turkey continues to be the biggest opponent of a deeper relationship between Israel and NATO.

## **7.2. Constraints – Israel**

Israel's reluctance towards multilateral organizations is deeply rooted in Israel's self-understanding and is largely based on its experience of cooperation with the United Nations (UN).

The relationship between Israel and the United Nations has been marked by tension from the outset and was already fraught with tension prior to Israel's accession to the UN in 1949. On 17 September 1948, members of the Zionist militia Lehi (Stern Gang) murdered the United Nations mediator for Palestine Folke Bernadotte in Jerusalem. The UN Security Council condemned the attack and three days later the Israeli government declared “Lehi” a terrorist organization and imprisoned some of its members. Israel's admission to the United Nations was already controversial. Although the UN Security Council decided on 4 March 1949 that Israel should become a member of the United Nations, the only

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<sup>117</sup> Marco Kauffmann Bossart, Das Ende des türkisch-israelischen Frühlings, Neue Züricher Zeitung, May 16, 2018, <https://www.nzz.ch/international/das-ende-des-tuerkisch-israelischen-fruehlings-ld.1386409>



Arab member of the Security Council, Egypt voted against Israel's admission, while the former mandated power of Great Britain abstained. The superpowers, the Soviet Union and the USA, voted in favour. The Soviet Union was the first state to recognize Israel de jure, the United States the first to recognize it de facto. In the subsequent, necessary vote in the General Assembly, 37 member states voted for admission, twelve against - including Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia - and nine abstained.<sup>118</sup>

In principle, Israel regularly faces condemnation by various UN bodies. This is often rejected by the Israeli government and its allies as one-sided and anti-Semiticly motivated criticism. On the one hand, Israel faces accusations of violating international law in the course of the Middle East conflict. On the other hand, however, there are also repeatedly blatant attempts to criticize Israel one-sidedly and disproportionately and to neglect violations of international law by other states and groups.

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<sup>118</sup> Dr. Jan Busse, Prof. Dr. Stefan Stetter, Israels Skepsis gegenüber den UN, Vereinte Nationen 3/2018, [https://zeitschrift-vereinte-nationen.de/fileadmin/publications/PDFs/Zeitschrift\\_VN/VN\\_2018/Heft\\_3\\_2018/02\\_Busse-Stetter\\_VN\\_3-2018\\_7-6-2018.pdf](https://zeitschrift-vereinte-nationen.de/fileadmin/publications/PDFs/Zeitschrift_VN/VN_2018/Heft_3_2018/02_Busse-Stetter_VN_3-2018_7-6-2018.pdf)

Especially in the General Assembly, Israel is repeatedly confronted with resolutions that harshly criticize its policies or even have anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli tendencies.<sup>119</sup>

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared in December 2016 to the Security Council: “During the past ten years, I argued that we must never accept bias against Israel within United Nation bodies. Decades of political maneuverings have created a disproportioned volume of resolutions, reports and conferences criticizing Israel. In many cases, rather than helping the Palestinian cause, that reality hampered the ability of the United Nations to fulfil its role effectively.”<sup>120</sup>

Resolution 3379, adopted by the General Assembly in 1975, which equated Zionism with racism and racial discrimination, was outstanding. The then Israeli Permanent Representative to the UN Chaim Herzog then described the resolution as anti-Semitic and based on hatred and falsehood. Following the end of the East-West conflict the General Assembly in December 1991 the Resolution back with 111 votes in favor, 25 states voted against and 13 abstained. Particularly from 2011 onwards, Israel succeeded in achieving a greater visibility beyond the Middle East

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations, S/PV.7839, 7839<sup>th</sup> meeting, New York, December 16, 2016. [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_pv.7839.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_pv.7839.pdf)

conflict issues. In 2012, and then again in 2016, Israel provided one of the Vice-Presidents of the UN General Assembly. Also, in 2016, the current UN Ambassador Danny Danon was elected Chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee of the General Assembly, the first Israeli to be appointed head of a Main Committee. In addition, the General Assembly approved a total of four resolutions initiated by Israel for the first time ever since 2011.<sup>121</sup>

Over the past 50 years the USA, as a close ally of Israel, has vetoed resolutions against Israel 43 times in the Security Council. Most recently, in December 2017, the USA was the only member of the Security Council to block a draft resolution against the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Moreover, Israel is the only country in the Middle East that has never been a member of the UN Security Council, particularly because the Arab states prevented Israel from joining the UN regional group of Asia-Pacific states. The temporary seats in the Security Council are allocated via the regional groups. After becoming a member of the Group of Western European and Other States (WEOG) in 2000, Israel last competed with Belgium and Germany for one of the two seats

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<sup>121</sup> Dr. Jan Busse, Prof. Dr. Stefan Stetter, Israels Skepsis gegenüber den UN, Vereinte Nationen 3/2018, [https://zeitschrift-vereinte-nationen.de/fileadmin/publications/PDFs/Zeitschrift\\_VN/VN\\_2018/Heft\\_3\\_2018/02\\_Busse-Stetter\\_VN\\_3-2018\\_7-6-2018.pdf](https://zeitschrift-vereinte-nationen.de/fileadmin/publications/PDFs/Zeitschrift_VN/VN_2018/Heft_3_2018/02_Busse-Stetter_VN_3-2018_7-6-2018.pdf)

allocated to this group between 2019 and 2020. However, it withdrew its application in May 2018.<sup>122</sup>

After the first Israeli-Arab war in 1948, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established. Today UNRWA is still present both in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Israel's Arab neighboring states. While from Israel's point of view UNRWA contributes to a one-sided politicization of the refugee question, on the Palestinian side the relief organization is regarded as a moral, political and legal confirmation of the injustice suffered by the refugees.<sup>123</sup>

In particular, the Human Rights Council (HRC) is accused of adopting a one-sided anti-Israeli stance. Since its founding in 2006, the HRC has focused on Israel in a disproportionately large number of resolutions. In March 2018, for example, five of the eight country-specific resolutions of the HRC addressed Israel. Israel and the USA criticize that in 2007 the HRC made human rights violations by the Israeli occupation a permanent separate item on the agenda of each meeting and would thus emphasize Israel as the only state separately.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Times of Israel, TOI,staff, Israel slams ›sham‹ UN Human Rights Council after 5 new anti-Israel Resolutions, The Times of Israel, March 23, 2018,

The situation is similar with the organization of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which is accused by the Israeli government of politicization. For example, UNESCO adopted a resolution on Jerusalem in 2016 without using the Jewish names of the holy sites. After years of tension, Israel and the USA withdrew from UNESCO at the end of 2018. The reason for the resignation was finally the inclusion of Hebron's old town with its tomb of the patriarch, important for Muslims, Christians and Jews, as an endangered Palestinian world cultural heritage.<sup>125</sup>

The deep mistrust against multilateral organizations applies not only to the political and military elites, but also to large segments of Israeli civil society. Israel's bad experiences with international and multilateral organizations preceded thereto. However, the good relations with NATO might be an indicator as to whether there is a rather indefinite and vague dissatisfaction with international organizations. The concept that NATO will take responsibility for Israel's security might be difficult for the Israeli public to accept, especially if an open compromise on the Palestinian question is also linked to Israeli NATO membership. At the

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[www.timesofisrael.com/israel-slams-sham-un-human-rights-council-after-5-new-anti-israel-resolutions/](http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-slams-sham-un-human-rights-council-after-5-new-anti-israel-resolutions/)

<sup>125</sup> ARD Tel-Aviv, Israel und USA verlassen UNESCO, December 31, 2018, <https://www.ard-telaviv.de/israel-und-usa-verlassen-unesco/>

same time, Israel's public is concerned about the growing anti-Semitic developments in some Western countries.

In his book "Normative Power Europe meets Israel: Perceptions and realities" Sharon Pardo a Jean Monnet Chair in European Studies in the Department of Politics and Government at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev wrote in 2015, that at the Israeli political level a number of leaders share the perception that Israel could and should join NATO. In 2006, the Israeli government evaluated the option of NATO membership again, after David Ben-Gurion in 1957 dispatched Shimon Peres and Reuven Shiloah to several European NATO member countries in order to explore the possibilities of Israel's membership. The 2006 motivation behind the alteration was the yearning to establish more effective deterrence in the face of Iran's nuclear program. An Israeli ministerial committee drafted a position paper that involved actions and a strategy for turning Israel into a full-fledged NATO Member. The paper was presented in February 2017 to then Prime minister Ehud Olmert for his approval, but never made it into an official Israeli policy ever since. He argues, that Israeli decision makers and diplomats perceive NATO as a European led political organization with American and Canadian elements. This way of understanding NATO supports the argument that

more robust relations with the Alliance could lead to a deeper relation with the otherwise as unfriendly towards Israel perceived EU.<sup>126</sup>

The public opinion within Israel is two-minded. NATO's "all for one, one for all" doctrine possibly affects against Israel's acceptance into the alliance. How many of the NATO members would fight for Israel if it were attacked by any of its many potential enemies? In a survey conducted by the German Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in 2015 they posed the question about whether the citizens of Israel would welcome their country joining NATO, even if it would require Israel being committed to delivering military assistance in the event of an attack on the NATO states, just as these states would have to support Israel in case of an attack. This somewhat theoretical question has already been asked in 2009 in connection with another review. At that time, 54 percent supported joining NATO and 33 percent were against. At the end of 2015, however, only 45 percent were in favor of such an accession and 41 percent were against.<sup>127</sup>

This way of thinking is expressed today by the fact that Israel is trying to develop and organize its international relationship based on bilateral

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<sup>126</sup> Sharon Prado, Normative Power Europe Meets Israel: Perceptions and Realities, *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Volume 10, No.1, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2016.1158445>

<sup>127</sup> Dr. Michael Borchard, Israel's view of Europe-Israeli relations, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung e.V, Study, September 2017, p. 7.

agreements. The attempt to establish closer ties with the Visegrad countries in Europe, Israel's cooperation with Russia as well as with China, the diplomatic endeavors with some African and Arab states and the emerging interaction with Brazil might serve here as examples. At the same time, there is a conviction that this attitude preserves the Israel's freedom of maneuver and that multilateral relations would restrict it. Looking at Israel's past conflicts, the Israeli window of opportunity has always been measured by when the international community would intervene. Israel is convinced that Israel only can assert its security interests, and that a commitment to multilateral organizations and their regulation would lead to an unacceptable restriction of the available options.

The above described NATO Mediterranean Dialogue may serve as another example. Israel considered the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue particularly disappointing and frustrating. When Israel tried to develop meaningful cooperation, it was kept trapped at the lowest common denominator because the other Mediterranean partners had lower expectations and interests in this dialogue forum. This and similar experiences have confirmed Israel's conclusion that participation in



regional multilateral cooperation in the Middle East and the Mediterranean cannot produce meaningful results for Israel.<sup>128</sup>

As close as the ties with global powers, especially the United States, are, Israeli relations with the international community is characterized by its emphasis on fundamental state independence and sovereignty. This is not least due to the historical trauma of the Shoah: Israel never wants to be vulnerable again, never again should Jews fall victim to persecution and annihilation, as they did during the Nazi tyranny and systematic genocide in Europe. The Jews had no state to protect them, and Israel today sees itself as a shelter for Jews from all over the world, not at least because of this historical understanding. Every Jew is entitled to Israeli citizenship in the event of immigration - and this self-image as a Jewish state therefore also shapes Israel's foreign policy ties to other states and social groups, above all to the Jewish diaspora.<sup>129</sup>

The strong emphasis on independence and sovereignty goes hand in hand with the fact that Israel is a state that is barely integrated into international, let alone supranational, organizations by international

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<sup>128</sup> Uzi Arad, Oded Eran, Tommy Steiner, Anchoring Israel to the Euro-Atlantic Community: Further upgrading and Institutionalizing NATO-Israel Relations, Working Paper, Submitted for the Herzliya Conference January 21-24, 2007, p.3.

<sup>129</sup> Stefan Stetter, Die internationalen Beziehungen Israels, Informationen zur politischen Bildung, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, May 28, 2018, <http://www.bpb.de/izpb/268922/die-internationalen-beziehungen-israels?p=all>

standards. The great skepticism about the United Nations, which is sometimes perceived in Israel as hostile to Israel has been mentioned already. Likewise, it has been a central concern of most Israeli governments to this day to prevent excessive internationalization in the resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The alliance with the USA, which as a veto power in the UN Security Council has so far successfully protected Israel from international pressure, is of central strategic importance. Israel is therefore seeking close global ties, especially with the West, but without integrating itself too much into multilateral forms of inter-state cooperation or committing itself to binding regulations under international law.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

## **8. Future Relations**

This paper argues that NATO membership could be a vital asset in sustaining and strengthening Israel's long term national security in a comprehensive way: politically, militarily, socially, and economically.

Israeli membership in NATO is a long-term structural solution to the ongoing crisis in the Middle East that Israel should seriously consider as the foundations of a new security system.

### **8.1. Benefits for NATO and Israel**

NATO sees itself not only as a military alliance, but also as a community based on common values. Moreover, the Washington Treaty stated that NATO members formed a unique community of values committed to the principles of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Israel and NATO share these common values. In addition, the principle of consensus decision-making and the importance of consultation define the spirit of NATO, composed with its defensive character and its flexibility.<sup>131</sup>

At the same time and almost more importantly, radical Islam, global terrorism, WMD proliferation and cyber challenges are threatening both

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<sup>131</sup> NATO, Founding Treaty, Last updated January 30, 2017, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_67656.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_67656.htm)

NATO and Israel. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. Human rights apply there, including freedom of religion, voting rights, freedom of press, and the rule of law. And this even though the conditions for a democracy of the western type are much more difficult to maintain in the Middle East than in America or Germany. Israel already maintains close ties with several NATO member states. Germany, as an example has built several Dolphin-class submarines for the Israeli Navy, reported being able to carry cruise missiles with nuclear warheads - seen as Israel's second-strike capability.<sup>132</sup> An enhanced security cooperation with NATO or even membership in NATO will improve Israel's international legitimacy - in the past, Israel has repeatedly found itself politically isolated, not only at the regional but also at the international level - currently eroding due to the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and the critical stance against Israel by the European Union (EU). Promoting a formal partnership of Israel with NATO could facilitate a broad political exchange and engagement between Israel and Europe and could underscore the Israel's logic of belonging to the Western democratic community.

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<sup>132</sup> Kyle Mizokami, Meet Israel's Super Dolphin-Class Submarine (Armed with Nukes?), The National Interest, January 27, 2019, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/meet-israels-super-dolphin-class-submarine-armed-nukes-42652>

Membership in the Alliance could give Israel the political and psychological haven to compromise with the Palestinians with which both sides mutually recognize each other as sovereign states. The guarantee under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty would give Israel the support it needs to take the risks. Conversely, such a solution would allow Palestine to become a sovereign state. NATO membership would allow Israel to act in a more relaxed manner, thus broadening the scope for a negotiated peace. It would not be a step towards militarizing the conflict, but would raise the threshold for armed conflict, on the one hand by guaranteeing assistance to Israel and on the other hand by integrating Israel into the political structure of NATO.

Already in 2006 Zaki Shalom argued in his strategic assessment “Israel and NATO: Opportunities and Risks”, that establishing the cooperation with NATO will most probably improve Israel’s negotiating capability in its contacts with the USA’s administration and with the countries of the EU, most of which are NATO Members. Until now Israel has acted equally isolated within the international community, particularly during the early 1950’s until the formation of its partnership with France in 1955. Enhanced cooperation with NATO will make it inevitable that Israel no longer centers its security only on relations with the USA. A more supportive environment makes Israel less dependent on one ally and

consequently boosts its bargaining potential<sup>133</sup>. This statement is even more true today. Additionally, bringing Israel into NATO would help restore Israeli confidence in Europe and the EU.

A closer alliance with the Euro-Atlantic community would also have a great impact on Israel's position in the region. Especially Iran, where the insight could mature that Israel would not stand alone in the event of a military conflict, even if military assistance from Western states is not stipulated in the treaty. Even Israel's currently difficult relations with NATO member Turkey could gain momentum, which could influence or even limit Iran's and Syria's strategic calculations.

The traditional conception of Israel's security is based on deterrence, early warning, decisive outcome, and defense.<sup>134</sup>

All four pillars could be enhanced by a closer relationship with NATO. Deterrence based in Art.5 of the Washington Treaty, as any opponent would have to consider, that Israel would be supported, maybe not always militarily but by other potent means NATO could make available, by the Alliance. Early warning by having full access to NATO and NATO

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<sup>133</sup> Zaki Shalom, Israel and NATO: Opportunities and Risks, Strategic Assessment, Volume 7, No. 4, INSS, March 2005, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/israel-and-nato-opportunities-and-risks/>

<sup>134</sup> Neamon Institute, Charting a Grand Strategy for the State of Israel, Grand Strategy for Israel: Reflections and Directions, Samuel Neamon Institute for Policy Research, Tel Aviv, 2017, p. 123, <https://www.neaman.org.il/en/Files/Grand%20Strategy.pdf>

members' intelligence and early warning organization like AWACS and NATO AGS. Even though Israel does have a strong military, it does not have the resources to sustain a longer lasting war against an organized military. NATO has the potential to provide the needed support and help Israel to face any existential threat and NATO's experience in large-scale Joint Operations will enhance IDF knowledge and operational capabilities, particularly in terms of interoperability on the land, at sea and air domain. There is no doubt that even in terms of the economics of security, collaboration is a more efficient response, allowing the achievement of security objectives that cannot be achieved independently because of limited resources.

The advantages of being a NATO member goes far beyond the security issue. The previous wave of expansion after the Cold War, which reached into Central and Eastern Europe, showed that the political stability brought about by NATO membership also creates a more favorable investment environment for investments and economic growth. NATO membership usually precedes entry into other Euro-Atlantic organizations and its economic benefits are often just as important. as the security advantage.

From a purely economic point of view, the Israeli military industry has a sales potential that appears to be particularly expandable in the future as a result of the country's closer ties to NATO.

Being embedded in NATO would strengthen Israel's identity as a democratic and Jewish state whose values are fundamentally the same as those of NATO member states.

As for NATO, Israel has a much to offer in the fields of technology, intelligence, remote operations, cyber, innovation, and impact on several third parties and will provide NATO with a strong, stable, militarily advanced, democratically like-minded and reliable ally in the Middle East. Israel's advanced military, sophisticated intelligence and reconnaissance abilities, counter-terrorism and cyber-security expertise will help NATO to better cope with future threats. NATO needs regional partners to counter threats and built resilient communities.

According to the NATO's Comprehensive, Strategic-Level Policy for Preventing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and Defending Against Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Threats, "non-proliferation refers to all efforts to prevent proliferation from occurring, or should it occur, to reverse it by any other



means than the use of military force.”<sup>135</sup> With its military and nuclear deterrence capabilities Israel could play a major role in slowing proliferation activity in the region.

The crises in the Middle East and North Africa have already reshaped the security environment. Member states’ threat perceptions related to these crises will certainly diverge, and each new conflict or event will strain NATO’s decision-making and policy execution capabilities. So as not to disproportionately burden its internal cohesion and to be more effective in challenging the regional security encounters, NATO should frame a broader approach toward this region and especially towards Israel that exploits its political as well as military capabilities. NATO’s past emphasis on values and norms, which it clearly shares with Israel, as part of its mission should again play a more constructive role in addressing the events in the Arab world. Israel’s role as the only democracy in the Middle East and its improving relations to some of the Arab states could help to facilitate this.<sup>136</sup>

Resilience is a vague term and is used in various political, economic or social contexts where it is often understood as increasing resistibility. It is

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<sup>135</sup> NATO, NATO’s Comprehensive, Strategic-Level Policy for Preventing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and Defending Against Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Threats, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_48895.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_48895.htm)

<sup>136</sup> Memduh Karakullukçu, How NATO Can Remain Relevant, Council on Foreign Relations, May 17, 2012, <https://www.cfr.org/expert-roundup/how-nato-can-remain-relevant>

thus quickly approached as a universal remedy to protect societies, states or groups from dangers or even to shield them against. But it is more a matter of making it possible for societies to limit damage after an assault or attack has taken place and of helping them to quickly find their way back to a state of stability. Here NATO states and Israel are having different experiences which they can pass on. NATO member states already maintain special Centres of Excellence (COE) on various topics (terrorism, cyber security, etc.) in order to pool expertise and make it available to the Alliance if necessary. Such a COE could also be established about resilience. Israel can provide a significant contribution here.<sup>137</sup>

Israel is a world leader in the research and development of cyber security solutions. Around 15 percent of the world's private sector investment in data security takes place in Israel. Several hundred cyber companies established players as well as successful start-ups together with research institutions and state organizations form the backbone of a growing industry that is also very successful internationally. Close cooperation and a coordinated exchange of knowledge and experience between

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<sup>137</sup> Karl-Heinz Kamp, Grundzüge einer neuen NATO-Strategie, Sirius, Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen, February 21, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1515/sirius-2017-0003>

NATO and Israel in the field of cybersecurity would significantly enhance the capabilities of both.

Lastly, Israel could help to support Europe`s energy security, while assuring natural gas flows to Europe, being heavily reliant today on Russia`s energy supply.

## **8.2. The Role of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

With the decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel, the American President Donald Trump has brought the decades-long conflict in the Middle East back into the spotlight of international public opinion.

"I have come to the conclusion that it is time to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel," Trump said in Washington on 6 December 2017.<sup>138</sup>

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is extremely complex and becomes increasingly complex over time. And yet there are some key points that need to be considered if the conflict is to be understood.

Right to return: After the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, Egypt, Lebanon, Transjordan, Syria and Iraq mobilized. Israel was able to

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<sup>138</sup> et.al., Ored Eran, The Recognition of Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel, INSS The Institute for National Security Studies, Publications, INSS Insight No. 1000, December 13, 2017, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/recognition-jerusalem-capital-israel/>

defend itself successfully. The war turned some 600,000 Palestinians into refugees, fleeing to neighboring states. The Palestinians speak of the Nakba - the catastrophe. According to international law, descendants of the displaced persons also receive refugee status, so that the number of refugees today has risen to more than six million people. The challenge is, if they were all granted the right to return, the Zionist idea that Israel is a Jewish state can no longer be sustained. Proposals for solutions to the refugee question are aimed at granting refugees the right to return to a future Palestinian state. Those who do not want to return would be compensated by Israel.

The borders of Israel, and thus also of a future Palestinian state: As early as 1948, the United Nations proposed a partition plan, which was not accepted. Numerous wars, from which Israel always emerged as a military victor, continuously changed the political map. In the peace talks of the past 20 years, the borders of 1967, before the Six-Day War, were regarded as the basis for negotiations. The barrier that Israel has been building, however, goes partly beyond this possible course of the border. Further territory is lost to a future Palestinian state through Israeli settlements.

The Israeli settlements: After 1967, Israel began building settlements in the occupied territories. Meanwhile about 600,000 settlers live in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.<sup>139</sup> The Palestinians demand an immediate settlement stop as a basis for peace negotiations. Israel is also receiving much criticism internationally. Settlements are illegal under international law as reiterated by the UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016), the developments on the ground make the vision of a two-state solution increasingly inaccessible. The question of what should happen to the settlements in the West Bank after the foundation of a Palestinian state also has the potential for conflict.<sup>140</sup>

Jerusalem: Two main problems coincide in Jerusalem. For both Israelis and Palestinians, Jerusalem is a holy city. And both sides claim Jerusalem, or Al-Quds, the Arabic name, as their capital. In Jerusalem, with the Temple Mount, the Wailing Wall, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, there are some of the holiest sites of Judaism and Islam - and of Christianity. Neither Israelis nor the Palestinians can envisage allowing control of the sanctuaries to be left to the other side.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> European External Action Service, Six-Month Report on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, EEAS European External Action Service, July 16, 2018, [https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/EUSETTLERPT\\_170718.pdf](https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/EUSETTLERPT_170718.pdf)

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> et al., Ibid.

Extremism: There are groups on both sides with whom no compromise peace can be made. The problem is that although not in the majority, both the extreme right on the Israeli side and the fundamentalists on the Palestinian side have enough influence to undermine peace. The Israeli party system allows extreme parties usually to be involved in the government. The Palestinian leadership is divided, Fatah rules in the West Bank, Hamas in the Gaza Strip, which up to date does not recognize Israel's right to exist.

Anyone who wants to support peace in the Middle East must respond to Israel's legitimate security interests. Any realistic peace policy must address the fact that most Israelis regard the withdrawal from the occupied territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state as a risk to Israel's future that is difficult to calculate. There is much to suggest that a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians can remove the breeding ground for rampant anti-Semitism in the Arab world. But both among the Palestinians and in the radical Islamic movements there are enough forces that do not want to come to terms with Israel's existence as a Jewish state. There is therefore a need for strong guarantees for Israel within the framework of a broader agreement that creates security for both sides.

There is currently a tense ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians, which can at any time turn into a new round of violence. The roadmap to a negotiated peace is currently clinically dead. Instead, Israel's newly elected government - with the support of the USA - is obviously relying on a policy of *fait accompli* and is planning to permanently establish borders with annexations and the recognition of Israeli settlements.

NATO must play the role of a guarantor of peace and security in the Middle East.

Already in 2006, the German political scientist Ralf Fücks proposed a package of measures that would affect the following points:

- the offer of NATO membership for Israel, coupled with a resumption of negotiations with the Palestinians on a stable two-state solution;
- the initiative for the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, combined with a security guarantee for Israel;
- the offer of a Marshall Plan for the economic and social modernization of the region, coupled with minimum standards of the rule of law and democracy.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Ralf Fücks, *Israel in die NATO!* Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Politik e.V., *Internationale Politik*, June 6, 2006, p. 34-36

The Middle East needs perspectives to overcome the political blockade in the region and promote the democratic transformation of the Middle East. A compromise between Palestinians and Israel that leads to peace at this nexus of conflict between the West and the Islamic world is of paramount interest to both the USA and the EU. The conflict is an incubator of terrorism, it damages the already weakened authority of the US in the region, it potentially threatens the security of Europe and it fuels the existing tensions between ethnic and religious groups in the European immigration countries. Money and good words alone will not be enough to promote security and cooperation in the Middle East. NATO membership would give Israel the political and psychological security to reach a compromise with the Palestinians that recognizes each other as sovereign states. The guarantee of assistance under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty would give Israel the support it needs to take the risk of withdrawing from the West Bank. Conversely, such a solution would allow Palestine to become a sovereign state. As an accompanying measure, Palestine should be promised international reconstruction assistance along the lines of the Marshall Plan. This aid must be linked to



the obligation to build a democratic constitutional state that recognizes Israel as a Jewish state.<sup>143</sup>

A possible Israeli NATO membership is closely linked to a successful Middle East peace process, in particular to the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and most probably a pre-condition for the European members of NATO.

However, today we face a discrepancy between strategic and political considerations. Strategically, the aforementioned considerations are logical and rational. Politically, however, its acceptance will require the next Israeli government to pursue a policy which is incompatible with its philosophy and commitments to the voters. Specifically, for prime minister Netanyahu and his future coalition partners, the option of any disengagement on the West Bank, let alone the recognition of a Palestinian state, is a rather remote contingency. The status quo is the slow, undeclared annexation of the West Bank, yet not automatically the areas with large Palestinian population.<sup>144</sup> This new government will be much more likely to de- facto annex parts of the area with the blessing of the USA administration. High-ranking diplomats in Jerusalem and Tel

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Stephen A. Cook, What Israel's Election Means for Peace, Council on Foreign Relations, April 12, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/article/what-israels-election-means-peace>

Aviv believe that Netanyahu could soon annex settlements in the C-areas that are particularly close to Israel - such as Ma'ale Adumim near Jerusalem.<sup>145</sup> This domestic setting, and the fact that prime minister Netanyahu has already pushed to the right during the recent campaign, is unlikely to meet even the minimal preconditions of NATO/ the EU concerning the parameters of a Palestinian settlement. The outcome of the recent election is a factor which is likely to diminish the prospects of any such contingency to materialize in the near future. In other words, the current strategic landscape may well be ultimately overshadowed by the Israeli domestic landscape, including, above all, relentless measures to prevent Iran from receiving nuclear weapons or from building a bulwark in Syria, retaining the Golan Heights permanently, lacking a Palestinian peace partner, avoiding futile bilateral negotiations or unilateral withdrawals, and maintaining a unified Jerusalem, settlement blocs and a defensive border in the Jordan Valley in any future scenario.<sup>146</sup>

And this may become the decisive factor. As Henry Kissinger once stated as quoted in this paper earlier, Israel does not really have a foreign policy

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<sup>145</sup> Raniah Salloum, Die Zweistaatenlösung vor dem Aus, Spiegel Online, April 14, 2019, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/israel-benjamin-netanyahu-wiedergewahlt-die-folgen-fuer-den-nahostkonflikt-a-1262449.html>

<sup>146</sup> Daniel Polisar, The Common Sense of Israel's Voting Public, Mosaic, April 15, 2019, <https://mosaicmagazine.com/response/israel-zionism/2019/04/the-common-sense-of-israels-voting-public/>

and is exclusively motivated by domestic considerations. This constraint, which may well a- priori abort any effort to proceed strictly at the strategic level without addressing the political preconditions for any such course. All of this poses a risk to Israel as well. There is an indeterminable tension between Israel remaining a Jewish and democratic state if it remains to exercise political control over millions of Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens. Avoiding this choice and maintaining the status quo will again increasingly isolate Israel in the region and the world.<sup>147</sup> The Israeli-Palestinian topic might not be the key to resolving all the Middle East problems, but it is the key to Israel's relations with Europe and the key to reinforcing the long-term relationship with the USA, putting an end to the loss of support on the Democratic side of the Congress.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Richard N. Haass, The Structure of a Diplomatic Revolution, It is time for a paradigm shift in how we think about the Middle East, Council on Foreign Relations, April 18, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/article/structure-diplomatic-revolution>

<sup>148</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, Strategy and Tactics: Examining Israel's National Security, Panelists discuss Israel's national security strategy, including implications for the Middle East and U.S.-Israel relations, Council on Foreign Relations, January 19, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/event/strategy-and-tactics-examining-israels-national-security>

## 9. Conclusion

“We live in a world where we cannot operate alone not just because we have no expeditionary forces in Israel. It’s also because in modern warfare, you have the cyber dimension. Can you be effective today concerning the cyber dimension without some sort of good relations with America? The answer is no. We need that...Can you fight today without using soft power? You need it, whatsoever. Can Israel do it alone? No. We need the international community for that. You want to be effective concerning fighting terrorism today? It’s all about international cooperation...if you want to gain something deeper, we cannot do it alone...We need to know our limitations.”<sup>149</sup>

This statement given by MajGen Yair Golan 2017 in Washington clearly indicates, the context of the complex and rapidly changing security environment, in which Israel must consider a new security architecture, guaranteeing Israel's long-term security. While the above-mentioned questions of heightened risk for NATO and military flexibility for Israel should not be reduced, these costs are offset by the benefits of Israel’s inclusion in NATO.

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<sup>149</sup> Maj. Gen. Yair Golan, Israel Defense Forces, New Thinking about Israeli National security in a Changing Regional Environment, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2017 Zeev Schiff Memorial Lecture, September 7, 2017, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/new-thinking-about-israeli-national-security-in-a-changing-regional-environ>

Furthermore, Israel must consider its limitations, and that the threats Israel is facing are at such a level that Israel must become a member of a regional security system. Moreover, Israel must realize that if the Palestine conflict continues, the existence of Israel as a Jewish state will remain to be challenged, as is the case now with Iran. Or as Chuck Freilich a Senior Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School and former Deputy National Security Adviser, defined the current state of play during a panelists discussion on Israel's national security strategy in 2018 :”There are no good military solutions to any of the major issues that Israel faces today: the Iranian issue, the Palestinian issue, even the Hezbollah issue. The bad news is that there may not be any good diplomatic solutions either.”<sup>150</sup> This basically means, that there are no solutions of any kind not even on the lowest tactical level. Israel is able and prepared to contain the status quo of today's challenges militarily and diplomatically but has no greater strategy on how to approach questions and problems concerning the future of the state of Israel and its existence. This is true not only for externally existing and emerging problems, maybe even more important, but also for the domestic situation.

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<sup>150</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, Strategy and Tactics: Examining Israel's National Security, Panelists discuss Israel's national security strategy, including implications for the Middle East and U.S.-Israel relations, Council on Foreign Relations, January 19, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/event/strategy-and-tactics-examining-israels-national-security>

Whereas a decade ago NATO's prime security concern was the stabilization and transformation of Central and Eastern Europe, today it is addressing problems coming from or transient through countries of the "Greater Middle East". If NATO is to meet this security concerns, it will have to shift the focus of its attention from Central and Eastern Europe to this region. In this context, the Syrian Conflict and Russia's intervention in the Middle East clearly show Israel's new strategic importance for the Euro-Atlantic community. Facing these challenges stemming from the South, NATO and the EU are concerned about Russia's destabilizing actions and policies together with its provocative military activities near their borders as well as the risks posed by its military intervention and support for the regime in Syria. Consequently, the common security spaces of NATO, the EU and Israel are more and more overlapping, and each player may look at Russia and even Iran as frenemies.

NATO and the EU have already responded to this changed security environment by augmenting their deterrence and defense posture, even though remaining open to dialogue with Russia. Additionally, NATO announced in February 2017 the formation of an information sharing organization as part of the NATO Strategic Direction South (NSD-S) initiative, that connects Allies, Partners and Subject Matter Experts. NATO aims to contribute to coordination, synchronization, and de-

confliction of NATO activities across NSD-S, while optimizing resources and maximizing effectiveness.<sup>151</sup>

In this strategic environment, an enhanced cooperation between NATO, the EU and Israel, already a member of the Mediterranean Dialogue, could become essential. This is true not only for a possible upgraded military and political partnership with NATO but also in the light of the EU's economic advantage potentially influencing Israel's policy.

A new security architecture is needed, which can help to enforce a sophisticated security package. NATO could be willing to extend its policy and security umbrella to cover Israel and move towards an Israeli membership. Conversely Israel would not undertake substantive military action without prior consulting with NATO. This process of mutual attitude change must concurrently take place in Jerusalem and Brussels.

These potential developments are marked with big question marks. But looking back over the past the pace of NATO's evolution has far outdone what was predicted at the time. The pace of world events is accelerating and NATO, despite its shortcomings, is the international institution which

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<sup>151</sup> NATO, NATO Fact Sheet, 09 Feb 2018, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2018\\_02/1802-Factsheet-NATO-Command-Structure\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_02/1802-Factsheet-NATO-Command-Structure_en.pdf)

has proven the most flexible and capable of evolving to meet the demands of the new security environment. This is likely to continue to be the case.

The violent decline of the "Arab Spring" in Egypt, Syria and Iraq underscores the image of modern Israel as a thriving oasis in a war-torn environment. The dream of a Middle East as part of a Euro-Mediterranean economic, peace and security zone will remain a utopian notion for a long time to come. The extent to which Israel will succeed at some point in acquiring full membership of the European Union and NATO within the framework of a two-state solution will also depend on the further dynamics of European-Israeli relations. However, the ending of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a strategic priority for Europe.

Without this solution, there would be little chance of successfully tackling the broader problems of the Middle East. This makes it even more important to realize that the Euro-Atlantic community and Israelis are closely linked not only because of the newly created security environment in the region, but also in the context of common political interests and cultural, democratic and human rights values.

Today NATO must address a variety of security challenges and threats that originate not only from the east but also from the south. The threats from the Southern flank have a direct and negative impact on Euro-



Atlantic security, all of them having both a military and a political interrelated dimension. NATO has taken several relevant decisions already, and more can be done while developing a more strategic dialogue within NATO as well as with partners regarding the ongoing crisis affecting security in the overlapping Euro-Mediterranean security space. Bearing in mind all the caveats and restraints necessary considering the Alliance's standing and balance sheet in the region, more strategic dialogue on the Southern flank within and from NATO's side would be advantageous for the security and the political development in that volatile region.<sup>152</sup>

Israel and the Euro-Atlantic community have to think-out-of-the-box and look for creative and lasting solutions, as the so far executed strategies – if there were any – have failed. How far-fetched this might seem today, especially when we look at the outcomes of the latest Israeli elections, NATO is probably the only strategic partner, that could be the solution for Israel's future challenges. Or as Benjamin Netanyahu stated in 2007: "Israel is NATO – we are the West. We are the same."<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Alessandro Marrone, What's new on NATO's Southern flank: security threats and the Alliance's role after the Warsaw Summit, Federal Academy for Security Policy, Security Policy Working Paper 22/2016, [https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/working\\_paper\\_2016\\_22.pdf](https://www.baks.bund.de/sites/baks010/files/working_paper_2016_22.pdf)

<sup>153</sup> Benjamin Netanyahu, „Israel and NATO“, Congress Monthly 74, Washington DC, September-October, 2007, in: Sharon Prado, Normative Power Europe Meets Israel: Perceptions and Realities, Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs, Volume 10, No.1, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23739770.2016.1158445>

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