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Introduction

- 1 This workshop, organized in Jerusalem by the 'Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem' (CRFJ), the Hebrew University and Sciences Po Paris, provided a great and rare opportunity to exchange views between researchers and diplomats on the impacts of the Arab Awakening on EU relations with Israel and its neighbors. By bringing together historians, political scientists, orientalist, economists and diplomats, it enabled to draw up an exciting interdisciplinary perspective on the upheavals shaking the Middle East and challenging the previous regional Status Quo. We are indeed grateful to all the participants for making this event a success thanks to their active participation. This introduction resumes the debates that took place during a closed roundtable among the researchers and briefly presents the different articles of this publication. As a matter of fact, the impact of the Arab Spring, starting with the popular revolts in Tunisia in December 2010/January 2011, on Israel's and the EU's regional policies, and on their mutual relationships, remains to be investigated.
- 2 Regarding the EU, it used this opportunity to give new momentum to its bilateral relations with the Arab states concerned. As a matter of fact, the Council of the European Union decided to launch official negotiations, through the adoption of negotiating directives, to reach Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade agreements (DCFTAs) with Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia in December 2011, going beyond the scope of their current association agreements. By contrast, the EU decided to impose financial and energetic sanctions as well as arms embargo on Syria in view of the refusal of President Assad to step aside and launch a political transition in the context of the ongoing intensive large-scale armed conflict leading to the death of more than 100 000 Syrians. The counterpart of the EU's new Neighborhood policy's motto, 'More for More', is thus

'Less for Less' in case of non-compliance with the EU's political preferences. It is worth noting that this new European policy towards its southern neighborhood, based on effective political conditionality and on bilateral relations, aimed first and foremost at restoring its reputation among Arab societies, tarnished notably since its support to the unelected Fatah government in the West Bank from 2007 and to authoritarian Arab regimes.

- 3 With regard to Israel, in the aftermath of the upheavals in Egypt, its government contemplated the idea to renegotiate its peace treaty with Egypt, notably regarding the status of Sinai, and at the same time observed closely the developments in Syria, fearful that they could trigger a worsening in their already tense relations. In the West Bank, Palestinians demonstrated against the rising cost of living, and have been more and more skeptical about the role of the Palestinian Authority (PA), while Hamas leadership in Gaza has been weakened in the aftermath of the removal of the Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi from power in July 2013. As decision-makers hardly know how to react when 'world politics outruns their imaginations', to paraphrase Robert Jervis¹, the 'wait and see' approach adopted by the Israeli government appeared to its main leaders as the least worst option in this context.
- 4 The years 2013 and 2014 essentially witnessed a step backward towards the old Status quo. Many in Europe were predicting the necessity for Israel to change its policy and attitude towards its future Arab democratic neighbors. A democratic Egypt would compel Israel to provide Palestinians with their own state as a pre-condition for the recognition of their peace treaty. Yet, this scenario did not materialize. On the contrary, the legitimately elected government of Morsi in Egypt was toppled and the Muslim brotherhood ostracized by the interim military government. Assad's government in Syria has also proved to be, against the initial assessments of the EU and Israel, particularly resilient. The benefits of the carrot and stick approach of the renewed European policy in the southern Mediterranean region are not obvious in this context. The EU's strategy predicated on the conditionality approach of the enlargement policy appears as ill adapted to the actual capacity and willingness of the Arab states concerned.
- 5 Nevertheless, as the course of events of the Arab Awakening have already shown, it would be particularly unwise to predict the stability of the current regional 'Status Quo'. As a consequence, researchers ought to be particularly cautious when analyzing the impacts of these Arab upheavals as they can only be assessed in a long-term perspective. Yet, this new regional context does require researchers a rethinking of their assumptions regarding a few important matters.
- 6 That was the general goal pursued by the roundtable. Is the Israeli regional policy (or non-policy) well adapted to these new challenges? Does the Arab Awakening change the way the Palestinian issue should be dealt with both in Israel and in the EU? Does it impact substantially the development of the EU-Israel relations? To what extent do they affect the phenomena of anti-Semitism in Europe? These were some of the questions and issues addressed by the participants during an exciting and lively debate. This introduction will be structured accordingly.

Israel's foreign policy and the Arab Awakening

- 7 First, Matthieu Cimino raised the issue of Israel's response to the regional upheavals: Does the fact of having no policy, more specifically towards Syria, constitutes a policy per se? Participants stressed the risk of a partition of Syria and of the danger of the rise of extremism, more particularly among the rebels. Matthieu, in his article dealing with the representation of foreign fighters by the Syrian opposition, points out that the jihadists among the opposition to Assad's regime were often framed as traitors or collaborators by the rebels, while being also perceived as a particularly effective force on the operational level. Despite the danger of the rise in power of the jihadists within the Syrian opposition, the Israeli government preferred generally to keep a low profile and to abstain from supporting one party or the other. Yet, if deterrence reveals itself insufficient, the IDF has proven to be willing to act preemptively on the Syrian territory².
- 8 The participants reacted differently to Israel's attitude. Daniel Halevy-Goetschel, head of the international department of the Center for Policy Research of the Israeli ministry of Foreign Affairs, asserted that doing nothing was not an option for Israel. Colin Shindler, emeritus professor at the SOAS-University of London, added that, in this specific case, having no policy was indeed a policy. He recalled that Israel's cautious policy – resulting from its unpopularity among Arabs – did not exclude targeted attacks so that keeping a low profile did not prevent action when deemed as necessary. Another participant remarked that a 'balkanization' of the region could even turn out to be in Israel's interest so that the 'doing almost nothing' would be the best option.
- 9 For his part, Lior Herman, lecturer at the Hebrew University, noted that this Israeli response towards the Arab upheaval did not mean that Israel had no regional foreign policy at all. He took the example of Israel's relations with Turkey in the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara incident in May 2010 and recalled that Israel has a reconciliation policy. As a matter of fact, Israel eventually apologized to Turkey in March 2013 enabling a thaw in their relations. In the context of the Arab uprising, this diplomatic breakthrough is supposed to permit Israel to restore dialogue and information sharing with its former Islamic ally, as well as lessening the Israeli sense of strategic isolation in the region. However, by the 15th of April 2014 when this introduction was written, despite the declared willingness of both governments to sign a 'compensation agreement' after the March 2014 elections in Turkey, the two parties did not manage to do so. The agreement, that would supposedly enable the normalization of their relations, is difficult to reach for both Israel and Turkey for domestic and foreign policy reasons, despite a common interest in ensuring regional stability and in preventing extremists to come to power more specifically in Syria³. Moreover, though a rapprochement may materialize in the future, Turkey will be far more hesitant than in the past to revive its close military relationship with Israel. Ilan Greilsammer, professor of political science at Bar-Ilan University, regretted that there is no strategic thinking in Israel regarding this matter as well as others and argued that Israel has only a reactive policy.

Impacts on the Palestinian question

- 10 Benedetta Berti and Caroline du Plessix point out in their paper – comparing the EU's narratives and policies implemented in the context of the Arab Awakening with Israel's

– that the EU and Israel draw contrasting conclusions as to the potential impacts of the uprisings on the Palestinian question. Israel's government argued that these regional upheavals eventually demonstrate that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not the core driver of the regional problems, but instead, that the problem is rather internal and has to do with radical Islamism within Arab societies. The EU and its Member States insisted, more particularly during the first years of the upheavals, that these events demonstrated the aspiration of Arab nations to democracy. According to them, the upheavals would have provided Israel with a rare opportunity to prioritize the Palestinian question on its domestic agenda. It could have enabled eventually a future normalization of its relations with its Arab neighbors, in the spirit of the 2002 Arab peace initiative. Tsilla Hershcó, Research associate at the Begin Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA) stresses in her article that this disagreement between the EU and Israel as to the priority level of the Palestinian question has been, for some time, one of the main impediments to the deepening of their mutual strategic relations. More generally, Bernard Philippe, a diplomat of the newly created European External Action Service (EEAS), is pointing out in his contribution the difficulty for the EU in sharing its own experience of peacebuilding with Israel and the Palestinians.

- 11 It is also worth noting that the uprisings in the Arab world have also become an increasing source of concern for European leaders. Whereas the Palestinian question has often been framed in the European discourse as crucial for reaching a lasting peace and stability in the region⁴, the main reason for the rising regional instability was not in this case the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but political and economic factors present within the Arab states concerned. As a consequence, the EU invested relatively more political energy and financial help to cope with the upheavals in the Arab states than to engage with the Palestinian question. While the EU, together with the European investment bank and the European bank for research and development, pledged an additional financial package of 5 billion euros during a meeting of the EU-Egypt Task Force in November 2012, Member States' contributions to the financial mechanisms dedicated to the PA, PEGASE, and more particularly its direct financial support, dropped by 22% from 2011 to 2012⁵. The context of economic crisis in Europe does provide the main explanation for the relative decreasing EU funding to the PA that still accounted for 451.7 million euros in 2012. Even though, ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained in this context a "high priority and a fundamental EU interest"⁶, recalled Lady Ashton, the EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy.
- 12 Ilan Greilsammer deplored that in spite of the fact that the whole international community, including the EU, is supporting the option of a Palestinian state, the current right wing Israeli government continues playing with the idea of a Jordan-Palestinian federation. The so-called 'Jordanian option' had been on the negotiation table at least until the end of the Jordanian authority in the West Bank and East-Jerusalem after the 1967 Six-Day war. It was buried after the Jordanian administrative disengagement from the West Bank in 1988⁷. Since then, the Israeli government is confronted with the 'Palestinian option' supported mainly by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in other words the Palestinian willingness to create an independent state. Therefore, the Jordanian option appears today to many as outdated given its lack of political realism. Nevertheless, discussions are still held on the possibility of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation in the aftermath of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement⁸. A confederation would provide both entities with full sovereignty, contrary to a federation.

As a matter of fact, Lior Herman underlined that the implementation of the federalist option would mean the end of the Hashemite kingdom while the royal family's power is already decreasing. Palestinians already constitute around half of the Jordanian population. If the West Bank population were to be added, the Palestinians would represent an absolute majority of the federation's population and the Hashemite family would face problems, more particularly in the context of the Arab Awakening, in justifying its hold on power. What's more, Jordan economic growth is currently hampered by the cost of accommodating hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war started in the first half of 2011. For all these reasons, the Jordan-Israel Peace agreement signed in 1994 could also be affected by the creation of such a federation due to its potential demographic and political impacts.

- 13 Yet, Alfred Tovas, Professor at the Hebrew university, noted that the creation of a Jordan-Palestinian state or confederation could eventually serve Europe's interests as it could permit to put an end to the territorial problem that arose in the aftermath of the Second World War. He stressed that while he defended the partition option after the Six Days War, meaning the evacuation of the occupied territories, Israel's governments' policy since then made the implementation of the idea of a Palestinian state unrealistic on the ground. Therefore, according to him, other options should be proposed. As an example, he alluded to the potential role the EU could play to improve the Palestinian economic situation. He exposed the positive economic effects on both Israel and the Palestinian territories (except Gaza) that would have the EU-Israel free-trade agreement on agricultural products signed in 2009 as well as the open-sky agreement signed by the EU and Israel in 2012. Nevertheless, Lior Herman argued that the role of the EU is doomed to be very limited anyway as only four major world powers really count in the region – the U.S., Russia, Turkey and Iran. He argued that, as long as Europeans will be divided politically, their influence will remain weak.
- 14 Julie Trottier, director of research at the CNRS (French National Center for scientific research), recalled that the EU does have important levers of influence vis-à-vis Palestinians. As a matter of fact, the PA remains financially accountable to the EU given that the latter's and its Member States' funding account for more than half of the PA's budget. Caroline du Plessix added that from 2000 to 2009, the EU alone – not including the Member States' bilateral aid – provided the Palestinians with almost 5 billion euros, including the aid to the United Nation's agency for the Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). Alfred Tovas questioned if this financial help was not in fact helping Israel to maintain occupation instead of resolving the conflict. This remark echoed the EU declaration in December 2013 stating that if peace talks were to fail, the EU would reconsider its aid to Palestinians so that Israel will have to assume directly the cost of occupation⁹. Yet, this declaration aimed first of all at putting pressure on Israel politically in the context of a moribund peace process. As a matter of fact, it is very doubtful that the EU would carry out its threat in such a context, due to the risk entailed by such a decision in terms of regional stability and given the EU's general aversion to risk¹⁰.
- 15 With regard to the impacts of occupation on the Israeli society, a participant deplored that Israeli families were still sacrificing their children as conscription remains mandatory in Israel. Eléonore Merza, Associate Researcher at the CRFJ, added that conscientious objectors in Israel – young men or women refusing to do their military service on the ground of freedom of thought, conscious and/or religion – were numerous. According to the website of the Israeli '*refuseniks*', the conscientious objector called

Sarvanimin Hebrew, a survey conducted by the Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies (סרבונים) (now the Institute for National Security Studies) showed that over 25% of all Israelis sympathized with their struggle and acknowledge the civil right and moral duty to refuse to serve the occupation¹¹. Eléonore recalled that the protests for social justice that took place in Israel in 2011, illustrated the fact that Israelis 'want their (חברתי צדק), money back' and are aware of the cost of occupation. Alfred Tovias countered that these protests did not have any relevant impact as even if 80% of Israeli wanted the end of occupation, the active minority which stands up against this move would block the process. He added that Israelis are more afraid of a civil war than anything else. Ilan Greilsammer agreed and concluded that 'Tel Aviv people' – the protests mainly took place in Tel Aviv – were living 'in a bubble' and would not be able to do anything against the settler minority.

The EU-Israel relations in the context of the Arab Awakening

- 16 Thirdly, the participants were asked about the potential consequences of the Arab Awakening on the EU-Israel relationship. Lior Herman stressed that the EU and Israel were already supposed in 2008 to upgrade their relationships, two years and a half before the start of the uprising in Tunisia. In fact, on the 16th of June 2008, during the 8th EU-Israel Association Council – a body set up by the 1995 Association Agreement – the EU agreed to upgrade the level and the intensity of their relations. The Foreign Affairs Council confirmed this decision on the 8th of December 2008. This upgrade mainly provides for the deepening of their political and strategic relations – through the consultation of Israeli representatives in several EU strategic committees, working groups and bodies, among which the COPS – and their commercial relations through a deeper integration of the EU internal market thanks to a better convergence with the Community acquis. Yet, the operation Cast Lead carried out by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip, between the 27th of December and the 18th of January 2009, interrupted abruptly this process due to the harsh criticisms it triggered in Europe against Israel, more particularly regarding the IDF intervention on the ground.
- 17 Thus, though few commercial agreements have been signed or ratified since then in the agricultural, pharmaceutical or air transport sectors, it is worth noting that the EU-Israeli political relations were already tense at the time of the beginning of the upheavals. Moreover, while this context did not foster the development of closer ties at the political level, mainly due to the disagreements regarding the Palestinian question, Benedetta Berti's and Caroline du Plessix's article shows that in the end the EU and Israel reacted to the upheavals with the same willingness to defend their security interests and to adapt their policy to the new regional landscape. Accordingly, the impact of the Arab awakening on their relations should not be overestimated.
- 18 Yet, from an EU institutional perspective, the political linkage constraining their relations, more particularly in the aftermath of the Lisbon treaty, may be strengthened in this new context. First, it is worth noting that the EU position towards Israel is far from being homogeneous. Lior Herman pointed out that among the EU institutions, positions were notably divergent. The EU Commission does not share the same method and objectives than the Member States for instance. The latter, he noted, through their

positions in the European Council and the Foreign Affairs Council, are much more sensitive to political criticisms among their populations. Moreover, while the EU Commission's role is supposed to be more technical when it comes to the EU's external relations, the European Parliament voices the European citizens' opinions towards Israel, more critical in the aftermath of the operation Cast Lead. And the Lisbon treaty, ratified in December 2009, granted the latter the veto power over the signature of EU international agreements. This rise in power of the European Parliament in the EU's external policy may slow down the momentum of the EU-Israel relations in the future, more particularly if Israel does not answer the EU's political expectations vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue. In this sense, the frustration expressed by the EU diplomats with respect to the stalemate in the peace process as well as Israel's unchanged policy towards Palestinians despite the regional turmoil may further constrain the deepening of their relationship.

- 19 Alfred Tovias expressed a contrasting view regarding the evolving dynamics taking place within the EU-Israel relations. According to him, the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements to the East made the EU less critical of Israel. This point of view is predicated upon the fact that Eastern European Member States are generally the more supportive of Israel within the EU. Alfred also emphasized that this enlargement triggered a rise in power of Germany among Member States, and that the latter often voices Israel's demands in EU's institutions. Thus, despite the political linkage imposed by the EU to Israel, between the resolution of the conflict and the deepening of their mutual relations, he expected the 'Memory of History' to play a more important role in their future relations.
- 20 He insisted that the creation of Israel remained the 'unfinished business' of the two World Wars and that it was in the EU's best interest to 'complete the work'. He acknowledged the following paradox: Israel has to get accepted eventually in the region but it should also return to Europe. He pointed out the need for Israel to be part of a regional block. As it would never belong to the only Middle East regional organization, the Arab League, the EU would be in this prospect the natural hinterland of Israel, as illustrated by the excellent level of their commercial, scientific and cultural relations. Thus, he wondered why, if the EU accepts Romania or Bulgaria as Member States, it would not accept Israel in the end? "I do not want only God as an ally, unlike the Orthodox people here", he concluded, smiling.
- 21 Against this backdrop, Maya Sion, Post-Doctoral fellow at the Hebrew University, regretted for her part the lack of Israel's strategic vision in its relations with the EU. Despite the general desire in Israel to get closer to the EU and even to consider a future membership, she mentioned the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, to integrate the European *acquis* with respect to one of the four freedoms, the free movement of people. As a matter of fact, Israel generally fears that it would increase foreign workers' emigration to Israel and foster the brain drain phenomena from Israel to Europe.
- 22 Thus, as an alternative option to a future EU membership, Maya alluded to Shimon Peres's vision for a new Middle East and notably to his more recent idea of creating projects of cooperation between the EU and Arab countries. This cooperation could be funded, according to Shimon Peres, by the EU while Israel could contribute to it thanks to its knowledge and innovations. Alfred Tovias strongly opposed this idea and recalled that given that Arab states have lost several wars against Israel, the last thing the latter should claim is that it would like to teach them something, in order not to offend them.

Consequences on Anti-Semitism in Europe

- 23 Finally the roundtable discussion focused on the issue of anti-Semitism in Europe and on the potential impact of the Arab Awakening. Samuel Ghiles-Meilhac, who compares in his article the Spanish experience of normalization of its relations with Israel with the current state of relations between Tunisia and Israel, stressed the difficulty to define the current pattern of anti-Semitism in Europe. He emphasized that its nature is different from the political attacks emanating from Arab countries. In Europe, according to him, there are not anymore political parties asserting that Jews should leave the country or threatening them physically. In France for instance, he mentioned the current influence of the Jewish community notably through the CRIF, the Representative Council of the Jewish Institutions, whose dinner organized each year attracts a lot of French politicians, among others. By contrast, he pointed out the importance of the widespread perception in Europe of a current demographic threat posed by the Arab community. He also highlighted that during the Strauss Khan scandal [former head of the IMF], medias generally did not refer to the myth of the 'powerful Jews' or any other anti-Semitic myth, contrary to the Press reporting during the Dreyfus affair at the end of the 19th century in France. Yet, he also pointed out that attacks against Jews have increased ultimately in Europe, and notably in France as illustrated by the Toulouse shootings in 2012.
- 24 Colin Shindler agreed that in Europe the threat posed today by anti-Semitism is different. In his article, in which he analyses the evolution of the positions of the European left towards Israel, he notably questions the actual link between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. According to him, the rise in anti-Semitism today can take the form of a delegitimation of the state of Israel as it can lead to the delegitimation of the Jewish people. Thus, he claimed that there could be in this context other attacks on Jews in Europe. But he also stressed that the memory of what happened to the Jews during the Shoah would not vanish with the new generation. He remarked that this new generation has inherited the memory of the Shoah from their grand-parents so that historical distance is not an issue in this respect.
- 25 For her part, Julie Trottier highlighted that in France, physical violence against people has increased in the last few years, not only against Jews but also against Arabs due to the deterioration of the economic situation. Another participant pointed out that Jews are today much more organized than Muslim people and that there is a noticeable rise in Islamophobia in Europe today. He concluded that the Jewish community benefits today from a comparative advantage in Europe. He illustrated this idea by the fact that Israel is the only MENA country in which a citizen does not need a visa when travelling to the EU.

NOTES

1. Jervis, Robert. *Perceptions and misperceptions in international politics*. New Jersey princeton University Press, 1976, p. 56.

2. On the Israeli strategic culture, see: Giles, Gregory F. *Continuity and Change in Israel's Strategic Culture*. Defense Threat Reduction Agency of the United States of America, 2006, <http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/dod/dtra/israel.pdf> [Accessed 7 April 2014]. Greilsammer, Ilan. *Divergences entre Israël et les pays européens de l'OTAN sur la sécurité durable de l'État Israëli*. Rome: NATO defense college occasional paper, 2007. Kimmerling, Baruch. Patterns of militarism in Israel. *European Journal of Sociology*, 1993, vol. 34, n° 1.
3. On the Turkish-Israeli relations, see : Cohen, Matthew S., Freilich, Charles D. *Breakdown and Possible Restart: Cohen, Matthew S., Freilich, Charles D. Breakdown and Possible Restart: Turkish-Israeli Relations under the AKP*. *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, 2014, vol. 8, n° 1.
4. See for instance the Foreign affairs council conclusion on the Middle East peace process of the 14th of May 2012.
5. European Court of Auditors. *European Union Direct Financial Support to the Palestinian Authority*. Special report n°14. 2013, http://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR13_14/SR13_14_EN.pdf [Accessed 20 May 2014].
6. Ashton, Catherine. *Speech on the latest developments in the Middle East & Syria*. 12 June 2012, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-436_en.htm [Accessed 20 May 2014].
7. See: Legrand, Vincent. *La question de l'inconstitutionnalité de la décision jordanienne de désengagement de Cisjordanie du 31 juillet 1988 : éclairage politique et judiciaire*. *Égypte/ Monde arabe*, 2005. <http://ema.revues.org/1745?lang=en> [Accessed 20 May 2014].
8. See for instance: Pedatzur, Reuven. *A new, improved Jordanian option*. *Haaretz*, 27 January 2014. <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.570661> [Accessed 20 May 2014].
9. Khoury, Jack. *EU to reconsider Palestinian aid if peace talks with Israel fail*. *Haaretz*, 3 December 2013. <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.561593> [Accessed 11 December 2013].
10. Laïdi, Zaki. *Is Europe a Risk Averse Actor?* *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 2010, vol. 1, n° 4.
11. See: *למען ישראל: Courage to refuse*. 2003. <http://www.couragetorefuse.org/hebrew/movement.asp> [Accessed 20 May 2014].

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