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Israel in the European neighbourhood policy

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Abstract: The paper "Israel in the European neighbourhood policy" attempts to explain the importance of the relation EU-Israel for the security of the European Union, but also for the global security. This task will be accomplished by analyzing basic documents vital for European political architecture, such as the European Security Strategy, Strategy Paper for Israel for the period 2007-2013, or EU/Israel Action Plan. The speeches of members of European Commission about the relation of EU with Israel are also important sources of the present paper, bringing valuable ideas who successfully complete the content of EU-Israel treaties.

This paper attempts, also, to explain the functioning and the role of European neighbourhood policy, its principles of action and objectives and, later on, to analyse the importance of Israel as a country found in the proximity of European Union. The reason for choosing Israel from all the other neighbors of the European Union, as subjects of European neighbourhood policy, was the common values reflected in tradition and culture of the Jews from Israel and of the Europeans, enhanced by the European Jewry Heritage from Europe. We consider that the relationship between European Union and Israel is very normal and useful. Among the priorities of action established by the two parts as a consequence of European Union-Israel treaties, we would like to point out the assignement to fight against anti-Semitism and against terrorist actions. The Jewish people are a people who passed through a lot of difficulties and inconveniences during history and through a great tragedy during the Holocaust. Israel represents the refuge they longed for centuries and democratic states do support Israeli aspiration towards having their own fatherland.

Anti-Semitism increased now in the Arab world being the consequence of the conflicts between Palestinians and Israelites in the last decades. Some times it can take the form of terrorist action and hence the connection with terrorist networks. The fight against terrorism is not strictly connected with anti-Semitism; terrorist networks are acting more and more widely, including actions versus western civilization. So it is both in the interest of Europeans and Israel to act against the ones who put in danger the basic human values.

Both Israel and European Union and United States also, have to reconsider their relation with Arab world whose aggression increased as being home for numerous extremist and terrorist Islamic movements. Terrorism is the present day threat and not a global war. But terrorism can cause much more damage than a war as affecting the entire world and mainly civilians. No place can be safe enough when confronting with such a threat.

But the treaties between Israel and European Union have also economic, social, political, security related objectives. They have at their base the common values that Israel and European Union countries share: democracy, human rights and respect for fundamental freedoms. They wish to create more prosperous and secure countries. And they open European economy to Israeli participation. Strengthening the economic ties between Israel and European Union, all sectors of cooperation will be strengthened because economic interest is at the basis of long term relations.

The method of work will be critical interpretation of the documents concerning European neighbourhood policy and its connection to Israel. The purpose is to understand the written base of EU and Israel relations as a precondition for further possible analysis of the diplomatic relations and politics of the two entities.

Our position is to encourage the relationship between Israel and European Union. Israel and the European Union countries are united through historical ties as Jews from whole Europe contributed after 1948 to the creation and development of the Israelian state. Their relationship appears us very normal and an expected result.

European Neighbourhood Policy was firstly developed in 2004 in order to achieve more stability in EU by strenghtening the relationship between European Union countries and its neighbours. It involved EU's immediate neighbors such as Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Lybia, Moldova, Morocco and the occupied Palestinian territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. Its objectives are common guidelines which the partner countries share such as respect for democracy and human rights, implementation for the rule of law and of market economy principles, common development.

In her speech at Tel Aviv from 10 November 2005, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy: "Israel's place in the avant garde of the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is a new departure for the EU. It is a policy designed to bring neighbouring countries interested in deeper relations with the EU closer to us. And to promote an area of stability, prosperity ans security for us all"¹.

The objective of implementing security in the neighbourhood of the European Union is reflected also in a document entitled European Security Strategy which was enacted in Brussels, on 12 December 2003². The document was intending to conduce to the creation of a more stable Europe, to combat terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass distruction, regional conflicts, state failure and organized crime. It had on its base the idea that "Security is a precondition of development". One of its points entitled *Building Security in our Neighbourhood* was mentionning the interest of European Union that the countries found at its borders to be well governed: "It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well-governed. Neighbors who are engaged in violent conflict, weak states where organized crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on its borders all pose problems for Europe"³. The document underlined that the integration of new states in European Union, event that took place in 2004 when 10 countries from Central and Eastern Europe joined the Union, brought more security in the European Union, but in the same time brought the areas in trouble closer to the European Union.

An important point of European Security Strategy was that it was mentioning a high priority for Europe, namely the resolution of Arab/Israeli conflict. After years of disputes between the state of Israel and Palestinian Authority, the solution approved by European Union was two states solution. In the same time the document mentioned the problems of Mediteranean area which was confronting with economic stagnation and the wish of European

¹ Dr. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, *Israel-European Union Relations: fulfilling the potential*, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/news/ferrero/2005/sp05_675.htm

² European Security Strategy, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g

³ *Ibidem*.

Union to strengthen economic, cultural, security related ties with its Mediterranean partners. The door was opened not only for Israel, but also for Arab world.

An important step with the view of implementing European Neighbourhood Policy was the EU/Israel Action Plan⁴. The document was considering policies to be carried out for a period of three years after the EU's enlargement from 1st May 2004. It implied the evolution of Israel's policies under the guidance of European Union.

The premise of the agreement were the common values shared by EU and Israel as democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law and basic freedoms. The parties were committed to fight together against anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia. It was mentioned the common historical and cultural heritage.

The above mentioned agreement between Israel and EU was concluded under European Neighbourhood Policy and was opening new perspectives opening the EU market to Israel and ensuring the possibility for Israel to participate to European Union policies and programs. As a consequence, political cooperation between the parties involved was expecting to increase. Economies were expected to open to each other and trade barriers to be diminished. A partnership instrument named ENPI was created to support the actions supported by the EU/Israel Action Plan. Community Programs were designed to be accessible for Israel. The framework for cooperation was the Association Agreement between EU and Israel.

In her speech at Tel Aviv from November 10, 2005, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Dr. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, describes the importance of Action Plans for the European Neighbourhood Policy:

“Action Plans are the European Neighbourhood Policy's principal tool. Each Action Plan is specifically tailored to the country concerned, so that Israel's Action Plan with the EU responds to the particular dynamics of EU-Israel relations. It sets out our mutually agreed vision for our relationship and detailed commitments for us both for a three year period, to achieve Israel's closer integration with the EU.

Israel's Action Plan covers a wide range of areas. On the political side, the EU and Israel have committed themselves to working together in the battle against anti-Semitism, racism and Xenophobia and in protecting human rights and minorities. For example we will work together on educating our peoples about the importance of tolerance and respect for all ethnic and religious groups. The events of the past year have only served to underline how vitally important this is”⁵.

Among the actions to be carried out within the EU/Israel Action Plan we can mention:

A). Political dialogue and cooperation-objective which was developed as a consequence of common values shared by Israel and EU: the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, good governance and international humanitarian law. The parties were committed to fight against threats to their common security and to promote peace in the Middle East, an area of conflicts. Political dialogue will be also emphasized by combating anti-Semitism. European Union will strengthen cooperation in order to combat Anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic propaganda in the media and on Internet. Remembrance of Holocaust is a way to

⁴ *European Neighbourhood Policy: EU-Israel Action Plan (22/11/2007)*,
<http://www.delisr.ec.europa.eu/english/default.asp>.

⁵ Dr. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, *Israel-European Union Relations: fulfilling the potential*,
http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/news/ferrero/2005/sp05_675.htm

reconcile with the Past. The documents militates for the fight against racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia.

In the same time, political dialogue will be achieved by resolving the problems in Middle East, reaching a solution to Israeli/Palestinian conflict and the solution of two states one Palestinian, one Israel. Measures will be taken to dismantle terrorist networks and infrastructure. Stability will be achieved by improving economic situation in Israel. In the same time, an important objective is non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The objective of combating terrorism is of utmost importance. Common views and experiences with regard to means of combating terrorism will be shared. EU decisions to act against terrorism will be implemented. Cooperation of Israel with international forums will be implemented so as regional cooperation.

B). *Economic and social co-operation and development*-by promoting “best practices on social problems of post-industrial societies”, by fostering “economic cooperation and structural reforms” by promoting sustainable development.

C). *Trade-related issues, market and regulatory reform* – will be achieved firstly by free movement of goods, by establishing a business dialogue, by progress concerning further liberalization of trade, by creating a mechanism for solving the disputes related to economic and trade provisions, by developing e-commerce. Then, regional trade links will be developed. Trade partners of Israel from Euro-Mediterranean area, as Jordan, will be encouraged to improve their economic relations with Israel. In the area of customs control, counterfeit goods and pirating, the supervision will increase. Technical regulations, standards and conformity assessment procedure will harmonize with the one existent in EU. In the same time, restrictions will be eliminated. The business environment will be improved. Foreign investment was supported. The trade in services was about to be liberalized. In the same time, it was encouraged the movement of persons, and, in particular, the movement of workers. The competition policy will be improved by deepening transparency and controlling state aid.

Peter Mendelsohn, EU Trade Commissioner, in a speech entitled EU trade policy and stability in the Middle East, hold in Jerusalem at 19 May 2005 talked about how EU will cooperate with Israel within the European Neighbourhood Policy in the domain of trade:

“My responsibility in the European Commission is for Trade. Israel is an important partner. Israel is a world leader in the high-tech sector-highly dynamic, innovative and competitive. Israeli business is skilful risk takers. Israel has one of the highest rates of research and development investment per GDP-and your formidable record in filing new patents show that this works. Adding imports and exports together, the EU is Israel’s biggest trading partner, responsible for 36% of Israel’s total trade. It is a relationship we cherish and wish to strengthen further.

Simply put, I have three aims. The first is to make it easier for Israel and Palestinian territories- and I hope eventually Palestine- to trade together. The second is to help improve the conditions for you both to trade with other countries of the region. The third is to help all countries of the region to do more trade with the European Union, including by further opening of European markets”⁶.

⁶ Peter Mandelson (EU Trade Commissioner), *EU trade policy and stability in the Middle East*, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/05/288&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiltlanguage=en>

In the same speech, Peter Mandelsohn talks about how EU will encourage Israel to develop economic cooperation with its neighbors. He asserts that on EU market, the rule of origin of a product is important and EU takes care that the benefits will belong to that country. Now two or more countries from the region can cooperate together in order to achieve a product:

“When we give preferential access to the EU market for goods coming from one of our partner countries, we want to make sure that the benefit really falls to that country. We want to be sure that goods coming to our markets are not simply transiting our partner country, bringing it no significant economic gain. So all our trade agreements include rules on the “origin” of goods. This is no protectionism on our part. It is in the interest of our partner countries, to make sure that the goods they send to our market on preferential terms add genuine value to their own domestic economy.

Our proposed PanEuroMed system of origin will go one better. It is designed to allow goods produced jointly in two or more of the countries of the region to maintain their preferential access to the EU market”⁷.

D). *Cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs.* In the field of migration, migration flows will be kept under control. The best practices in the field of migration will be analyzed by Israel and European Union countries. The agreement gave the possibility to Israel to participate as an observer at EU programs on migration issues. In the field of asylum best practices will be analyzed. Terrorism was combated in JHA field. Cooperation with regard to combat financing of terrorism were taken into discussion. Measures concerning the combating of fight against organized crime and discussion. Measures concerning the combating of fight against organized crime and discussion. Measures concerning the combating of fight against organized crime and traffic of human beings with the help of international instruments such as UN Convention on Trans-National Organized Crime were to be implemented. Exchange of information in the field, on legislation instruments such as UN Convention on Trans-National Organized Crime were to be implemented. Exchange of information in the field, on legislation, the rights of victims, on cyber crime was implemented.

Measures were to be taken in the field of drug trafficking involving exchange of information in the drug field. Measures were to be taken in the field of financial and economic crime. Police and judicial cooperation implied exchange of information, data protection, cooperation with European Judicial Network, cooperation between Israel and Europol, exchange of information with the view of use of ICT.

E). *Transport, energy, information society, environment and Science and Technology*

In the field of transport, the parties involved were cooperating, as well as in the infrastructure field. Infrastructure in the Mediterranean was taken into consideration, as well as regional infrastructure. Reform and cooperation in the sector of road and rail transport was implemented. In the field of aviation, it will be explored the possibility of a single European sky and cooperation will be implemented with the view of ensuring aviation safety.

Cooperation will be implemented in the field of energy policy; European competitive markets will be developed in the field of EU internal electricity and gas sector. Israel will be connected to Trans-European/Mediterranean electricity, gas and oil network In the field of electricity and gas, regional cooperation will be developed.

In the domain of information society, views will be exchanged on electronic communications policy and regulation.

⁷ *Ibidem.*

In the domain of environment, the “good environmental governance” will be ensured, the capacity of Israeli Ministry of Environment will be ensured and information with regard to environment’s protection will be available for public. Actions will be taken with the view of prevention of the deterioration of Environment and of human health protection. Israel was invited to participate to the works of European Environment Agency and NGOs were stimulated to get involved in the protection of environment.

Further cooperation in science and technology field was encouraged. Israel will be integrated in European Research Area; dialogue will be promoted in all fields, but with particular emphasis in bio-technologies and space.

F). *People-to-people contacts*. Israel will benefit by the creation of “European Higher Education and Vocational Training Area”. This means an increase in the exchange of academic staff and students. Cooperation was stipulated in fields such as school education, vocational education and adult education. A dialogue will be fostered with regard to educational programs such as people with disabilities, gender equality and special needs. E-learning will be promoted. The education, both in Israel and in European Union countries will fight against anti-Semitism, racism, will promote the remembrance of Holocaust. European and Israeli teams will make an exchange of specialists.

Cultural co-operation will be enhanced; views will be exchanged in the fields of culture, audio-visual policy. An inter-faith dialogue will be promoted. Religious freedom, religious tolerance, cultural and linguistic heritage, cultural exchanges, cultural diversity will be promoted.

The civil society actors as civil society institutions and NGOs are encouraged to develop.

In the field of public health dialogue will be encouraged and participation of Israel in EU Health Forum is mentioned.

Concerning people-to-people contacts, the European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, in a speech in Jerusalem, in February 27, 2007 said:

“Now we also propose more people to people contacts; deepening economic and trade relations, and stronger energy and transport.

We want more exchanges between civil society, university researchers and local authorities; business people, artists and young people”⁸.

An important document of the European Neighbourhood policy was Israel. Strategy paper 2007-2013 & Indicative Program 2007-2010⁹. This document represents a “country strategy paper” and it covers the years 2007-2013. An organism ENPI (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument) was in charge with the development of relation between EU and Israel. ENPI will provide assistance to all countries for who were elaborated Action Plans. Israel will receive with the help of ENPI 14 millions Euros for the period 2007-2013.

The relationship between EU and Israel has as aims economic and politic related objectives. In its relation with Israel, European Union has set strategic objectives. The Strategy paper for Israel continues the line of the Association Agreement with Israel, signed at 20 November 1995. The Association Agreement was pursuing the strenghtening of economic interest, of common trade, investment and cultural, economic, political common policies. The

⁸ Benita Ferrero Waldner, *Bilateral Relations between Israel and the European Union*, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/07/108&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN>

⁹ *Israel: Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013 and National Indicative Programme 2007-2010*, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/documents_en.htm.

Strategy paper goes also in the continuation of European Neighbourhood Policy which is “designed to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines” in the vicinity of European Union. Last but not least, the Strategy paper goes in continuation of European Security Strategy of December 2003.

The document describes the situation of Israel, which after the conflicts with Palestinians, constructed a separation barrier in order to be protected from terrorist attacks. It was built partially on Palestinian territory and it was rejected by EU. Presently, shows the document the economy of Israel is a “Knowledge-based economy” with competitive services and industry which implement “European Recovery Plan” which had begun in 2003. The plan was intending to make the economy of Israel more competitive. The EU is the most important partner of Israel concerning economic relations. The EU and Israel liberalized trade in services which constitute 77% of Israel GDP.

The programs between EU and Israel were supporting civil society on one hand, and we have regional programs. Israel do not received funds from EU in the past, as being a very competitive economy, and consequently does not have experience in management of EU funding. As it did not have diplomatic relations with all the countries from Mediterranean area, regional cooperation proved to be difficult. European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan implementation was funded by EU.

Considering the present situation of Israel, EU considers to give a bilateral allocation to Israel for implementing ENP, for the period 2007-2010.

European Commissioner for external Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, in a speech hold at Jerusalem, at February 27, 2007 talked about the financial assistance offered by EU to Israel:

“There is also, for the first time, a financial assistance element to our cooperation-Israel is now eligible for 14 millions Euros in European Community financial cooperation over the next seven years. And the European Investment Bank is renewing its activities in Israel, starting with 275 million Euros of loans for environmental projects and small and medium-sized businesses”¹⁰.

We see, thus, the variety of directions of actions of European Neighbourhood Policy towards Israel which emphasized the relation between EU and Israel. We see the variety of objectives established by the Action Plan, Strategy Paper for Israel and European Security Strategy. We see thus that they are taken into consideration, economic and political provisions and security objectives, measures for encouraging the development of education and of civil society. Israel being a territory disputed by Jews and Palestinians, the documents between EU and Israel express the wish to fight together against terrorist movements and other threats to the world security.

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