

“WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 50 YEARS’ TIME?”

**OUTLOOK ON THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE
DEVELOPMENT OF GERMAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS**

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INTRODUCTION

“Where do you see yourself in five years’ time?” This innocuous standard question from any job interview held in Germany provokes either great hilarity or an uncomprehending shake of the head in Israel. To citizens of that country who grow up and live with a totally different experience of threat than people in most European countries thinking ahead significantly beyond the present and contemplating the future is an incomprehensible exercise. Who can say what the coming years will bring when you live in an environment characterised by disintegrating states, asymmetrical situations of threat, and neighbouring countries that are not exactly friendly towards you?

Thousands of years of the Jewish people consistently being threatened, persecuted and disappointed, repeatedly displaced and expelled, the development of an unbroken survival instinct, the feeling of ultimately having to rely on oneself – all this has left its mark on the collective culture and memory of the Jewish people and therefore also of the Jewish state, summarised in the saying “God helps those who help themselves”. As understandable as this stance may be, having since developed into Israel’s national “culture”, it does create an immediate dilemma. Particularly for a country under such fundamental threat, sustainable alliance-forming, sound diplomacy, visionary and forward-looking policies are essential for creating security and stability. Under these circumstances, excellent bilateral relations devised to stand the test of time are of utmost importance.

German-Israeli relations in particular are a case in point, illustrating what long-term, visionary policies can achieve. The picture of David Ben-Gurion and Konrad Adenauer conversing in the New York Waldorf Astoria in an evident spirit of cordiality, which has since developed into a symbol of German-Israeli relations, precisely reflects this farsightedness and the will to provide reliable partners to Israel in an insecure situation where its very existence is threatened. For David Ben-Gurion, it also meant sitting down at the same table with individuals from a people that had perpetrated the most heinous crimes against the Jews.



Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion met personally for the first time in March 1960 in New York. Among other topics, they spoke about economic assistance for Israel. | Source: Benno Wundshammer, Bundesregierung, Bundesarchiv B 145-Bild-00009354.

This meeting of two extraordinary personalities on the 35th floor of the old-established hotel had been preceded by tough negotiations about “reparations” (or “Wiedergutmachung” in German). Economic relations and military co-operation between Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany increasingly intensified over the following years. Just 20 years after the end of National Socialist rule and the horrors of the systematic murder of the European Jews and some five years after the memorable meeting of the two statesmen, the then Chancellor Ludwig Erhard and then Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol signed an agreement on the exchange of ambassadors. While it is the case that the failure to establish relations earlier had been mainly due to obstruction on the part of Germany, this political step remains a remarkable development in foreign affairs, worthy of being referred to by a term

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that should be used very rarely in the realm of politics: a miracle. To be precise, we should speak not only of one but of at least two miracles: The first miracle is the fact that the relationship was established just two decades after the end of the Shoah. The second

miracle is the astonishing development of the relations up to the present day. Even though there were repeated upsets and setbacks such as the traumatic experience of the hostage-taking at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972, the disappointment about deliveries of arms to Egypt and subsequently to Saudi-Arabia and the German government's growing disapproval of the continued construction of settlements, there are few other relationships that have developed in the same consistently positive manner over decades, relatively unaffected by changes in political leadership on both sides.

A telling example which can hardly be exceeded in terms of its positive impact but has attracted very little public attention in the two countries is an Agreement on Consular Assistance negotiated between Germany and Israel in 2012.¹ It calls for Germany's provision of assistance to Israeli citizens in countries where the latter have no consular representation. Germany of all countries acting as a protector to Israelis around the world in situations where people frequently encounter danger to life and limb – that is a remarkable indicator of the quality of German-Israeli relations.

But to what extent does this provide a solid foundation for the future? In which direction will German-Israeli relations develop over the next few decades? When asked to comment on that question, political scientists are quite likely to refuse to look into the crystal ball, stating that there is insufficient evidence to satisfy scientific criteria. Nevertheless, after 50 years of good, and these days even excellent relations, one has to pose the question as to which conclusions can be drawn from an examination of the situation from both a historical and a present-day perspective. That is precisely what this article is intended to do by focusing on six "I"s, matching the beginning of Israel's country name.

1 | Cf. Yoav Sapir, "Deutschland als Botschafter Israels. Das Konsularabkommen zwischen Jerusalem und Berlin ist ein großes historisches Symbol", *Jüdische Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 Feb 2013, <http://juedische-allgemeine.de/article/view/id/15277> (accessed 9 Feb 2015).

BURDEN OF HISTORY OR COMMON INTERESTS?

The first "I" stands for interests, more precisely "common interests". Can common interests, which are at the center of almost all diplomatic relations, also underpin German-Israeli cooperation? There will always remain a special aspect to the German-Israeli relationship, due to the tragic constant of historical guilt and responsibility. The Israeli author David Grossman expressed it very clearly at a recent event organised by political foundations in honour of the 75th anniversary of Federal President Joachim Gauck: "However good and extensive these relations may be today, they will always remain difficult, emotive and traumatic. There is not and cannot be forgiveness for this horrific chapter of German history; nor can there be healing. Wherever Jews and Germans come together, the wound of the Shoah will forever remain open."²

Amos Oz protested equally vehemently against the description of the German-Israeli relationship as "normal" back in 2005. "A normal relationship can exist between Norway and New Zealand or between Uruguay and Sri Lanka. There has been an ambivalent relationship between Germany and the Jewish people for over two centuries, an intense, deep and damaged, complicated and multifaceted relationship. Not a normal relationship. And that will continue to apply to the relationship in the future."³

These views are not only held by Israel's intellectual elite but are still widely shared by the population. The findings of an unprecedented survey conducted by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, in which Israelis and Palestinians were questioned about their opinions on Germany and the Germans, show that when asked the open question as to what came to their mind first when thinking of Germany, the great majority of them still immediately thought of National Socialism and the Holocaust.⁴

2 | David Grossman, "Israel ist kein Ort der Freiheit", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 30 Jan 2015.

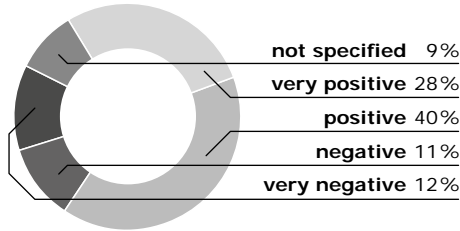
3 | Amos Oz, *Israel und Deutschland*, Frankfurt a.M., 2005, p. 7.

4 | Cf. Michael Borchard/Hans Maria Hejñ, "The Holy Land and the Germans – Measuring attitudes of Israelis and Palestinians towards Germany and the Germans", KAS Study, Jerusalem, 2015, p. 6.

Fig. 1

How Israelis view Germany

Do you have a positive or a negative opinion of Germany?



Source: Borchard/Heyn, n. 4, p. 3.

For this reason, the pillar of Germany's historical responsibility for Israel's existence will always play a major role within the edifice of relations between the two countries. The question is, however, whether the stability of this edifice can endure in the long run if it is not complemented by a second pillar, namely that of mutual fascination, close cooperation and collaboration.

The results of the KAS survey – at least those on the Israeli side – indicate that this is a resilient edifice⁵: While a majority of respondents, namely 42 per cent, still believe that the German-Israeli relationship rests more strongly on a historical basis than on common interests, the difference does not seem that significant. A remarkable 33 per cent think, however, that common interests have come to serve as the basis of the relationship, and this figure is all the more remarkable when you consider that 19 per cent of Israelis maintain that both common interests and history play an important role.

INNOVATION AS A BASIS FOR THE FUTURE

One of the most promising areas where these common interests will come into play is that of the second "I": "innovation". Once again, a differentiated and rather surprising picture emerges. While living in a start-up country themselves, which is justifiably proud of its high level of innovation, Germany is recognized by Israelis as an innovative country. For 80 per cent of the respondents, innovation was at the top of the list of all positive characteristics attributed to Germans. While many Germans look admiringly towards Israel when it comes to its start-up scene, the same phenomenon exists in Israel the other way around.

5 | Cf. *ibid.*

The area of research and innovation, in which there are already numerous joint activities taking place, can provide one of the decisive starting points for a further deepening of bilateral cooperation between Germany and Israel. The current hype about Berlin is fuelled to a large extent by the increasing enthusiasm of the Israeli start-up scene for the good working conditions in Berlin, for high wages and highly skilled employees, for low prices and a good quality of life. The Berlin start-up scene shows a similar enthusiasm for Tel Aviv, for the willingness to take risks, for intelligent support programs, for extraordinary creativity, for a professionalism many of the new start-up entrepreneurs brought back from their time in the army.

It may be premature to speak of a “new core” in the bilateral cooperation. But in the same way as cooperation between Germany and Israel in the area of science and technology paved the way for diplomatic relations, subsequently developing into more than a mere alliance based on expedience and still extraordinarily prolific compared to other areas of interaction, this new field of mutual enthusiasm can also show the way far beyond the confines of economic interests.

While the discussions revolving around the so-called Milky protest confirmed the image of the innovative and attractive city of Berlin, they also brought up the painful past.⁶ During this episode in the autumn of 2014, an Israeli who had moved to Berlin with his family due to the good job opportunities mentioned on his Facebook page that a chocolate pudding that is hugely popular in Israel, where it is sold under the affectionate brand name “Milky”, costs three times as much in his home country as in Berlin. This social media posting may have ended up going totally unnoticed like many others if the young father had not also invited other Israeli families to make Aliyah to Berlin. The choice of this term, which specifically denotes the immigration of Jews from all parts of the world to Israel, represented a true provocation, which inevitably led to fierce reactions. In the media, the emotional debate focused on the key question of whether it is acceptable for Israelis to not only betray the Jewish dream of a nation state for a cheaper chocolate pudding but, to rub salt into the wound, also urge people to emigrate to the very place where the systematic mass murder of European Jews originated? Besides many positive statements on life in Germany, this episode also brought to light the significant extent of the prevailing “fundamental scepticism”.

6 | Cf. *ibid.*, p. 4.



In autumn 2014, a receipt that was posted on Facebook triggered a series of protests in Israel. Objects of criticism were the costs of living that are higher than in Berlin. | Source: Naor Narkis, Olim-el-Berlin via Facebook.

NEW OR OLD ANTI-SEMITISM – A PRESENT DANGER?

The third “I” therefore stands for “risk of infection”. To what extent is Germany immune from anti-Semitic tendencies today and, most importantly, will it be so in the future? In the focus groups, recorded group discussions conducted according to a scientific process, which the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung organised in connection with its survey to research the opinions of Israelis towards Germany, many Israelis provided astonishing assessments which can, of course, not be considered representative.⁷ Well before the horrifying attacks on the *Charlie Hebdo* offices and the kosher supermarket in Paris, Germany received markedly more positive assessments than France. The participants confirmed that they were aware of anti-Semitic tendencies in Germany, which were not to be trivialised, but that there was no comparison to the situation in the neighbouring country, where the problem was being swept under the carpet.

While this change in perspective is remarkable, one cannot fail to realise that decisive action to combat anti-Semitism in Germany and Europe will remain a vital condition for sustainable relations between Germany and Israel – the ultimate litmus test, if you

7 | Mitchell Barak, “Israeli Attitudes Towards Germany, KAS Israel Focus Groups, Final Analysis and Report”, Jerusalem, 2014, unpublished manuscript, p. 8.

will. The anti-Semitic demonstrations in the summer of 2014 in response to Operation Protective Edge in the Gaza Strip, with its ominous mix of Islamists, right and left-wing extremists as well as populists, rang the alarm bells. The tone employed in the various news forums, on websites and in social networks also sharpened to a worrying degree in the course of last year's developments.

Absurdly but not infrequently – as if it was an acceptable “excuse” – the anti-Semitism that is re-emerging in Germany like everywhere else in Europe is being “explained” by the policy Israel pursues in the Middle East conflict, which has supposedly elicited the negative stance towards Israel and the Jews in the first place, combined with the extremely simplistic “kitchen sink psychology” idea that victims too can become perpetrators. Such ominous words ultimately go back to the classic stereotypes and vilifications which put the blame for their fate on the victims of exclusion themselves.

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Anti-Semitism must be branded a violation of human dignity and fought against as such. By the same token, it must, of course, be possible to express criticism in Israeli policies without immediately being classed as anti-Semitic; this statement must, however, be seen in the context of a valid qualification voiced by Henryk M. Broder in his usual pointed manner, namely that anti-Semitism frequently begins when the sense of justice underlying the assessment of a situation is directed exclusively against Jews and people are not prepared to condemn human rights violations in other countries with the same vehemence as they do in the case of Israel. Put simply: “An anti-Semite is a person who condemns Jews for something for which he does not condemn non-Jews.”⁸

The new study of the Bertelsmann Stiftung gives a slightly more differentiated description: Criticism of Israel becomes problematic “when Jews are assigned collective responsibility and when the distinction between Jews in general and the Israeli government is blurred”.⁹ However gratifying the fact that a large majority, namely two thirds of Germans, rejects the statement “The policies of the Israeli government make me less sympathetic towards

8 | Henryk M. Broder, “Antisemitismus heute – Im Gespräch mit Henryk M. Broder”, *MDR FIGARO*, 30 Jul 2014, <http://mdr.de/mdr-figaro/journal/broder106.html> (accessed 9 Feb 2015).

9 | Steffen Hagemann/Roby Nathanson, *Germany and Israel Today. United by the Past, Divided by the Present?*, Gütersloh, 2015, p. 36.

Jews”, the more worrying is the fact that as many as a third of Germans harbour some anti-Jewish prejudice.¹⁰

The German-Israeli historian Dan Diner made an intelligent statement, which he called a “Gordian solution”, long before the current developments, which can serve as the guiding principle for German-Israeli relations and clearly spells out the need for action, particularly on the German side: “Namely on the one hand, to fight anti-Semitism as though there were no Arab-Jewish, no Israeli-Palestinian conflicts; and on the other hand, to do everything to find a solution to that conflict that is equitable for both sides – as though there was no anti-Semitism.”¹¹

Ultimately, this also shows that you must not succumb to the illusion that the new anti-Semitism, which is above all linked to criticism in Israel’s policies that frequently goes far beyond what is justified in this context, is anything other and less dangerous than the old anti-Semitism. The policy advisor Roland Freudenstein from the Winfried Martens Center in Brussels has compared these two “manifestations” of anti-Semitism very fittingly to a car with a hybrid engine.¹² The new anti-Semitism, which is frequently linked to the criticism of Israel, is the electric motor, which only propels the car across short distances. But if the vehicle needs to cover large distances and travel at high speed, it must ultimately fall back on the traditional, conventionally driven machine. This classic engine is the “old anti-Semitism” directed against the Jewish people. And this is the anti-Semitism that needs to be fought against, entirely disconnected from the discussion about the Middle East conflict.

STABLE FOUNDATION BASED ON TRUST

The focus group surveys conducted by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Israel have repeatedly illustrated that underneath the strengthening protective layer of trust, which has grown over the historical scars, there is still some distrust acting as a source of infection.¹³

10 | Cf. *ibid.*

11 | Quoted from: Martin Kloke, “40 Jahre deutsch-israelische Beziehungen”, <http://bpb.de/izpb/25044/40-jahre-deutsch-israelische-beziehungen?p=all> (accessed 9 Feb 2015).

12 | Cf. Roland Freudenstein, “Europe’s New Anti-Semitism”, Keynote speech for B’nai B’rith Europe, Brussels, 6 May 2012, <http://bnaibritheurope.org/bbeurope/news/news-of-bnai-brith/220-roland-freudenstein-complete-speech-for-bbe> (accessed 9 Feb 2015).

13 | See Barak, n. 7, p. 4.

At the same time, the focus groups and the representative survey have also revealed how resilient this relationship has become as well as confirming the extent of the trust

placed in Germany despite the shocks of the

last few months. It is remarkable that 80 per cent of Israelis view Germany as an important partner for Israel these days, that 57 per cent of Israelis believe that their country can rely totally on the Germans, that Germany is the most popular of all European nations in Israel.¹⁴ This does, however, immediately pose the question – leading to the fourth “I”, the “involvement” – as to whether and to what extent Germany can play a truly active role in resolving the Middle East conflict?

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This emerging trust has become condensed into a term which could hardly be any more astonishing in view of the backdrop of the Shoah, that of the “honest broker”. A clear majority of Israelis, 54 per cent, agree with the statement that Germany can act as an “honest broker” between Israel and the Palestinians in the Middle East conflict, while only 32 per cent disagree. “The importance of this can hardly be overestimated considering that the words ‘honest broker’ ultimately reflect the opinion that Germany can be totally trusted and that German history should no longer mean that the German government has to limit its actions in seeking a resolution to the conflict.”¹⁵

According to one remarkable finding from the KAS survey, both “sides” of the conflict, Israelis and Palestinians, expect and explicitly approve of a stronger involvement on the part of Germany in the Middle East conflict. The fact that the German government and the German Chancellor have repeatedly voiced their opinion on the construction of settlements very clearly and described it as a major obstacle on the road to a sustainable peace does not affect the positive stance towards Germany. In the same way as there is understanding on the Palestinian side for the special relationship between Israel and Germany – one of the most surprising findings of the most recent KAS survey –, there are also indications of an understanding on the Israeli side for Germany maintaining close and trusting relations with the Palestinian Authority.

14 | Cf. here and below: Borchard/Heyn, n. 4, p. 6.

15 | Ibid.



For Chancellor Angela Merkel the existence of Israel is part of the German reason of state. She emphasised this repeatedly during meetings with Israeli politicians, such as here with Benjamin Netanyahu (m.) and Ehud Barak (l.). | Source: Moshe Milner, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, flickr 

This hope of Germany taking on a more active role – no doubt linked directly to the unfulfilled expectations placed on the current U.S. administration – is both a compliment and a heavy burden. When both sides expect greater activity in such a multi-faceted complex conflict, it is a little reminiscent of a tightrope walker who not only has to cross the Niagara Falls in an incredibly courageous and spectacular act and arrive safely on the other side but simultaneously accept criticism for not performing a few tricks high up on the wire at the same time. Added to this is the time pressure on this tightrope walker, as hopes for the creation of a two-state solution are diminishing rapidly on both sides, and it is uncertain how long the window of opportunity for this solution will remain open. The heaviest burden, however, this tightrope walker has to carry is the unwillingness on the part of huge parts of the German public to contemplate taking forceful action, including military options, not only in the Middle East conflict but in any conflict.

One of the key reasons for the enormous trust Germany enjoys in Israel is the German government's decisive support for Israel's right to exist. When closely examining the scepticism with which the wider public views the Israeli government and Israel's actions in the conflict, one must not ignore the question as to how far

German society would be prepared to go if the idea that Israel's existence is part of Germany's national interest was put to the test. In this context, Shimon Stein speaks of two monologues, which he thinks are based on different collective and historical experiences: "The overriding rule for the Germans is 'War – never again', while the idea foremost in Israelis' minds is 'Defenceless – never again'".¹⁶

ISRAEL FROM MARS – EUROPE FROM VENUS?

The famous statement by Donald Rumsfeld that Europeans were from Venus and Americans had more in common with Mars can also be applied to the threesome of Israel-Europe-Germany.¹⁷ While people in Germany have at times spoken too thoughtlessly about democratic deficiencies in Israel without themselves being subject to an immediate threat to their existence, in Israel, any friendly reminder of the universal validity of human rights and human dignity is at times fended off too quickly as unjustified criticism, citing precisely this immediate threat.

Staying within the context of ancient mythology: the union of Mars and Venus produced Cupid, the god of harmony. In concrete terms with specific application to politics: maybe Israel and Germany will need to venture into an entirely new field of bilateral exchange in the future. There are good reasons for Germany to learn lessons from Israel in terms of hard power, for instance where the awareness of the wider public about present terrorist threats is concerned, or the operational readiness of the different "services" and many other areas. On the other hand, there are also good reasons for Israel to learn from Germany in terms of soft power, particularly where public diplomacy is concerned. This includes the ability of not only acting head-on and offensively towards institutions such as the European Union and the United Nations but also taking measures behind the scenes, strategically and with assistance from friends and advocates, to promote the country's interests to optimum effect. The latter requires above all appropriate diplomatic and interdisciplinary education. Apart from a very small number of exceptions such as the IDC in Herzliya,

16 | Shimon Stein/Mordechay Lewy, "Von Einzigartigkeit über Normalität zu Staatsräson: 50 Jahre diplomatische Beziehungen – Essay", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (APuZ)*, No. 6/2015, 2 Feb 2015, <http://bbp.de/apuz/199891> (accessed 10 Apr 2015).

17 | Cf. Rudolf von Thadden/Alexandre Escudier (eds.), *Amerika und Europa A Mars und Venus? Das Bild Amerikas in Europa*, Berlin, 2004.

there are no institutions in Israel for educating the internationally experienced elites of the future outside the confines of the army. In both countries' interests, Germany and Israel would be well advised to cooperate even more closely in this area.

GERMANY'S INTERNATIONAL ROLE – A PARADIGM SHIFT?

This brings us to the fifth "I", Germany's "international role". 71 per cent of Israelis consider Germany's influence in the world to be positive, 37 per cent even very positive.¹⁸ In the aftermath of the war, it was considered prudent in Germany for a long time to weigh up every step taken in foreign affairs with great care, particularly against the backdrop of the country's historical responsibility. Historian Heinrich August Winkler views this constant reference back to the Holocaust in Germany's international activities as, in fact, morally questionable. In a remarkable speech held at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) in 2013¹⁹ he stressed that the admonition that Germany would be well advised to generally show restraint in the international arena because of the cataclysmic historical experiences would, if taken to extremes, result in granting Germany a "right to look the other way" because of its past. In Winkler's eyes, the Holocaust would then ultimately result in the "unquestioning acceptance of ethnic cleansing and genocide", which would itself be totally absurd. Winkler therefore pleaded for "realism informed by normative enlightenment"²⁰ in the debate about human rights in foreign affairs.

There are indications that there may, in fact, be something akin to a gentle, very gradual paradigm shift beginning to take place in the international debate over Germany's role in the world, at least among elites. The speech the German Federal President gave at the 50th Munich Security Conference a year ago, in which he called for Germany to play a significantly more active role, was remarkable in that the great clarity with which the President spoke did not produce the usual reflexes, which politically focused speeches given by the Head of State in Germany tend to generate in political circles.²¹

18 | Cf. Borchard/Heÿn, n. 4, p. 7

19 | Cf. Hans Monath, "Ortstermin. Realismus und moralisches Gebot", *Der Tagesspiegel*, 19 Jun 2013, <http://tagesspiegel.de/politik/ortstermin-realismus-und-moralisches-gebot/8370920.html> (accessed 9 Feb 2015).

20 | Ibid.

21 | Cf. Joachim Gauck, "Germany's role in the world: Reflections on responsibility, norms and alliances", 31 Jan 2014, <http://bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/EN/JoachimGauck/Reden/2014/140131-Munich-Security-Conference.html> (accessed 9 Feb 2015).

It was surprising to see the liberating effect this speech had on many and the number of positive reactions it evoked.



At the Munich Security Conference 2014, Federal President Gauck called on Germany to take a more active role in the international arena. | Source: © Guido Bergmann/Bundesregierung, picture alliance/dpa.

This view from within the country is complemented by an external perspective, which is also in favour of Germany taking on a more active role in efforts to resolve international and inner-European conflicts. While the former Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski called for German leadership in the euro crisis during his speech at the DGAP in 2011 rather than referring to its role in international politics generally, his statement is surely also still relevant in a security policy context: "I will probably be the first Polish foreign minister in history to say so, but here it is: I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear German inactivity."²²

Sikorski's statement did not go unnoticed in Israel. Israelis would rather fear German inactivity if this were to jeopardise a chapter of German-Israeli relations whose significance to Israel is not to be underestimated. The outstanding popularity of the German Chancellor, which is currently at close to 70 per cent, rose by as much as 15 percentage points over the last six years. This remarkable increase may be due to the fact that one true engine driving

22 | Radoslaw Sikorski, "Am Rande des Abgrunds muss Deutschland führen", *Die Welt*, 29 Nov 2011, <http://welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article13741449/Am-Rande-des-Abgrunds-muss-Deutschland-fuehren.html> (accessed 9 Feb 2015).

Israeli-German relations, which has been in existence since the days of the secret meetings between Defence Minister Franz-Josef Strauß and Shimon Peres, then Director-General of the Israeli Ministry of Defence, has had a "turbo" fitted to it: military cooperation between the two countries, which has intensified further in recent years.²³ The role of the Israeli Army is a key element of the country's national identity,²⁴ acting as one of the main points of reference of all societal development, which the following example illustrates: In hardly any other country besides Israel will soldiers being killed evoke greater media attention among the general public than civilian victims; the opposite is usually the case.

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Markus Kaim is right when he says that support for this military cooperation needs to be generated within society in order to avoid an increasing resistance in domestic politics.²⁵ A

number of Israeli diplomats have been concerned, however not outspoken, for some time that the relationship will increasingly develop in an asymmetrical manner. Shimon Stein and Mordechai Lewy have voiced this concern as follows: "As a leading member of the European Union, Germany will remain a significant and strategic partner for Israel's future. But will Israel also be of significance to Germany? It is by no means inevitable that what has grown over the past five decades will continue to develop equally positively."²⁶

YOUNG GENERATIONS – SIMILAR OR INCOMPATIBLE?

Ultimately, the crucial question is whether Israel's liking for Germany, to phrase it colloquially, will thrive in the right place and whether the positive dynamics will persist without massive political intervention and without a clear strategy. Maybe we are getting the wrong picture due to the hype about Berlin, namely one of two generations who are similar share the same interests and have the same outlook. This is a somewhat idealised view because

23 | Cf. Marcel Serr, "Zur Geschichte der deutsch-israelischen Rüstungs-koooperation", *APuZ*, No. 6/2015, 2 Feb 2015, <http://bpb.de/apuz/199900> (accessed 10 Apr 2015).

24 | Cf. Evelyn Gaiser, "The Relationship Between the Military and Society in Israel. The Entire Nation Is an Army, the Entire Country the Front Line", *KAS International Reports*, Aug 2014, http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_38621-544-2-30.pdf (accessed 19 Feb 2015).

25 | Cf. Markus Kaim, "Israels Sicherheit als deutsche Staatsräson: Was bedeutet das konkret?", *APuZ*, No. 6/2015, 2 Feb 2015, <http://bpb.de/apuz/199894> (accessed 10 Apr 2015).

26 | Stein/Lewy, n. 16, p. 8.

cultural differences definitely exist, a fact that leads us to the sixth and last “I”, the danger of “incompatibility”. While a rather cheerful and relaxed patriotism has developed in Germany and the positive identification with one’s home country has increased noticeably, and not only since the days of the “summer miracle” of the 2006 World Cup with its welcoming and cheerful spirit, the trends in the two countries are heading in opposite directions and therefore leading straight towards alienation. In Israel, national pride is strongly embedded in people’s psyche, and the trend is rising, especially among the young generation. “Germany,” says Middle East expert Sylke Tempel, “is post-militarist, post-nationalist and post-religious. Israel is and can be none of those.”²⁷



Representants of the Jewish Agency visit Jewish Communities in Germany. It is important for the future that young generations are acknowledging the common ground of their cultures. | Source: Jewish Agency for Israel, flickr ©ⓂⓂ.

One of the findings emerging very clearly from the more recent surveys concerns the fact that particularly among the younger Israeli generation the proportion of those who are becoming more religious and more nationalistic or who are ultraorthodox is on the increase, not least among women, which gives cause for concern with respect to the sustainability of the relationship between the two countries. This also correlates closely with people’s image of Germany, a fact that was reflected particularly clearly in the KAS

27 | Sylke Tempel, “Deutsche Israelbilder – Essay”, *APuZ*, No. 6/2015, 2 Feb 2015, <http://bpb.de/apuz/199898> (accessed 10 Apr 2015).

survey. The younger and the more religious the respondents are, the more likely they are to have a critical view of Germany.²⁸

Imagine the following question being put to a candidate in a fictitious job interview between Israel and Germany today: "What do you imagine the next 50 years to be like?" This can only elicit a positive answer if greater efforts are made on both sides to replicate the good relationship existing at the level of the political elites more effectively at the grass roots level of civil society.

There is no easy way to overcome the different perceptions and cultures, but establishing a new culture of mindfulness would go quite some way. For Germany, this means engaging with Israel in new ways, finally escaping the repetitive newsreel of the conflict at least to some extent and trying to obtain a more differentiated picture of Israel, both in terms of its complexity and its attraction. For Israel, this means gaining a clearer perception of the different cultural worlds and performing its lobbying activities in Germany in a more strategic and sensitive manner, so that its message will reach the target audience and give it a better understanding of the reality of life in Israel. Both require a quality which David Ben-Gurion and Konrad Adenauer brought to their relationship to complement the politics of interest: empathy. And as banal as it may sound, this empathy will not develop without encounters, without civil society "ambassadors". Coming generations will judge this anniversary year by the extent to which these encounters and genuine dialogue will have been given adequate space.