When Soft Power Meets Hard Security: Can the EU Nonproliferation Policy Contribute to Israel's National Security?

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We are used to thinking about EU-Israel relations mainly in economic and political terms, and the European Union has traditionally been stigmatized for its perceived "softness'' and inability to face up to the hard power realities of the world. Thoughts about common security concerns or strategic relations between the EU and Israel are largely sidelined because of the perception that the EU is a political and military "lightweight" and because of the traditional Israeli reliance on the US in these areas. Today, ten years after the launching of the European Security Strategy (ESS) and the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (Non-Proliferation Strategy), both of which were meant to give the EU a more significant role in international security affairs, and in light of pressing proliferation challenges common to both the EU and Israel, it is worth questioning the widespread assumption of European irrelevance in security matters. The close observation of the evolving EU nonproliferation policy over the last decade suggests that the EU might not be as naive as previously thought. Far from being diametrically opposed, it seems rather that both the EU and Israel have taken steps to overcome their past divergences, with their positions actually becoming closer: on the one hand, EU soft power is becoming tougher, and on the other hand, Israel is more wiling to explore diplomatic options. To make this argument, focus will be directed to EU nonproliferation efforts mostly in relation to Israeli security, namely the EU intensive diplomatic involvement vis-à-vis Iran and its long term policy towards the Mediterranean neighborhood.

The EU and Israel vs. WMD Proliferation

The tumultuous history of EU-Israeli relations has been characterized by both dynamic economic cooperation and bitter political relations, yet less attention has been directed to their common security concerns. In fact, cooperation in this area does not make the headlines and is rather sidelined in the public discourse. The distant Israeli attitude towards the European Union is mainly due to the widespread perception of the EU's irrelevance in the strategic realm, as well as the traditional closeness to the US as far as Israel's security is concerned. However, it is important to underline that the EU and Israel do share common goals in the strategic realm. Besides the intense cooperation that has developed in recent years in the realm of counterterrorism,[1] the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has become a priority for both the European Union and Israel. More specifically, the advancement of the Iranian nuclear program has clearly been singled out as a growing concern that threatens regional stability. The European Security Strategy of 2003 identified the proliferation of WMD as the "potentially greatest threat to its security" and "warned that we were now entering a new and dangerous period that raised the possibility of a WMD arms race, especially in the Middle East."[2] In a report published five years later, the EU reiterated its concerns regarding the Iranian nuclear program, specifying that it had significantly advanced and that it represented a danger to stability in the region and to the entire nonproliferation system.[3] It further stipulated that "the development of a nuclear military capability would be a threat to EU security that cannot be accepted," conveying a strong sense of the gravity of the situation and its determination to address it.[4]

Clearly, both the EU and Israel are interested in maintaining regional stability in the Middle East and in preventing the proliferation of WMD, particularly in Iran. Yet while these final goals converge, substantial divergence appears over the strategy to adopt in order to tackle these hard security challenges. While the European Union's approach to security is mainly based on its "soft power" and normative agenda, Israel's strategy tends to include reliance on coercive measures, including the threat of, and the effective use of, military force. Regarding the EU's approach to security, it is interesting to note that the ESS presented a broad definition of security. Indeed, it defined economic prosperity, respect for the rule of law, and democratic governance in neighboring countries as the best way to ensure stability at its frontiers and hence its own security in the long term.[5] In addition, it did

not specify any enemies, but rather identified key threats – among them, the proliferation of WMD. In contrast, to make its case, Israel regularly insists on the fact that it is surrounded by actual or potential hostile entities, the most significant one currently being Iran.[6]

The EU's Nonproliferation Strategy

Several key concepts regarding the EU nonproliferation strategy help explain the evolution of EU policy vis-à-vis Iran. The main components of this strategy largely reflect the comprehensive and cooperative nature of EU foreign and security policy based on its so-called "soft power."

First, the notion of effective multilateralism constitutes the very cornerstone of the European strategy for combating the proliferation of WMD. It corresponds to the EU's commitment to the multilateral treaty system, which provides the legal and normative basis for all nonproliferation efforts. Actually, the European Union seeks to strengthen the international nonproliferation regime by pursuing the universalization of existing multilateral agreements and by preventing cheating through effective verification mechanisms.[7] This long term commitment to strengthen the international architecture of rules and norms of nonproliferation corresponds to the pursuit of a "milieu-goal" in foreign policy.[8] As a normative power, the EU intends to shape the wider milieu of international relations, regulating it through international regimes, organizations, and respect for international law. It attempts to instill, diffuse, and thus normalize rules and values in international affairs through non-coercive means.

Beyond the importance attached to the respect and reinforcement of international law, the EU is also a proponent of close cooperation with key international players, particularly the United States and the Russian Federation. The underlying idea is that the more there are players involved in nonproliferation efforts, the more successful the outcome of the global fight against proliferation might be.[9]

An additional pillar of the EU strategy against WMD proliferation is the promotion of a stable regional environment. This tenet is based on the assumption that the pursuit of WMD does not occur in a vacuum, but rather stems from a state's perceived sense of insecurity. Hence according to the EU, the best solution to the problem of WMD proliferation is that countries should no longer feel that they need them. If possible, political solutions should be found to resolve the problems that led them to seek WMD. Through

its root cause approach, the EU attempts to tackle the underlying causes for proliferation. To this end, it fosters regional security arrangements, regional arms control, and disarmament processes to encourage countries to renounce the use of technology and facilities that might lead to an increased risk of proliferation.[10]

To achieve these objectives, the EU strategy stipulates that it should use all the relevant instruments at its disposal. Theoretically, the EU can indeed make use of all kinds of foreign policy means: from soft methods based on engagement, persuasion, and cooperation to more coercive methods such as sanctions or military action. Yet the EU has affirmed a gradual use of a mixture of these instruments. The ESS clearly stipulates that "the EU should pursue a dual track approach in dealing with countries that have placed themselves outside the bounds of international society. The EU should provide assistance to encourage them to rejoin the international community, but those countries that are not willing to do so, should understand that there is a price to be paid, including in terms of their relationship with the EU."[11]

Use of Force

The ESS makes it very clear that Europe continues to view the use of force as a last resort, following various gradations of coercive action. Europe believes that no problem can be solved by military force alone, and that military methods must be used only as a last resort in tandem with diplomatic, political, economic, and humanitarian resources. The EU clarifies what it considers to be the only acceptable route for such action:

> Political and diplomatic preventative measures (multilateral treaties and export control regimes) and resort to the competent international organizations form the first line of defence against proliferation. When these measures (including political dialogue and diplomatic pressure) have failed, coercive measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and international law (sanctions, selective or global, interceptions of shipments, and as appropriate, the use of force) could be envisioned. The UN Council should play a central role.[12]

Several comments can be made regarding this specific issue. First, the EU nonproliferation strategy fails to indicate clear benchmarks as to the exhaustion of the diplomatic process. Consequently, the EU might pursue negotiations

indefinitely even if they do not yield satisfying results.[13] Second, it hardly seems conceivable to witness European member countries intervening militarily in the framework of the EU. While Europeans are not per se unwilling to use force to achieve political goals, the EU is not their preferred framework in which to do so. The lack of resources, institutional weaknesses, and the fact that NATO is perceived as a better alternative at hand for the management of its hard power concerns make it highly unlikely that the EU, as such, would take military measures against proliferators.[14]

In contrast, Israel is traditionally suspicious of international law and institutions and does not hesitate to take unilateral coercive measures if necessary without waiting for the green light from the international community.[15] Israel has tended to respond to threats it faces with the use of force, with the aim of deterring its enemies from carrying out massive attacks.[16] In the context of WMD proliferation, the bombing of the Iraqi reactor in 1981 and the Syrian facility in 2007 are cases in point.[17]

Explaining Different Strategic Cultures

This basic difference of strategic culture clearly stems from the very different geopolitical realities and threat environments in which the EU and Israel respectively evolve. Even though the EU and Israel share the same final goals in terms of nonproliferation, the interests at stake and the subsequent threat perceptions that both actors hold are incomparable. While the daunting prospect of WMD proliferation in the Middle East (and particularly in Iran) poses a real threat to Israel's existence and to the physical security of its citizens,[18] the interests at stake for the EU are of a different nature. For the latter, they concern mainly expatriate communities, stationed or deployed troops that might be directly attacked, or economic interests (natural resources, investments, export markets) that might be affected by growing instability in the region.[19]

The current proliferation challenges also constitute a real test to the soft power of the EU and to the very credibility of its approach in international politics. To paraphrase Bruno Tertrais, the Europeans are trying to demonstrate the "power of soft power."[20] Hence the possible failure of the EU to tackle non-compliance efficiently may damage both its reputation as an effective defender of international nonproliferation regimes, and its ambition to be a meaningful actor in the international arena when it comes to hard security matters. It is interesting to note that the threat perception linked to nuclear

proliferation is much more salient among European elites than it is in the general public. According to the 2011 EU barometer, less than one tenth of respondents mentioned nuclear disasters and wars as the most important security challenges faced by their country.[21]

Although these wide patterns of divergence between the EU and Israel in terms of threat perception, strategic culture, and approaches to security are still relevant today and will probably persist for a long time, recent developments may hint at an increasing closeness in their respective positions. Is this gap actually closing? To answer this question, the following section will take stock of the decade-long efforts of the EU to find a diplomatic solution to the dispute over Iran's nuclear program, emphasizing its gradual shift towards a tougher approach.

From the 2003 "Positive Engagement" to the 2012 Oil Embargo: The Toughening of Soft Power?

The First Stage: EU Confident in Soft Power – Positive Engagement

In August 2002, the exiled Iranian opposition group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), revealed at a press conference in Washington, DC that they had evidence of the existence of two undeclared nuclear facilities in Iran: at Natanz and Arak. These revelations led to an investigation by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that confirmed the serious doubts about the character of Iran's nuclear program. The concern that Iran was perhaps pursuing a nuclear weapons option was reinforced by its reluctance to cooperate proactively with the IAEA in clarifying such allegations. An ultimatum was thus issued to Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA, cease all activities related to uranium enrichment, and join the Additional Protocol by October 31 of that year. However, with the impending threat of referral to the UNSC that would have meant an early end to negotiations, the EU-3 (France, Britain, and Germany)[22] stepped in and launched a diplomatic effort aimed at resolving the issue through negotiations.[23]

This move towards diplomatic action must be understood in the context of the military action against Iraq: the Europeans feared that Iran could be the next on the US administration's list of nonproliferation issues to be dealt with by force.[24] Thus the EU-3 saw in the Iranian crisis an opportunity to propose their alternative approach, based on the recently launched ESS.[25] At that time, the Europeans were confident in the "power of their soft power" – thinking that they would be able to capitalize on the credentials

obtained from their historical dialogue with Iran.[26] Therefore, in line with the root cause approach, they presented far-reaching proposals to the Iranian authorities, which would help Iran develop a modern civil nuclear power program whilst meeting international concerns about its peaceful nature. The proposals offered Iran a series of attractive incentive packages in the form of broad cooperation in the technological and economic field. At first, the initiative seemed to bear fruit: the EU-3 managed to conclude a bilateral agreement with Iran whereby it would adhere to the conditions of the ultimatum. Yet over time, discontent was Iran's dominant attitude, and it finally abandoned the agreement. The EU was successful once again in securing the suspension of Iran's enrichment activities for a while through the Paris Agreement, but during the course of 2005, the negotiations completely broke down. It became evident that no economic inducement was attractive enough to persuade Iran to stop working on the nuclear fuel cycle, which enjoyed widespread domestic support.[27] Concluding that the "discussions with Iran had reached an impasse," the EU-3 argued that "the time has now come for the Security Council to become involved to reinforce the authority of the IAEA Resolutions."[28] This step is of course in line with the gradual approach favored by the EU and with the notion of effective multilateralism that pledges for a reinforcement of the international nonproliferation regime.

The Second Stage: Flexing EU Diplomatic Muscles – Sanctions within the UN Mandate

The UN Security Council referral opened a new chapter in the EU dealings with Iran. The EU-3 efforts to mediate now became part of the activities undertaken by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC). The first UNSC Resolution 1696 (2006), adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, demanded that "Iran shall suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development," but did not contain sanctions.[29] Nevertheless, from a European perspective, this resolution was a success. First, the UNSC provided an unambiguous legal basis for European calls on Iran to cease enrichment by endorsing the demand of suspension. Second, the resolution specifically endorsed an offer made by the E3+3 (the EU-3 and the three additional permanent members of the Security Council, the US, Russia, and China) to Iran on June 6, 2006, and stated that this proposal "would allow for the development of relations and cooperation with Iran based on mutual respect and the establishment

of international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program,"[30] proposing attractive incentives to Iran. The explicit endorsement of the June 2006 offer by China, Russia, and the US can be seen as a diplomatic victory for the EU as it managed to impose its dual-track approach and advance cooperation with international key players. Third, European negotiators believed that the UNSC referral was a necessary and useful step forward because it enhanced their position in relation to Iran. It provided the EU with more leverage because the Security Council could impose sanctions – and theoretically authorize the use of force – under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.[31] Indeed, the resolution established a de facto deadline by requesting the IAEA Director General to report by the end of August 2006 on "whether Iran has established full and sustained suspension of all activities mentioned in the resolution."[32] The implication was that without progress, sanctions would be imposed.

Iran blatantly disregarded this resolution, paving the way for the first rounds of targeted sanctions. The UNSC Resolution 1737 (2006) primarily restricted trade on goods that could potentially aid Iran's nuclear or missile programs.[33] A few months later, it was followed by resolution 1747 (2007) that additionally banned Iranian weapons exports but simultaneously repeated the UNSC's support for the previous June 2006 E3+3 proposal[34] – showing again a clear willingness to offer Iran further incentives and leave the door open for a possible return to the negotiations, while at the same time increasingly applying pressure. A third round of sanctions was applied in March 2008 through resolution 1803 with very little impact on Iran.

The Third Stage: "Enough is Enough" – Sanctions beyond the UN Mandate

The third phase of the EU's involvement in the nuclear conflict with Iran began with the election of Barack Obama as US president. Breaking with the previous administration's approach, Obama promised to revive diplomacy and to engage seriously with Iran. Yet ironically, as the US was ready to adopt a more conciliatory approach to Iran, the enthusiasm for engagement in parts of Europe was waning.[35] The E3+3 put on the table a new substantive proposal, taking into account the advancement of Iran's nuclear activities: the so-called fuel deal (October 2009),[36] but no progress was made. The breakdown of the deal over disagreements on procedure and legal guarantees was particularly disappointing for those EU members who had argued that

the refusal of the Bush administration to engage with Iran had been the main factor behind the lack of progress of diplomatic efforts. The fuel deal was indeed an example of a substantive proposal that had the full support of the US – and yet it yielded no results.[37] Subsequently, the EU supported the fourth round of UN sanctions in July 2010.

The shift of the EU from a dual track approach toward more punitive measures was strengthened following the November 2011 IAEA report on Iran that further corroborated suspicions regarding Iran's efforts to weaponize nuclear technology. This time, the EU took an unprecedented step and decided to break with its policy of keeping its own sanctions generally within the scope of trade restrictions imposed by the UN Security Council. On January 23, 2012, the EU Foreign Affairs Council imposed an import ban on Iranian crude oil and froze the assets of the Iranian Central Bank within the EU. These trade restrictions were the most far-reaching against an individual country adopted by the EU since the sanctions on Iraq in the 1990s and the broadest unilateral sanctions regime ever adopted by the EU.[38]

The rationale for EU sanctions has clearly evolved and assumed a wider perspective. While targeted sanctions were previously mainly justified by their effect on Iran's nuclear and missile activities, the EU's current, more general argument is that comprehensive economic sanctions are aimed at affecting the cost-benefit calculation of the Iranian leadership.[39] Given the potential drawbacks of the European move for European economies, the EU deserves credit for imposing such sweeping sanctions, even more so at the height of the financial crisis. For example, France was the fourth commercial partner of the Islamic Republic in 2000, and has fallen to fifteenth since the imposition of the European, American, and UN-enacted sanctions. From 2005 until today, French exports to Iran have plummeted, falling from 2 billion euros to 800 million euros (-70 percent).[40] But the most affected European countries are those that were already suffering from the severe economic recession: Spain, Greece, and Italy.

In retrospect, the Iranian crisis has provided the first opportunity for the EU to demonstrate that it can live up to its self-articulated ambitions. From the beginning, the EU has consistently applied its step-by-step approach: through its positive engagement and economic inducements, it gave Iran a real opportunity to negotiate. But frustration grew in the face of Iran's perceived unwillingness to pursue constructive and coherent negotiations. Consequently, the EU hardened its tone through the imposition of economic

sanctions, while constantly leaving the door officially open to dialogue and rallying key international players in line with its normative ambition. Finally, the 2012 oil embargo indicates that the EU's soft power is actually becoming tougher as it proves that the EU is ready to resort to coercive economic measures even if it has to pay a high price.

The Heightened "European Aggressiveness"

What underlay this new "European aggressiveness"? First, the EU is primarily driven by its deep commitment to fight nuclear proliferation and prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear state. In pursuit of this goal, the European Union has undergone a learning process in its dealing with this proliferator. Indeed, Iran's repeated displays of reluctance to seriously engage in negotiations undoubtedly led the EU to realize that more forceful measures were needed. Thus the hardening of the EU's soft power is the logical result of a policy that failed to yield satisfactory results.

Second, as stipulated in the European Security Strategy, the EU attributes much importance to the transatlantic relationship described as "irreplaceable," and therefore aims for an "effective and balanced partnership with the USA" on common security matters.[41] In the conflict over Iran's nuclear program, the story of transatlantic relations has been one of convergence, culminating today with a unity of approach.[42] Thus, it was quite obvious that efforts to pressure Iran had to be jointly intensified.

Other sources indicate that the blunt violation of human rights, the virulent Iranian anti-European rhetoric, and the multiplication of attacks both against European expatriates and representatives of European embassies have also played a role in the hardening tone of the EU vis-à-vis Iran.[43] However, in the framework of this paper on the respective positions of the EU and Israel, the Israeli threat to resort to the use of force in a preventive strike against Iran must be examined as well.

Unraveling Hidden Dynamics: The EU, Israel, and Iran

The European reluctance to witness a military escalation in the Middle East has certainly been a factor pushing the EU to take more forceful steps to stem Iran's nuclear ambitions. Indeed, many EU policymakers dread the scenario of a military attack against Iran triggering a full scale regional war on Europe's borders that would play havoc with world oil supplies, and might even result in an Iranian-sponsored terror campaign on European

territory.[44] European politicians have also expressed their doubts as to the benefits of such a strike that would unite the Iranian people around the regime.[45] Moreover, this aversion to military means to deal with Iran makes the EU particularly sensitive to other countries' threats to use force. In this regard, Israel has played a central role in fueling such fear: it has repeatedly threatened to bomb Iran's nuclear installations if international diplomatic efforts fail to persuade it to curb its nuclear activities.

Against this backdrop, an interesting dynamic has developed between the EU and Israel. When Israel has been particularly vocal in its threat to attack Iran in a preventive strike, the EU has subsequently reacted in imposing tougher sanctions against Iran, in what certainly appears to be a move to restrain Israel. It might also be interpreted as evidence of the EU's recognition and sensitivity to Israel's security concerns. In any case, this pattern of behavior has already occurred twice: once with the imposition of the oil embargo in January 2012 and again following the 2012 September UN General Assembly a few months later.

In the first case, following the release of the November 2011 IAEA report, Avigdor Lieberman, like many other Israeli officials, repeatedly called for "crippling sanctions" that would target Iran's purported Achilles' heel.[46] The implicit message was that it might forestall the Israeli use of military force against Iran's nuclear facilities. This kind of pressure works very well on the EU because it is convinced that an Israeli military strike on Iran's nuclear sites is a real possibility in the near future. According to a French researcher who is also an advisor to the government of France, "the French administration was particularly worried about Israel attacking Iran this year [2012]."[47] In the same vein, British Foreign Secretary William Hague argued that the newly imposed sanctions were designed to "lead us away from any conflict by increasing the pressure for a peaceful settlement of these disputes."[48]

In the summer of 2012, Israeli politicians significantly increased their talk of carrying out an air strike on Iran's nuclear sites, conveying the impression of a real possibility that Israel would indeed attack within weeks. In a highly unusual move, German Chancellor Angela Merkel initiated a call and asked Prime Minister Netanyahu not to order a unilateral Israeli attack against Iranian nuclear facilities at the present time.[49] In the same period, in late September 2012, Prime Minister Netanyahu called for a "clear red line" against the Islamic state's nuclear drive. On this occasion, a top Western

official involved in talks on the crisis immediately said on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, "what we will do next is intensify sanctions."[50] And in fact, on October 15, 2012, the EU foreign ministers voted to substantially increase sanctions against Iran, including banning imports of Iranian natural gas and other restrictions on the country's infrastructure development.[51]

Each time that such steps are taken, Israel does not miss an opportunity to praise the EU for tightening the sanctions against Iran, but simultaneously insists that it might not be enough. For Israel, the real success of these sanctions is not merely their enactment (as it may be for the EU) but rather their actual effectiveness: "These sanctions are hitting the economy hard, but they haven't yet rolled back the Iranian program," insisted Netanyahu in a speech to the EU ambassadors to Israel in October 2012. "We will know that they are achieving their goal when the centrifuges stop spinning and when the Iranian program is rolled back."[52] For the time being, it seems that Israel has taken a pragmatic decision, and is respecting the wish of the Western nations to make another effort to secure a diplomatic and peaceful outcome with Iran. However, the Israeli patience with the sanctions path will not last forever, and Israel might arrive sooner than the US at the conclusion that more forceful means are needed.[53]

From the Barcelona Process to the Union for the Mediterranean: Soft Power in a Supportive Role

Besides its high-profile involvement vis-à-vis Iran, the EU is also active in another geographical area of relevance to Israel: the Mediterranean basin in the framework of Euro-Mediterranean relations. Indeed, in the various frameworks of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation put forward by the EU since 1995, the issue of WMD proliferation has been mentioned repeatedly. The 1995 Barcelona Declaration established within its so-called political and security partnership two overarching objectives of the EU's nonproliferation policy in the Mediterranean area: the adherence of all Mediterranean partner countries to the existing nonproliferation instruments/regimes and the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East.[54]

Regarding the first aspect, which is very reminiscent of the concept of effective multilateralism, the EU has attempted to mainstream nonproliferation and disarmament activities in its external relations with third countries. The inclusion of a nonproliferation clause in agreements with third countries was at first considered groundbreaking, as it introduced political conditionality

in the field of nonproliferation. This concept, originally related to human rights and democracy issues, foresaw that in case a third country does not fulfill its obligations to nonproliferation provisions, the EU can, as a last resort, suspend the agreement. The EU's nonproliferation clause was subsequently included in the Association Agreement with Syria, and in the Action Plans of Morocco, Tunisia, Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan.[55] Yet, even in a blatant case of violation, conditionality has never been applied, putting into question the efficiency of such a provision. Syria is a case in point.[56]

Interestingly, the formulation of the nonproliferation clause was more conciliatory for Israel than for the other Mediterranean countries: according to the Action Plan signed with the EU, Israel will only "*consider the promotion*" and not directly *promote* the accession to nonproliferation agreements and treaties to which it is not party.[57] Obviously, the EU has in this case made a concession to Israeli interests and sensibilities. Another Israeli interest in the nuclear realm that does not match the EU approach is Israel's need to preserve its nuclear deterrent and avoid international pressure on this front.

As to the long term objective of establishing a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, it might well reflect a positive approach to regional arms control that fits the Israeli interest. Indeed, there is a tremendous need to develop some kind of cooperative security framework in the Middle East, particularly in light of recent events shaking the region and creating common security interests. A cooperative security regime would allow Israel to be better integrated in the region, and that is why it favors the idea of a WMD-free zone provided that it is elaborated in the appropriate context, in the relevant zone (Middle East threat environnent), and in the relevant political climate (of peace).[58] To support this process, the EU has made efforts to organize and fund multilateral dialogues, regular meetings, and seminars specifically on disarmament and nonproliferation of WMD in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean as confidence building measures.[59] The goal of such discussions (or "seminar diplomacy") is the creation of rules of engagement and more peaceful existence among the relevant actors. This process of confidence building and the promotion of a culture of security cooperation are widely acknowledged as an essential prerequisite of more far-reaching structural arms control agreements in the future. As such, these initiatives are beneficial to Israel, a state that should not miss any opportunity to resume dialogue with its neighbors on common security matters.[60]

Conclusion: Expectations for the Foreseeable Future

The EU acts in two different areas relevant to Israel's security as far as nonproliferation matters are concerned. While the EU plays a leading role in the negotiations with Iran and has the responsibility to "deliver," its long term action in the Euro-Mediterranean framework is of a different nature, characterized rather by a supportive role for confidence building measures and for the creation of regional security forums. Yet while the EU should be praised for its efforts to bring the countries of the Mediterranean area to cooperate on security issues, its supportive role might truly make a difference only once the concerned states themselves have decided to faithfully engage on this path. In this regard, if a new regional security forum dialogue were to be established shortly, the support of the EU in this endeavor would be most welcome. Imagining a more pessimistic scenario, in which Egypt or Turkey would regain interest in the development of nuclear weapons, the EU would find itself in a real conundrum – torn between its willingness to deter the states of concern from pursuing this path and the impossibility of being too tough with these important partners of the Mediterranean region.

Vis-à-vis Iran, the analysis has shown that during its 10-year standoff, the EU has consistently applied the key tenets of its nonproliferation strategy, privileging a negotiated outcome but also proving that it can resort to more coercive measures and take steps costly for some or all member states. There is no doubt that the economic pressure resulting from the severe sanctions regime imposed on Iran has been a key factor informing the round of diplomacy following the election of Hassan Rouhani. Indeed, in late November 2013, the P5+1, led by the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, managed to reach an interim accord with Iran: the so-called Joint Plan of Action (JPA), which "sets out an approach towards reaching a long-term comprehensive solution that would ensure Iran's nuclear program remains exclusively peaceful."[61] Under the terms of the Geneva Agreement, Iran agreed to freeze the most important parts of its nuclear program in return for a limited easing of sanctions. The six months stop is meant to make it more difficult for Iran to develop a nuclear weapon and to build much-needed confidence while the two sides negotiate a final settlement of the nuclear dispute. In this sense, one can argue that the EU's efforts have served the Israeli interest in mobilizing a global diplomatic coalition against Iran's enrichment program and in delaying the advancement of the Iranian nuclear program. The difficult negotiation process, the intransigence of some

European Ministers, notably of the French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, and the attention given to Israel's concerns, are testimony to the fact that the Europeans are well aware of the "sophistication"/deceiving strategies used previously by the Iranian leadership and understand the extent of the challenge at stake. These negotiations should be considered as the last chance: as a European diplomat put it, "this time, we have to get it right."[62]

While the interim accord on confidence building steps was first hailed by the Europeans as an "historic breakthrough,"[63] it should be kept in mind that the negotiations are not an end in themselves. From the outset the set-up for the implementation of the JPA was fraught with difficulties: many technical questions remained and disagreements over the interpretation of the document arose early – as usual, the devil is in the technical details.[64] It is now up to the EU to maintain its toughness and use smartly the leverage it has acquired over the years in order to obtain concrete results and not merely empty promises from the Iranian side. Now that the international community has entered into a new dynamic with Iran with a heavily-loaded historical antecedent, it must exploit the momentum – namely, make sure that Iran respects its commitments, insist that sanctions be ratcheted up in case of cheating, and react in a timely manner.

As far as Israel is concerned, this latest diplomatic initiative might not be as bad as depicted by Netanyahu, who referred to the deal as an "historic mistake."[65] It decreases the likelihood of military action against Iran without completely discarding it, while at the same time it puts the Iranian leadership in an uncomfortable situation, which will inevitably (hopefully) shed light on its real intentions. If it works, the diplomatic process will stop (or at least further delay) the development of an Iranian nuclear military capability. If not, it will provide further proof that Iran is indeed a determined (and very sophisticated) proliferator against which soft power definitely has its limits.

Notes

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8 Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), p. 73.

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10 Ibid, p. 10, notes 20-22.

11 "Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy," p. 10.

12 "EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction," p. 5, note 15.

13 The same is true regarding the United States dealing with Iran.

14 Jan Techau, "Will Europeans Ever Agree on the Use of Military Force?" Carnegie Europe Policy Paper No. 65, 2013, http://www.notre-europe.eu/media/usemilitaryforce-techau-ne-jdi-feb13.pdf?pdf=ok.

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16 Baruch Kimmerling, "Patterns of Militarism in Israel," *European Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 2 (1993), p. 210.

17 Although international media talk about an alleged Israeli attack, Israel did not take responsibility for the bombing.

18 For more details on the internal debate in Israel, see Emily B. Landau, "Facing Iran's Military Nuclear Ambitions: The International Challenge and Israel's Concern," CERI Strategy Paper No. 15, May 2013, p. 13.

19 "EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction," p. 4, note 10.

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