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Warsaw 1989 or Tehran 1979?

The Consequences of the Arab Spring for the Security of Israel and Israeli Options in the
Middle-East Conflict

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Zusammenfassung:

Die Revolutionen und Umbrüche, die in Folge des Arabischen Frühlings die Staaten des Nahen Ostens und Nordafrikas nachhaltig veränderten und nach wie vor verändern, haben auch große Auswirkungen auf die Sicherheitsarchitektur der Region. Die vorliegende Masterarbeit befasst sich mit den Auswirkungen des Arabischen Frühlings auf die Sicherheit Israels im regionalen System. Der jüdische Staat nimmt in diesem eine Sonderstellung ein, die es in spezieller Form von solchen tief greifenden Umbrüchen betroffen macht. Zunächst wird dieses System und die Parameter, die in diesem in Bezug auf Israel vorherrschen, kurz dargestellt. Das regionale System, das gekennzeichnet war durch Autokratien und eine für Israel stabile regionale Machtkonstellation, wurde durch die Aufstände nachhaltig erschüttert und verändert. Anhand dreier Länderbeispiele werden diese Veränderungen dargestellt und der Frage nachgegangen, wie sich der Arabische Frühling auf die nationale Sicherheit und das Bedrohungsgefühl Israels ausgewirkt hat. Das Beispiel Ägypten zeigt, wie eines der zwei Länder, mit denen der jüdische Staat nach Jahrzehnten des Kriegszustandes einen Friedensvertrag unterzeichnen konnte, durch die Revolution im Jahr 2011 und die Auseinandersetzungen um Macht und Einfluss in der Folge für Israel immer mehr zu einem Unsicherheitsfaktor wurde. Syrien, als einer der Nachbarstaaten Israels, die dem jüdischen Staat feindlich gesinnt sind und wichtigster Verbündeter der Islamischen Republik Iran, ist durch den Bürgerkrieg nachhaltig destabilisiert und steht an der Kippe zum gescheiterten Staat. Die einst sicherste Grenze Israels wurde somit zu einer „heißen“ Grenze. Die Jihadisten, die den Bürgerkrieg zu einem interkonfessionellen Kampfgebiet zwischen Sunniten und Schiiten machten, bedeuten für Israel eine massive Sicherheitsbedrohung. Denn allen jihadistischen Bewegungen ist gemein, dass ihr langfristiges Ziel die „Befreiung Jerusalems“ ist. Das dritte Beispiel, der Libanon, zeigt eindrucklich, wie nationale Befreiungsbewegungen regionale Auswirkungen haben können. Die schiitische Hezbollah-Miliz hat sich aktiv am syrischen Bürgerkrieg auf Seite des Assad-Regimes beteiligt. Gleichzeitig ist der Kampf gegen Israel eine der zentralen Aufgaben für die Gruppierung. Ihr Kampf gegen die sunnitischen Aufständischen in Syrien führte dazu, dass ihre Kämpfer von den syrischen Streitkräften aufgerüstet wurden und kampferprobt in den Libanon zurückkehren, wo sie für Israel zum Sicherheitsproblem werden. Der Arabische Frühling hatte außerdem auch Auswirkungen auf den Israelisch-Palästinensischen Konflikt, wenngleich Palästina nicht direkt von den Umbrüchen betroffen war. Speziell die israelfeindliche Hamas konnte im ersten Jahr nach der

Revolution hoffen, massiv von den Umbrüchen zu profitieren. In Ägypten kam die Mutterorganisation der Hamas, die Muslimbruderschaft, an die Macht, und das Sicherheitsvakuum auf der Sinai-Halbinsel konnte von der Hamas für seine Waffenbeschaffungen genutzt werden. Doch die Volksbewegungen zeigten der zerstrittenen palästinensischen politischen Führung (Hamas und Fatah) auch, dass auch ihnen der Druck der Straße gefährlich werden könnte. Die Einigung zwischen den beiden ist in diesem Licht zu sehen. Doch eine geeinte palästinensische Führung bedeutet für Israel eine sicherheitspolitische Veränderung. Eine Beteiligung der dezidiert israelfeindlichen Hamas an einer Palästinenserregierung ist für Israel nicht hinnehmbar. Doch der Arabische Frühling hat auch Auswirkungen auf die israelischen Handlungsoptionen gegenüber Palästina. Denn vor den Revolutionen konnte sich Israel sicher sein, dass seine Reaktionen auf den Raketenbeschuss aus Gaza zwar in der arabischen Welt kritisiert werden, aber kaum etwas dagegen unternommen wird. Denn die Autokraten, die in der Nachbarschaft regierten, konnten es sich aus verschiedenen Gründen nicht leisten, aktiv gegen Israel vorzugehen. Sie mussten sich auch nicht um die öffentliche Meinung kümmern, die vielfach ein härteres Vorgehen gefordert hätte. Doch nun sind diese Autokraten geschwächt oder nicht mehr an der Macht, und für Israel ergibt sich nun eine völlig neue Situation: Plötzlich muss es die regionalen Akteure stärker in seiner Palästina-Politik berücksichtigen und findet keine bekannten Machtstrukturen mehr vor.

Der Arabische Frühling hat das regionale System des Nahen Ostens nachhaltig verändert und einen Machtkampf um regionale Hegemonie mit religiösem Furor entfacht. Israel verlor durch die Revolutionen und den Bürgerkrieg in Syrien eine Ordnung, in der es sich ein gewisses Maß an Sicherheit und Vorhersehbarkeit geschaffen hatte. Die Entmachtung der alten Ordnung und die Anarchie, die nun in der Region vorherrscht, haben dem jüdischen Staat viel an Handlungsspielraum genommen und seine Position innerhalb des Systems geschwächt.

Schlagwörter: Arabischer Frühling, Arabisches Erwachen, Israel, Naher Osten, Israel-Palästina-Konflikt, Antisemitismus, Sicherheitspolitik,

Abstract:

The revolutions and upheavals, which lastingly changed the nations of the Middle East and North Africa in the wake of the Arab Spring, do have a huge impact on the security architecture of the region. This master thesis is concerned with the consequences of the Arab Spring on the security of Israel in the regional system. The Jewish State has a special status in this system, which makes it distinctively affected by these pervasive changes. Therefore, the system and parameters that are dominating in respect to Israel, get briefly analysed. The regional system ante Arab Spring was characterized by autocracies and a power constellation that meant stability for Israel, now all of this has changed dramatically. The thesis will use three countries as examples on how these changes happened and affected Israel and its national security and threat perception. The case of Egypt shows how one of the two nations, with which Israel had agreed on a peace treaty after decades of war, increasingly became a security risk for the Jewish nation after the toppling of the old autocrat in 2011. In Syria, one of Israel's enemy nations and closest ally of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the uprising has escalated into a civil war, and is on the brink of becoming a failed state. The once safest border Israel had is becoming an increasingly "hot" border. The Jihadists that turned the civil war into an sectarian battlefield between Sunna and Shia are a massive threat to Israel's security. Because all Jihadist movements share the ultimate goal of the "liberation of Jerusalem". The third example, Lebanon, shows how national liberation movements can have a regional impact. The Shiite Hezbollah-militia has actively joined the fighting in Syria alongside the ruling Assad-regime. At the same time, the fight against Israel is still a central agenda for the group. Its war against the Sunni rebels in Syria made it possible for them arm themselves from Syrian stocks and gain experience on the battlefield. As soon as they return to Lebanon, they will become a security problem for Israel.

The Arab Spring had implications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well, although Palestine was not directly affected by the upheavals. Especially the anti-Israeli Hamas had high hopes for the uprisings in their first year. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, the mother-organisation of Hamas, came to power; the security vacuum on the Sinai peninsula made it possible for the organisation to smuggle weapons into Gaza. But the people's movements also showed to the quarrelling Palestinian leadership (Hamas and Fatah), that the pressure from the streets could become a danger for them as well. The agreement between the two factions can be seen in this light. But a unified Palestinian leadership is a radical change on the security level for Israel. A

unified leadership means unified positions and a stronger voice on the international stage. And a unity government with Hamas-involvement is unacceptable for the Jewish nation. The Arab Spring also had direct consequences for the Israeli option for action towards Palestine. Before the revolutions, Israel could be sure that its reactions on the rocket fire from Gaza would certainly be criticized by the Arab world, but that no one would take action against Israel. The autocrats that ruled the neighbouring countries could not afford open conflict with Israel for various reasons. Furthermore, they did not need to give in to public sentiment, which often demanded a more aggressive stand on the matter of Israel and Palestine. But now, these autocrats are weakened or toppled, and for Israel, a new situation has emerged: there are now several other actors that have to be considered in its policy towards Palestine. And the old power structures in the region are gone.

The Arab Spring has changed the regional system in the Middle East dramatically and incited a struggle for regional hegemony with religious rage. With the revolutions, Israel lost an order that guaranteed a certain form of security and predictability for the Jewish nation. The fall from power of the old order and the anarchy that is now dominating the region has shrunk the Israeli room for manoeuvre considerably and weakened its position in the regional system.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Arab Awakening, Israel, Anti-Semitism, Middle East, Palestine, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Security Studies

Table of Content

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Theoretical Aspects and Assumptions.....	5
2.1. The International and Regional System	5
2.2. Ideology and State Behaviour	7
2.3. The Uniqueness of Israel and Arab Anti-Semitism	9
2.4. National Security and Threat Perception	13
2.5. Israel's Security Paradigm and Decision-Making Processes	15
3. The Arab Spring – A Summary.....	18
3.1. Egypt	18
3.2. Syria	23
3.3. Lebanon	29
3.4. The Israeli perspective	31
4. Israeli National Security and the Arab Spring.....	36
4.1. New Developments – Old Hostilities	36
4.1.1. Egypt - The End of a Partner?	
4.1.2. Arms traffic and Israeli security	
4.1.3. Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism and the Revolutions	
4.1.4. The Pacific Pivot of the United States	
4.2. Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood	48
4.2.1. The Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas	
4.2.2. Sinai and Gaza	
4.2.3. Egypt in Turmoil – A Potential Disaster for Israel	

4.3. Lebanon – The Northern Border	59
4.3.1. Hezbollah	
4.3.2. The Shiite Axis	
4.4. Syria – Enemy in Civil War	63
4.4.1. The Devil We Know	
4.4.2. Syria as a Failing State	
4.4.3. Anti-Semitism and Jihadism in Syria	
4.5. The Arab Spring as a Struggle for Regional Hegemony	72
4.5.1. The Schism of Sunna and Shia	
4.5.2. Iran and Saudi Arabia – Fighting for Hegemony	
4.5.3. Israel – Stuck in the Middle	
5. The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict.....	82
5.1. The Arab Uprisings as a Game Changer	82
5.2. Hamas – Winner or Loser of the Arab Spring?	86
5.3. Chances of Progress in the Conflict	92
6. The Future for Israel in the New Middle East – an Outlook.....	96
6.1. Scenario 1: Failing States in the Region: “Worst Case Scenario”	96
6.2. Scenario 2: Revival of Autocracies: “Status Quo Ante”	98
6.3. Scenario 3: Arab Democracy Prevails: “A New Era”	100
6. Conclusion.....	103
Bibliography.....	107
Appendix.....	125
Curriculum Vitae	125

1. Introduction

The rebellions and revolutions that are turning the MENA-region (Middle East and Northern Africa) upside-down since 2011, the so-called “Arab Spring” came as a huge surprise to the world. Although it was evident years before that something will happen some time, the intensity and revolutionary spirit with which the people of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Yemen, Syria and other countries rose up against the old, corrupt regimes that ruled for decades, was stunning. The democratic countries (especially in Europe) were swift to call the developments a step towards democratization in the region. Far from the optimism shared amongst Western countries was the one democracy in the region, which, commentators criticized, should be thankful and supportive of the new developments: Israel. The revolutions in its neighbouring countries left the Jewish nation deeply worried and concerned. Is Israel right in its rather pessimistic perception of the “Arab Spring”?

This master thesis will tackle this question from two sides: one is the direct repercussions the Arab Spring countries had on Israel and its perception of security; the other side deals with the indirect effects of the phenomena on Israel in regards to Palestine. The question that shall be answered in the course of this paper is the following: “How did the Arab Spring influence the security of Israel and Israeli options in the Middle-East conflict?” It is quite obvious that this paper assumes that the two issues – the national security and the conflict with the Arab world on the issue of Palestine – are both heavily connected to the revolts that happened throughout the MENA-region.

To approach the topic, one needs to first define the theoretical assumptions that are used to describe the developments and the relations in the region. Therefore the theoretical outlines will be laid out in the first part of the paper. The topic will be approached with a basically neo-realist assumption about the regional relations of power, the system that is at the basis of the conflicts covered and the possible behaviour of the states involved. But the neo-realist approach does not give the full theoretical framework for the analysis. This is because the neo-realists often fail to acknowledge the influence of non-state issues such as ideology and religion, reasons for policies and conflict that are of significant importance for understanding the Israeli point of view. These shortcomings will be analysed, and some findings of other schools such as foreign policy analysis, constructivism and institutionalism will be added. Furthermore, Security Studies will be

used to outline the term “national security”, and to give an overview of the theoretical aspects of said term. But Israel is in a worldwide unique position, due to its history. So in order to fully grasp the meaning of "national security" when it comes to Israel, one also has to analyse the particularities of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the threat that Israel sees that might not be verifiable by "objective" approaches, but still is a valid threat for a nation that has been at war constantly for the last 60 years, that is constantly threatened by terrorist organizations and a nation that was built on the bodies of six million dead Jews and the Shoah, a nation that looks at the duty to "protect its citizens" in a unique way due to the horrors that lead to its constitution.

Finally, to analyse the complex and worldwide unique relationship between Israel on the one hand and the Arab countries on the other, neo-realism does not explain everything that needs to be understood when you write about the Middle East. This conflict is no classical war between two or more states or national entities but it is a war between one state (Israel) and non-state-actors (Hamas and Hezbollah) that are funded or supported by other nations that are formally at war with Israel but use these organizations as surrogates for their final goal of destroying the Jewish State. The Arab anti-Semitism has to be analysed for understanding the possible threat the Arab Spring and the instability it caused poses for the national security of Israel. To only analyse states and systems, as Neo-realism does, is not enough.

The third chapter will give a summary of the developments that became known under the term “Arab Spring” as an understanding of what had happened and is still happening is needed before one starts analysing the effects that the developments had on Israeli perceptions of its own national security. The three countries that are most important in understanding Israeli pessimism and fear of the events will be used as case studies for the developments of the past three years.

Egypt, the first country portrayed, was for a long time a reliable partner for Israel. But after the downfall of long-time dictator Hosni Mubarak, and even more after the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood in the elections following the revolutions, the partnership that Israel had with its western neighbour is no more. The Brotherhood was never seen as a reliable partner by Israel, not only due to the fact that Hamas is the daughter of the Brotherhood, but also because members of the MB engaged themselves in fierce anti-Israeli rhetoric throughout the election process. The developments in Egypt, the fighting after the ousting of Muslim Brother and president Mohammed Morsi, the security issues on the Sinai that are persistent, the fact that the Egyptian society is torn apart,

frustrated and without perspectives and unstable, all these factors come in when Israel assesses its security situation in relations to Egypt.

Syria, the second country portrayed, is in civil war. The two main powers in the region use Syria as a battlefield to fight for regional hegemony, consciously turning the conflict in a sectarian war that escalated completely. Bashar al-Assad, the dictator in power and under pressure from almost all nations in the world, has a record of anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist rhetoric. But at the same time, the border with Syria was one of the safest Israel had for decades. The Golan heights and the UN-forces stationed there were a quiet border for almost 30 years. All that changed with the revolution. Ever more so since Hezbollah actively and violently sided with the Baath-regime in Damascus. But not only the involvement of one of Israel's main enemies worries the Jewish nation. It is also the possibility of a Sunnite Islamist state right next to it. So, no matter who will come out victorious in the battles in Syria, Israel will have a very close look at the situation.

The third country portrayed is Lebanon. This mainly due to the fact that Lebanon has a historically tight relationship with Syria and one of Israel's main enemies is a political force in the country. The Hezbollah, a Shiite organization based in Lebanon to fight "the Zionist enemy" has actively chosen sides in the Syrian civil war, sending soldiers to fight side by side with the military of Bashar Al-Assad. Rockets have since been fired from Syria into Lebanon, the security situation deteriorates. Lebanon is the second border that Israel guards heavily and perceives as a great security risk. The Hezbollah regularly engages in armed conflict with the IDF, and the developments in Syria could well lead to a decoy war of Hezbollah with Israel, armed with weapons from Syria. In the last part of this chapter, the Israeli perspective of the developments in the three countries will be outlined.

In the fourth part, the paper will tackle the question how the developments in its neighbouring countries have already affected Israel and the Israeli perception of national security. The changes in the political landscape, but also the anti-Semitic background noises that were heard not only in Jerusalem during the revolutions, have left the country deeply worried by these developments. The revolutions and the uprising of the people are no reason for light-hearted joy in Israel. But are their worries justified? And how did Israel alter its policies towards these countries and how did it interpret the revolutions, how did Israel change its parameters of security? This part of the paper will deal primarily with the Israeli perspective. The chapter will include analyses of the major zones of conflict as well as statements, interviews and propaganda by the

different factions concerning Israel. It will tackle the first part of the research question, showing how the Arab Spring did change Israeli perceptions of its own security as well as the stability in the region. And it will tackle one aspect of the revolutions that is a huge security concern to Israel: Where did the weapons go that were looted during the revolutions? At least some of them found their way into areas that are considered hostile by Israel.

The fifth chapter will deal with the implications the Arab Spring had on the Middle-East conflict. In the past, Israel could act more or less without too much constraints due to possible rapprochements by its neighbours. For example during “Operation Cast Lead”, when it attacked Gaza after heavy rocket fire from Hamas and other terror groups, where Israel did not think twice about possible reactions from its neighbours. Back then, Israel did not have to think about diplomatic reasoning too much, about possible reactions from Egypt or other nations. Mubarak was a reliable partner. All this has changed now. Israel has to move on tiptoes nowadays when it comes to the conflict in Gaza, or Southern Lebanon. The regimes around it are no longer reliable, they are new and not yet predictable. This changes Israeli options in the conflict and restricts Israeli actions that they perceive as self-defence.

In the final part, the paper will examine the possible future of the MENA-region in respect to Israel's perception of its own national security. Three scenarios will be outlined briefly that are perceived as the most likely ones: A MENA-region of failing states, an Arab Spring that has gone full-circle and returns to autocracy, and a “Tunisian model” of a distinctive Arab democracy. All three scenarios bear risks and opportunities for the Jewish nation that will be analysed.

This master thesis is written from an Israeli point of view. The author will describe the developments in the region as neutral as possible, but it should be kept in mind that the question that will be answered in the course of this paper is deliberately asked from an Israeli point of view. Furthermore, as the situation in the Middle East is one in progress, this paper tries to be as up to date as possible. Because the paper would grow bigger and bigger as time and events go by, the writer chose a deadline for the daily events in the region, ending with the end of 2013. Certain developments that happened and have a long-term impact on Israel are included nevertheless, but daily events will be included only up to 31st of December 2013.

2. Theoretical Aspects and Assumptions

2.1. The International and Regional System

National security and perceptions of the environment that surrounds a country are shaped by certain assumptions about the regional and international system, about balance of power or power distribution. These assumptions can help in understanding actions or non-actions of certain actors in a region or the world.

The international system and the region in the Middle East as they are seen in this paper are characterized by a state of anarchy between the states that inhabit the system. This approach goes back to the school of classical realism and is used in its neorealist derivative¹ and assumes that there is no overarching governing body in the regional or international system that commands over the actions of nations, that could punish them for unlawful behaviour, restrain them from taking actions that are seen as illegal or that can shape the relationship between nations. What determines state-action is not a higher body of law, it is their particular view of their own security. Nations, scholars of realism assume, will always seek security and stability first and foremost. Because there is nothing between nations that binds them to a certain behaviour, mistrust is the key component of perception between them. Trust is something nations can not afford, and therefore a constant threat by neighbours and other powers is assumed. Nations need to guard themselves against aggression from outside, and they do so in several ways. For one, they try to strengthen their “hard power” capabilities, meaning they build up a credible and threatening arsenal of conventional weapons. This is dependent on the capability of a country to build such an arsenal. But this is just one part of the behaviour of nations inside the international and regional system. Because building up the muscles but not having the brains usually leads to failure. That is why states also try to build up what Joseph Nye (1990; 2004) calls “soft power”. It is the ability to get other actors to do what you want without using force. This can be achieved through attractive conditions for collaboration, but also by ideological means. If a nation can convincingly act as a role model in a region, if its culture, system of law or economy is attractive for other countries, it has a higher chance of achieving its main goals and enhance its security without using or threatening with hard power.

1 For theories of (neo-) realism, see i.a. Waltz 1979; Waltz 2001; Nye 2009; Jackson/Sørensen 2010.

The MENA-region (Middle East and Northern Africa) is characterized by anarchy and constant mistrust between the nations. Cooperation is rare, as there are too many issues separating the nations from each other, and amidst them all is a nation that is loathed by most of the others: Israel. The regional balance of power is shaped by two inner-Muslim blocks, the Shiite axis Iran-Iraq-Syria-Lebanon and the Sunni powerhouses in the Gulf, with Saudi Arabia and Qatar as the leading nations. These two power blocks both try to establish a regional hegemony of their own and at the same time they try to restrain the other. The region can be seen as a prime example for the realistic world-view, as there is very little trust and cooperation, security issues and a bipolar order shape the region. Whilst other powers try to gain influence in the region (like Turkey), there is no debate as to who are the two main regional powers that are fighting for influence, namely (Sunni) Saudi Arabia and (Shiite) Iran.

But amidst this struggle for hegemony, a third actor is trying to establish its sphere of interest and security, one that is not affiliated with the other powers in any kind. Israel is by far the leading power in the region when it comes to hard power, but it has no or close to no soft power in the region. Israel is seen as an occupying force by most of the regional public, and although Israel managed to make peace with two of its neighbours, it is far from feeling safe in the region.

To understand this kind of regional balance of power, neorealism is not enough. There is more at work in this region than the blatant structure of the system. The fact that Israel, although no challenger for regional hegemony, is in the midst of the ongoing conflicts in the region, can not be explained by realistic assumptions alone. At this point, constructivist assumptions about identity and interests are useful in helping to understand the interaction between states in the region. Realism ignores these assets of human interaction completely, individuals and ideas do not exist in their view of regional or international relations. But, especially in the MENA-region, these things matter. The conflicts that are shaping this region are conflicts of ideas, century-old hatred and ideologies are used and abused to incite conflict and war. And while in the end it might very well be a struggle for hegemony and power, these struggles are possible only because there are certain ideas about friend and foe that are used by the powerful and the elites to gain support and hard power.

2.2. Ideology and State Behaviour

Kenneth Waltz, one of the great theorists on neorealism, sees state behaviour in the international system as completely cut off from human influences:

The focus is on the structure of the system and not on the human beings who create the system or operate the system. State leaders are prisoners of the structure of the state system and its determinist logic which dictates what they must do in their conduct of foreign policy (Jackson/Sørensen 2010, 75).

In opposition to Waltz (1979, 97), it is assumed in this paper that there is more to nations and their behaviour than different capabilities and a search for security and power. The human mindset and human behaviour are more complicated than that. Ideology must not be underestimated. The way nations act is not only determined by questions of security and power, but also by the way they perceive their others, how they view themselves and what they ultimately want to achieve as a nation, a global or regional power, a people, or as a religious group. What they do and how they act to achieve their goal is more than the “invisible hand” of the international system that guides them in a certain direction without a possibility to veer to the right or to the left. “The material power and state interest are fundamentally formed by ideas and social interaction” (Jackson/Sørensen 2010, 168). The nation is not a black box, totally cut off from the people that inhabit it and the ideas and norms they agreed upon or disagree over. The people that are citizens of that nation, the educational system, and the structure of a society matter in terms of what the state will want to achieve and how it tries to achieve it in the international system. Not all states act and react according to certain patterns of behaviour that are shaped by the structure of the international system. Rather, they have certain images, traditions and imagined bonds and communities² that drive their behaviour just as much as “hard” questions of security and power.

This is where ideology comes on to the stage of international politics. Ideology is, in the sense of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, a “false consciousness” that has a double func-

² The concept of „imagined communities“ derives from Anderson (1991). The concept is used to describe entities, nations, ethnicities or religions, that are communities not in a real sense, but they are merely imagined as such. The reason for that is that there is no possibility that all members of the group can have direct contact with each other. Rather, they perceive themselves as part of a group that they will never truly grasp or know as a whole. Nationalism and ethnicity are based on these imagined communities (cf. Anderson 1991).

tion: on the one hand, it is used to explain the conflicts and fault lines of a society to the people and make them able to cope with them. On the other hand, ideology is always used to subdue the people, to keep them from understanding the true matter of social conditions and the power relations that rule them³. In foreign policy and questions of international relations, the concept of ideology helps explaining seemingly illogical behaviour of states. Ideology is a powerful part of human thinking, behaviour and interaction. Especially in the MENA-region, it is ideology that is mixed with pragmatics and realism. This is especially the case for the behaviour of Arab countries when it comes to Israel. They are using the Jewish nation as a scapegoat and diversion for their peoples. Israel is used as an ideological “Other”⁴, the entity that can be used to hide the truth from the people, putting the blame for their misery on a small nation instead of their leaders. The “Jew among the nations” (Leon Poliakov) is used in the very same way that Jews were used in the past, as a universal boogeyman that is to blame for almost everything.

State behaviour is, not only in the MENA-region but everywhere in the world, partly driven by ideas and/or ideology. Ideology is a powerful tool that is used by leaders and elites to get the people of a nation to rally around them, and at the same time ideology is forcing the very same leaders to make decisions that are irrational and no good for themselves or their people. This is the specific human aspect of international politics. One that can not be put into the black box of the state, not to be analysed and not to be taken into account. And in the MENA-region, the unique nature of Israel and Israel's position inside the region is mainly due to ideological decisions. The decision to invade the small nation mere hours after its declaration as a sovereign state was driven by ideology. The hostility of the Arab countries towards Israel was driven by ideology. The nations of the region act and react not only out of realist assumptions about security and stability. Their decision making is influenced by religion, political ideology and percep-

3 Ideology is used by Marxism to explain how the ruling classes can subdue the proletariat and keep it from revolting (see MEW Bd. 3, 5-530). Ideology is used in the same matter in this paper, to argue that ideology and ideas shape the foreign policies of nations, sometimes keeping them from making peace or overcoming irrational aversions against one another.

4 The „Other“ is that which makes it possible to identify yourself. A group or an individual can only identify what they are by referring to the “Other” to see what they are not. They distinguish themselves from the Other, and only through that does their own identity become real and graspable (for an introductory work see Clarke 2011).

tions of the “Other” that are based on prejudice rather than objective realist assumptions about the other nation as a regional competitor.

2.3. The Uniqueness of Israel and Arab Anti-Semitism

From a realist point of view, all countries are alike. It does not matter much if it is a democracy, a theocracy or a dictatorship, if it has an aggressive propaganda or not. And the history of a country does not matter greatly either.

In this chapter, a case is made as for why history matters for foreign and security policy. As was shown before, the inner processes and ideas of a nation matter for the country's foreign policy. In the case of Israel, it is history that can help understand why Israel acts like it does and why it is different from all the other countries in the world.

Israel is not a nation like any other. The founding of Israel is directly connected to the great catastrophe of the 20th century, the industrial determination of European Jews by the Third Reich. After 2000 years of discrimination, persecution and pogroms, the European Jews decided that the nations that they perceived as their home countries for a long time were not willing nor able to protect them from anti-Semitism.

Theodor Herzl, the ideological father of Zionism⁵, put the idea of a homeland for the Jews into the heads of the Jewish communities of Europe. But they had to suffer Auschwitz and almost annihilation before the world accepted the demand of Jews for an own nation that would be able to protect them. Thus, Israel is built on the bodies of the six million that died during the atrocity of the Shoah, and is a promise to those that have survived that Auschwitz must not and will not happen again. No other country has a history that is so directly bound to the principle of protecting its citizens as Israel. Without the Shoah, Israel would not be. It is the promise of a safe haven for Jews that are fleeing anti-Semitism everywhere.

And only days after its independence, the young Jewish nation faced anti-Semitism once again and had to fight for its survival for the first time. The nation was attacked by its six neighbouring countries, for no other reason that the Arab elites did not want a Jewish nation among them. The war of independence in 1948 can not be explained with

5 Theodor Herzl, in his famous work „Der Judenstaat. Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage“ (1896) made a case for the necessity for the Jewish people to create their own nation. The anti-Semitism in Europe made it absolutely essential for the Jews to pursue this goal.

security issues the Arab countries had, nor with realist assumptions about power. It was a war that was waged against a people and only because they were members of a certain community. In the course of the war, Arabs and Jews alike displaced their respective other community, with Arab Jews fleeing to Israel and Arabs from Israel fleeing to the neighbouring countries.

After the first war, Israel had to fight several more times for its survival, against changing coalitions of Arab countries. And until today, only two countries in the region (Egypt and Jordan) have signed a peace treaty with the Jewish nation. And even after that, anti-Israeli sentiments, sometimes bordering on the absurd (see section 4.1.3) survived and flourished in the Arab world.

Arab anti-Semitism, similar to the European form, has its roots in religious Anti-Judaism. The prophet Mohammed perceived the Jews as Islam's greatest enemies⁶. And with colonialism, elements of the rather new European anti-Semitism reached the Arab world. Especially the notorious pamphlet "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" was quite popular in the Arab countries. But the Muslim world was not as vulnerable to anti-Semitic antics as the Christians, as they did not blame the Jews for the murder of Jesus and had a generally more tolerant approach to the other monotheist religions (cf. Wind 2005, 20ff). But after the Balfour-Declaration in 1917, that promised a Jewish home country to the Zionists in the Middle East, anti-Semitic tensions intensified, with the so called "Mufti of Jerusalem" Amin al-Husseini as a leader. He used the "Protocols" as justification for the pogrom of Jerusalem in 1920 and became an ally of Nazi-Germany during the second World War. He introduced the racial anti-Semitism of the Nazis and the propaganda of a Jewish world conspiracy to the Arab people and gave the ideological background for the war against Israel in 1948 (cf. Küntzel 2007). This was when the seed was planted that is still fruitful today. The Jews became the world conspirator, and Arab leaders manipulated history so that their people believed that it was the Jews that stood behind everything that happened in the world.

After 1948, anti-Semitism remained present in the Arab countries, and the leaders could use the Jewish nation as a universal boogeyman, as the scapegoat for poverty and failure. Mixed into that were classical anti-Judaistic motives that have their origins in the Quran, such as the Jewish ritual murder of children, the poisoning of wells and so on. There are clear anti-Semitic elements of European descent, such as the Jewish world conspiracy and the greedy Jews that rule the capitalist world. Furthermore, the Jewish

6 For a more detailed account of Anti-Judaism in the Quran see Wind 2005, 13ff).

world conspiracy was used as an ideological explanation for the self-perceived weakness and low position of the Arab nations. The Shoah was either denounced as a Jewish lie or belittled and proclaimed a gross exaggeration by the Jews to “get the world to feel sorry for them and give them Palestine as compensation” (cf. Von der Osten-Sacken/Uwer 2001, 134). The struggle for Jerusalem and Palestine further deepened the cleavages between the two, with Arabs fiercely negating Israel's right to exist, calling for an armed struggle to “free Palestine” time and time again. Palestinian nationalism became a universal Arab feature, with some being more concerned with the fate of Palestine than with their own country. And anti-Semitism was always a factor in the struggle for Palestine. The Palestinian organization Hamas has made its anti-Semitism explicit in its charter, Article 22, a document that is valid until today:

The enemies have been scheming for a long time, and they have consolidated their schemes, in order to achieve what they they have achieved. They took advantage of key-elements in unfolding events, and accumulated a huge and influential material wealth which they put to the service of implementing their dream. (...) They stood behind the French and the Communist Revolutions and behind most of the revolutions we hear about here and there. They also used the money to establish clandestine organizations which are spreading around the world, in order to destroy societies and carry out Zionist interests. (...) As regards local and world wars, it has come to pas s and no one objects, that they stood behind World War 1, so as to wipe out the Islamic Caliphate. They collected material gains and took control of many sources of wealth. They obtained the Balfour Declaration and established the League of Nations in order to rule the world by means of that organization. They also stood behind World War II, where they collected immense benefits from trading with war materials, and prepared for the establishment of their state. They inspired the establishment of the United Nations and the Security Council to replace the League of Nations, in order to rule the world by their intermediary. There was no war that broke out anywhere without their fingerprints on it (Hamas 1988).

The Hamas itself denies that the charter is still a relevant document for their organization, stating that those who use the charter to outlaw the movement misunderstand the modern Hamas of today (McGreal 2006). But the fact that they attack Jewish citizens left, right and centre without second thought makes it highly doubtable that Hamas has truly abandoned the anti-Semitic thoughts that were written down in the charter.

No matter if the charter is still in use today or not, what is evident in documents like that is the belief that the Jews have been plotting against the Islamic world for a long time, seeking wealth and world domination. The argument is similar to those of German anti-Semitism in the 1930s and 1940s, where there was a firm belief that Jews controlled the world and sought to wipe out the Germans. And it is evident that Islamic anti-Semitism today draws its inspiration from Nazi Germany⁷ The ideology of anti-Semitism has been omnipresent in the years following the establishment of Israel, and up until today it is a key element of the perception of Israel in the Arab world. It has been used and is still used as a ideological coping mechanism, to distract the people from the shortcomings of their own regimes, the inability of their leaders to rule and build up governance structures. Israel could always be used as a metaphor to get the people to “rally around the flag” and forget their anger at their own leaders and direct it at the omnipresent Jew.

As to the question how well-established the anti-Semitism is in Arab countries, there is no clear answer. There are certain aspects, like anti-Semitism in the media, movies, music and other forms of culture that make a case for a deeply rooted Arab anti-Semitism. Furthermore, there are polls suggesting that the majority of Arab population has a very negative image of Jews and believe in a Jewish world conspiracy and other typical myths about the Jews⁸. Opinion leaders and elites have successfully established a regime of anti-Semitic patterns in their societies. Anti-Semitism is deeply rooted in Arab societies, through years of propaganda. But on the other hand, the uprisings of 2011 showed that Israel is not the main enemy anymore. During the “Arab Spring”, anti-Semitism was present on the streets, but not the driving element behind the protests.

Israel's history and the heritage of the Shoah rests heavily on the country. More than any other nation in the world, it is committed to the protection of its citizens, “never again” is more than shallow words in Israel. And as anti-Semitism spread into the Arab countries and was nurtured by the Arab leaders, Israel felt confirmed by the reaction of

7 Not only was the Mufti of Jerusalem an admirer of Hitler and his anti-Semitism. Gamal Abdel Nasser, former Egyptian president, also declared his admiration for Nazi Germany. A leading figure of the Baath party declared that they were Nazis, racists and admirers of the NSDAP in the 1930s and 1940s (cf. i.a. Lewis 1987, 175; Küntzel 2002/2004).

8 A poll from 2011, conducted by the PEW institute shows that only 2 to 4 percent of the Arab people have „favourable views“ about the Jews (cf. PEWResearch 2011). Arab TV is known for notorious anti-Semitism (cf. Ben-Ari 2002).

its neighbours. In an environment full of enemies and anti-Semitism, it is easy for Israel to argue for its immense hard power capabilities and the wars it “had to fight”. And while the threat of an Arab-led war against Israel is objectively rather small, Israel will never again take chances in the reaction to and perception of anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli statements. No Israeli government could react lightly to such statements, as the Shoah is always in the minds and in the subconscious of the Israeli people.

2.4. National Security and Threat Perception

As this paper is concerned with “national security”, it is important to define what is meant by it. There is no textbook-definition of the term, it is a disputed and contested one in the academia. But the realist aspect of security, meaning that a nation is concerned with protecting its sovereignty and values from outside threats, is probably the lowest common denominator. According to the classic definition by John Kennan, national security is “the continued ability of the country to pursue the development of its internal life without serious interference, or threat of interference, from foreign powers” (quoted in Slaughter 2006).

Each nation has different assessments of the threats to its security and the values it cherishes and seeks to protect. Security priorities for all nations are protection of its sovereignty, its own citizens and its infrastructure. But nations differ in the way they perceive the threats from outside and therefore their own level of security as well as which aspects of national politics they see as vital for their security. Usually, these include military, environmental, political and socio-economic issues. National security is, for that matter, more than just the stability of the borders and the survival of the citizens of a nation. It is a comprehensive approach to the whole of society, and national security can be threatened in many ways, not only by a war-waging neighbour. But for Israel, this war-waging neighbour is the reality since its founding, and therefore Israel has a national security approach that is defined primarily by military assessments of security.

Another important aspect in defining national security is threat perception. As a nation's security is constantly concerned with threats and challenges, the assessment of said threats is central to the way a state or national decision-makers act. Security, there-

fore, is always defined in the perception of a state's surroundings. And the perception is dependent of the actor's ability to read the actions of the other correctly. Several problems arise when it comes to interpretation of state action. One is the security dilemma:

A security dilemma arises between two states who are both “security seekers.” When one takes defensive action to protect itself, but that defensive action can also be read as offensive, the other misperceives intention and misreads the type of state the other is. This process begins a mutual misperception of each other’s defensive intentions as threatening that can culminate in a spiral into war (Stein 2013, 5).

The reason for this misperception lies in the inherent ambiguity of information that is available, and the selective flow of information from one state to the other. Misperception is the rule, not the exception in international relations. Stein identifies five sets of variables that complicate threat perception (ibid, 9): “changing balances of power (...), security and status dilemmas which make intentions difficult to read and threats difficult to assess, institutional interests, political culture, and the violation of norms”. This is the rationalist aspect of threat perception. But, as Stein highlights, rationalism alone does not grasp the complexity of threat (mis-) perception (ibid). There is a psychological component in it as well, one that can not be explained by rationalism and realism. It is the problem of whom is addressed by the assessment of threats, what is the cultural, national and societal history of a state, and, again, ideology plays its part. Threat perception is not something that can be done “rationalistic”, by making a scientific equation of the situation and coming to a rational conclusion as to who is dangerous and who is not. Emotions make individuals who they are and influence the way they feel, act and perceive the other. For states, this is not different, and even less so for their perception of threat. And for Israel, the collective remembering is a deeply engraved part of its national identity, the burden of the Shoah makes it almost impossible for Israel to get a “objective” picture of its surroundings and the de facto capabilities and threats. It has to always assess the worst; “never again” is what drives Israeli threat perception⁹.

⁹ For an elaboration on this „normative threat“ perception see Creppell 2011.

2.5. Israel's Security Paradigm and Decision-Making Processes

Israel does not have an explicit national security doctrine. But, nevertheless, it is possible to identify some basic concepts that can be fit together in a coherent strategy (according to Rodman 2001, 71f):

Developed at various points in time, and not integrated into a set of closely linked propositions that could be called a systematic and coherent “theory” of national security, these concepts have nevertheless clearly driven Israeli thinking and conduct over the course of the state’s existence. They can be organized, in no particular order, under eight distinct headings: geography; manpower; quantity versus quality; offensive maneuver warfare; deterrence; conventional versus unconventional threats; self-reliance; and great power patronage.

Concerning geography, the author refers on the one hand to the geographical conditions of Israel and strategic consequences they have: the borders of Israel are described as more or less undefendable, and the country as lacking strategic depth. Manpower means the reliance of the IDF on reserve forces and conscription to keep large armed forces available and operational, despite the fact that they will always be fewer than the Arab forces combined. Here the third aspect comes in: “Israeli manpower has always been more physically fit, more highly educated, and more strongly motivated than its Arab counterparts” (ibid, 75). The IDF remains committed to a superiority in quality not only in manpower, but also in equipment. The offensive manoeuvre warfare suits not only the Israeli geographical shortcomings, but also the IDF's focus on quality in the armed forces. Deterrence means the goal to keep its enemies (or what Israel perceives as enemies) from waging war against the Jewish nation, as preferable to actual warfare. One of its biggest deterrence potentials is its nuclear capability. Israel has been and still is, furthermore, more than any country in the world subject to unconventional threats. Since the last conventional war in 1973, Israel had to deal with terrorist organizations and sub-state-level threats and adjusted its resources and capabilities accordingly: “With the outbreak of the intifada in the late 1980s, the IDF created special operations units specifically dedicated to low-intensity conflict tasks” (ibid, 78). Self reliance refers not only to the Israeli approach of “dealing with its own problems itself”, but also on the self-reliance when it comes to defence industry. Israel has built itself a very high reputation in the area of arms production and development, precisely because Israel did not

rely on weapon imports. Great power patronage means that Israel still relies on support from the USA, and also waits for direct or indirect signs of approval by its patron before starting a war or military campaign.

Israel's national security "doctrine" therefore is characterized by these distinctive features and has been developed over time, going through changes in some areas and characterized by continuity in others.

The national security paradigm of Israel is built upon two assumptions, according to Charles D. Freilich. First, there is a broad public consensus that "Israel faces a realistic threat of genocide, or at a minimum, of politicide" (Freilich 2006, 636). Second, the neighbouring Arab countries are perceived as hostile, and as a consequence of this, there is "a very limited range of military or diplomatic options" (ibid, 637) for Israel when it comes to its regional politics. The security environment of Israel is marked by extreme volatility and a high degree of uncertainty. Unlike other countries, Israel is surrounded by countries that are perceived as hostile. Furthermore, there are organizations at the sub-state level that want to annihilate the state and its people altogether, a situation unknown to any other country in the world. Therefore, unlike any other country in the world, Israel's prime concern is its own survival, not only metaphorically (like every country in the world tries to achieve maximum security for itself), but on a day to day basis. Its survival is Israel's first and foremost concern, and the decision-making processes reflect that fact. For one, the Israeli army (IDF) is involved in practically every aspect of foreign policy and defence policy, and in the decision-making process at all levels (see ibid., 657 ff). This allows the military to stay close to the centres of power and influence the political decision-making. Furthermore, Israel's decision-making processes lack a grand vision and long-term plans when it comes to national security:

The persistent threat of imminent or actual hostilities has led to a nearly total preoccupation in Israel with the 'thundering present' and to the development of a national security decision-making process geared towards ad hoc solutions to immediate problems (ibid., 643).

Israeli security policies are all rather short-termed, the government is reactive, not proactive when it comes to its environment. This has to do with the perception of said environment as mentioned above. Israeli politicians and decision-makers have accepted that they can not foresee what will happen in the future. This approach to questions of

national security and the political environment has advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, Israel is highly flexible when it comes to reacting to new developments that affect its security. As they lack any grand vision for the future, Israeli decision makers wait and see how events unfold, and react when it seems fit to them. But a simply reactive policy bears the danger of being overrun by events and lacking a vision or pro-active decisions limits the ability of the country to actively shape its environment, rather than reacting on outside changes. Israel has a tradition of “fire-fighting”-policies when it comes to its environment (cf. *ibid.*, 644). Furthermore, according to Freilich, there is no effective policy-making forum that could develop such a long-term strategy. Instead, prime ministers and ministers of defence seem to make ad hoc decisions that are largely driven by their own perceptions and experiences (*ibid.*, 651 ff).

On the other hand, the “ability to improvise, change gears, and rapidly adapt to changing circumstances is a vital necessity and has become a sphere of [Israeli] national excellence” (*ibid.*, 660). But this ability also results in a rather passive approach to events in the region. As Israel can react to changing circumstances, it usually waits until these changes have evolved until it adapts. The (non-) reactions of Israel when the Arab Spring unfolded and their old autocratic partners were swept out of their palaces by the people, were typical for the Jewish nation: they waited until the fog had lifted and reassessed their position. Although Israel was certainly not pleased to see a reliable partner like Hosni Mubarak go, they did nothing to stop events in Egypt. And after the Muslim Brotherhood won the elections, which was close to the worst case scenario for Israel, they did not cut all ties with Egypt, but tried to make the best of it. The flexibility of Israel is one of its biggest assets. The failure to produce a longterm vision and have a foreign policy that is trying to make this vision reality is the other side of the medal.

3. The Arab Spring – A Summary

3.1. Egypt

The revolutions and major power shifts that took place in North Africa and the Middle East kicked off in Tunisia. There, for the first time in the history of these countries, a revolution by the people was able to overthrow the autocratic ruler of Tunisia, Zine el-Abadine Ben Ali. This was the starting point for what followed and was soon labelled “Arab Spring”. Others called it “Arabellions” (Jahaver-Haghigi et al 2013) or “Arab awakening”. Whatever one calls it, what followed after 27-year old Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire out of desperation and to protest the inhumane conditions in Tunisia were the most severe and ground-shaking changes the region has faced for a long time. Everywhere, autocratic regimes began to crumble, some fell, some are still in power. Some remain in power through means of force and murder, others learned from the mistakes of others and made concessions to the youth movement that challenged their rule.

Egypt, the most populous country in the region, and still one of the leading Arab countries in terms of culture, religious expertise and philosophy, was set ablaze by the developments in Tunisia. It all began on the 25th of January, when a coalition of five movements called for the “day of wrath”. All the movements involved had a majority of well-educated youth in their ranks. Across the whole country, tens of thousands of people followed the call. Three days later, on Friday the 28th of January, there were heavy clashes reported between police and security forces on the one side and protestors on the other, where dozens were killed. Apparently, the ministry of internal affairs issued an order to the police and security services to shoot at the protestors with live ammunition. The 28th also marked the beginning of the Tahrir square occupation, which served as a symbol for the Egyptian youth movement and its resistance against the old regime (all information considering the revolution in Egypt taken from Jahaver-Haghigi et al 2013).

What happened on Tahrir square the following days was a revolution from the people for the people by the people. They occupied the city's central square, and demonstrated against the regime that had been harassing them for decades. The regime answered with

violence at first, sending its police and special security forces to hunt, shoot and beat the people that were on the streets. But what was different and what might have well saved the lives of hundreds of people was the fact that the Egyptian army did not side with either of the opposing factions. This is especially important because the army traditionally has a huge say in whatever happens in Egypt. And while the military did support the suppression of the protests by the police and security services (by giving them ammunition for example), it was not convinced that the regime was able to survive. And if they would have sided with Mubarak and he had to resign after they declared their support, they would have lost their face before the international press and the Egyptian people (cf. Javaher-Haghighi et al 2013, 62f). So they remained passive, only imposing order where it was necessary, guarding centres of power or economy against rioters and looters, waiting for an end of the struggle to side with the winners.

The last turning point that sealed the fate of the Mubarak-regime were the events of February 2nd and the following night. The regime and its supporters tried for the last time to defy the demonstrators on Tahrir square. The gangs of thugs (baltaggiya) that Mubarak let loose attacked the people on Tahrir with clubs, stones, missiles, machetes and hand guns, throwing molotov cocktails from the surrounding houses (cf. ibid. 61). But the protestors did not flee but fought back and finally defeated the attackers. And, once again, the army did nothing to defend the people on Tahrir square or to re-impose order. It seemed as if they had orders to stand by and wait for the end of the “battle of Tahrir square”. The Generals wanted to wait and then side with the winners.

After the bloodshed on 2nd and 3rd of February 2011, it became clear that Mubarak could not emerge victorious from this. Hundreds of people had been killed and thousands injured during the “battle of Tahrir square”, and there was no way the people would agree on anything Mubarak had to offer but his immediate resignation. The army knew that, and they began to prepare themselves for the time after. And on February 11th, the Vice-president Omar Suleiman announced the immediate resignation of President General Hosni Mubarak.

The reasons for the uprising in Egypt are diverse. It has to be stressed that, while the Western press tried to make it look so, throughout the revolution, religion and ideology only played a minor part in the reasons for uprising. Of course, as soon as they could, the Muslim Brotherhood came out of the underground and joined the revolution. And of course they had a degree of organization and loyalty that the diverse movement on

Tahrir square did not have. But they had to play according to the rules, setting religion aside (for the beginning at least) and talk of democracy, personal freedom and liberalization.

The main reasons for what happened in Egypt are very close to the reasons of the “Arab Spring” in other countries: According to Peyman Javaher-Haghighi et al (ibid. 2013, 66ff), the Egyptian revolt had three main reasons, which it shared with almost all the other countries in the region:

1. Poverty and cuts in social services: Egypt is one of the poorest countries in the Arab world. Before the revolution, the average income of a worker in the textiles sector amounted to only about 70 US-\$ a month. 44 percent of the Egyptian population lived under or very close to the international poverty line. Then, from 2006 onwards, the prices for food skyrocketed, leaving the many poor people in Egypt in despair (cf. ibid.). Thus, partly, the Egyptian revolution was or started as a *hunger revolt*.
2. Corruption: Egypt before the revolution was, according to Transparency International, one of the three most corrupt countries in Northern Africa. According to reports, you did not get anything without bribing someone or having connections to the police, the ministries or the secret services. One of the most popular slogans on Tahrir was “End to corruption” (cf. ibid.).
3. Political repression: the third factor is at the same time the most logical. Political repression is a key feature of every autocratic regime. In the case of Egypt, the emergency rule lasted throughout the 30 years of Mubarak's reign. This basically gave him and the police the power to do whatever they wanted. There was no need for trial, witnesses or evidence to put unpleasant individuals into jail for ten or more years. Especially the police forces were known for brutal assaults on anyone who they saw as misbehaving, there were numerous reports from NGOs of people being beaten or tortured to death by the police. The police was also the driving force of the counter-revolution.

The revolution in Egypt left the country without a leader. The following months, the military imposed order and made it clear that it would not tolerate any large demonstrations. It became more and more obvious that the military did not “save” the revolution from the regime, as the propaganda was saying – but that the military was against the

revolution from day one, saved itself by siding at the last moment and tried to carry on without Mubarak, but with the same regime. The SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) seized power on the 12th of February. They immediately began to strengthen their own position, let the state-owned media publish articles about how the military saved the revolution and enforced new political repression. They even expanded the emergency laws that Mubarak had used to suppress any opposition. They introduced new criminal offences that allowed the military and the police to trial civilians in front of military courts. Official numbers say that at least 16.000 people had been trialled in front of such a military court in 2011 (cf. Schumacher/Osman 2012, 30).

The military attacked demonstrations and occupations of Tahrir square numerous times, the bloodiest being the attack in the night of April 9th, where the military used live ammunition against the occupiers, imprisoned hundreds of protestors and tortured many of those they captured. The movement in Egypt began to realize that the military did not defend the revolution. What the SCAF wanted was to be seen by the common people as the guardian of the revolution, and at the same time they tried to quell the resistance with even more force than Mubarak did. The SCAF had no interest in real change. It profited hugely from the old regime, took part in its crimes and was and still is heavily involved in the economics of the country. The military elite wanted peace and business as usual as soon as possible. This is also the reason why they wanted elections so fast. But it was a double strategy. The other reason the SCAF wanted the elections as soon as possible was because an early date did not give the youth movement of the Tahrir time enough to organize themselves. The military had made a pact with the established parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood. They were no threat to their power. The people that occupied the Tahrir on the other hand, were aware of the fact that the military had no interest in true democracy and political liberalism. The military wanted the revolution to end and continue to rule the country as they please. They made a deal with the political establishment to make this possible and thus hijacked the revolution for their own good (cf. Morrow 2011).

The Freedom and Justice Party of the Muslim Brotherhood won the elections in Egypt at the end of November 2011, their candidate Mohammed Morsi also won the presidential elections. The newly established parliament got to work, and the president was at first well received by the Egyptian people. But soon after that, it became clear that the Brotherhood might have won the elections, but not the Tahrir. The people were dissatis-

fied by the lack of political reforms, freedoms and economic reforms. The Brotherhood failed to rule and govern for the people because they could not escape their Islamist principles. They had lingered in the underground for decades, and they had, although strictly organized and very well funded, no idea about how to rule a country to the satisfaction of the majority of its people. Furthermore, they had no expertise in policy-making. As Mohammed El-Baradei wrote:

The Brotherhood doesn't have the qualified people, who hail mostly from liberal and leftist parties. You need to form a grand coalition, and you need to put your ideological differences aside and work together to focus on people's basic needs. You can't eat sharia (El-Baradei 2013).

The Brotherhood sought to make Egyptian politics according to its agenda and according to political Islam. The people on the streets, who fought for democracy and social reforms, quickly realized that this was not the way they wanted Egypt to be and became disillusioned and angry. The protestors came back to Tahrir, millions of them, and protested against the new president and the politics of the Brotherhood. After months of protests on the street and constant neglect by the Freedom and Justice Party of the people's needs and demands, the inevitable happened: The army ousted Morsi, stripped him of all his duties, dissolved the government and put an interim government into power, called for new elections and put many Brothers into jail. This happened after protests on Tahrir and throughout the country because the Brotherhood and its party were not able to improve people's living conditions in Egypt. Instead, they made Islamist politics, making the revolution once again look like a failure. But the movement was not ready to give up and took it to the streets once more. And the army, happy to oust the president that they never wanted, could pretend to be the saviour of the revolution once again. Now Egypt is in turmoil, Mohammed El-Baradei even calls it a "failed state" (ibid). The general Al-Sisi, member of the SCAF, de facto rules Egypt now, not the interim government. The truth is that the military used the revolution once again to keep the Brotherhood from power and to continue with business as usual, as though the revolution(s) never happened. And the Brotherhood, instead of making politics for the people, was only after securing their own benefices and imposing an Islamist ideology onto daily politics. The situation in Egypt today is uncertain, with the Brotherhood seemingly fed up with the regime that accepts democratic decisions only when they suit

them. There was fighting day and night on the streets of Egypt, with the Muslim Brotherhood clashing with the military and police services. The Tahrir people on the other hand first were jubilant after Morsi was unseated, and supported the SCAF. But they started to realize soon after the events of the 4th of July 2013, that the military did not do so because Morsi was abusing his power and the Muslim Brotherhood acted undemocratic. It did so because they feared for their own power and privileges. It seems like there is a fourth revolution happening in Egypt (after the one against Mubarak and two more against the military government in 2011), but in fact the old regime (i.e. the army) has “eaten” the revolution. It uses it when it needs it, squashes it when it is annoyed by it or the revolution interrupts their business. The ousting of Mohammed Morsi was a coup, a necessary one perhaps, but a coup nonetheless. Since the ousting, the military undertook several steps to outlaw the Brotherhood and install a system Mubarak without Mubarak.

3.2. Syria

The uprising in Syria is a very different case compared to all other rebellions during the Arab Spring. Unlike Egypt or Tunisia, the revolution in Syria was faced by the regime with brute force including army attacks on civilians. Furthermore, one of the opposition's leading factions in Syria are deserted army officers and soldiers. The turn that the rebellion in Syria took threw the country into full-scale civil war. Add to that the fact that there are now three factions fighting each other – Assad and his allies versus the Free Syrian Army (FSA) versus the Jihadist groups that are involved in the war – the situation in Syria looks very grim.

In the beginning, the revolution in Syria was small, compared to the millions that took the streets in other countries. It all started with smaller demonstrations in Damascus, which did not yet have anti-regime slogans. What the protestors demanded were smaller democratic reforms, but in-line with the regime. These assemblies were easy for the security services and police to dissemble. Even the call for a Syrian “day of wrath” on 4th and 5th of February, similar to the ones that started the revolts that toppled the autocrats in Egypt and Tunisia, went by without wide popular protest. The protests that really started the uprising did not happen until a month later, and surprisingly not in

Damascus or any other big Syrian city. In March, some teenagers tagged the walls in the small city Daraa, at the Syria-Jordan border, with the slogan “the people want to overthrow the regime” which they borrowed from the Egyptian revolution. The army arrested a few of them and tortured them brutally. The next day, the parents and supporters took it to the streets to express their outrage. The armed forces shot at the protestors, killing at least five of them. This was the last straw that was needed to unleash the wrath of the people of Daraa and it became a centre of resistance (cf. Javaher-Haghighi et al 2013, 128ff). From there, the protests spread across the country to Duma, Idlib, Homs, Hama and other cities. The protests were peaceful at the start, but the regime answered them with brute force from the beginning, and there was no room for compromise or negotiations. The tactics of the Baath-regime, pretending to negotiate with the people and killing those on the streets, disillusioned the activists more and more. The protests got constantly more violent because the regime willingly let them escalate. The regime forces were joined by the notorious Shabiha militia, a paramilitary organisation which is believed to exist since the 1970's as a tool for the Assad-regime to crack down protests. Its members are mostly part of the Alawi group, the Shiite sect that the Assad-family also comes from. In late March 2011 they came to the aid of the military in the Syrian town of Latakia to quell the protests there. From that moment on, witnesses told the story of armed civilians, hundreds or even thousands of them, helping the official troops to disassemble protests and arresting people, with the Shabiha notoriously beating and killing people (cf. BBC News Middle East 2012 (1)). The regime angered the people of Syria even more because it frequently attacked funeral services for those who were killed by police or the military. When people were killed during funerals, a snowball effect took place, more protests and more violence ensued. The Syrian opposition in exile, many of whom are authors of the so called Damascus Declaration, formed the Syrian National Council (SNC) as an umbrella organisation for the opposition groups. They wanted to support the protestors from outside, speak on their behalf with the international community and form a shadow-government like its pendant in Libya, the Libyan National Council which served as a coordinator for the armed struggle against Muammar Al-Gaddafi in 2011. But while the Libyan council was inside the country, co-ordinating the attacks on the regime and leading the struggle for liberation, the SNC is in exile and thus lacks some of the support and legitimization that an opposition group that wants to speak for all the Syrian people needs.

As the protests in Syria got bigger, the answer of the regime got more extreme. The inner circle of the Assad-regime was, at least in the beginning of the uprising, disagreeing about how the regime should act. Some favoured smaller reforms and negotiations, the others preferred the “Hafez way” of dealing with the protests, meaning putting a violent end to the protests like Bashar's father did in in Homs and Hama, when the Muslim Brotherhood rose up against him. In the end, the Hardliners led by Bashar al-Assads brother Maher, seemingly prevailed with their call for a violent crack-down of the protests.

Hardliners led by Bashar's younger brother Maher, commander of the elite 4th Armoured Division that has been at the vanguard of the suppression, reportedly triumphed over those in favour of a negotiated solution. The violent response that was settled upon clearly sought to repeat the 'success' that Hafez had in brutally crushing a rebellion by the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1970s and 80s, that eventually led to the massacre of over 10,000 fighters and civilians in Hama in 1982. Although regime hardliners viewed the challenge as a repeat of the 1980s - fighting 'terrorists' - this approach finally shattered any hopes from the opposition that Bashar would be different form (sic!) his father (Phillips 2012, 39).

But not all members of the armed forces were willing to shoot at their own people. From June 2011 on, more and more soldiers and officers deserted from the forces, and on the 29th of July, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) under the leadership of Colonel Riad al-Asaad was established. The FSA proclaimed that it wanted to fight “alongside the Syrian people” against the regime (cf. Javaher-Haghighi et al 2013, 132). This was one of the key differences to the other revolutions in the Arab world. Neither in Tunisia nor Egypt, the revolutions that preceded the Syrian uprising, did army officers or soldiers form a people's army. The FSA immediately started to gather weapons and vehicles, either from the deserted soldiers or by looting army stocks. At first, they stood side by side with the civilians, joining or guarding their weekly friday-demonstrations, after the friday prayers. Early in the conflict, there was no split between the FSA and the civil part of the revolution, some of the FSA fighters joined demonstration on friday unarmed, while patrolling the rest of the week with a weapon in their hands (cf. Al-Saleh/White 2013, 7).

The fighting really kicked off from November 2011 onwards. The FSA recruited more and more soldiers and civilians that took up arms in its ranks, about 20.000 men in the

summer 2011 (cf. *ibid.*). The FSA had its main stronghold in Homs at that time, and the regime attacked the city with force in February 2012. The siege of the Sunni neighbourhoods in the city was unprecedented in the conflict in terms of violence and civilian casualties. In Homs, the Shabiha again had a part in the violence that lasted for several months. The brutality in Homs and, even worse, the massacre of Houla, was partly responsible for the conflict spiralling out of control. In Houla, Shabiha militia and the military allegedly killed 108 people, including 49 children and 34 women (cf. BBC News Middle East 2012 (2)) on the 25th of May 2012. Before the massacre, the UN made an attempt to negotiate a ceasefire, with former General Secretary Kofi Annan as special envoy. The ceasefire never worked completely, with both sides violating the six-point-plan proposed by Annan. After the massacre of Houla, most countries expelled Syrian diplomats as a response to the violence, and the FSA issued an ultimatum: Either the regime fully obeys to the peace plan, which included the withdrawal of armed forces from the cities, or the FSA would drop its end of the bargain. From then on, fighting escalated, and the crisis in Syria showed more and more symptoms of civil war, with peaceful demonstrations becoming more and more rare as the regime squashed every attempt of civil disobedience. The fighting, on the other hand, got out of control. And at first, it seemed like the FSA was winning the fight:

By mid-2012 the FSA was enjoying significant success. Aided materially and logistically by allies in Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, through channels over the Lebanese and Turkish borders, rebel units were able to overrun Syrian army bases to capture more sophisticated weapons. In the late summer they were able to launch a major assault on the second city of Aleppo, and by year-end large stretches of northern Syria were in rebel hands (Phillips 2013, 22).

But the FSA could not build on these early successes. In 2013, the regime began to get the upper hand, with the aid of the Shiite Hezbollah-militia from Lebanon and substantial military and economic aid from Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a response, Saudi Arabia and Qatar increased their support for the rebels. On the 15th of July 2012, the International Red Cross declared the situation in Syria a civil war (cf. MacFarquhar 2012). The death toll rose up to over 100,000 by the end of July 2013, more than 1,8 million Syrian refugees and fighting continues in almost every part of the country. The Assad-regime and the FSA did their part in escalating the violence even further, but the increasing sectarian violence made the conflict into what it is today. The

SNC has no legitimization and not enough support inside the country to claim a leading role in the constituting of a post-Assad Syria. The Jihadists that invaded the country have no interest in the conflict to end before they fulfilled their Jihad. There is no one who can be trusted in handling the Syria situation from within. Furthermore, the war escalated even more, with at least one side (or both) using chemical weapons. The USA have declared it as “evident” that the regime had used chemical weapons against the rebels (BBC News US&Canada 2013), while Syria, Russia and the UN suspect that the rebels used Sarin (Al Jazeera 2013 (1)).

The most dramatic development in Syria was the use of chemical weapons in a suburb of Damascus on the 21st of August 2013. It is confirmed that the chemical agent Sarin was used there, leaving hundreds of people dead. The West was quick to pass judgement and accused the regime and Bashar al-Assad of being responsible for the attack, with Assad and Russia claiming that the rebels were the attackers (cf. BBC News Middle East 2013 (1)). After weeks of a seemingly inevitable retaliation operation by the USA, Russia proposed the disarmament of Syria's chemical weapons, and Assad agreed. Russia's initiative prevented a possible regional escalation, and also prompted a shift in Western perception of the rebels. The West started to acknowledge the fact that the opposition was neither democratic nor secular. They started to see that the opposition in Syria was now mainly in the hands of Jihadists and Al-Qaeda-affiliates, and Assad as being not part of the problem, but part of the solution as well. The West, Russia and the main international actors agreed on a conference “Geneva II”, trying to end the bloodshed in Syria. The conference could not end the fighting though, and as the oppositional forces are of diametrical ideological sides, they are fighting each other and the Assad-regime at the same time. Furthermore, the opposition movement is increasingly de-legitimized, as the Jihadist groups that are operating in Syria (especially ISIS) are violating the laws of war, human rights and are too radical to stop the killing. This plays into the cards of the ruling regime, and it is gaining tactical and strategic high ground ever since the end of 2013.

As one can see from the diffuse and unclear situation described above, the situation in Syria is much more than a civil war between a regime and the opposition. It is a battleground for regional powers, world-politics and the latest stage for an inter-islamic war. The major world powers did their part in letting the conflict escalate: Russia and China vetoed every resolution of the Security Council of the UN, fearing for a second Libya. There, they gave their consent to a resolution that should only protect civilians by enfor-

cing a “no-fly-zone” over Benghazi. The West interpreted the resolution differently and actively supported the opposition movement in Libya and thus helped to topple Gaddafi. Russia and China were outraged by this move. Both countries have a very strict policy when it comes to what they call “intrusion of internal affairs” because they fear for their own national stability. Thus, there was no way that China or Russia would support the SC in a resolution against Assad. But now, with Putin's success on the diplomatic front and the OCPW in Syria to dismantle the chemical arsenal of Syria, an agreement in the Security Council might be possible. Russia remains the main international actor and the only one that is capable of handling Assad.

Furthermore, Russia has close ties to Syria, both ideologically and economically. For Russia, Syria is the last outpost outside the territory of the former Soviet Union, with the port of Tartus as the last remnant of a once worldwide acting superpower. The port has close to no military value, but from a strategic point of view, it is Russia's access to the Mediterranean. Russia has no intention to abandon its last partner in the Arab world; the United States, Russia's old rival, already has a huge advantage in the region, having close ties to the majority of countries in the region. Losing Syria and Assad would mean another setback for its goal of becoming a major power again. Even more important for Russia and Syria are their economic and military ties: Russia's total value of trade with Syria was at approximately 20 billion US-Dollars in 2012 (cf. Gorenburg 2012, 2). Russian companies have invested heavily in Syria, trying to assure themselves of Syria's oil and gas exploration and production. But Syria (i.e. the Assad-regime) is also heavily dependent on shipments of Russian arms, ammunition and equipment. And Russia has no intention of abandoning the contracts, since there are about 4 billion US-Dollars in open bills (cf. Shuster 2012).

The civil war in Syria is also a proxy conflict for the regional powers. Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the Sunni powers, are supporting the FSA and the opposition in Syria because they want to break down the Shiite axis Iran-Lebanon-Syria. The house of Saud and its allies invest heavily in the conflict, as they want to position themselves as the major power in the region, against the Shiite nations. A victory of the opposition would mean a vital success for the Sunnite powers in the region. For the Islamic Republic of Iran on the other hand, losing Assad would be a bitter blow to their own ambitions of becoming a regional powerhouse. Therefore Iran invests heavily, shipping weapons and equipment into Syria and even assisting the Syrian military with members of its own elite force, the Revolutionary Guards (Black 2012). Furthermore, the third Shiite player in

the region has made its support for Assad official: Iran-sponsored Hezbollah is fighting alongside the Syrian military against the FSA and the Jihadists in Syria. And the Jihadists, who are becoming more and more powerful, do not fight for a free Syria. They fight against Shiites, with the goal of exterminating them and all other heretics to Islam. On the other side of the battlefield, Islamist organization and terror group Hezbollah fights for the Shiite cause.

If Assad falls, or if the war continues, there is a very high risk of ethnic cleansing and religious violence taking overhand. Syria is in civil war, with international, regional and religious powers fighting for influence, power and purity of faith. The civil war in Syria is one of the biggest humanitarian disasters worldwide, with 2,5 million refugees outside Syria, and some 6,5 million IDPs.

3.3. Lebanon

Lebanon was, quite surprisingly, one of the countries that had been least affected by the Arab Spring, at least on the domestic level. The one Arab country where it was legally possible to protest against the government seemed to not take part in the uprisings at all. The demonstrations of 2011, although influenced by the successful revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, were not directed against the regime per se, but more against its sectarian character. The political system in Lebanon is a fragile equilibrium of the many religious groups in the country, with all sects, sectarian factions and groups having their share of the power in Lebanon. In 2011, the Hezbollah brought down the coalition government because of the international tribunal for Lebanon, which accused the Islamist organization of murdering former prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri. The government of national unity, that was in and out of power ever since, was the target of slogans and signs during the short blooming of Spring in Lebanon. The protests in the country did not achieve the magnitudes of the other Arab countries, and there was no protest against the regime itself, but against its policies. The sectarian character of the government in Beirut, that was necessary to end the civil war in the country is now the reason for political unrest and may well lead to its downfall. The political situation in Lebanon remains unsolved, but the protests quickly faded away and there was no revolution or large-scale protesting in the country.

But Lebanon can be seen as a victim of the Arab Spring. Unlike other countries that were sucked into the revolutions that set the Arab streets on fire, its integrity and safety might be endangered not from within, but from outside: Its close connection to Syria threw them into turmoil as Damascus began its war against its own people. Lebanon's economy is largely dependent on its neighbour, and the civil war in Syria proves to be devastating for it, with the GDP falling by 5 to 6 percent since the beginning of the Syria Crisis in March 2011, resulting in an economic cost of 6,03 billion US-Dollars. (cf. Itani 2013, 2; Credit Libanais Economic Research Unit 2013). Other sectors of the economy struggled as well, especially the export market of Lebanon:

Due to the fact that Syrian borders are a mandatory transit point for Lebanese land exporters, the Arab Spring has wreaked havoc on Lebanese companies exporting to and via Syria. More particularly, Lebanese companies exporting via Syria to Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and GCC countries have been suffering from the deteriorating security conditions in Syria, and which turned their export routes into a minefield (Credit Libanais Economic Research Unit 2013, 32).

The economic crisis in Lebanon is therefore directly connected to the war in Syria, although exports to Syria actually rose during the crisis, mainly due to the newly-imposed sanctions by the USA on Syria, which turned to Lebanon to fill that void (cf. *ibid*, 33).

What proved to be most dangerous to the country and its economy are the refugees that came over the border since the beginning of the crisis. Around one million Syrians lived in Lebanon as of May 2013, half of which are refugees (cf. Itani 2013, 4). Now there are at least one million Syrian refugees in the country, which amounts to one fourth of the entire population (cf. Mullen 2014). The regions where most refugees have settled are also the poorest regions in Lebanon, and they can not cope with so many new people trying to make a living. Additionally, the Syrian refugees are cheap labor forces, pushing Lebanese workers out of their jobs (cf. UNHCR 2014). The refugees also disrupt Lebanon's fragile demographic equilibrium, as those who fled to Lebanon are mostly members of the Sunna. This also means a political problem for the country because the sectarian regime is not prepared for a disruption in the balance of power of the different groups that inhabit Lebanon. The flood of Sunni refugees is also a great concern for the security of the country, because this might lead to its infiltration with Sunni terrorists wanting to take the fight to Hezbollah. The Shiite Hezbollah is one of the major powers

in Lebanon and is an official ally of the Assad-regime in Damascus; the organization even sent fighters to Syria to help the army against the FSA. This led to a series of attacks from Syrian territory on the Lebanese side, killing several civilians in the towns close to the border (cf. Barnard 2013). The risk of a spill-over of the civil war in Syria into Lebanon is not to be underestimated, with an FSA general already threatening the integrity of Lebanon: “If the attacks of Hezbollah on Syrian territories do not stop,” he said, “then we will take all measures, and we will pursue Hezbollah to hell” (ibid.)

Lebanon is in danger of getting drawn into the civil war in Syria. Its close ties with the neighbour – politically as well as economically – are factors that pose a huge risk to the internal stability of the only Arab democracy in the region. The Hezbollah and its active support for Assad endanger the political stability of Lebanon and the government in Beirut has no plan on how to deal with it. Hezbollah's power in the country and its agenda are the main threat to the country's safety. Beirut needs to contain the Shiite organization, but this is highly unlikely. Hezbollah is not known to retreat from a conflict that they see as necessary.

3.4. The Israeli perspective

The comments from Israeli politicians show the disturbance the Arab Spring has caused in Israel. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the Arab Spring „anti-Western, anti-liberal, anti-Israeli and anti-democratic“ (Blair 2011). A view that might seem puzzling on first sight, given the fact that Israel usually justifies its own actions and “special” relations to the United States with the fact that they are the only real democracy in the region, and one might be inclined to think that a democracy would prefer other democracies around them. But for Israeli *realpolitik*, an autocrat that is predictable and controllable is better than a democracy where a lot of votes can be gathered by fuelling anti-Israeli sentiments in the country. The fear of politicians and security personnel in Israel is that the autocrats were “as good as it gets” for Israel. Public sentiment in the Arab world is largely anti-Israeli, and a democracy would have to listen to this sentiment one way or the other. For Israel, autocrats meant security and stability because they did not have to obey to the people. Israel's fear is that democracy in the Arab world means war for Israel (cf. Byman 2011,128ff).

This stand has been harshly criticized by Zvi Bar'el in an Haaretz article. „Peace, in its Israeli version, is made with leaders, preferably autocratic ones, and not with peoples. The leaders, so it is believed, will force the people to love Israel“ (Bar'el 2011). The article states that it is contra-productive to denounce a movement (the Muslim Brotherhood was meant in the article) as a whole, without even knowing who the „big players“ in the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt are. But from an Israeli perspective, it is only natural to be very sceptical towards any changes in the countries that went to war against it numerous times, and even more so towards an organization that has shown no love for Israel whatsoever. Israel is deeply unsettled by these changes, because changes in Arab countries meant problems for Israel in the past, and democratic change might well lead to anti-Israeli governments. That is another reason why Israeli officials are sceptical towards the Arab Spring, especially the threat of Islamists gaining power is what worries the Israelis. Ryan Jones wrote in the „Israel Today Magazine“ that „Israel's National Security Council determined during an emergency meeting last week that US President Barack Obama is ‚naive‘ when it comes to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and the dangers it poses“ (Jones 2012). But the Foreign Ministry leaves a door open: „Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor told Army Radio on Tuesday that Israel ‚has not closed the door‘ to the new government in Cairo and ‚would be happy to conduct dialogue with anyone prepared to talk with us.‘ “ (Kessler 2012). The outcome of the elections in Egypt and, to a lesser extent, in Tunisia, have proven Israeli sceptics wrong and right at the same time: on the one hand, Islamists came to power in Egypt and Tunisia, one of the major fears of Israel. But on the other hand, anti-Israeli and/or anti-Semitic propaganda was not that widespread during the campaigns. What was a topic during the campaign in Egypt was the peace treaty with Israel and the Egypt-Israel gas-dealing, which are very favourable towards the Jewish nation. These seemingly rational issues were used carefully to appease the anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli sentiments of the people. Criticizing Israel is always a good way to win the people in the Arab world. The elections in Egypt showed that, while anti-Israeli speeches and propaganda was always mingling in the background, it was not the big topic during the campaign. But, in a country where only 2 percent have positive attitudes towards the Jews (Pew Research 2011), the winners could be pressurized to stand to what they said during their campaign. And while the government in Jerusalem does not fear open war with Egypt (both parties know that this would lead to a disastrous defeat for the Egyptian forces), it fears something else, something that is way more complicated to answer to than a war:

The Egyptian peace with Israel, always cold, could become even chillier. Mubarak, supposedly Israel's friend, only visited Israel once - for the funeral of assassinated Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin - and even then declared "this is not a visit." Intelligence cooperation, pressure on other Arab states to embrace peace initiatives, and (as discussed further below) help for Israel in containing Hamas all may diminish. Egypt has already made overtures to Iran, which Israel considers its nemesis. Egypt allowed an Iranian warship to transit the Suez Canal, and on March 29 acting Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil al- Arabi announced Egypt would eventually normalize relations with Iran and its Lebanese ally Hezbollah (Byman 2011, 127).

What Israel has come to fear is a deterioration of its own security situation, triggered by a loss of interest of its partners in Cairo to keep up the security in the border-regions. Some analysts in Israel go thus far as to suggest that Israel should take over the control of certain border-regions completely: Uzi Dayan, former head of the Israeli National Security Council, told an Israeli TV-channel in August 2011, that „Israeli military and security forces should prepare for a period different from the past in dealing with the new Egyptian government”. Dayan claimed that the military effort would aim to target those that represent a threat to the Israeli regime. “This is the time for the Israeli army to prevail its control inside Sinai,” he said in the interview (presstv.com 2011). Statements like these are not very clever. They are short-sighted, and would mean a violation of the peace treaty of 1979. But they show how anxious the new situation makes the Israelis feel. They fear for the stability of the relationship with its biggest neighbour. Now, after the military ousted president Morsi, banned the Brotherhood and basically installed a “regime Mubarak without Mubarak”, it would be foolish by Israel to think that the situation is now one of a status quo ante. The months of lax security on the Sinai peninsula allowed Jihadists to infiltrate the region, and now the Egyptian military tries hard to contain them. But sooner or later, Israel might well be left alone with the terrorists that infiltrated the Peninsula and Gaza. This might become a reality when the military decides that the domestic current affairs are more important than the situation on their border with the Jewish nation, for example during an upcoming election. Israel has to be aware of the security threat on the Sinai.

From an Israeli perspective, the situation in Syria is even worse than the situation in Egypt. With Syria, it is another situation of missing the “devil we know”. Bashar al-Assad, while an anti-Semite and an enemy of Israel, still obeyed to many rules that the two countries have established between each other – most of them are unspoken but are *realpolitik*. Assad checked and balanced his support for Hamas and Hezbollah with the need to calm Israel and prevent direct military action against his own country. A new government – especially a Sunni-led Islamist state of Syria – would be disastrous for Israel. Israel has nothing to win in the Syrian civil war. If Assad prevails and the regime survives, the situation would be the continuation of a Shiite axis from Iran to Syria, with a government in Damascus that needs to divert popular pressure. Usually, a thankful scapegoat for Arabs in that case is the Jewish nation. Furthermore, Iran might declare the post-civil-war time to be “payback time”. Their continued and extensive support to the Alawite regime must have a benefit for the Islamic Republic of Iran, and a possible benefit could be escalation of the conflict with its archenemy Israel. If the FSA prevails, it might need to do the same. Furthermore, it has no experience with the fragile game of mutual sticks and carrots that Assad had with Israel. They might not keep Hezbollah and Hamas on a short leash, especially given the fact that Hezbollah is fighting alongside Assad now. And if the Sunni extremists, be it Al-Nusra, ISIS or al-Qaeda, come out victorious, Israel would be facing a direct Islamist threat and terror base in its backyard that would further destabilize neighbouring Lebanon and Iraq as well. So, however the war in Syria ends, Israel is likely to lose. This is why they are so wary of the actions that take place in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and other countries in the region. They fear that whatever end there is to this story that is labelled Arab Spring, they will be the ones getting the short end of the stick.

What Israel fears is not democracy and a free Arab people. What Israel fears is what every country fears that is interested in its own security: The chaos that these events unfold in the region. The Arab Spring disrupted the system of power of the Middle East, with old alliances in shambles and old security walls crumbling and collapsing in itself. Israel has a vital interest in maintaining the balance of power as it is, because no matter to which direction the beam will deflect, it means uncertainty and dangers for the Jewish nation. A democracy in an Arab world, while at the first glance rather desirable

and in line with the democratic peace theorem¹⁰, is nothing that Israel will greet cheerfully. Too many polls and public opinions suggest that a democratic Middle East means a place where Jews will be even less liked. This might sound hysteric and scaremongering – but Israel has no reason whatsoever to trust in anything else but what politicians and public opinions says. Furthermore, the Jewish nation has a distinctive threat perception that relies heavily on taking anti-Semitism seriously, not belittling it to propaganda and “empty words”. And there are other ways to help those who want to destroy Israel than going to war oneself. Lower the security standard on the Sinai, loosen the controls at the Gaza-border, let shipments coming from Iran into Lebanon, and you did more for the anti-Semitic cause than you could do by attacking the IDF with a regular army. This is what Israel fears and this is why Israel is so wary of the developments that were labelled Arab Spring. It has nothing to win, but very much to lose.

¹⁰ The democratic peace theorem goes back to the philosopher Immanuel Kant, who postulated that democracies will not be likely to fight wars against one another, as this would not be accepted by the people (who are the power in a democracy) and the costs of it (possible loss at the next election, rebellion by the people against the war) would be too high for every nation (Kant 1986)

4. Israeli National Security and the Arab Spring

4.1. New Developments – Old Hostilities

4.1.1. Egypt - The End of a Partner?

The peace treaty between Israel and Egypt was signed in 1979, and it was the first peace treaty that any Arab nation signed with the Jewish nation. While the two countries went to war numerous times before, this new treaty meant stability for both. They were able to stabilize their relationship, deal with each other economically and gained each others trust, at least to a certain extent. The peace treaty was – more or less – respected by former dictator Hosni Mubarak, and Israel always regarded him as a reliable ally in its conflict with terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah, and against Iran. Mubarak was the devil that Israel knew, and they could rely on him insofar as he did not need to look after public opinion when it came to his dealings with the Jewish nation. Since he was an autocrat, he did not have to fear an electoral loss once he co-operated too closely with Israel. The new, democratic Egypt, might be a lot more vulnerable to the anti-Israeli sentiment that runs strong in Egyptian society, as Daniel Byman (2011) points out as well:

A Pew poll taken after Mubarak's fall found that Egyptians favoured annulling the peace treaty with Israel by a 54 percent to 36 percent margin. Leaders who do not make good on promises to distance Egypt from Israel will face criticism and punishment at the polls, particularly if a conflict in Gaza or another crisis again dominates the headlines (ibid., 126).

So, in terms of Israeli national security, the ousting of Mubarak was nothing desirable. They had stability with Mubarak, and were certain that he would co-operate with them on security matters. With the fall of Hosni Mubarak, the security that once had been, was no more. Israel had to wait, without any guarantees, for the outcome of the elections in Egypt, to see whom they will talk to in the future when it comes to the problem

of the Egypt-Gaza border, the Sinai-peninsula and the various treaties that the two countries have signed under Mubarak.

And the new-and-now-out-of-office government that was elected in 2012 showed that the Israeli fears were justified: In an article by Jack Khouri in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz (2012), the author quoted an official of the Muslim Brotherhood, deputy chief Rashad al-Bayoumi, with the words that Israel was an „occupying entity and we will not allow anyone of our members to meet with an Israeli“ (ibid.). And regarding the peace treaty, the Muslim Brotherhood planned to let the Egyptian people decide: „We weren't party to the peace treaty, it was signed away from the Egyptian people and thus the people must have its say“ (ibid). And the Muslim Brotherhood further engaged itself in anti-Israeli rhetorics: In the Egyptian Independent, Rashad al-Bayoumi is quoted as follows: „We do not recognize Israel at all. This is an enemy, an occupier, a rapist and a criminal“ (AP 2012). These statements are kind of irritating. If the Muslim Brotherhood want to be the strongest party in a future Egyptian government, how do they want to negotiate with Israel if they don't allow their members to talk to anyone from Israel? This statement surely left the Israeli side sceptical towards Egypt. The country is an important partner for Israel in the region, and losing it would mean a real threat to its national security. Because losing the partner Egypt means to lose Sinai and therefore the Gaza blockade completely. And the result of that would likely be increased traffic of high-tech arms to Hamas.

As the Muslim Brotherhood won the elections, the fear proved both right and wrong. On the one hand, Mohammed Morsi's fierce anti-Israeli sentiments were difficult for Israeli and Western diplomats to handle. David Horovitz (2013) wrote in an article about the situation in Egypt after Morsi about the former president and his anti-Semitism: “So entrenched is his anti-Semitism that even in meetings, as president, with American politicians whom he had every interest in cultivating, he proved unable to restrain himself from issuing utterances [that were] viciously hostile to Jews” (ibid.). But for Israel these statements are neither new nor unexpected. The most important thing on their agenda, and the only one they pressed upon after the new government was in power, was the containment of Hamas and the security of the Sinai peninsula (for the situation there see 4.2.2.). There, it seemed to work out even with the Muslim Brotherhood at the helm. *realpolitik* and anti-Zionist propaganda, it seemed, are two different things. But of course Israel was never happy with the new government, although the Freedom and Justice Party and the Israelis seemed to agree on certain aspects of their

respective security. Thus, Egypt accepted the fact that Israel exists and they have treaties and mutual interests, and Israel accepted an “anti-Semite” party in power for the time being. But the trust that existed under Mubarak is gone, and the partnership had deteriorated ever since.

The bigger problem with the new Egypt is more complicated. Israel expected the Muslim Brotherhood to be anti-Israel. There was nothing new in the statements of the various leaders, calling for an end to the peace treaty, a revision of it, or for a plebiscite concerning the peace with Israel. What worried Israel even more was the fact that respected moderate politicians came out during the campaign for the Egyptian elections and called for a revision of the peace treaty (cf. *ibid.*, 125). One of the biggest hopes for the West was the former IAEA general secretary and much appreciated liberal politician Mohammed El Baradei. The vice-president of the interim government for a few days in Egypt, has told the Washington Post in August 2013 his views on the treaty with Israel:

They [Israel] had peace with Mubarak, not with the Egyptians. Now is an opportunity for them, and I hope they grab that opportunity to have a peace with the Egyptians. But that requires that they make certain major adjustments to their policy with the Palestinians (Weymouth 2013).

This could not have gone down well with Israeli politicians and security staff. What El-Baradei was saying here is also an attempt to appease the Egyptian public. As is indicated by the various polls, the peace treaty is not popular in Egypt, and whenever Palestine is in the news, the peace treaty is questioned again in Egypt. El-Baradei linked the success of the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Autonomy directly to the peace treaty of Egypt and Israel. Israel will not take this light-heartedly, although Egypt and Israel both know that there is nothing to win in a war between the two. But this statement was another indicator for how the reliability of Egypt as a strategic partner has deteriorated since the fall of Mubarak.

Israel is afraid of losing Egypt as a partner. The treaty with Egypt is more important for Jerusalem than who is in charge in Egypt. Furthermore, they could still rely on the Egyptian army, the secret puppet master of Egyptian politics. It was the army who took charge of the situation on Sinai after terrorists attacked security forces, gas pipelines to Israel and even sneaked into Israel and killed eight civilians. The army intensified its

operations on the peninsula ever since, with approval and clear support by Israel (cf. Ben-David, Issacharoff 2013). The army was never known for an anti-Semitic agenda since the peace treaty; for them, it was more about themselves and security. And for Israel, the army was the most reliable partner in Egypt. As long as the army is in charge of Egypt, or at least controls the security agenda and military institutions, Israel still sees Egypt as a partner that can be trusted more or less. It remains to be seen whether the Egyptian people will accept the new president al-Sisi, who has a surprisingly similar biography to former president Hosni Mubarak. But he might be the best man for Israeli security interests: in a telephone conversation with Israeli president Shimon Peres and Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu he told the two politicians that the peace treaty between the two countries “is an important commitment that can be relied and built upon in order to serve both countries' interests,” (cited in Kais 2014). The two Israeli politicians congratulated al-Sisi on his election as president of Egypt, and several Israeli newspapers and analysis stress that he is “the right man to lead Egypt” (cf. i.a. Hamid 2014, Traiman 2014).

But if the Tahrir movement sees through the plan of the SCAF to establish a new system that is the same as the old, there might well be further unrest. If a civilian government is in power after possible parliamentary elections, the situation might become complicated once again, as they might play the “Israel-card” for votes. The Egyptian army and president al-Sisi will respect the treaty with more commitment than civilian politicians who, as shown above, might be tempted or are already tempted to give in to anti-Israeli sentiments in the Egyptian population. The issue that might arise is: what happens if the army decides to take part in a future parliamentary election? There are two things that will be dangerous for Israel: for one, an internally occupied military will be less likely to keep up its military operations on the Sinai. Secondly, anti-Israeli campaigns are an easy and popular way of maximizing votes. But for the time being, the military has no interest in tensions with Israel. And as long as the economical treaties that guarantee cheap gas and oil for Israel and, more importantly, the peace treaty is respected, Egypt will remain a reliable and stable partner. After all, this is as good as it might get for Israel for the time being. A cold peace is better than a cold war.

4.1.2. Arms traffic and Israeli security

The revolutions that were labelled as “Arab Spring” disrupted the security situation of every country that was affected by them. One of the consequences was that, as the governments and armies were either fighting the people or struggling to remain in power, a lot of weapons disappeared out of army vaults. This is another key factor one needs to consider when writing about the implications of the Arab Spring for Israeli national security. The weapons that disappeared from the stocks of the toppled dictators might well find their way into the hands of organizations that are fierce enemies to the Jewish state. The weapons that are on the loose represent a significant upgrade to the weapons that organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah had before the revolutions. But it remains unclear whether they reach Israel's enemies or remain in (Northern) Africa, are used in the bigger and more important war in Syria or for militias elsewhere. But nevertheless is Israel very worried about the weapons that are piling up from floor to ceiling of the black market.

Especially the Libyan weapons caused sleepless nights for the Israeli security services. Because as the security situation in Sinai worsened (see 4.2.2.) and the smuggling intensified. Suddenly, the blockade of Gaza became holey, with weapons from Egypt, Libya and other parts of the Arab world flooding the Gaza strip. The civil war in Libya in 2011, in combination with the revolution in Egypt, proved disastrous for the containment of Hamas in Gaza. While the arms traffic into Gaza before the revolutions was orchestrated by Iran via sea (from Iran via the Persian Gulf to Sudan and from there by convoys via Syria) or by air (from Iran to Syria and from there to the Syrian port of Latakia, to Alexandria and then to Gaza) and could only be done with smaller quantities of weapons, Libya became a gold mine for smugglers, and Sinai their preferred marketplace (cf. Alter 2013). The route was shorter and easier from Libya to Gaza via Sinai, less dangerous and suddenly the smugglers had huge quantities of weapons at their disposal to sell and smuggle. Furthermore, Gaddafi's army had very modern weaponry, missiles and grenades, and many of them simply disappeared after the war officially ended. And, unlike the shipments the anti-Israeli organizations received before the Arab Spring, these are not orchestrated by a government (Iran, Sudan, Syria and so on) but by the free market and the principle of maximal profit. So while governments might have had an interest in not giving Hamas and Hezbollah weapons that are perceived as breaking

the equilibrium in the region, they might get these sorts of weapons now on the free black market (cf. *ibid.*). The black market is full with new and modern weapons, and some of these weapons may well have found their way into the Gaza strip and to Hamas and other Jihadist organizations dedicated to the fight against Israel. The Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) concerning Libya also voiced its concerns about the possible smuggle of weapons from Libya to Gaza in its final report (2013):

Libyan stocks present an opportunity for armed groups in the Gaza Strip to diversify their source of arms supplies. According to international and regional security sources, trafficking through Egypt has allowed such groups to purchase new materiel, including items to which they did not previously have access, such as more modern assault rifles and new anti-tank weapons systems. While the Panel is investigating this issue, the impossibility to conduct research on the ground is an obstacle (34).

Although the Israeli Military Intelligence did not believe that the smuggled weapons represented a significant upgrade in means of quality (cf. Tarnopolsky 2011, Williams 2011) so far, they voiced their concerns over the fact that anti-Israeli terrorist groups could re-arm themselves faster and easier than before. And a first sign that at least Hamas is nowadays better equipped, or ready to use its more sophisticated weapons was visible during the Israeli Operation “Pillar of Defense” in November 2012. For the first time, Hamas managed to nearly hit Tel Aviv and Jerusalem with its rockets. Israel believes that these rockets were delivered to Hamas by Iran and/or Sudan, via Egypt (cf. Smith 2012, Harel 2011). The most notorious supporters of Hamas exploit the lack of stability in the revolutionary post-Arab Spring countries to deliver weapons to Hamas and other terrorist organizations, Israel believes.

Another area of civil unrest that turned into civil war is even more dangerous for Israel: As the Syrian government and the opposition escalated their fighting, a lot of high-tech weapons were delivered to the rebel groups from Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Now, as the opposition has radicalised and Jihadists seem to have taken the lead in the war against Assad, they are in control of these weapons. No one knows yet how the war in Syria will end, but in any case, thousands of modern weapons will remain in the country, without any control by any government. Furthermore, several sources indicate that Jihadist

groups like Al-Nusra are already in possession of chemical weapons¹¹. For now, it seems as if the OPCW has control over the regime's chemical weapons, but no one knows if and how many chemical weapons have been raided by the rebel groups. And most of these groups are radical Jihadists, and one of the few common ideological principles of Jihadism, Arab nationalism, Shia and Sunna alike is the fight against Israel. Even more worrying, the Jihadists in Syria are among the most radical terrorists in the world, and no one can guarantee that they will not use the Sarin or other chemical weapons against Israeli civilians. Syria is developing into a failed state, and for Israel, this certainly means trouble. If Assad falls "Syria's advanced arsenal, including chemical weapons, shore-to-ship missiles, air defense [sic!] systems, and ballistic missiles of all types could end up in the hands of Hizballah [sic!] or other radical elements" (Inbar 2013 (1), 4). On the other hand, radical elements from the Sunni side are already highly equipped and it is likely that, sooner or later, these weapons will be used against Israel in one form or another.

So while the arms smuggle from or through countries that were thrown into turmoil might not have Gaza or Southern Lebanon as the top-priority business targets, Hamas will nevertheless try to take advantage and bulk itself up with new and modern weaponry. The weapons are there in the black market for the highest bidder to take home, and as long as the Sinai is not safe again and Syria and Lebanon are in distress, arms traffic, weapon smuggling and the black market in Northern Africa remain a security concern of the highest order to Israel. Furthermore, the most notorious enemies of the Jewish state and its nemesis Iran will further exploit the lack of security and order in the region and in Northern Africa, to bulk up its proxies in the war against Israel, and possibly to deter Israel from a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities. For that purpose, the Arab Spring came in handy. For Israel, the security situation is a possible disaster and a catastrophe waiting to happen. The sooner Israel has a reliable partner in Cairo again, the better it is for the country and its fear of a heavy-armed Hamas in Gaza. In Syria, Israel can do nothing but wait and hope that Jihadists don't acquire too many chemical weapons during the period of anarchy and civil war. Whoever wins in Syria, it is highly likely that high-tech-weapons end up in the hands of Jihadists, Terrorists and other radical elements whose only common goal is the "liberation of Jerusalem".

11 Apparently, Iran warned the US through informal diplomatic channels that the Syrian opposition had acquired chemical weapons (cf. Peterson 2013). According to Turkish newspapers, a police raid of several homes of several suspected Al-Qaeda members revealed that Al-Nusra was producing Sarin gas on Turkish soil (cf. Today's Zaman 2013).

4.1.3. Anti-Semitism, Anti-Zionism and the Revolutions

The revolutions in the Arab world were not driven by matters of foreign affairs or revolutionary ideologies. There was no organization with a sharp, well-defined profile running the show, no political party that lead the line of the revolution in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya or Syria. The revolutions in the Arab world were revolutions by the people, against the miserable conditions they had to live in, the hunger, the unemployment, obscene levels of corruption, the absence of a real chance of economical and private success. Later on, the revolutions were also revolutions for civil rights, democracy and freedom. Nevertheless, Israel must have felt very concerned about some of the chants, slogans and articles that were published during the uprisings. anti-Semitism was not a huge issue during the revolutions, but it mingled, ever just beyond the surface of the angry masses, and broke loose every once in a while. The Arab world has been notorious in its anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism, and prior to the Arab Spring, the misery of life in the Arab nations was more often than not blamed on the Jewish scapegoat. The autocrats in the region often used Israel as a common enemy to gain the support of the people in times of distraught, using the Jewish scapegoat to achieve a “rally around the flag” effect in the country. And the Arab Spring was no different. It has been already highlighted how important an anti-Israel stand in Egyptian daily politics was. But even during the revolutions, there were people from both sides, blaming the shadowy “Jewish conspiracy” or the “Zionists” for what went wrong or what happened. anti-Semitism was a factor during the revolutions, and one that Israel is unlikely to overlook.

In Libya, soon after Gaddafi was forced out of his palace and killed by revolutionary fighters, a rumour started to grow: That Gaddafi was Jewish, or of Jewish descent, with his grandmother as the Jewish ancestor (cf. Engel 2011). This, so the rumour worked, explained why he betrayed his own people and why the people had to revolt. They had to free themselves from the Jewish yoke they were under, and from the secretly Jewish president (cf. *ibid.*). This seemed to be a popular excuse as for why the Libyan people suffered so much under their president: The fact that he was not Libyan at all, a foreigner, and a Jewish one even more so, is more likely and easier to be blamed as the scapegoat than the Muammar Gaddafi of Libyan descent. One of the expressions of newly-found free speech in the Arab countries was Graffiti spraying. And in Libya, many

Graffiti depicted Gaddafi as a Jew, with the star of David on his nose, arm or somewhere on his clothes, other signs of “Jewishness”, like a big nose or greedy eyes usually fulfil the picture. Another incident that took place took Libyan anti-Semitism from bad to worse: A Libyan Jew who had fought in the war against Gaddafi was nearly killed by an angry mob as he recited psalms in the former synagogue of Tripoli (cf. Josephs 2012).

Similarly to that, the dictator of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, was called a Zionist or a Jew numerous times during the revolution as well as after he was ousted. He was accused of being a pawn in the Zionist plan to destroy the Muslim world because he worked together with Israel (cf. Barsky). It seems that the revolutions relied on the Jewish scapegoat to make the story more heroic. Because one of their own can not possibly do things to his own people that makes them revolt, he must have been a foreigner, and a Jew. Then the revolution is clean and justified. Furthermore, suggesting a foreign and preferably Jewish conspiracy at work will result in an even angrier population and thus strengthens the ranks of the revolutionaries.

The revolution in Egypt engaged itself in anti-Semitic actions on at least one occasion: On the 9th of September 2012, the opposition movement called for a rally, to demonstrate against the politics of the SCAF and for free and democratic elections. But in the afternoon that day, more than a thousand protestors moved to the Israeli embassy in Cairo, and began to attack the wall that had been erected to protect the embassy. At night, some of the protestors set the embassy on fire, the pictures of the Israeli flag burning and the building on fire went around the world. The Tahrir movement claims that this outburst of anti-Israeli violence was orchestrated by the military, to get international backing for the following crackdown (cf. Schumacher/Osman 2012, 69ff). Be it as it may, the fact that the Tahrir movement felt the need to protest in front of the Israeli embassy against the politics of the SCAF is telling. Anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism was at work in the Tahrir movement as well. In February 2013, another bizarre conspiracy theory surfaced in Egypt, indicating that the Muslim Brotherhood itself is Jewish and/or working together with Jews (cf. Forward 2013). Again, branding the unloved party in power as Jewish was used as a way to de-legitimize it.

And, of course, the Muslim Brotherhood is also engaging itself in anti-Semitic propaganda. After the ousting of Mohammed Morsi and the instalment of an interim government, the MB published a text on its website, indicating that the new interim president Adli Mansour was a Jew (cf. JTA 2013). The text was not online for a long time, but the

intention behind it is quite obvious: the easiest way to discredit an opponent, it seems, is to claim that he is Jewish.

The pattern of framing the opponent as Jewish repeated itself after it became clear that al-Sisi was running for presidency and the military started the crackdown of the Muslim Brotherhood: Egyptian journalist Saber Mashhour spread the rumour that the former general had a Jewish mother, that he even grew up close to Israeli war hero General Moshe Dayan (cf. Benari 2014). Another source claimed to have found out that al-Sisi's uncle was a member of the Haganah: "His mother is called Mulaika Titani, and her brother was a member of the Jewish Haganah organization," Nasser added. "Thus, we see that this man, by any standard, is implementing a Zionist plan to divide Egypt" (cited from Times of Israel Staff 2013).

The same logic was at work in Syria. Immediately after the beginning of the revolt in Syria, there were conspiracies on the Internet and on Syrian streets claiming that Assad was a puppet of the Jews. During the uprisings, opposition writer Osama Al-Malouhi posted on an opposition website:

[Jews] want that sucker of Syrian blood to remain and continue to prey and suck blood. They not only want their security, but also to enjoy the sight of Syrian blood being spilled.... Asking myself why Jewish support of Bashar [Assad] increased after they saw the rivers of Syrian blood this mass-murderer spilled in Syrian towns, an old image leapt to my mind, of Jews bleeding people and using their blood to prepare matzas. Logic does not accept this, but the facts prove it (quoted in Simon Wiesenthal Center 2011, 2)

In Syria, Assad as well as those fighting his reign, used anti-Semitic pictures and conspiracy theories in an attempt to de-legitimize the opponent. Assad has stated from the beginning of the revolt against him, that the whole thing was orchestrated by foreign forces. The Internet is full of accusations from both sides of each conflict in the countries that experienced the Arab Spring, that the enemy is either Zionist itself, is manipulated by Zionists/Jews or actively works for them. On the other hand, Bashar al-Assad is quoted as saying that the revolution in the country is not one of the people, but of Zionist propaganda and gangs of thugs working for the Zionists, the USA and the Sunni nations in the region. Especially the Islamic Republic of Iran has been engaged in propaganda of a Zionist plot against Syria (e.g. Hussain 2013).

Fear of a Zionist plot is not restricted to the countries affected by the Arab Spring though. Pakistani Sheikh Imran Hosein accused the “Zionists” of planning the Arab Spring as a sophisticated plot to expand the territory of Israel. He argues that this is written in the Bible and is thus imperative for the Jews of the world. The revolution in Libya, aided by NATO forces, is seen as part of the conspiracy of the West to be able to attack Egypt's western line of defence (cf. El Ghazi/Ait Amara 2013).

The anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism that accompanied the revolutions like white noise in a radio frequency was certainly not a major factor in the revolutions. But in the aftermath, in every country that was affected by the revolution, anti-Semitic stereotypes and conspiracy theories about the old dictators or other hated figures started to spread. For Israel, this is bad news, as the anti-Israeli sentiment is deeply rooted in the Arab nations (see 2.4.) and these sentiments start to break through now, as the countries got rid of their dictators. And although most of the hatred for Jews is purely propagandistic, it shows a dangerous tendency that may well lead to a deterioration of the security situation of Israel: Blaming the Jewish state has become a tool to rally supporters and distract the public from internal problems and the need for true, democratic reforms.

4.1.4. The Pacific Pivot of the United States

From a strategic perspective, the most dangerous development for Israel is the re-assessment of US-interests. The United States are slowly, but steadily shifting their strategic focus away from the MENA-region towards the Pacific, to contain China and remain its status as the number one world power. Consequences of that shift are already visible in the MENA-region. US-President Barack Obama was reluctant to lead the international forces during the Libya intervention, letting Great Britain and France take the initiative. This was one of many occasions where the Obama-administration decided to cut back its engagement in the region. Efraim Inbar, professor at the Sadat-Begin Center for Strategic Studies, calls this new policy “confused, contradictory and inconsistent responses to the unfolding events in the Middle East” (Inbar 2012, 5). American interests in the region are decreasing, and Israel is noticing that with concern. According to Inbar, “the growing consensus in the region among America's friends and foes is 'Obama does not get it’” (ibid. 7). The regional politicians, and especially Israeli politicians, who always thought of the Israeli-American relationship as “special” and

strategic, are deeply worried by the Pacific Pivot. Decreasing American influence will lead to a reduced deterrence potential by Israel. Because Israel was always seen as protected by the USA, the new strategic focus is dangerous for Israel. Its neighbours might be tempted to become more aggressive or use terror proxies to destabilize Israeli security. Furthermore, the USA were always seen as a sort of regional broker. As it had ties to all countries in the region with the exception of Iran, and as the MENA-region was and still is heavily dependent on American money and weapons, the United States could check and balance the regional powers, threaten them if necessary and thus keep the fragile equilibrium in the region functional. But the new pacific pivot leaves the MENA-region without a central power that influences policies and guarantees a certain degree of stability. Without the protection and strategic interest of the USA, the whole region might get de-stabilized. Without the superpower, anti-Israeli and anti-Western sentiments might become policy-relevant again for Arab leaders. And as American interest for the region fades away, so does its interest for the safety of Israel, at least that is the Israeli perception. Without a consistent policy in the region, Israel might feel left alone and threatened by the new developments. The region needs the American smart power as a system of checks and balances. Before the Arab Spring and the pacific pivot, Israel did not have to worry about open warfare with a neighbour because the Arab leaders knew that this would mean economic sanctions by the US or even intervention on behalf of the Jewish nation. But with American interest fading, this means increased risk of violent or rhetoric escalation. The Jewish nation has to bear the worst security implications that result of this pivot. The United States, although pledging solidarity and promising enduring and deep relationships to Israel, have left their strategic partner in the region deeply worried by their lack of a consistent policy and engagement in the region.

4.2. Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood

4.2.1. The Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas

Over the course of the second half of 2013, the situation in Egypt went from bad to worse, as the military ousted MB-backed and elected president Mohammed Morsi. This was the final signal for the Muslim Brotherhood to abandon the path of democracy and engage in a war against the state, the army and the “non-believers”. The fighting in Egypt continued ever since the last protest camps of the MB were shut (and shot) down by the military in August 2013 (cf. Saleh; Finn 2013). But before one talks about the situation at present, one has to take a step back and look at the Muslim Brotherhood *per se*. What do they want, what do they stand for, and are they an ideological radical group like Hamas, one that can not be trusted by Israel? This chapter will recapitulate who the MB is, how it is connected to Hamas, and what the situation of political Islam in power in Egypt meant for Israeli national security. In a next step, the most recent developments will be examined and analysed.

The Muslim Brotherhood is the oldest and best-organized Islamist movement in the world. Founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna in Egypt, its main goal is to establish an Islamic state according to the laws of Shari'ah. It has always been a grass-roots movement, deeply involved with local charity and social politics (cf. Farag 2011). And it was through means of charity that the MB became loved within the Arab populations. In Egypt, the Free Officers Movement of Gamal Abdel Nasser had worked together with the MB (cf. Leiken/Brooke 2007, 108f), soothing them with promises of an Islamized constitution. As this promise proved empty, a member of the Brotherhood shot General Nasser in October 1954, causing a crackdown on the MB and imprisonment of a lot of its members. Nasser, uninjured and gaining a massive boost in popularity after the assassination attempt, continued his reign of Arab nationalism and the Brothers were tortured in Egyptian cells. This situation caused Sayyid Qutb, one of the main theorists of the Brotherhood, to issue a statement that is still used as an argument today: Those responsible for the torturing of Brothers in jail are “kafireen”, apostates, and thus legitimate targets of Jihad (cf. *ibid*, 110). But Qutb's ideals were those of a minority in the Brotherhood, with the majority being more tolerant on their fellow Muslims. Still, Sayyid Qutb became the founding father of modern Jihadism. The Brotherhood itself,

the article by Leiken and Brooke goes on, had accepted democracy as being compatible with its version of Islamization. But the question one should ask is if the Brotherhood will still embrace democracy after they won their first election. Bearing the events of the summer 2013 in mind, one could be tempted to answer: No.

But let us not get ahead of events here. After the Brotherhood was outlawed, and its members jailed, tortured and killed by Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, they went underground, winning over the hearts of the people with charity and social work. The MB was formally forbidden in Egypt since 1954, but in the parliamentary election of 2005, independent candidates affiliated with the Brotherhood gained 20 percents of the seats (cf. *ibid.*, 114). They used their new electoral strength not to propagate Islamization or religious themes, but got engaged in social politics instead (cf. *ibid.*).

The Muslim Brotherhood for the last decades was pretty much an underground social welfare organisation in Egypt and elsewhere, not Jihadists. They tried to get involved in the parliamentary processes in Egypt, but were never the terrorists that Mubarak claimed them to be. And the organisation was completely taken by surprise by the events of the Arab Spring. Furthermore, the Brotherhood was afraid of another crack-down by the regime if they would participate in the demonstrations early on. That is the main reason why they were not so prominent in participating on Tahrir Square, not because they “did not want the revolution to be seen as Islamist” as they themselves defended their passivity (cf. De Kerckhove 2012, 1). The Brotherhood only joined the protests when it was clear that it was a mass movement and the regime would not survive. Furthermore, there was no place for political Islam on Tahrir Square. The young people on the streets were not Islamists and not interested in the Brotherhood. But they needed the Brotherhood, their experience on the streets and in fighting an oppressive regime and thus the two worked together because of the shared goal to bring down Mubarak.

But it became clear very soon that what the Brotherhood wanted was power. They made a deal with the SCAF soon after Mubarak was toppled, as did the established parties: to not demonstrate against the SCAF and its politics, and in return they were guaranteed elections sooner rather than later, so the established and experienced had a huge advantage over the young Tahrir movement at the polls. And the Brotherhood won the elections, the presidential as well as the parliamentary ones. As for how dangerous the Brotherhood is in terms of democratic values, Shadi Hamid has dedicated an essay in

Foreign Affairs to the political stands of the Freedom and Justice Party and the Muslim Brotherhood. According to him, the group is not in itself dangerous, rather, they are quite flexible with their world views, and they will adjust their positions to what is most beneficial for them in gaining votes:

If the Brotherhood feels that it must move to the center – to reassure liberal skeptics and the international community – then it will. If it feels it needs to move to the right – to compete with Salafis – then it will do that instead. But it could also do both, conceding some things to liberals while reasserting religious credentials to rally its conservative base. Already, this is the approach – whether by design or default – for which the Brotherhood appears to be opting. In the country's conservative rural villages, where it faces off against Salafis, the group reminds voters of its history of persecution and reverts to fiery religious rhetoric. In Cairo, in the media, and in meetings with visiting delegations of policymakers and investors, the Brotherhood presents its most sensible face. Some of the Brotherhood's critics call this a ,dual discourse.' Others, however, call it politics (Hamid 2011).

This was how the Brotherhood won the election. They did what they had to do, said what they had to say and won the majority of voters in Egypt. But running a country is a lot more complex than doing charity work. At the beginning, the MB seemed to be really up for the task, forging alliances with the other democratic parties and Morsi vowing to nominate a woman and a Christian as his vice-presidents. But these were all empty words. Shortly after they won the majority of Egyptian votes, the MB started to consolidate their newly-gained power. They started to exclude non-Brothers from the political process, cut the power of the military (which, by the time most Egyptians agreed to and cheered because of it) and had no answer to the deepening economic crisis in Egypt (cf. Blair; Taylor; Perry 2013). The MB and its president Morsi took it too far in their attempt to extend their competences and promote political Islam, they failed in ruling democratically after getting elected democratically. These failures in ruling and the inability or unwillingness to include the other democratic organisations into the political processes enraged the population of Egypt, most of all those that were on the streets from the beginning: the youth movement of Egypt that brought down Mubarak. They were the ones who took the streets once again in spring 2013, protesting against the undemocratic rule of the Muslim Brotherhood and Morsi. The Brotherhood was not able to use the momentum of the elections and the revolution to work together with the

liberal and secular forces in Egypt and had to pay the price for that failure. They left Egypt in turmoil, with the army and the old regime taking the chance to win back their power and re-establishing pretty much the same regime that the people chased out of office two years ago. The situation in Egypt since the ousting of Morsi will be analysed in section 4.2.3..

For Israel, the Brotherhood was not their winner of choice in the elections in Egypt. And how could they have been, given their notorious anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli agenda. But Jerusalem arranged itself with the new democratic government. After all, the fierce rhetoric of the Brotherhood seemed to be nothing more than that, with Morsi working together with Israel in certain security aspects and the newly-elected government refraining from re-thinking the peace treaty and the economical treaties with Israel (cf. Gold 2013). But the situation in Egypt was very closely monitored by the Israelis for sure, with one eye on the Sinai peninsula (see 4.2.2.), and with the other eye on rhetorics and actions by the Islamist government and president. For Israel, the most important thing regarding Egypt were the peace treaty, the security of the border and the co-operation in the attempt to isolate Hamas in the Gaza strip. This task received a serious blow with the election of the Muslim Brotherhood and president Morsi. After all, the Brotherhood is closely linked with Hamas, more so as Hamas actually is a sibling of the Brotherhood: „Hamas, (...) was formed by the late Sheik Ahmad Yasin at the onset of the first Palestinian uprising or Intifadah in late 1987, as an outgrowth of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood“ (globalsecurity.org). As such, it was, from an Israeli perspective, highly doubtful that the Brotherhood would abandon its Palestinian brothers once they were in power. And they did not intend to: according to an article in the Egyptian Independent, group spokesperson Mahmoud Ghezlan told London-based Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper that „It’s illogical to have dialogue, any dialogue, in light of the Israeli practices against the Arab peoples“ (Egyptian Independent 2012). The situation before the elections was pretty grim, with all major parties making anti-Israeli statements and the Brotherhood actively promoting their ties to Hamas. There were statements from various MB leaders claiming they would never talk with Israeli officials and promoting a more active policy in favour of the Gaza strip and Hamas. And president Morsi himself also engaged himself in pro-Gaza rhetorics and symbolic gestures: He sent his prime minister, Hisham Qandil, to Gaza City during the November 2012 conflict between Gaza and Israel and withdrew Egypt's ambassador from Israel. These actions were hailed in Egypt, but it was more symbolic than anything else. In reality,

Hamas was disappointed by their brothers. Not only did the Egyptian government not ease the blockade of the Gaza strip, but it even tightened it some more. According to Peter Beinart (2012) the Brotherhood-government was at least as problematic for Hamas as the Mubarak regime. Furthermore, the Muslim Brotherhood enraged its allies in Gaza with the tightening of the blockade, supporting Israel by actions (not by words) and rejecting Hamas' call for allegiance. This behaviour enraged the leaders in Gaza, even more so because they never thought that their ideological brothers could turn on them:

Several Hamas leaders in Gaza have erupted in anger in recent days, in spite of obvious efforts for many weeks to contain their rage and express "understanding" of Egypt's predicament. Senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Al-Zahar expressed the group's growing infuriation by declaring, 'The previous [Egyptian] regime was cruel, but it never allowed Gaza to starve' (Beinart 2012).

On the other hand, Morsi officially stated that Egypt will stand side by side with the Palestinians in their struggle for their rights. After all, it seemed the Muslim Brotherhood was reasonable and realistic about its role in the region and in the conflict between Hamas and Israel. Propaganda and ideology, it seemed, had to step back in favour of *realpolitik*. This policy of the Brotherhood and Morsi has several reasons (cf. Beinart 2012):

The first reason is the aforementioned *realpolitik*. Morsi and the MB might wish that the world was different, and in another world they would certainly support Hamas in their fight against the Jews. But it is still the same Egypt that they govern, and they had to obey to some of the realities of Egyptian ties with Israel and the USA. The regional system of power simply does not allow any Egyptian politician that is not a complete radical to go rogue. The economic and military ties with the USA and Israel, the fact that their own security is at risk and the will of the Egyptian people (no war with Israel, but anti-Israeli rhetoric is always greeted) do not allow the MB and Morsi to act too supportive of Hamas.

The second reason is that the military and security aspect of Egyptian politics is in the hands of the army and the SCAF. The military decides the strategies of Egyptian policy in regards to Israel, Hamas and Sinai. And the military has no interest in getting involved in a conflict with Israel. Furthermore the army has strategic interests in keeping the Sinai safe and radicals out of Egypt, and therefore approves the blockade

and the closing of Rafah. This leads to the last reason for the Egyptian policy towards the Gaza situation;

The third reason is the security situation in Sinai. Hamas and other terrorist groups from Gaza had infiltrated the peninsula after the revolution in Egypt, smuggling weapons and attacking Egyptian soldiers and police. Egypt can not afford to lose control over Sinai, and for that, it needs stability more than anything else. This is why they seemingly appeased to Israel. But this was no act of appeasement, but of international and regional realities and coercion. The coercion already began under the reign of the MB and Mohammed Morsi, and is continued by the military government.

The next blow to Hamas' hopes and dreams came in its war with Israel in November 2012, operation "Pillar of Defence". Instead of supporting Hamas and its rocket war against the Jewish state, Mohammed Morsi brokered a truce between the two conflict parties, gaining international praise for his role in mediating between Hamas and Jerusalem. They did not, as ideology would suggest, side with Hamas, but rather became the Gaza-version of the USA in regards to Israel, a trusted broker of mediation and peace (cf CNN Wire Staff 2012). They talked to Hamas as the USA talked to Israel, urging them to agree to a ceasefire, becoming one of the main actors in the conflict. Cairo seemed to act realistic, looking for greater security in the region instead of ideological alliances. Although the actions of Morsi and the Brotherhood were guided mainly by necessity and not by believing that this was the right thing to do, it pleased the Jewish state that Egypt acted like a responsible nation and not like an anti-Semitic agent.

To summarize, the actions of the Muslim Brotherhood and its president Mohammed Morsi certainly showed that they were capable of rational politics when it came to Israel. But it is not easy to say if the strategy of the Brotherhood is voluntary or if they had no other choice due to the power of the Egyptian army and the SCAF. The army was always reliable as a rational actor when it came to the mutual security interests of the two nations. It was a relief for Israel when it saw that the new government acted in pretty much the same way as the old regime of Mubarak did. But of course, they did not forget, nor overheard the anti-Israeli rhetoric in- and outside the government in Cairo. And for Israel, the situation with Morsi was certainly safer than the situation without him is now (see 4.2.3.). Morsi might have been an anti-Semite, but he was realistic enough to honour the agreements that two nations had. With Morsi gone and the country in turmoil, the security situation for Israel might well get worse once again.

4.2.2. Sinai and Gaza

The border from Egypt to Gaza has in the past already been only reluctantly guarded by the Egyptian military (according to Israel), to prevent smuggling from Egypt to Gaza and back (see Sharp 2008, 5f). While Mubarak saw the Hamas as an enemy and was willingly helping Israel to contain them in Gaza, the first democratically elected president Morsi was a lot more ambivalent and more difficult to work with. He rhetorically supported Hamas and the Palestinian cause, while at the same time working together with Israel numerous times in the matter of the Gaza blockade (see previous section). Now, with the unsure situation in Egypt after the electoral victory of the Muslim Brotherhood and the ousting of Morsi a year later, the question of how to secure the Gaza blockade and prevent Hamas and other terrorist groups from acquiring high-tech weapons is still on top of the Israeli agenda.

Israel has a tight grip around the Gaza Strip, where the radical Islamist/Terrorist-organization Hamas is in charge. When Hosni Mubarak was in power, the Israeli government could be sure that the Egypt-Gaza border was at least somehow save and that there will not be full-scale arms-traffic on that route. Now, with the insecurity in Egypt and the anti-Israeli sentiments in the Egyptian population, the situation becomes less predictable for Israel. Egypt had already relaxed restrictions at its border with the Gaza Strip at Rafah right after the ousting of Mubarak (see Donnison 2011). The situation got better once a government was in charge, and even the Muslim Brother Mohammed Morsi worked together with Israel, instead of helping Hamas. But the problem of securing Sinai and Gaza remains unsolved. According to Shin Bet, the Israeli General Security Service, the "governance in Sinai is not high and this allows smugglers to operate almost without hindrance. In 2011, the Egyptian regime's attention was focused on stabilizing the new situation in the country and getting the democratic elections going, and this eased the Sinai smugglers' task" (Haaretz/Reuters, 13.5.2011). Hamas and other terrorist organizations, some even more radical than the Muslim Brotherhood sibling, enjoyed the lack of control at the border and on Sinai, both shortly after the revolution and after the coup against Morsi.

Another indicator for the deterioration of the security situation on the Sinai peninsula and the border to Gaza is the quantity and quality of terrorist attacks from Gaza. According to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 233 rockets were fired from Gaza

from the day Mubarak stepped down in February until the end of 2011, while in the same time in 2010, only 54 were fired. The immediate month after the ousting of Mubarak, rocket fire from Gaza to Israel went up from only 6 in February to 38 in March. In 2012, Palestinian terrorists more than doubled the numbers of rockets fired into Israel in comparison to 2011, from 375 in all of 2011 to 787 rockets fired before Operation “Pillar of Defense” in November (all data from Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). Although this increased numbers of rockets fired might well be connected to the fact that the terrorist groups needed to regroup and re-arm themselves after the devastating operation “Cast Lead” in 2009, it is highly likely that they managed to do so very fast thanks to the chaos in Egypt from 2011 onwards. Furthermore and even more worrisome, Hamas and/or other terrorist groups in Gaza managed to acquire rockets that could reach the Israeli city of Tel Aviv, as they showed in the conflict of November 2012. The lack of security forces and control on Sinai was one of the main reasons why they could acquire those kinds of rockets. The Institute for National Security Studies in Israel issued a report in July 2011, saying that the governmental chaos in Egypt has already caused an increase in arms traffic from Sinai into Gaza:

In fact, it is evident that the shaky security situation in the Sinai has already affected Israel. A report published by the General Security Services in May 2011 stated that terrorist organizations are exploiting the governmental chaos in the Sinai in order to smuggle large quantities of weapons into the Gaza Strip. Israeli military intelligence officials reported that Egypt recently stopped building the physical barrier to prevent smuggling on the Philadelphi Route, in contravention of the agreement it had with Israel on this issue. In addition, it has been reported that in the past six months, Bedouin smugglers have exploited the wide open border in Rafah and the absence of Egyptian security forces in the vast expanses of the Sinai to smuggle rockets to Gaza. This has increased the number of rockets held by terrorist elements from 5,000 in their possession at the end of 2010 to some 10,000. In addition, the quantity of standard explosives smuggled into the Gaza Strip over the past half year is three times larger than the quantity smuggled in all of 2010 (Stern et al. 2011).

Especially the Bedouins, who are not affiliated with a certain group or faction but smuggle for money only, exploited the lack of security on the peninsula. Additionally, Al Qaida and other terrorist groups infiltrated the “no-mans land” and made themselves at

home at the Sinai. In the year 2013, about 15 jihadist groups have been operating on the peninsula, according to Shin Bet. The number of jihadist individuals operating there differs between a few hundred and a few thousand (cf. Ravid 2013). For now, they are attacking border patrols, Egyptian patrols and the pipelines. But if they establish their base on the Sinai, this would mean bad news for Israel and its border security.

Another major point of Israeli fears is the possibility of terrorist groups infiltrating Israel via the Sinai peninsula. When security was high on the peninsula, they could be to a certain amount be sure that such an attempt would be stopped by Egyptian security forces. But after the revolution, the Sinai became more or less a white spot in security issues, and the fear of Palestinian terror groups entering Israel via Sinai was great among Israeli security experts. And the terrorist attacks of August 8th 2011, when terrorists from Gaza crossed into Israel via the Sinai through smuggling tunnels and killed 8 Israelis (see Pfeffer 2011), was a first indicator of how insecure the border has become since the end of Mubarak. The attacks on the gas pipelines from Egypt to Israel (see DPA 2011 (2)), the attack in December being the 10th attack on the pipelines since the end of Mubarak, were another sign that Egyptian military and security forces did not control the Sinai region at that time. In August 2012, militants ambushed an Egyptian military base in Sinai, killing 16 Egyptian soldiers and hijacking two military vehicles. They then broke through the Israeli border and started a firefight with IDF soldiers (cf. Rudorem/Fahim 2012). Although no Israeli soldier was injured during the attack, it was another indicator for the insecurity in Sinai.

The Israeli government reacted to the worsening of the security situation in Sinai and the massacre near Eilat: They approved the construction of a seven metre high fence across the desert border with Egypt. Lieutenant Colonel Yoav Tilan, an Israeli border commander, described the situation on the peninsula as follows: "This is a 'hot' border now and terror is on this border like any other border we have in Israel. And we are copying and modifying our techniques like in other borders to this border solely on the motive that this is now a terror-threatened border" (Kershner/Kirkpatrick 2012).

After the election of president Morsi and the new Egyptian government, the situation seemed to get better. Morsi was more pragmatic than Israel imagined when it came to Gaza and Hamas, but the situation on Sinai remained unsolved. There were numerous attacks on the gas pipelines to Israel by militants, and the Bedouins continued to smuggle weapons through the peninsula. Israeli military officials had called the Sinai

“chaotic” and a “no-mans land” (Harkov 2012), and complained about the unwillingness of Egyptian security forces to deal with the problem.

To secure the Sinai, and thus secure the blockade of the Gaza strip, is possibly the most important task for Israeli security at the moment that was directly affected by the Arab Spring. The Sinai situation gets worse as chaos in Egypt continues, and Hamas will continue to improve its arsenal. Israel needs a stable Egypt to tackle the Sinai issue, or they need to follow other possible solutions to secure their border and the blockade.

4.2.3. Egypt in Turmoil – A Potential Disaster for Israel

On the 3rd of July 2013, the elected president of Egypt, Mohammed Morsi, was ousted by the military. General Abdel-Fatah al-Sisi, the minister of defence and chief of the armed forces, appointed by Morsi himself, was the leader of what the former president himself called a “full coup” (Sen 2013). Before the ousting, millions of Egyptians protested against the president and the Muslim Brotherhood, against their failures in politics and policy and their undemocratic behaviour. The people on the streets were the same that were on the streets when Mubarak had to resign, and they called for another revolution, now against the elected, but undemocratic president of the Muslim Brotherhood. The military, it seemed, had found its excuse for crushing the revolution, and the Tahrir youth was too fed up with the Muslim Brotherhood to see through the mask of the SCAF. The military proclaimed that it only acted on behalf of the Egyptian people, that it had no interest in the political power in Egypt and that it only wanted to save the young democracy. And the people were happy to believe it. After years of fighting, they were tired and just wanted the reign of Morsi to end. They did not, unfortunately, see that what was happening on the 3rd of July was not the “new revolution” that al-Sisi claimed it to be – but rather it was the counter revolution that crept up onto the young democracy and ended it.

After the ousting of Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters were outraged. They started their own protests, occupying squares in front of mosques across the country. Immediately after the ousting, clashes were reported from Cairo and other major cities between the Morsi-supporters, anti-Morsi protestors and the army. Mohammed Morsi himself was detained in house arrest, and the military and the police issued warrants for about 300 Muslim Brothers. The following days, at least one

hundred Morsi-supporters got killed by security forces and the army during clashes between the two in Cairo and other cities. The chaos intensified, and the MB had no intention of backing down or giving in, although the interim government invited them to join a process of national conciliation and to take part in the interim government (cf. abc News 2013). But the MB refused, possibly misjudging their own mobilization potential or being outraged because their grasp at power was so short-lived. The Brotherhood threw the country into turmoil, causing a situation that was close to civil war. The SCAF and the armed forces took their chance to re-install the old regime and save their assets, and the Muslim Brotherhood went into (civil) resistance. What followed were weeks of violence and protests, with Brothers being jailed, demonstrations being cracked down violently by the police and army and hundreds or even thousands of civilian casualties (cf. i.a. Hauslohner; al-Hourani 2013).

What the Brotherhood did, if on purpose or not, is that they dragged the political struggle in Egypt down to a sectarian level. In 2011, the revolution was secular and “liberal” in the sense that it was not the goal of any major force on the side of the revolution to install a religious regime. After the successful revolution against Mubarak, the Brotherhood stepped forward, but with a more or less “liberal” agenda, as they did not dare to “islamize” the revolution yet. And the government after the elections in November was still rather cautious with its religious approach. But after the ousting of Morsi, the Brotherhood began to issue propaganda statements that called for civil war on behalf of Islam, and the even more radical parts of the Islamist community in Egypt started to attack Christians in Egypt, causing the fighting to get a sectarian dimension. The Brotherhood has, without saying so, declared war on the military and the SCAF, and other, more radical and more violent organizations, have used the situation to wreak havoc in Egypt and attacked “non-believers”. The military, never cautious when it came to violence, responded in the same way.

For Israel, the situation in Egypt is a disaster waiting to happen. They had only just managed to warm themselves to the idea of a Muslim Brother as president and successfully managed to build a somewhat stable working relationship with the new government. But after the ousting and the turmoil, Israel has to fear the worst. If Egypt can not control Sinai and drive the terrorist groups and Jihadists out of the peninsula, Israel's security is at risk. A Sinai full with Jihadists, from Al Qaeda to Salafists to radicalised MB members, would also mean an increase in support for Gaza and Hamas, an increase of weapons smuggling and the likelihood of terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians will

increase as well. This is a scenario that Israel can not let happen. At the moment it seems that the Egyptian military is aware of the dangerous situation on Sinai, but Israel will be wary of any changes in policy concerning the peninsula. And even after the election of Abdel Fatah al-Sisi as the new president and the positive reactions from Israel, this will not hide the fact that the Egyptian society is still internally divided and the potential for another revolution is still smouldering beyond the surface and the tight grip of the military. The new president has to restore order and pacify the Egyptian people, or else Egypt will continue to remain unstable.

4.3. Lebanon – The Northern Border

4.3.1. Hezbollah

Lebanon's Shiite militia Hezbollah is one of the fiercest enemies of the Jewish state. After the last war between the two parties in 2006, Hezbollah was weakened and refrained from any large-scale fighting against Israel ever since. But with the uprisings throughout the region and the sectarian character that a lot of the confrontations have, it seemed likely that Hezbollah would try to profit from the insecurity and bulk up its weapon storages for another fight against its “Zionist enemy”. But, as the fighting in Lebanon's intertwined neighbour Syria intensified, the organization took a path that might very well destroy it in the long run. The decision to openly and actively support Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian government and send militiamen to the aid of Damascus worsened the situation of the Hezbollah in Lebanon. The fact that the organization is fighting a religious war abroad, instead of trying to resolve the domestic problems in the homeland, was not a very popular move. But Hassan Nasrallah, the organization's leader, perceived the Syria crisis as a primary battlefield, not only as support for a strategic partner, but also for Jihad (cf. Nassar 2013). Furthermore, Iran might have had something to say in Hezbollah's decision to fight alongside the Syrian army. After all, what is at stake in Syria is the Shiite axis from Teheran to Damascus.

The Arab Spring was, in the beginning, perceived positively by the Hezbollah. The uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and elsewhere were seen as revolts against the West, the USA and Israel (cf. Berti 2012, 22). But when fighting ensued in Syria, it's closest ally and main donor, Hezbollah was quick to condemn the opposition movement, calling

lackies of the USA and the Zionists (cf. Nassar 2013). Soon after the situation in Syria escalated, Hezbollah decided to participate in the fighting. They saw that the opposition movement was supported by Sunni countries and the fighting groups were increasingly supported by Sunni Jihadists. Hezbollah saw it as their religious duty to fight against the infidels of Sunni-lead Al-Nusra and later ISIS and joined their Alawite brothers in the fight.

Hezbollah is eager to end the civil war in the neighbour country, as it needs a stable Syria for the traffic of weapons from Iran, as well as it needs Syria as a back-up when it comes to another attack on Israel. Hezbollah at the moment seems preoccupied in Syria, but it fights the fight there not only out of brotherly love for its Shiite brothers, but also out of strategic interests that are directed against Israel. Without a peaceful, or at least stable Syria, the weapons Hezbollah needs for fighting the Jewish state are a lot harder to obtain. And although the organisation's ultimate goal of destroying Israel is for now out of it's list of top priorities, this is certainly one of the reasons why Hezbollah is so active in Syria.

Hezbollah's reasoning behind it's support for the Assad-regime is based on strategic considerations and ideological pressures. It had to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of getting engaged at the Syrian front, and it chose to do so out of the two main reasons elaborated above. Syria is where the Shiite block is challenged by its Sunni adversary, and Hezbollah, as an Iran-trained militia, is active on the ground.

For Israel, the Hezbollah's fighting abroad is a short-term-relief. The fact that the organization is fighting in Syria means that it will not open up a second front and fight Israel simultaneously. But on the long run, Hezbollah's involvement could be potentially disastrous for Israel's Northern front. At the moment, it is looking likely that Bashar al-Assad will survive the civil war in power, meaning that this is also a victory for Iran and Hezbollah. And after the fighting in Syria, the Hezbollah fighters will return to Lebanon, with experience and advanced weaponry. And then, after their focus shifts again from defending an ally and it's own supply routes, it might turn it's eyes again on the ideological goal of defeating the Zionist enemy. But it will all depend on the future course of Iran. If the Islamic Republic truly wants a better relationship with the West, it will have to keep the Hezbollah from attacking Israel. But Iran might be tempted to use its newly gained influence in the region (because Assad remained in power) to attack the Jewish nation and end the "Zionist occupation of Palestine" by using proxies like Hezbollah to fight their fight. Because a direct attack on Israel would be devastating for Iran, but

Hezbollah had attacked Israel time and time again without any consequences for their “masters” in Teheran. Iran has yet to prove that it is willing to abandon its policy of using proxies to fight the Zionist enemy and its aggressive grab for regional hegemony. If Iran uses the nuclear deal just to ease the sanction regime by the West, it is very likely that a new attack by Hezbollah on Israel might be used to gain public support in Lebanon again.

4.3.2. The Shiite Axis

Lebanon is, in terms of Israeli security, always tied to Hezbollah, Syria and Iran. The Shiite “axis of resistance” that consists of the three, is a constant security threat to Israel, and the fact that Iran is supplying its two regional partners with weapons, money and training is particularly worrisome for the Jewish state. The Shiite axis is not only the attempt of Iran to expand its sphere of influence in the region, but also the main security issue for Israel. Iran is Israel's archenemy, and Hezbollah its most successful asset in the region in its attempt to free “Palestine”. And for Iran and Hezbollah, the stabilization of Syria under a Shiite or Alawite regime is of utmost importance.

The key to Iranian influence on the MENA-region is Syria. That country has been key to Iranian interests in the region, its door to the Mediterranean and to the Arab world. The Shiite sickle from Iran, over Iraq and Lebanon to Syria is the second block in the regional power games in the region. And Syria is the battlefield, where the two blocks seem to fight for control over the region. Only if Syria remains part of the Shiite “axis of resistance”, meaning that Assad or another Iran-backed regime remains in power, Iran would be able to enhance its influence in the region. Furthermore, if Syria is stabilized and remains Shiite, Iran will remain capable of equipping Hezbollah and other proxies with weapons to fight Israel. Lebanon is the front for the Irani-Israeli war, and for Lebanon to remain a strong front, Iran needs Syria stable. Syria is the main route from which Iranian weapons reach Lebanon and Gaza. And if Syria falls, it would not also mean defeat for the hegemonic plans of Shiite Iran. It would also mean dire times for Hezbollah and the anti-Israeli rockets in the region. The supply routes will be cut off for a considerable time and that will diminish Hezbollah's capability to attack the “Zionist enemy” for at least a few years. But if Syria fails as a state, Lebanon will be de-stabilized as well. Syria has always had a big influence on Lebanon. The country was occupied by

Syrian forces for nearly 30 years, and one of the major powers in Lebanon is allied to Syria. Now that Syria is the battleground for an inter-islamic war and for regional hegemony between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Lebanon is in danger of getting sucked into the conflict by its old ties to its western neighbour. A spill-over of the Syrian civil war on Lebanon and Iraq is very possible, and this would have a devastating effect on Israeli security. On the other hand, a strengthened Shiite axis is nothing Israel will wish for either. A weakened, but internally stabilized Assad in power might be tempted to turn the public opinion around by attacking the Jewish nation. A well-equipped Hezbollah with fighters coming back from Syria is a big security threat for Israel's northern border. And Hezbollah are already improving their arsenal, according to several news sources: "Israeli national security analyst Ronen Bergman has told the NY Times that most of the long-range surface-to-surface missiles given to Hezbollah by its allies Iran and Syria have already been disassembled and moved to Lebanon" (Yanover 2014). These are sophisticated weapon systems, and the fact that Hezbollah is moving them away from the battlefield into Lebanon is surely a factor Israel will be worried about. Most of Hezbollah's current weaponry is not very advanced, but this new arsenal might be put to use against Israel at some point in the future.

Iran will do everything in its power to make sure that the Shiite axis persists. And for that, Lebanon is an important piece of the puzzle. The Sunni enemies of Shia domination in the region know that as well, and have started to attack Hezbollah on its own territory. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia pledged 3 billion US-Dollars to the Lebanese army (cf. Al Jazeera 2013 (2)). The intention behind this major investment is deterring Iran and Hezbollah, making the army capable of fighting against the Shiite organization if it becomes necessary from a Saudi point of view. Lebanon looks like the possible future battlefield of Saudi Arabia and Iran, with Iran desperate to keep the Shiite axis intact and the Sunni Saudi Arabia out of its sphere of influence.

If Lebanon gets drawn into the Syrian civil war and the proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, this would destabilize another Israeli border. The border with Lebanon is protected by UN forces (UNIFIL mission), but this has not kept Hezbollah from targeting Israeli cities time and time again. If Lebanon is destabilized by Sunni and Shia sectarian violence, this could lead to an Israeli intervention in Lebanon. Israel will not intervene in Syria, but there they have the Golan heights as a puffer zone. With Lebanon, the strategic situation is different and Israel might be tempted to secure the border with its own forces rather than wait for the UN to do it for them. If that is the

case, Hezbollah and Iran will feel provoked and threatened and will likely strike back with terrorist attacks on Israeli cities.

The Shiite axis is one of the main security concerns for Israel. Not only is the Iranian influence in Lebanon and Syria directed at Israel as well as at the Sunni powers. The Shiite axis is also the most active in the Islamist war against the Jewish nation. From a strategic viewpoint, a broken Shiite axis is much more preferable to Israel than an intact one.

4.4. Syria – Enemy in Civil War

4.4.1. The Devil We Know

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, the cards seem to have turned for the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. For the first two years, he was seen as the problem, the Western countries supported the “people's rebellion” and told him that he should step down and end the bloodshed, which he alone was blamed for. He was shunned by the international community, several Western countries openly supported the rebellion in Syria. When the chemical attack happened on August 21st, it seemed inevitable that the USA and its allies will attack Assad and side with the opposition fighters. But fate changed for Assad after he agreed to dismantle his chemical weapon arsenal. Suddenly he was part of the solution as well as part of the problem, and is now in a much stronger position than ever before during the civil war. Realism, it seems, prevailed in Syria. A dictator is preferable to a failed state. And Assad is a person the West had no problems dealing with in the past. As such, he is at least partly predictable. This view is similar to the “devil we know” approach Israel seems to have adopted towards the Arab uprisings.

Israel, in the past, had usually learned how to deal with the autocrats in their neighbourhood. They learned how to get along with Mubarak in Egypt or King Hussein of Jordan. And although the rhetorics were always harsher towards Syria, Israel learned how to live with the Baath-Regime of Assad (father and son). And the Assads learned how to deal with Israel, without getting destroyed in a war or appearing like a collaborator with the “Zionist entity”. The Syrian regime supported (and still supports) groups that are considered terrorists by Israel, like the Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza, and is

part of the Anti-Israeli “axis of resistance” led by Iran. Nevertheless, the last war with Syria was more than 40 years ago, the Yom Kippur War that was won by Israel. The president by the time, Bashar's father Hafez al-Assad, learned from that war and understood that he could not win a war against Israel. He decided to build up a deterrence potential by striking an alliance with the Shiite Islamist Republic of Iran. The two countries could “agree to disagree” from 1973 onwards, and apart from rhetoric escalations and some air strike every now and then by the IAF, they could trust each other (cf. Manfreda). The two countries engaged in various peace talks, trying to reach an agreement that would improve the security situation of both nations, but this did not work out. There are reliable sources indicating that Israeli PM Benyamin Netanyahu was in very advanced talks with Bashar al-Assad to agree on a peace treaty before the Syrian civil war broke out (Kershner 2012, Shiffer 2012). But although the two nations had relations in the sense that they agreed not to go to war against each other, they still perceived each other as enemies. This is due to the fact that Syria strongly supports Hezbollah and Hamas (the latter only until their fallout over the civil war in Syria), has a strategic alliance with Israel's archenemy Iran and has used strong anti-Israeli rhetorics to gain popular support. But Israel saw Assad as a reliable opponent, one that was well-known for his anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic opinions, but still was realistic enough to not push his luck with the Jewish nation. He never confronted Israel directly, and controlled and balanced his proxies in Gaza and Lebanon. It was an uncomfortable situation for Israel, but it was safe, controllable, and, most important for the Israelis, predictable. They could always count on Syria's *realpolitik* that would refrain them from escalating the “war of words” they had with Israel, nor the proxy war that was fuelled by them. Assad, it seemed, was, although an anti-Semite, clever enough to check and balance between fighting against Israel and stepping back to avoid an open war with the Jewish nation. Israel, on the other side, refrained from all-out war against Syria although it knew that the country was supporting Hamas and Hezbollah. In return, the border at the Golan heights was quiet and, more or less, safe. A famous story is told about a meeting between then-prime minister Ariel Sharon and then-US-President George W. Bush concerning the possibility of a regime change in Damascus:

[...] when the U.S. president, irritated by the double games played by Assad in Iraq, spoke to Sharon about seeking to remove him, Sharon replied by saying that he preferred “the devil we know.” In other words, he too was not enamoured of

Assad and his policies, but preferred a Syrian ruler who kept the ceasefire line with Israel quiet and worried that the alternative to the Baath regime was the Muslim Brotherhood, the only organized opposition group known to the outside world. (Rabinovich 2012, 3).

What Sharon and other Israeli politicians feared at the time was the unpredictability of any new regime in Damascus. This “Israeli realism” (Jones/Milton-Edwards 2013) is a constant in Israeli policies towards its neighbours, past and present. In time, they arranged themselves with most of the leaders in the surrounding countries, and now, with one leader after the other falling, Israel is confused and unsure what to think about the developments. Many Israeli and international commentators still favour that position, that a known devil is preferable to an unknown one¹². Whatever happens in Syria, the argument goes, Assad or the regime itself should come out victorious. After all, they know the rules of the game and will not be desperate enough to attack Israel anytime soon. And furthermore, the argument of the Pro-Assad camp continues, the alternative to Assad is Al-Qaeda or worse, something that can not be good for Israel by any means. Assad is a known variable, something Israel should always prefer to anything else, given the hatred still directed at the small nation from Arab countries. The devil they know is better than a devil that they don't know, one that is not predictable. But several analysts, including Rabinovich and Efraim Inbar (2013 (2)), see the fall of Assad as preferable to an Iranian-backed entity in their backyard that will do anything to regain public support. Inbar adds a moral perspective to the situation in Syria: “In the real world there is sometimes a tacit necessity to tolerate a dictatorship for a variety of reasons, but explicit support for it is a moral embarrassment” (Inbar 2013 (2), 1). And Israel has another strategic interest in the fall of Assad: Syria under the rule of the Assad family has become the most important partner for Iran. Iran is Israel's archenemy, the biggest threat to its security. If Assad prevails, so does Iran. Iran would be able to expand its sphere of influence in the region and the Shiite “axis of resistance” would become stronger as a result. Because if Assad wins the civil war, his victory would be an Iranian victory as well, and they would very likely re-arm their ally with advanced weaponry to deal with possible new uprisings. But after the consolidation of his own power through means of force, Assad might be tempted to rally the Syrian people to his flag again. And

¹² Daniel Byman (2013) for example explains that „changes in Syria could bring to power a new government that does not know these subtle rules [that Israel had agreed upon with Assad] and, again, plays to popular opinion rather than strategic reality“ (296).

there is no easier way in Arab countries to get the people on your side than inciting hatred and/or violence against the Jewish nation. And Assad had mastered the art of using Anti-Israeli sentiments to his favour a long time ago. Furthermore, Assad relies heavily on support from Israel's nemesis, the Islamic Republic of Iran. And it might well be, and this is what Israel fears, that Iran might decide after the war has been won, that it is time to pay the bill for this support. Israeli policy-makers are wary of this scenario. A Syria with an Assad as president who owes his power to Iran may not be able to refuse the Islamic Republic, should they decide that it is time to attack Israel, even if only via proxies. Syria would have to obey, whether they like it or not.

There are other reasons why Israel must not directly side with Assad: supporting Assad would be a direct affront against the Sunni nations, that, while they might be fierce in their anti-Israeli rhetorics and do not have any diplomatic agreements with the Jewish nation, share one common goal with Israel: to prevent Iran from going nuclear. If Israel starts to openly support Assad or openly agrees with a post-civil war order that includes an Assad in power, it would diminish Israeli chances of deterring Iran with the (covert) support of the Sunni nations in the Gulf.

However the civil war in Syria will end, it is very likely that it will worsen the Israeli security situation. Simply because that it doesn't matter to Israel whether there is a Sunni-led Islamic state next to it or a Shiite- and Iran-led regime that wants to consolidate its power. Either way, Israel will be facing a drastic deterioration of its Syrian border and might be tempted to bulk up its defences at the Golan heights. The UN troops that are stationed there to observe the truce between the two nations might be caught in the middle of an aggressive anti-Israeli entity in Syria and an Israel that will rather attack than get attacked by it. For Israel, it is not about devils they know or new devils anymore, as a devil remains a devil. Israel has nothing to win in Syria, but everything to lose.

4.4.2. Syria as a Failing State

The civil war in Syria has put the country at the brink of failing. The regime and the opposition are fighting tooth and nail and there is no sign of moderation or one side gaining the upper hand. The situation on the ground is unresolvable, as neither the regime nor the various rebel groups seem to favour a diplomatic solution to continued fighting. What is more, the rebels are fighting among each other, the “secular” opposition (the FSA) and the Islamists (al-Nusra, ISIS etc.) are fighting against each other, battling for influence and strategic advantages, and ISIS and al-Nusra seem to be fighting against each other as well (cf. Dettmer 2014). For Israel, the option of a failed state at its border is terrifying. Jihadists and other militants in the country are heavily armed with advanced weaponry, and the Syrian army is also well-equipped. If Syria fails, the arsenals of the army will fall into the hands of whoever loots them. And all the groups that are fighting in Syria perceive Israel as an occupying entity and despise the Jewish nation. When the state's monopoly on power and the use of violence vanishes, the system collapses and the different terrorist groups and rebels prevail, Israel will be facing many different groups that will be willing and able to target the Jewish nation with advanced weaponry. If the Assad regime wins and the state remains more or less intact, Israel has only one enemy to handle. The Israeli army seems to already prepare itself for this possible end of the Syrian civil war. According to the IDF commander of the northern forces, Major-General Yair Golan, the armed forces were "deeply engaged in getting ready, with plans and physical means" along the borders (Hamilton 2012).

If Syria fails, this will not only have devastating effects on the country itself. Its neighbours Iraq and Lebanon are already intertwined into the webs of the Syrian civil war, and if the state collapse, the risk of a spill-over of the war into neighbouring Iraq and Lebanon will be very high. This means, the borders that were drawn in the MENA-region by the former colonial powers will be nullified, and new states and state-like entities will emerge. For Syria, this could mean an Alawite-mini-state or the Kurds could try to establish a Syria-Iraq-Turkey Kurdistan. Syria would be dissected into different entities, with Jihadist groups roaming freely through them, highly armed and aggressive. Nothing positive will come out of a failing Syria. And for Israel, failing states all across the region is a great danger for its own security. Because, with failing state authority, Israel's enemies can transfer weapons and militants easily and without the

risk of getting detained or restrained by any state authority. Failing states, after all, are nothing any nation would want in their neighbourhood.

But again, Efraim Inbar from BESA Center disagrees with the notion that a failing Syria would mean less security for Israel. On the contrary, he notes that a stabilized Syria under Assad could be even more dangerous:

Moreover, the fundamental truth is that states have greater capabilities than non-state organizations to inflict pain on their neighbors. Therefore, by definition strong states are more dangerous than failed states. Only strong states can support a long-range missile program or develop nuclear weapons. For example, a strong Salafist regime in Egypt is potentially more dangerous than an Egypt that has problems enforcing its sovereignty over all its territory. Chaos among Israel's neighbors should not be altogether feared, as it weakens them. The most significant result of the Arab upheavals in recent years is the weakening of the Arab state, which has increased the power differential between Israel and its neighbors (Inbar 2013, 3).

Israel might benefit from weakened or even failing Arab countries, due to the fact that a failed state is preoccupied with internal struggles and have a highly diversified power distribution that will likely keep “the state” from making any decisions or undertaking any action in foreign policy in an organized way. A state with great hard power capabilities like Israel can deal with diverse terror rackets easier than with a unified and trained military with a clear structure and hierarchy. This is a completely realist approach to the paradigm of national security, with a focus on capabilities and hard power.

But while this view is tempting from a moral and realist strategic perspective, it has several flaws of thought. For one, it negates the fact that the Islamist terror rackets in Syria all have an anti-Semitic agenda (see section below) and will therefore turn on Israel rather sooner than later. An attack on Israel is a high-profile attack, one which will very likely result in public support from the people and Arab countries. Furthermore, by attacking Israel, these rackets also deal a blow to the West, the ultimate goal of Jihadists worldwide. Such an attack does not have to be large-scale, it is enough if they attack Israeli cities with rockets and mortars, as terror relies on fear and psychological warfare with the intent of inciting anxiety in a nation and destabilize the society, rather

than actual chances of victory¹³. Therefore, the consequences for Israel would not be a defeat in the military sense of the word, but a constant fear from terrorist attacks for the Israeli people, leading to a situation similar to the trauma of the second Intifadah.

Secondly, as there are numerous groups fighting in Syria, if they turn against Israel each, Israel has no chance of winning a war against such organizations. These are guerilla armies, trained and equipped for an asymmetric war. Israel knows that a war against such groups is not only fatiguingly long, but also a PR disaster. Israel's last campaign against the notorious Hamas led to several outcries in Western media concerning the proportionality of Israel's retaliation strikes and the death of civilians (including women and children) from air strikes and artillery. These groups won't attack Israel in an open battle but will rather use the tactics that have been perfected by Hamas and Hezbollah. Hiding between civilians and disappearing immediately after a strike. Israel can not compete with these tactics and will have to use classic military tactics to counter the attacks. Air strikes and infantry will certainly hurt the organizations, but will not defeat them. Rather, they will regroup after such a strike, re-arm themselves and strike again, starting a cats and mouse game against a nation that can not and will not hold still while its citizens are under attack.

Israel will win nothing with a destabilized and failed Syria. Neither will they gain anything with Assad remaining in power, as this would strengthen Iran's position in the region. The tactics that Israel uses at the moment, holding still and striking weapons transports or factories is the only tactic they can use in this conflict.

4.4.3. Anti-Semitism and Jihadism in Syria

While the civil war in Syria is first and foremost a war between the two factions of Islam, Sunna and Shia, and between the contenders for regional hegemony, Saudi Arabia and Iran, the groups that fight in Syria do in fact have an anti-Semitic agenda as well. More than that, some of these groups see the struggle for Syria as the premise for the “liberation of Jerusalem”. For example, Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, stated that the struggle for Syria is the gateway for the ultimate goal of liberating Jerusalem (cf. ICT

¹³ As Schmid and Jongman wrote, „Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent actions employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets“ (2005, 28).

2013). Syria, for Jihadists and Salafists, is the door to Israel. Al-Qaeda operates in Syria via its affiliates, the Al-Nusra front and ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria), who are responsible for crimes against civilians, executions of prisoners and other crimes against humanity. The Islamist groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and funded by Saudi Arabia see Israel as an occupying entity, as an illegitimate force inside the Muslim heartland. Therefore, they will certainly, sooner or later, turn their attention towards Israel. Al Qaeda never made a secret out of their hatred for Jews and Israel. In their online magazine “Inspire”, which is used as a propaganda and recruitment tool, Jews are depicted as enemies frequently. The Anti-Defamation League's National Director for Israel, Abraham H. Foxman, described it as follows:

“Anti-Semitism fuels the blood lust of al-Qaeda’s Inspire magazine,” Foxman said . “Since the early days of Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda has never made a secret of their animus toward Jews, and its current leadership continues to call on its supporters around the world to target Jews and Israelis for acts of terror. Inspire magazine is anti-Semitic through-and-through and their use of incitement against Jews has served as a central tactic in the terrorist organization’s recruitment process” (Times of Israel 2013).

Al Qaeda never hid the fact that their war is not only against the USA or the West, but it is ultimately against Israel, Jews and for the “liberation of Jerusalem and Palestine”. No message by its founder and former leader, Osama Bin Laden, was published that did not have at least one reference to the “Palestinian struggle” and Israel. The topic of Palestine was used as a propaganda tool to gain support and praise (cf. Levitt 2014). But Al Qaeda never attacked Israel itself. This was because after the war in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda had to make a strategic choice: Target the West and the USA, or target the “little Satan” Israel. Al Zawahiri and Bin Laden favoured the first option because they saw the Palestinian issue as being occupied by secular and nationalist forces. Therefore, they refrained from direct action against Israel and targeted the United States instead (cf. *ibid.*). But the organization kept their propagandistic focus on Palestine through all these years, and with the civil war in Syria, they are finally close enough to the “Zionist enemy” to target him directly and rather easily. Now, Zawahiri called for the Jihadists to focus on winning Syria, because this would be the road to the liberation of Al Quds (Jerusalem) (cf. *ibid.*). And the fact that the most powerful Islamist groups in Syria (Al-Nusra and ISIS) are affiliated with al Qaeda leaves no other conclusion than that they

will ultimately target Israel. And while, at the moment, these groups are preoccupied in their battles against the secular opposition and the Syrian army, they will not hesitate to carry out attacks against Israel and the West once the fogs of war have lifted. Matthew Levitt, an analyst from the Washington Institute, believes that Al Qaeda might target Israel out of other considerations as well. After an Al Qaeda terror plot against Israel was revealed by Israeli authorities, he tries to understand the reasons why Zawahiri and Al Qaeda are starting to attack Israel directly now. The reason might be an attempt to unite the fractioned Syrian Sunni Jihadists under a common cause and showing that Al Qaeda is able and willing to fight for Jerusalem and use this as a call to rally around the black flag of Al Qaeda:

Meanwhile, other Islamist groups, such as Ahrar al-Sham, remain independent even as they share some ideological underpinnings with al Qaeda. Today, the jihadi centers that are drawing new recruits, donations, and foreign fighters are not run by al Qaeda. Knowing that, Zawahiri perhaps felt the need to be able to claim something big that jihadist fighters of all shapes and sizes could rally around. What better than an attack on Israel? (...) Zawahiri's plotting against Israel may well have resulted from a need to reassert his position among other jihadist groups, especially in Syria, but that doesn't mean that the threat of terrorism is less real. However one defines al Qaeda today -- as a singular group with a few close franchises, or as the sum of all franchises and decentralized parts -- it is clear from plots like this one that the West, including Israel, need beware (Levitt 2014).

But it is not only the Islamist groups that express anti-Israeli thoughts and attitudes. The Chief of Staff of the Free Syrian Army, Salim Idris, is quoted as saying that “Israel is an enemy country” during an Al Jazeera interview. He went on by telling the interviewer that the Assad regime and Hezbollah are supported by Israel (Pontz 2013). Again, it seems that each side does not want to appear connected to the Jewish nation in any way, but rather want the other side to become an ally of Israel. Suggesting that the other side is supported by Israel is the easiest way to discredit the enemy in the MENA-region. And while all sides are currently at war against each other in Syria, it is safe to say that, sooner or later, they might turn against Israel. They will do this for two main reasons: first, anti-Semitism is a core ingredient of Jihadism, be it Sunnite or Shiite. Therefore, the struggle for Palestine is a high priority goal for Jihadists. Second, a skirmish against

Israel is seen as a sign of intent, and this is usually greeted by the Arab peoples. After a long and painful civil war, an attack on Israel could be an easy way to gain public support and distract the people from the grave problems in the interior.

Israel should not try to support any side in the Syrian civil war. This will only damage its own reputation and will certainly result in an (at least rhetorical) attack from the side that is not supported by the Jewish state. Anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli statements, while at the moment not on top of their priority lists, play a role for both sides of the conflict. Israel will have to remain silent and patient, protecting its borders and taking out weapon transports to Lebanon. No matter who will win in Syria, it is unlikely that they will be favourable towards Israel, and therefore, Israel should refrain from direct action in Syria. No matter if it is Al Qaeda, the FSA or Assad who will win, it will certainly deteriorate the Israeli security situation.

4.5. The Arab Spring as a Struggle for Regional Hegemony

4.5.1. The Schism of Sunna and Shia

The Arab Spring was hailed as a democratic uprising by the people of the Arab countries, trying to overthrow the dictatorships they had suffered under for decades. But it did not take long to see that something else was awakening amidst the Arab uprisings. The autocrats that ruled the MENA-region ruled with a secular iron fist, quelling the religious feelings and animosities that existed between Muslims for centuries. After the ousting of Mubarak, Ben Ali and Gaddafi and the civil war in Syria, this old hatred lurked back to the surface and incited violence and fighting throughout the region.

The main conflict that became ignited by the Arab Spring was the inner-Muslim conflict between the two main factions of Islam: Sunna and Shia. The conflict is almost as old as Islam itself. Under the rule of the prophet Mohammed, there was no question as to who would lead the Muslim world. But after the death of the prophet Mohammed there were two factions that competed for the “one true succession” of the prophet.

The differences between the Sunni and Shiite Islamic sects are rooted in disagreements over the succession to the Prophet Muhammad, who died in 632 AD, and over the nature of leadership in the Muslim community. The historic debate centered on whether to award leadership to a qualified, pious individual who would follow the customs of the Prophet or to transmit leadership exclusively through the Prophet's bloodline (Blanchard 2009, 1).

One side, those who will later become the Sunnites, believed that Abu Bakr, a companion of the prophet but not from his bloodline, should become the leader of the religion and the first “Caliph” (Arabic for successor). The majority of the Muslim believers did follow that decision, but some insisted that Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib was the only rightful successor. They became later known as the “Shi'a, a word that derived from the Arabic word 'shi'at', meaning 'supporter of’” (cf. *ibid.*).

Other than that, both factions have surprisingly little differences in their belief system. In the end, the Sunni branch, as the view of the majority of Muslims, gained the upper hand and went on to become the bigger of the two Islamic factions. The Sunni majorities came to power in various Arab countries and established their rule according to their laws. In Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism, an especially strict and puritanical version of Sunni Islam, developed and became the religion of the ruling gentry. The name refers to its founder, Muhammad bin Abd al Wahhab, who established this line of Islam in the 18th century on the Arab Peninsula. He was a conservative believer and sought to bring back the pure Islam that he perceived as lost and denounced by the various sects of Islam. “In particular, Abd al Wahhab denounced many popular Islamic beliefs and practices as idolatrous. Ultimately, he encouraged a 'return' to the pure and orthodox practice of the 'fundamentals' of Islam (...)” (Blanchard 2008, 2). He was opposed to all other forms of Islam, including the Shiite tradition. This resulted in an aggressive religious ideology that had conflicts with all other Islamic traditions, as well as non-Muslims in neighbouring areas. Wahhabism is the religious-ideological core of the al-Saud family who rule Saudi Arabia since 1932, and is used to discriminate against Shiites and other religious minorities. Furthermore, Wahhabism is closely tied to the movement of Salafiyya, a term that became known in the Western world in the last few years and refers to Sunni (often Wahhabi) extremists in the MENA-region and in the homelands. Wahhabism sees the Shiite belief system as heretic and seeks to purify Islam. Furthermore, and

supported by the Saud-family, Wahhabi extremists and “Salafiyyun” are at the core of the anti-Assad rebellion in Syria and are known for their fanaticism.

The Shiite tradition of Islam gained a political and ideological fervour during the Iranian revolution in 1979. Shiite majorities exist only in Iran, Iraq and Bahrain, and the revolution in Iran swept to power a particularly radical version of Shiite Islam. Although Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of the movement, was in favour of Sunni-Shiite unity, he also opposed the rule of Saudi Arabia in the Arab world. The “Shia awakening” caused a violent reaction and further suppression of Shiites in the Sunni-ruled countries (cf. Nasr 2006). And Iran, with its expansive ideology of a “global Islamic revolution” began to expand its sphere of influence via proxies like Hezbollah and supporting Shiite organizations worldwide. Today, the two countries do not only stand for a struggle for hegemony in the region (see next section) but also for the battle between the two strands of Islam. For decades, the schism was suppressed by the secular autocratic regimes and by a rather Sunni-friendly policy by Iran. But, beginning with Al-Qaeda and funded by Saudi Arabia and others, a radical form of Sunnite violence had surfaced that was meant to counter the Shiite expansionism from Iran. Another defining moment for the escalation in sectarian violence in the region is the fall of Saddam Hussein. The toppling of the Ba'ath regime in Baghdad changed the balance of power dramatically in the region, allowing a second state ruled by Shiites to emerge. The brutal oppression of Shiites by the Sunni minority in Iraq led to an extremely violent backlash against the group which prompted a sectarian rift across the region (cf. Kéchichian 2013).

Today, sectarian violence is shaking the foundations of the MENA-region's balance of power, turning the “Arab Spring” into a Shiite-Sunni war that looks unsolvable for the foreseeable future. At the centre of this conflict are the two religious-ideological powerhouses Iran and Saudi Arabia, who have deliberately and knowingly fuelled an ancient hatred that had been suppressed by the autocratic regimes in the region. Now, the violence that has perverted the “Arab Spring” looks out of control. The hounds that have been unleashed by Riad and Teheran seem to be unstoppable.

4.5.2. Iran and Saudi Arabia – Fighting for Hegemony

The “Arab Spring” or “Arab awakening”, as some analysts prefer to call it, was seen as a step towards democracy by optimists in the West. Now, almost three years after its beginning, the tables have turned. The counter-revolution has prevailed in Egypt, Syria is in the midst of one of the bloodiest civil wars the region has ever seen and a spill-over into Lebanon and Jordan seems inevitable, there is chaos in Libya, the Sinai Peninsula and other parts of the region and Jihadists and other radicals are on the rise. But while some see only chaos, there is a deeper and much more cynical root to all of it, and that is classical power politics. The chaos was orchestrated, the fighting fuelled and the Jihadists unleashed on purpose, for reasons of expanding power and influence.

The two main powers in the region have taken the chance that was offered to them by the popular revolts and are now trying to enhance their spheres of influence and gain the upper hand over each other. Iran and Saudi Arabia are fighting a war for regional hegemony on the backs of the Arab people. Currently, Syria is the main battlefield, and the civil war there is fuelled and escalated by the two powers. While they can not and will not go to war against each others directly, they use terrorist groups and proxies to fight it out. And at the moment, Syria is the battlefield for their struggle for hegemony.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a very strict form of Wahhabism as its religious ideology and guideline. Wahhabism is strictly anti-Shiite, and the fact that Iran became a Shiite Islamic Republic after the revolution in 1979 was seen as heretic and dangerous by religious leaders and the house of Saud. The relationship of the two nations deteriorated, leading to a break down of diplomatic relations in 1988. Saudi Arabia supported Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), a fact that infuriated Teheran. “This decision also represented an important shift in (...) the triangular regional order of the Gulf whereby the strategic power alliance in the region shifted from Iran and Saudi Arabia attempting to contain Iraq to Iraq and Saudi Arabia attempting to contain Iran” (Jahner 2012, 40). After the war, the relations continued deteriorating at first. But after the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam's forces, the two countries seemed to strike a détente. Both saw Iraq as a bigger threat to their security than the former archenemy. And the relations between the two countries started to get better again, with economic considerations (Iranian pilgrims coming to the Muslim holy sites in Mekka and Medina, crude oil

and gas), there seemed to be a decrease of the perception of threat the two countries had of each other (cf. *ibid*).

The situation changed dramatically again after the fall of Saddam Hussein. After the invasion by US-led international forces of Iraq and the toppling of the dictator, the Shiite majority in the country suddenly was allowed to have a say. The triangular that has been mentioned before, with Iraq as a buffer in-between the Sunni Saudi Arabia and the Shiite Iran, broke down, and a bipolar system emerged in which both countries were trying to gain the upper hand. Under Saddam, the Shiite majority was oppressed and brutalized. Iran welcomed the fall of Saddam, sensing that it would be able to expand its sphere of influence via the newly emerged fourth Shiite state in the Arab world. For Saudi Arabia, this was a disaster. Another Shiite power in the region was a direct threat to its own interests and power base. And Saudi Arabia was right in seeing the fall of Saddam as a direct strengthening of Iran, as the Islamic Republic immediately started to increase its influence on its neighbours. And, even more of an affront against Riad, Teheran started a smear campaign against Saudi Arabia, labelling it as a lackey of the USA and Israel, de-legitimizing the ruling family and their partners (cf. *ibid*, 44f). Saudi Arabia used its influence in the West and particularly in the USA to make sure that Iran remained outside of the world community, with the nuclear conflict as the main issue that stood between the West and Iran. Saudi Arabia was certainly pleased by the fact that the West adopted strict sanctions against the Shiite regime in Teheran, while the kingdom itself resumed its intense contacts with almost every Western country. Iran and Saudi Arabia were engaged in a sort of Middle-Eastern cold war before the Arab Spring.

The revolutions that swept through the region and witnessed dictators falling and people rising against the old order, bore risk and opportunity for the two main powers. Back in 2011, a third power had a say in the Middle East, namely Turkey. The Turkish Prime Minister of the mainly Sunni Turkey wanted to become a regional power in the MENA-region and establish itself as an alternative to the established regional forces. But in the Arab Spring, Turkey miscalculated and misjudged almost every single field of action and could never really get a foot into the region¹⁴.

Saudi Arabia was deeply unsettled by the revolutions. The popular uprisings were seen as a direct threat to the house of Saud, an autocracy that ruled the country with an iron

14 The influence of Turkey and its miscalculations during the Arab Spring can not be analysed in this paper.

fist itself. Now, popular unrest had toppled dictators that were not unlike them, and the family feared for their internal stability. But even more they feared a further Shiite awakening in Saudi Arabia and the neighbourhood, one of the reasons why Saudi Arabia intervened directly during the uprisings in Bahrain 2011 (cf. *ibid.*, 45f). Iran used this intervention to issue another propaganda-wave, de-legitimizing Saudi Arabia and praising the Shiite uprisings. For the Islamic Republic of Iran sees the Arab Spring as the logical next step towards Muslim freedom and its own revolution as the spark that incited the MENA-region and made all of this possible (cf. Rafati, 50).

In Syria, the two powers invested heavily to support their respective allies. Iran, determined to maintain the Shiite sickle and its door to the Mediterranean, supported the Assad-regime from day one, with intelligence, resources and manpower. Iran unleashed its proxy militia Hezbollah in late 2012, to help Assad quell the revolution that was slowly turning into an increasingly violent conflict back then. Iran manipulated the public, to incite the fear of sectarian violence and an imminent anti-Shiite massacre, while they themselves purified the support of Assad at the same time to let the conflict become more and more of a Shiite regime against Sunni rebels (cf. Pierret 2013, 2). Saudi Arabia on the other hand welcomed the revolution in Syria. But, unlike the revolution in Egypt, it seems they wanted to leave nothing to chance this time. During the Egyptian revolution, the Gulf power remained rather passive, supporting the revolution, but never too much. After the fall of Hosni Mubarak, the Saud family was not pleased to see the Muslim Brotherhood winning the elections and therefore supported the military coup d'etat 2013. Saudi Arabia feared a Muslim Brotherhood-alliance between Egypt, Turkey and Qatar, undermining its own legitimacy and authority in the Sunni Arab world. Furthermore, they feared that the success of Islamist parties in Egypt and Tunisia might embolden its own Islamist organisations (cf. Puder 2014; Baer 2013; Lacroix 2014). In Syria, they invested heavily, to arm the opposition with weapons that made it possible for them to resist the Russia- and Iran-backed Assad-regime. Syria developed into a proxy war between the Sunni and the Shiite power, with both sides investing money, equipment and people to gain the upper hand over each other. And for a long time, it seemed as if the West sided with Saudi Arabia in their quest for “democracy and revolution”. But the momentum shifted as the Saudi-backed revolution was (most likely with initial Saudi approval) becoming the battleground for the Jihad of radical Sunni Islamists and Al Qaeda. The West turned its back on the oppositional

fighters and engaged in a more interest-based policy than a value-based approach. Next, the new Iranian government made amends with the West, worked out a provisory nuclear deal and got closer to the world and the West again. This was another blow for Saudi attempts on regional hegemony.

Syria is the battlefield for a war of dominance between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The fact that they let this conflict escalate into a sectarian civil war shows that ideology and religious fervour is a strong driving force for both powers. The war for regional hegemony will not end in Syria, with the rest of the world uneasy and undecided on who to support. For the region, the hounds of war the Shia and the Sunna had unleashed mean nothing but trouble and insecurity.

4.5.3. Israel – Stuck in the Middle

How does Israel feel about the struggle for power between the Shiite and Sunni nations? First of all, there is a broad consensus of staying out of the whole conflict. The understanding in Israel seems to be a case of “as long as they are fighting each other, they have no capacity to fight us”. Israel knows that the two regional powers have no love for the Jewish nation, both out of ideology and out of strategic considerations. From a strategic viewpoint, Israel represents a third middle power in the region. Thus, it is a source of insecurity and threat for the other two powers. A third actor usually means a deterioration of the security paradigm, as more players means more options, uncertainties and more possible alliances and conflicts. Furthermore, the Israeli hard power capabilities are by far superior to the capabilities of the other two powers combined. Therefore, Israel is a threat to regional stability (stability in a bipolar order), but only from a hard power perspective. Israel has close to no soft power capabilities in the region, as it is despised by the neighbouring peoples and governments alike. Israel is a threat to the two powers, but only from a purely military point of view, armed “to the teeth” and proven willing to use its capabilities if threatened. Other than that, Israel is isolated and has no desire to become a regional power in more than military means. It is content with the status quo of regional power distribution, an accepted middle power by the Western world, unaccepted or at least unloved by its neighbours, but with enough fire-power to deter them. But, as Israel sees Iran as the main threat to its security, as does Saudi Arabia, a short-term cooperation between the two nations to deter Iran was and is

a possible option for both. And Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's PM, has come out with a statement calling Israeli-Saudi relations “good” and expressed his hope for “more peaceful relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel” (Tarnopolsky 2014). But an Israel-Saudi alliance would only work on the common threat by Iran, anything more than that would not be possible for Saudi Arabia, who sees itself as the advocate of Muslim (and therefore Palestinian) rights. Joshua Teitelbaum (2013) concludes: “Saudi Arabia is not about to give up its position in the Islamic world by forming an alliance with Israel, the perceived enemy of Islam. Yet quiet cooperation should not be ruled out”.

The struggle for hegemony between the Sunni Saudi Arabia and the Shiite Iran bears great risks for Israel. The fact that the proxy war between the two is fought in Israel's backyard is nothing that the Jewish state can be pleased with. And although the fighting did not yet spill over onto Israeli territory (a few misguided missiles and minor border incidents aside), there is a certain constant risk of Jihadists trying to attack the “Zionist entity”, using the civil war in Syria as cover for a strike against the Jewish nation. Furthermore, as the fighting intensifies, the risk of a regional spill-over grows, a spill-over that would turn the region into a failing region, with Israel in its midst. If Jordan or Lebanon get sucked into the conflict, or Iraq gets further destabilized, then the region would witness turmoil and unrest that will produce further insecurity for the Jewish nation. For failing states does not merely mean “weaker enemies” as Ephraim Inbar (2013) expects, but it will lead to an increasing privatization of violence, with militias and Jihadists roaming freely through border regions and former state territory, with no armies or security forces that are able to oppose them. For this scenario to happen, Saudi Arabia and Iran would have to lose control over the situation in Syria completely, with the West, Russia, China and Turkey as non-helping-bystanders, which is highly unlikely. But the struggle for hegemony will nonetheless be fought fiercely and brutally, with the borders of Israel becoming less and less secure. The war in Syria and its spill-over capacity is a nightmare for Israeli border security.

Furthermore, as the two rivals are fighting each other over Syria, chances for Israel to make amends with its other neighbours and regional players have decreased massively. The “Arab Spring” was a possible door-opener for a new chapter in Israeli-Arab relations. But now, with Syria in civil war and unrest all across the region, Israel is pre-occupied with securing its own society and borders and has no interest in a new mode of communication or new treaties. The current security situation in the region simply gives

no moving space to the Jewish nations, with governments and new leaders rising and falling and the national institutions eroding left, right and centre. With the uncertainties of who will govern the neighbours in the foreseeable future, Israel is not very optimistic regarding its surroundings. The struggle for hegemony between Saudi Arabia and Iran that is fought not only in Syria, but also in Iraq, Lebanon and other parts of the MENA-region, destabilizes these surroundings even further. Both sides are eager to gain the upper hand, and this is affecting the security architecture of the region. Because they apparently do not care that much for regional stability, and more for regional hegemony, and their struggle affects every part of the region, even the seemingly uninvolved Israel. Because the fighting destabilizes borders, governments and state stability, no country in the region and in the neighbourhood remains untouched by the events that were started by the two powers. Israel can not survive as a mere “island of the uninvolved” because what happens in the region directly affects Israel, one way or the other. One is border security and the chance of regional repercussions, but the other side of possible influences of the power struggle for Israel is worse: There is a probability for power politics mixing with ideology. As the two competitors both have a highly ideological mindset, they both see Israel as an occupying entity and a direct affront against their respective strands of Islam. The militias and Jihadist groups that they are using as proxies can be easily “motivated” to plan and execute a strike against Israel, for the liberation of Jerusalem is the ultimate goal of both Sunni and Shiite Jihadism alike. And it is also an (in the case of the house of Saud unwritten) goal for the two powers. Saudi Arabia itself would never attack Israel openly or threaten it, as it needs the support of the USA and the West to maintain its costly autocratic monarchy and shares Israel's fear of a nuclear Iran, but on the other hand, it will never abandon its self-perceived role as an Arab and Islamic role model which fights for the Arab cause – and Palestine is one of these. Furthermore, there are the groups that are most likely fighting in Syria on GCC support: the Sunni groups that are operating in Syria at the moment and have been and still are supported by the kingdom all have an inherent anti-Semitic agenda, as was shown in the sections above. Saudi Arabia, as long as it uses its Wahhabi ideology and finances Jihadist terror groups, can never be a reliable partner for Israel. Iran, on the other hand, is Israel's nemesis, and it would be an Israeli nightmare if Iran came out victorious in this struggle for regional hegemony. Iran openly shows its anti-Semitism time and time again in rhetoric and action, supporting and funding Hezbollah in its war against Israel. Iran will not keep Hezbollah from using the weapons that they acquired during the civil

war against the Jewish nation. More than that, Iran might push the organization towards a strike against Israel. A new front would be strategically unwise, but this would not be the first time that strategy is put aside in favour of anti-Semitic rage. And both factions might see a propagandistic value in a strike against Israel: Israel is a topic that has been used many times to rally popular support in times of (national) distress. Now, as the two powers do not only fight over territory, but over influence in the Arab world as well, an attack against Israel might be seen as a tool to get the public behind ones cause. One must not underestimate the appeal an attack on Israel might have to the groups that fight in Syria, and even for the powers that are behind them. But it is more likely that the powers restrain themselves and the Jihadists, as they think strategically first and foremost, with ideology coming second. But for Israel, even the slightest chance of an escalation of the conflict towards a war against the Jews, is enough to feel threatened. Israel does not have the luxury to think that strategic considerations and realism will automatically overrule possible ideological goals. Therefore, no matter how the situation between the two powers develops, and whoever “wins” this conflict, Israel's own security situation is massively affected by all the events.

5. The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

5.1. The Arab Uprisings as a Game Changer

When the so-called Arab awakening swept the MENA-region from west to east, the main conflict of the region suddenly lost a lot of its importance – at least for the moment. The conflict between Palestinians and Israel, over territory, civil rights and the rule of law, a fight over the legitimacy of nations that was on the top of the international priority list for decades, was overcome by the power of the Arab revolution. After 2011, three autocrats were no more, others were hard-pressed by demonstrations or violence on the streets, and the balance of power had shifted dramatically.

The conflict over Israel and Palestine has been a major concern for the people of the region for many years. Arabs all over the world identified themselves with the Palestinian cause, and every leader, autocratic or not, was well-advised to not have too close relations with the Jewish nation. The world as it had been pre-2011 meant a certain stability for Israel nonetheless. Its surroundings were ruled by autocrats, and, especially after the Cold War was over, most of these autocrats needed political support and economic investments from the USA and Europe. This meant that they could not possibly risk the economic benefit of dealing with the last remaining superpower for the sake of an emotional and ideological goal like destroying Israel. Furthermore, autocrats do not have to win elections. Therefore they don't have to give in to the public in highly emotionalized topics like Palestine and Israel. This was a very comfortable situation for Israel. It made deals with the autocrats, signed two peace treaties with autocrats and managed to stabilize its surroundings as much as possible by relying on these autocrats. Hosni Mubarak was Israel's most important ally in its fight against Hamas. And although the rhetoric was aggressive between the two, Israel even had come to terms with Bashar al-Assad (see respective sections in this paper). And although the rulers in Israel's neighbourhood never declared affection or at least respect towards the Jewish nation (in fact, they used anti-Israeli positions and propaganda as distraction in times of trouble and criticized Israel frequently to appease the public), Israel could be certain that they would not attack or interfere with the Israeli policy towards the Palestinians and especially Hamas and Gaza. Israel knew how to interpret the rhetorics on the one

hand and relied on the realism of the autocrats. Autocratic rule is, with all its downsides, one of the more predictable forms of government when it comes to foreign policy. The autocrat, as long as he/she is not driven by an ideological mission, wants to keep his/her power, therefore it will look for alliances and partnerships with the world, rather than aggression and war. Israel arranged itself with the autocratic rulers in Egypt, Jordan and other countries, slowly building up a working relationship, based not on trust but on the one mutual interest, and that was stability.

But after the revolutions and rebellions, the security architecture in the region has shifted, and the cards on the Palestine deck have been riffled. What happened in the Arab world was exactly what the Palestinian people have always praised themselves for doing: a people standing up against oppression and struggling for freedom. The people of the Arab world had finally overthrown the dictators and this was seen by, for example Hamas, as a direct and fierce blow to Israel:

In brief, the main thesis embraced by the group [Hamas] was that: “Changing the Egyptian regime means breaking the equation that has provided the Jews [sic] with security as regards their fears of the Egyptians, assuaged their hunger for reassurances about their existence, and provided them with protection from the anger of the masses. All these benefits to Israel fell under the headline of the peace process” (Berti 2012, 25).

The beginning of the Arab Spring was well-received by Hamas and Fatah alike, as it was seen as a chance to win against Israel (Hamas) and a new chance for progress in the quest for a Palestinian nation (Fatah). The Arab spring changed the rules of the game between Israelis and Palestinians profoundly: Israel could not rely on the autocrats of the region anymore, the old order that meant stability for Israel for so long collapsed. And for the Palestinians it meant a chance to resolve the conflict between the ruling parties in Gaza and the West Bank. The diffusion of Palestinian politics and the animosities between the radical Hamas and the secular Fatah was another certainty that was lost for Israel during the Arab awakening. After the beginning of the Arab Spring, the two factions sat together in 2011 for the first time since 2005 and agreed on the “Cairo agreement”, “in which Hamas and Fatah agreed to have new Palestinian elections, including, significantly, elections for the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the parliament and supreme political body of the PLO” (Tuastad 2013).

It was fear that got the two Palestinian groups to the table, the fear that what had happened in the Arab world to autocratic rulers who did not care for public opinion or the needs of their people, might happen to themselves if they would not put their differences aside. So the Arab awakening also changed the balance in the inner-Palestinian conflicts and brought the two sides together. And although the newly-found Palestinian unity is not a marriage out of love, but of necessity, it is nonetheless a change that might not please some Israeli analysts and policy makers. A unified Palestinian government means a stronger negotiation team and a unified position towards the peace process. The Arab uprisings have shown to Fatah and Hamas that they can not continue the internal fighting, the corruption and the shady dealings. They understood that they had to show to their people that they mean business on the Palestinian issue. The question is how long it will take before the serious differences between the two will result in another conflict. The radical ideology of Hamas makes this inevitable.

For Israel on the other hand, the Arab Spring meant two things concerning the Palestinian issue: first, the fall of old allies and certainties in the region meant that Israel now had to consider several other players besides themselves and the West when it came to its own actions towards the Palestinians. Before the revolutions, Israel could be certain that a public outcry in its neighbourhood concerning Israeli policy towards the Palestinians would have no dramatic political effect in the neighbouring states. For example, Israel did not fear Egyptian or Syrian retaliation during its war against Hamas 2008-09. It could rely on the autocratic *realpolitik*. When the Muslim Brotherhood came to power in Egypt, Israel feared that the reaction from Cairo towards another attack on Hamas would be entirely different, an assessment that proved to be right in the latest conflict with Hamas in 2012. During the “Operation Pillar of Defence”, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party demonstratively sided with Hamas. What Israel did not expect was the diplomatic finesse that the MB used to get the two parties to agree to a ceasefire. The unexpected diplomatic effort showed that, even if the environment did not react as hostile as Israel would have expected, it still led to uncertainties in the planning of the operation. Before, Israel could rely on Mubarak to stay quiet. Now the MB got actively involved in something that was seen as “none of their business” by Israel.

The second major change in the Israeli-Palestinian issue is the erosion of security and stability in the region. As the borders get more and more insecure, and Israel has to face

enemies more dangerous than the Palestinians, one could be tempted to call for Israel to make peace with the Palestinians and use the money and energy for more important tasks. But Israel decided to rely on its “bunker mentality” (Krebs 2011), seeing everything that is a step away from the status quo as a security challenge. Therefore, peace can not be made as long as the region is in turmoil.

Israel has high demands for peace with the Palestinians, a price that some call unrealistic. But does Israel really have a choice? A peace with the West Bank and Fatah is not worth anything as long as the other half of the future Palestine is still threatening the Jewish nation with annihilation. Even more so as the surroundings are insecure and unstable, Israel will want a lasting and solid peace agreement with the whole of Palestine if they want one right now at all. It is far from certain that peace with the Palestinians would be beneficial to Israel amidst the Arab unrest. A peace agreement with the Palestinians, and possibly even a Palestinian state, is not the solution to the threats Israel faces. And from a security perspective, an agreement with the Palestinian side is the least pressing topic for Israel right now. As the old order is crumbling and the stability of the region is gone, Israel faces threats from non-state and state actors, challenges that demand the Israeli attention more than the Palestinian issue. As long as the region is not stabilized, an agreement with the Palestinians would change nothing for Israel. Before the unrest, an agreement between the two would have been beneficial for both of them. But as Israel is feeling threatened by the developments and is wary of the outcomes, the possibility of a Palestinian-Israeli peace is becoming smaller and smaller. On the other hand, it could be the other way around: solving the Palestinian issue could lead to a shrinking of anti-Israeli views in the Arab world, as this is (seemingly) only linked to the question of Palestine. If the conflict is solved, Israel would have a greater chance to make peace with the other neighbours and new governments:

The Arab Spring has dramatically altered the political landscape of the region, and while the final outcomes of the political transitions underway in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria are today far from certain, the mere fact that public opinion in these countries is bound to have a greater say on any future government is deeply unsettling for Israel. In a rapidly changing Middle East, the festering Israeli-Palestinian conflict is bound to increase Israel's isolation and related sense of insecurity (Dessi 2012, 12).

The demands of the public and the pressure the people use on the new governments would be also directed at Israel and Palestine. So, for Israel to be safe and avert the wrath of the Arab public, an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement could be a good start. But the negative Arab public opinion on Israel (see chapter 2.3.) is far from deriving mainly from the Palestinian issue. There is a hatred that goes deeper than simply the want for a Palestinian nation. Western commentators and analysts have an easy time predicting an end to Arab hostilities towards Israel once the issue of Palestine is sorted out. For Israel, and possibly for parts of the Arab public as well, the issue goes far deeper: Arab enmity is derived not from the in-existence of Palestine, but from the existence of Israel. These voices amidst the Arab world will not be silenced by a Palestinian nation, only by the end of Israel. There is no certainty for Israel that peace with the Palestinians now, amidst Arab turmoil and chaos, will do them any good.

The Arab Spring and what came out of it changed the situation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict dramatically. Before, there was a more or less stable surrounding, predictable and known, and the conflict between the two was the main issue. Now everything is falling to pieces and is built anew, with new leaders, new threats and possibly new borders. And although the Palestinians saw the Arab uprisings as a continuation of their own struggle for freedom, the revolutions did them no good.

5.2. Hamas – Winner or Loser of the Arab Spring?

The Hamas is Israel's major security concern in its conflict with the Palestinians. Hamas rules Gaza since the 2006 elections. Founded in 1976-77 by the Sheikh Ahmed Yassin as a welfare organisation and sister-organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood, it had become the leading anti-Israeli Palestinian Islamist organisation during the first Intifadah of 1987. It was then that Hamas transformed from a social grassroots organisation into an armed group, to counter the emergence of the "Islamic Jihad", a concurrent Islamist faction that came into existence at the same time (cf. Botschaft des Staates Israel 2006, 3). The organisation has since then attacked Israeli citizens and military personnel alike, opposed the peace process and rules in Gaza with an Iron Islamist fist since 2006. Their election came only a year after Israel had unilaterally and unconditionally (meaning they demanded nothing in return from the Palestinians) cleared the small strip of all Israeli settlements and soldiers, as an act of good will and intent. This

backfired, as Hamas was elected and immediately after that, armed groups – both affiliated and not connected to the Hamas – began to coat the south of Israel with rocket and mortar shell fire¹⁵. In December 2008, the IDF began “Operation Cast Lead”, to stop the rocket fire and weapons smuggling from and into the Gaza strip. The operation seriously hurt Hamas and the other terrorist organisations in Gaza, and rocket fire onto Israeli territory had decreased from then on.

Since the election, and even more so after “Cast Lead”, Gaza is under siege. Israel has built up a blockade to prevent the allies of Hamas to arm the group, and to keep up the pressure on the major security threat that Gaza poses for the Jewish nation. Hamas had since then been isolated and its allies had difficulties in arming and supporting the group. The organisations main allies in the region were, according to Israel, Syria and Iran, who supported them with weapons and know-how, and money is given to them by private donors in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries (cf. *ibid*). Especially Syria was an important partner for Hamas. The exiled leadership of the organisation has been based in Damascus for years, the political office headed by Khaleed Mashal in particular. Before the Arab Spring, the Hamas was outlawed by the world, supported by the Arab world and interconnected with the various regimes Israel regards as enemies and threats to its security. The organisation itself is Sunni, as the Muslim Brotherhood, but it had ties to Shiite regimes in Syria and Iran, getting money and other forms of support from them.

The Arab Spring and particularly the revolution in Egypt was greeted in a very positive fashion by Hamas. Egyptian president Mubarak had co-operated with Israel on the Gaza blockade, blocked the smuggling tunnels between the Sinai and Gaza and secured the peninsula and the border region. Even more delighting for Hamas was the election of Mohammed Morsi as Egyptian president and the impressive victory of the Freedom and Justice Party in the 2012 elections. In 2012, it seemed as if Hamas could be the silent winner of the Arab Spring, as the successful revolutions paved the way for political Islam in Egypt and Tunisia, ousting the autocrats that collaborated with the West and Israel. The organisations was certain to benefit from the uprisings, as the public opinion in the Arab world is very favourable towards the Palestinian struggle. Mark Perry, a US-expert on terrorism, assessed the situation for Hamas in 2012 like this: “My belief is

¹⁵ Between the withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza strip in 2005 and 2008, the IDF recorded a doubling of the total number of rockets fired from 2005 to 2006, and again from 2006 to 2007, with the peak in 2008 with 3278 rockets fired from Gaza onto Israeli territory (numbers from idfblog.com 2012).

that, when this crisis subsides, Arab governments will *throw* money at Hamas” (Woodward 2012). This was the majority belief after the first year of the Arab awakening, and Hamas shared the optimistic view. And even Israel agreed with Hamas on the assessment of the Arab uprisings, denouncing the revolutions as undemocratic and Islamist almost from day one. The Israeli government feared nothing more than an Arab surrounding that is even more supportive of Hamas and Gaza as it was before the uprising, and it dreaded the implications a MB-led government in Egypt might have for the blockade.

Therefore, in 2012, the IDF launched another operation in Gaza, operation “Pillar of Defence”, after Palestinian extremists launched hundreds of rockets at Israel in a 24-hour period (cf. Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012). It was not only a retaliation strike, but also a sign of intent, aimed at Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. The message was clear: “Don't go there”. The Gaza strip was to remain isolated, and if Palestinian militants were to be firing rockets at Israel, the Jewish nation will answer, whether the MB is governing Egypt or not. It is not far-fetched to assume that Hamas allowed the rocket fire from Gaza into Israel to happen because it was most certain that the new Egyptian government would support it against any Israeli retaliation, but they were disappointed by Cairo: Although the Brotherhood and the Egyptian government condemned the strikes against Gaza, withdrew their ambassador from Israel and sent the Egyptian prime minister to visit Gaza city as a sign of support, nothing more happened. Hamas had hoped that Egypt would support their struggle against the “Zionist regime” with more than idle words and diplomatics, but the Islamist government had to give in to hard political realities. They left their “brothers” alone in the war, did not ease the blockade around Gaza, not even from the Egyptian side and brokered a ceasefire between the two sides rather than siding with Hamas. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Freedom and Justice Party had no other choice than limited (rhetorical) support for Hamas and passivity concerning the Israeli strike. The *realpolitik* made it impossible for Egypt to back Hamas. After the revolution and the collapse of parts of the Egyptian economic, Cairo needed the US and US-allies' economic aid more than anything else. And the MB knew that if they sided with Hamas, or even more so if they went to war against Israel, that money would be gone. And there was no other source of income for Egypt at that time. Therefore the Sunni Islamist government restrained their brothers in Gaza, told them to hold back and stop the attacks on Israel (cf. Karon 2012). For Hamas, this was a very bitter pill to swallow. But they had to give in, not only

because the MB was their mother-organisation and the ties between the two are historically strong and partly hierarchical. They also had to agree to the ceasefire because of the Arab Spring in Syria:

The Arab Spring in Syria was a complete disaster for Hamas. There, a Shiite regime fought against Sunni Muslims, a war that caught the Sunni Hamas in a quagmire. Their political leadership was based in Damascus, guests to the autocrat Bashar al-Assad. The organisation got money, equipment and training from the Shiite powers Syria and Iran, and now those two started a war that was perceived as a war against Sunnites in Syria. Therefore, when the fighting intensified and it became clear that Assad was warring against his own people, Hamas had to make a choice: stick to the old ally despite him killing your “brothers of faith”, or denouncing the regime that was your host for years.

And Hamas did what was necessary and right from their point of view: “I salute all the nations of the Arab Spring and I salute the heroic people of Syria who are striving for freedom, democracy and reform,” Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas' prime minister in Gaza, told his supporters in Cairo at a friday prayer in February (Al-Mughraby/Famy 2012). Hamas did what was expected from them from a religious point of view, but something that was not wise on a strategic level: they denounced Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian regime, broke off all ties with the Syrian government and announced their support for the revolution in Syria. This shows again how, in the MENA region and elsewhere, ideology and ideological motivation is much more relevant than some analysts are ready to confess. The move away from the one actor in the region that openly and massively supported Hamas would not have happened any time if it was not for political and ideological ties to the other side of the conflict. Hamas broke out with Assad because Hamas was a Sunni organisation, a daughter of the Muslim Brotherhood. The policy-relevant part of Hamas' decision to reject Assad were the Palestinians in Syria. There are about 500.000 Palestinians living in Syria as refugees, the majority of them Sunni and sympathetic to the uprising (cf. Reuters 2012). Hamas came to the conclusion that it must not lose the sympathies of these Palestinians because this would mean less support in the Palestinian territories and a de-legitimization of the organisation in the homeland. Therefore it was impossible for Haniyeh, Mashal and the movement to stand by their long-time ally. As one can see from the decision-making-process of Hamas, the war that is waged in Syria is not only about geopolitics, hegemony and strategic high ground. It is about ideology and religion as well.

The political leadership of the movement left Damascus in February 2012 and moved its headquarter to Cairo. Khaleed Mashal and the others left Syria as the rebellion got increasingly violent. At the same time, the revolution had brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power in Egypt. What Hamas intended, and what became evident after Haniyeh declared Hamas' support for the Syrian opposition in Cairo (and not Gaza), was a united Muslim Brotherhood front against Assad, and a Sunni, MB-led revolution for all Arab countries.

Equally important though [for the decision to support the opposition] was the success of Muslim Brotherhood parties elsewhere in the Arab world, brought to power by the events of the Arab Uprising in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco that formed an alternative to the Syrian alliance. Emboldened by this regional reconfiguration that saw Qatari pledges of aid worth some \$400 million to the besieged authority in Gaza, by May 2013 Hamas appeared to have stepped up its support for the Syrian resistance, going beyond a mere rhetorical level, 7 with reports of the transfer of technology and know-how to FSA fighters in the decisive battle for Qusair (Akhter 2014, 2).

They made their decision, thinking that Assad would not be able to stay in power for long. In February 2012, the majority of people thought that Assad would be gone before the end of the year, similar to Ben Ali, Gaddafi and Mubarak. Hamas deemed a Sunni-led front against Israel far more in their interest than their alliance with the Shiite powers.

But seen in hindsight, this was the decision that most likely cost Hamas the winning side in the Arab Spring. Support from outside seriously decreased after the fallout with Syria and the consequently cooled-down relations with Iran. Iran especially was shocked to see that Hamas turned against them (cf. Chalhoub 2013). Furthermore, the coup d'etat in Egypt brought down the Muslim Brotherhood, and with that the vision Hamas had for the future of the region was shattered. Without the MB, Qatari money will not flow as freely to Hamas, and the Sunni led resistance against Israel was but a distant dream. Hamas has since then accepted that they made a mistake by siding with the uprising. As groups like Al Qaeda gained the upper hand inside the opposition movement and Assad remained in power, Hamas tried to make amends with their former allies, visiting Iran, Syria and Hezbollah (cf. *ibid.*). The movement declared its renewed love for Syria in October 2013 :

In a recent interview with the pro-Syrian Al Mayadeen channel based in Beirut, the Hamas deputy chief, Mousa Abu Marzouk asserted in October 2013 that Khaled Meshaal was 'wrong' to have raised the flag of the Syrian revolution on his historic return to Gaza at the end of last year. [...] subsequent remarks by Marzouk during the course of the interview describing the Syrian state as the 'beating heart of the Palestinian cause' and acknowledging the previous 'favour' of the Syrian regime towards the movement may be more indicative of shift in Hamas's position of open opposition towards the Asad [sic!] regime (ibid., 1).

But, as Akhter described in his analysis of the Hamas position towards the civil war in Syria (ibid.), the organisation can not simply join the pro-Assad-camp again. The fact that Assad attacked Palestinian refugee camps on various occasions during the war, and the personal animosities between Assad and Mashal make it impossible for Hamas to simply go back to the status quo ante. The Palestinians are sympathetic to the Syrian opposition movement and feel that they are in a similar situation as they are under Israeli occupation. Hamas openly supporting Assad would therefore completely erode the support at the Palestinian base.

The first year of the Arab Spring looked like a dream come true for Hamas. The supporters of Israel were overthrown, the Muslim Brotherhood came to power in Egypt and there was the real possibility of new sources of funding from the Gulf countries. They decided to place their bets on the Sunni side, breaking up with Assad, Iran and Hezbollah. Now, two years later, the tables have turned completely. Hamas has lost its partner in Egypt, the Gulf states are warring in Syria, and Hamas slowly runs out of allies. The organisation has been hugely affected by the Arab Spring and has not yet recovered from the fast changes in the region and the rise and fall of its allies.

5.3. Chances of Progress in the Conflict

The biggest implication the Arab Spring had for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was that it decreased the attention it got from external actors. Before the revolutions in the MENA-region, the Palestinian struggle and the conflict with Israel was the main source of conflict in the region. The major global powers all dealt with the conflict, as it was seen as affecting the whole region. Mark N. Katz described the situation “ante Arab Awakening” like this:

What previously made the Israeli/Palestinian dispute important for international relations was that it was considered important by so many others. Because whatever happened in the Israeli/Palestinian dispute affected the Arab World as a whole, it also affected the prospects for outside powers which sought to be influential there. During the Cold War, American support for Israel was so unpopular in the Arab World generally that the Soviet Union's adoption of a pro-Palestinian stance resulted in Moscow enjoying a highly positive image in many Arab countries for many years. On the other hand, one of the reasons why President Sadat ended Egypt's alliance with the Soviet Union in the 1970s was that he (and many Egyptians) believed that Moscow was not doing enough to help the Arab world vis-à-vis Israel (Katz 2013).

Now, Katz continues, the situation has changed dramatically. The Arab world is pre-occupied with its own internal struggles, and the Palestinian issue receives only very little attention. One could be tempted to think that a less emotionalized environment should be beneficial for the solution of this conflict. Furthermore, the solution of the Israel/Palestine conflict might seem a benefit for the whole region.

But the reality is quite different. Neither of the two sides involved seems to be genuinely interested in a sincere talk about the conditions for peace. On the contrary, Israel has continued the building of settlements in the West Bank, causing anger on the Palestinian side and consternation and irritation in the West. The Palestinians, on the other hand, while formally having resolved their internal conflict, struggle to find a position that is a basis for negotiations acceptable for the Jewish nation. Although the USA initiated a new round of peace talks in June 2013, with Secretary of State John Kerry in the lead, until now nothing constructive has come out of it. Mr Kerry urged both sides to come to terms with each other, as a failure in these peace talks would likely lead to a

“third Intifadah” (cf. Wroughton 2013). Israeli Prime Minister and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas agreed on a fresh round of peace talks, but these talks were flawed from the start.

According to Kerry’s plan, which both sides endorsed, the Israelis and Palestinians would reach a “final status” agreement by April 29 of this year. Kerry specifically rejected the idea of another “framework” that would merely outline areas of potential agreement. The Quartet of the U.S., European Union, United Nations, and Russia had tried that approach a decade before, and it had failed abysmally. So Kerry wanted the parties to resolve key issues, including borders, Jerusalem, security, water rights, and refugees, in nine months. Formal talks began in August, but broke down by November. No agreement was reached on any of the final status issues. In addition, Netanyahu had introduced a new issue—that the Palestinians must not merely grant recognition to Israel, as other countries had done, but recognize Israel specifically as a “Jewish state” (Judis 2014).

The recognition of Israel as a “Jewish state” led to another major point of conflict in the discussions between Israel and the Palestinians. And while Judis blamed this in his article on Israel and Netanyahu, the breakdown has another component: The Palestinian demand of making it possible for the Palestinian refugees of 1948 to return to their homeland. This would turn the identity of Israel upside down, and that is something that Israel will never agree to. Therefore Netanyahu introduced the issue, knowing fully well that the Palestinian side would reject it – the return of fugitives is a key issue for them – but also knowing that he has to demand this. Israel has a very distinct self-awareness of the catastrophe that led to its emergence (see 2.3.) and the “Jewish identity” is something that serves as a identifying common denominator of Israel as a safe haven for those that are suffering under Anti-semitism worldwide. If this Jewish identity is no more, than Israel would cease to exist.

Israel fears for its security and the integrity of its nation. The Arab Awakening has left the country deeply troubled and anxious of any new changes. Israel developed a very passive approach to developments in its surroundings, tending to not taking action until it is very clear what will come out of anything, not supporting anyone, but instead pragmatically trying to deal with whoever is in charge in a neighbouring country. That is how they sat out the various coup d'etat's in the region. Israel just waited and then did what was best for itself and itself alone. Pro-active involvement was only applied when there

was a (real or perceived) threat that needed to be dealt with. Constant rocket fire or kidnapping of soldiers, aggressive rhetorics from Iran or some paramilitary organisation for instance. But Israel was not active when it concerned diplomacy in the last 15 years. Israel knows that a peace agreement with the West Bank and Fatah alone would change nothing, and Hamas is still refusing to talk about anything more than an extended ceasefire¹⁶. And with the region in turmoil, it would mean even less. Because earlier, Israel could see that peace with the Palestinians could mean peace with its neighbours in the middle- or longterm. But as leaders come and go, and with conflict all around, it just does not see this tactical advantage anymore. Israel is therefore very wary and would need serious security assurances before talking about peace. Israel sees itself surrounded by uncertainty, the worst possible surrounding in international relations. A state needs predictable neighbours and a predictable regional system to feel safe, and Israel even more so than others. And for that matter, Israel sees no better future on the horizon and is therefore interested in maintaining the status quo, concerning Fatah and concerning Hamas. So this means that Israel is interested in peace talks, as talks mean status quo, means stability. But Israel sees no real chance for peace with the Palestinians, therefore it engages in peace talks without any clear agenda or initiative, simply maintaining a status quo that is flawed but known. The “bunker mentality” adopted by the Israeli government has lead to a situation that is unsatisfying and safe at the same time: just wait how things turn out, don't take the initiative and don't make any concessions to anyone. Israeli policy towards the Palestinians seems to be guided by these principles.

But can anyone actually blame the Jewish nation for this approach? As a matter of fact, the Arab Spring has led to a deterioration of Israeli security, as Islamist parties won elections in Egypt and Tunisia, civil war broke out in Syria, Iran extending its influence on the immediate Israeli neighbourhood and violent Islamism gaining ground across the region. For the first time since its establishment, Israel faces four borders that are subject to terrorist activities at the same time: Egypt, Gaza, Syria and Lebanon. From a security perspective, Israel faces now a far more dangerous environment than before the Arab Spring. So why would Israel broker a peace agreement with Palestine while its surroundings are so unstable?

16 A „Hudna“, as Hamas calls it. The term means „armistice“ or „ceasefire“, but it usually has a specific timeframe. Hamas has used this concept of „Hudna“ various times to regain its strength before breaking its own agreement.

Because it would be the wise thing to do and the chances for Israeli gains coming out of an agreement could be as great as never before, one might argue. An agreement between Israel and Palestine would seriously affect the perception of Israel in the Arab public, and would take away one of the most useful tools of Arab Anti-Israeli propaganda. A peace with Palestine would benefit Israel in many ways, while clinging to the status quo will only make it worse. The Arab Spring as a popular movement might lose its Anti-Israeli momentum, once the Palestinian issue is sorted out and Palestine can emerge as a more or less sovereign nation. But there are parts of the Arab public that don't see the missing Palestinian state as the main issue. It is the existence of Israel that is at the heart of the conflict for actors like Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas and parts of the Muslim Brotherhood and Arab media. While the issue of Palestine was the core of the conflict for the West and the Western analysts, for a certain part of the Arab world the issue was not Palestine, but Israel itself. As long as Israel exists, the conflict exists. And the Arab Spring is seen as the beginning of a new chapter in this. As London-based Arab-daily Al-Quds Al-Arabi wrote in reaction to the reality of the Arab Spring:

It pains us that the priority of the Egyptian government is to fight its own people and crack down on Hamas, coordinating with Israel under the pretext of fighting terror. It pains us that the Syrian army replaces its enmity for Israel with enmity for its own people, destroying its cities and bombing its people with weapons of mass destruction... weapons it has never used against Israel (cf. Miller 2013).

So what is really concerning the author of this article is that the Arab governments are either co-operating with Israel, or they are using weapons against their own people instead of using it against Israel. For these sort of opinion leaders, the fighting will not end with the creation of Palestine. It will only end with the end of Israel's existence. Therefore, the Arab Spring is not embraced by Israel as a chance to solve the Palestinian conflict. It is a possible new challenge and Israel seems to rely on its old strategy of sitting it out, as all the challenges that occurred in the Arab world before. This might be a passive and nerve-wrecking approach, but for Israel, it seems to be the only approach possible.

6. The Future for Israel in the New Middle East – an Outlook

6.1. Scenario 1: Failing States in the Region: “Worst Case Scenario”

The future of the Middle East after the Arab Spring remains uncertain. No one is able to foresee how the future of the region will look like. But for Israel and Israeli national security, an assessment of possible developments seems necessary. In this last chapter, three possible scenarios on the future of the region will be briefly elaborated and possible Israeli reactions to the new environment will be given.

The first scenario is, so to speak, the “Somalification” of the MENA-region. The revolutions will not end, and with the old order clinching to power, civil war will break out across the region. Or a spill-over of the existing civil war in Syria and the anarchy in Libya might result in Arab governments and regimes falling apart. The governments are no longer able to execute their power, the monopoly on the use of force has crumbled and there are various non-state actors roaming freely through the region. In this scenario, terrorism and violent Islamism is on the rise, various groups are fighting for power and influence. The Arab Spring has turned the region into a post-revolutionary battlefield. Civil society is not able to establish itself, the economy collapses and the resulting poverty and steadily rising numbers of unemployment fire radical tendencies. Syria will most likely be the first of a number of countries that are failing, with Lebanon and Jordan following as a result of the refugee-situation and the unstable borders. The revolution would reach the until now stable regional powers like Saudi Arabia or Iran, and the Saud monarchy will repress the opposition movement with brute force, similar to Assad in Syria. The regional powers will not be able to execute any form of stabilizing policies, as they are occupied at home. This scenario will only be possible if the United States complete their pacific pivot, leaving the region altogether and not engaging itself in any stabilizing operations. Furthermore, the EU, Russia and China would also have to leave the region on its own, deterred by the violence and unstable political and security situation.

In this scenario, Israel is confronted with a lot of insecure borders, where Jihadists and other terrorist groups can operate without any restrictions by the failing governments. The border with Syria, Lebanon and Egypt will be under constant threat of attack and there might well be a serious threat by suicide bombers, mortar shells and rocket fire from these regions. Israel would have to secure its borders more than before, leading to a highly militarized society with the constant fear of attack. Israel would most likely further engage in its “bunker mentality”, securing the borders and tightening its relations to the West. But Israel would be more or less alone in the region and there is a constant risk of war with the roaming groups at its borders. The situation for Israel would deteriorate enormously, as there are no predictable nations anymore, but a lot of non-state actors with radical ideologies and a special hatred towards the Jewish nation. The regional security architecture would collapse completely, as the war between the Muslim factions would intensify and the governments would not be able to contain the inner-state violence anymore. Constant civil war and sectarian fighting would mean an environment of never-ending threat and violence.

On the other hand, for Israel this scenario could also mean a short-term relief in Israeli threat-perception: If the nations of the region are falling apart, then the most potent aggressors against Israel will fall apart as well. As Israel tends to view state actors as the main threat to its security, the failing of said entities would mean a lesser risk of classic inter-state conflict. If aggressive leaders fall and the countries descend into chaos, no actor will be strong enough by itself to threaten the Jewish nation. Furthermore, as the ensuing chaos in the region would be heavily interconnected with the Sunni-Shia schism, the emerging non-state actors will be fighting amongst each other. And as long as they are fighting each other, there is no capacity for attacking Israel. Individual terrorism and terrorist attacks will remain a risk, but with its massive defensive capabilities, Israel is very well adjusted to these developments. From a realist perspective, a “failing MENA” might not be the worst outcome of the Arab Spring for Israel. It would be the last remaining state power in the region, the only nation with a functional state apparatus and defence structures, therefore capable of outmatching any threat of non-state actors.

Scenario 1 is not very likely to occur in the near future. There is too much at stake for the outside powers (the West, China, Russia) to let the region fall apart. Secondly, the people that started the revolutions across the region are more interested in stability, prosperity and economic growth than in constant revolution and sectarian violence.

What might happen is a “light version” of the scenario, with the old imperial borders collapsing and new states emerging as a result of constant violence and terrorism. And we may witness a constant struggle between rather weak state security institutions and radicals. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia might get de-stabilized as the West and Iran engage in closer cooperation if the nuclear issue is resolved. Because Saudi Arabia is stabilized by its status as number one Arab partner for the global economy in the region, the re-emergence of Iran to the stage of world politics could lead to economic difficulties in the kingdom, leading to mass protests and demand of reforms. The de-stabilization of Saudi Arabia and the other GCC-member states bears potential disaster for the economic and security architecture of the region.

But be it likely or unlikely, Israel is certain to keep a close eye on its border regions, increasing the number of troops there and further seal itself off the region. As this is a scenario that Israel will certainly be considering.

6.2. Scenario 2: Revival of Autocracies: “Status Quo Ante”

This scenario might also be called the “Egyptian way”. The nations in the region are returning to the status quo ante of the Arab Spring. The prototype for this development is Egypt, where the military tries to install a “System Mubarak without Mubarak”, meaning a strong leader who is a former military general. The regional countries will take a U-turn and develop backwards, and strong leaders and autocrats will try to restore the old order.

In this scenario, the revolution has left the people tired and without visible developments to the better. The revolution has worn itself out, the people are no longer able and willing to take the streets and demand freedom. What they want is food, work and stability. A strong man or a clique, most likely out of the military or the establishment, will capitalize from the situation and seize the power. After a period of brutal repression against the remaining opposition, they will restore the countries to the situation that has been characterizing before the Arab Spring. A strong government with a small clique of rulers, paternalistic economy and a few personal freedoms as long as they do not interfere with politics. The global powers will most likely arrange themselves with the new regimes sooner rather than later, because autocracies were guarantors for security and stability in the region in the past. Furthermore, the MENA region is still of great importance for the global economy because of its vast deposits of crude oil and natural gas.

Economic interests will most likely overrule moral objections, like they did during the era before the Arab Spring. The region will fall back into old habits, with autocrats ruling and cooperating with the West where it fits their interests.

For Israel, this might most likely be the best case scenario. At least, it is a world that they know and have grown accustomed to. This suits Israel's passive approach to its surroundings as well as it fits the picture the Israeli government seems to have of its neighbouring countries. Democracy is seen as a threat to Israel, therefore strong rulers that cooperate out of the demand for internal stability are preferable to a government that might give in to anti-Israeli demands of the public. Furthermore, as has been shown before, Israel usually fares better with autocrats, as their sole interest is the maintenance of their own power basis, and they are usually not highly ideological. Like with Mubarak and even Assad, Israel would be able to arrange themselves with the new “strong men” and might even get the peace talks that they secretly held for the past few years (cf. Kershner 2012, Karni 2014) to be continued. This would suit Israeli interests best, as Israeli policy-makers and defence experts are wary of change in the Arab world and more adapted to these surroundings. This scenario would leave Israel in very much the same position as it was before the Arab Spring, but with new players to deal with. Whether autocrats like Assad remain in power or not, Israel could continue its efforts to broker a cold peace with these leaders with a lot less difficulties than they would have to deal with were the Arab Spring to prevail. Furthermore, it could still use its status as the only democracy in the MENA-region as an argument for “special relations” with the West. As the Arab countries are still in autocratic hands, Israel will continue to be the first partner for Western countries, and will be able to count on their support if threatened. Be this as it may, there are risks still remaining: The new or old autocrats will need money and economical support from the start to kickstart the broken down economies. And this money will most likely come from the GCC countries – especially Saudi Arabia – and Iran, and thus the two competitors for regional hegemony will try to expand their spheres of influence through economical support. Iran especially will demand certain quid pro quo services. If autocrats agree to this, the threat to Israel could, contrarily to the main assumptions, get even graver. As Iran could export its ideology via economical assistance, the perceived threat grows for Israel. Iran is seen as Israel's main enemy in the region, and a broader Shiite axis could lead to a serious deterioration of Israeli national security perceptions.

The second scenario does seem the most likely to prevail in the near future. In Egypt, this is already happening, with General al-Sisi running for presidency and the Muslim Brotherhood crushed. In Syria, there are indications that the regime will win the civil war. But the autocracies that might come out victorious now must be aware that there will always be the possibility of new uprisings if they do not meet public demands.

6.3. Scenario 3: Arab Democracy Prevails: “A New Era”

This scenario would be the alternative future that most of the liberal commentators and humanists would prefer: The Arab Spring becomes a success, the autocracies of the past are crumbling and a new, broadly accepted civil self-awareness leads to a democratic MENA-region. The revolutions have helped to found a civil society that is based on certain, distinctively Arab interpretations of human rights and basic freedoms. A kind of democracy (not necessarily the Western model of democracy) becomes the new form of government-building and political legitimacy. The revolutions have rocked the societies to their cores and the majority of the people agree on the main issues that are concerning them. Economically, a sort of “Arab capitalism” prevails, with a distinctive form of welfare state. The question remains though, how the deeply corrupt structures in the economies can be cleaned and optimized.

This scenario has, like the other two, risks and opportunities for Israel. But this possible future is most likely the least welcomed scenario from an Israeli perspective. The environment of the Jewish nation would change radically, statehood and governance of its neighbours would improve dramatically and Israel would have to deal with much more confident neighbours. Furthermore, it would lose its status as the sole democracy in the region, turning this former advantage into nothing. The rest of the world – especially the West – will feel more at ease in dealing with the rest of the region, and Israel would become one among others in terms of economic and political support. The Arab world would most likely see a substantial rise in trade and investments, the economies would flourish and as a result, the countries are more likely to act bolder in their regional power politics. With more self-esteem, these countries will not be as easily persuaded to not act against Israeli policies towards Palestinians or militia groups. Furthermore if they are economically better off and better integrated into the world market, Israel stands little chance should there ever be a conflict with its neighbours. Egypt for example has the potential to be one of the top economies in the region, should it over-

come its corruption and paternalistic system. If that were the case, Israel would be facing economical problems and few support were it to engage in a conflict with this potential regional power.

Furthermore, an Arab world with democratic structures could lead to a wave of anti-Israeli governments in the region. Israel is still a very emotional issue for many people in the Arab countries, and Israel fears the consequences that elections might have on the relations with its neighbours. The experiments in Tunisia and Egypt both ended in Islamist parties winning the elections, and those movements traditionally have few positive views about the Jewish nation. The possibility that the deeply-rooted anti-Israel stands could be used to maximize votes and win elections is something that Israel would have to deal with when it comes to Arab democracy. But not only could these sentiments be used as a populist appeal to the masses during elections, it might well be that they are actually put into reality in one way or the other. The concrete policy consequences might include revision of the peace treaty (if there is one), extended support for Palestinian organisations, revision of economical contracts, stronger pro-Palestinian positions at the UN or other international organisations, anti-Israeli alliances in regional politics and so on. This would seriously deteriorate Israeli security in the regional context.

Another possible negative outcome of this scenario would be the “sectarianization” of politics in the Arab world. Many people identify themselves over religious and small-scale ethnical borders, and the political parties might well reflect these cleavages. As in Lebanon, Gaza, Egypt and Tunisia, the parties might become more or less religiously or ethnically clustered entities. This might lead to extended support from the sectarian archenemies Iran and Saudi Arabia for their respective religious partners in the countries. And especially with Iran, another Shiite-led nation at its borders is something that would seriously affect Israeli security perceptions.

The positive outcome of this scenario however, would change Israeli position in the region to the better: A civil society that wants peace and stability, rather than conflict and politics based on piety, could demand a more cooperative stand towards Israel. The security architecture in the region would be far more stable than it ever was since 1948. Israel could deal with its neighbours without restraints, full cooperation would become a possibility. The region might witness a process similar to Europe after the second World War, as there might be a mutual agreement on cooperation and mutually assured security, rather than war and conflict.

So while the last scenario outlined in this paper might be very positive for the regional balance of power and chances of an enduring stabilization of the region, Israel will not rely on the positive outcome. Rather, as it has shown in the past, it will be very pessimistic towards these radical changes, fearing the negative outcomes more than it looks forward to possibilities. The threats usually outweigh the chances for the Jewish nation. Israel did not fare well after revolutions in the environment or popular votes. The Iranian revolution has turned a former ally into a nemesis, and the elections in the Palestinian territories witnessed a majority for notoriously anti-Israeli Hamas. Therefore, Israel has no evidence that Arab democracy would be beneficial. Put in a nutshell, Israel might well prefer a regional system where the people do not have too much to say when it comes to foreign policies.

Scenario 3 would make an interesting experiment in the MENA-region. But unfortunately, it is not very likely that the ruling elites suddenly embrace democracy and let the people decide on who governs them. The hopes and dreams that were connected with the popular uprisings have proven to be unrealistic thus far. At least in the near future, such a radical turn towards civil society and democracy seems highly unlikely.

6. Conclusion

The Arab Spring and the consecutive events changed the landscape of the MENA-region radically. There were a few successful experiments with democracy in Tunisia and Egypt, but at present, the uprisings could not fulfil the great expectations that many people in the regions and leaders around the world had for them. On the contrary, it seems like the counter-revolution is marching through the Arab world. In Egypt, the military establishment tries to retake and consolidate the power that was lost after the fall of Mubarak. In Syria, the revolution has been taken over by Islamists and the Assad-regime is gaining ground. Tunisia appears to be the only post-Arab-Spring nation where it looks like there could be something like a sustainable development towards democracy. Even though the Islamist Ennahda-party had won the majority of parliamentary seats in the first election after the revolution, it seems like Tunisia is on its way to a stable democracy *sui generis*. Across the region, wherever protests occurred, it was safe to say that the want-to-be regional hegemons Iran and Saudi Arabia (or some other Sunni GCC country) were involved, either by supporting the regime or the opposition, trying to expand their own sphere of influence.

Israel, contrary to popular believe, was not too surprised by the events that kicked off in Tunisia in 2011 and consecutively swept across the Arab world. Speeches and comments from the beginning indicated that the Israeli government did foresee that major changes were imminent in its environment. But, unlike the West and Europe especially, Israel never felt comfortable with these changes. Neither did Israeli policy makers share the optimistic view towards the revolutions. The official stand of the government and security experts revolved around what they saw as a false perception the West had of the revolutions: while they saw Warsaw 1989 and a democratic movement towards Western standards and values, Israel saw a re-enactment of Tehran 1979: A revolution by the people ending in an Islamist takeover. Israel was mistrusting the Arab Spring from the start: they feared for another ally becoming a nemesis, like Iran. The Islamic Republic was and still is Israel's biggest security threat. It attacks Israel through its proxies in Lebanon and Gaza and – according to Israel and the West – is working on its own nuclear bomb. Israel must not allow another Iran in its backyard. Therefore, Israel saw the Arab Awakening as a substantial risk to its own national security. This paper showed how and why Israel perceived the Arab Spring as such, focussing on the three neighbours that concern the Jewish nation the most. In the course of the arguments made, it

got clear why exactly Israel has these negative views towards changes in the Arab world. The Jewish nation has no evidence that it could profit from changes in its neighbourhood, as it witnessed numerous times in the past. The singularity of Israel and the resulting policymaking processes need a long time to adapt to new developments. Furthermore, Israel usually mistrusts new regimes in its environment, again due to its history and past experience.

Nationalism never really flourished in the Arab world. When the West saw the masses rising up against corrupt and oppressive regimes across the region, it thought that these masses were yearning for democracy in a nation state. But the driving ideological forces that fuelled the revolutions were not statehood, democracy and rule of law. The old colonial borders meant little to the masses, the common denominator for most was family, clan, tribe or religion. Thus, there were older sources of identity at work, and Israel saw that coming. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had made a clear notion that Israel regarded the changes in its neighbourhood as a threat to stability and the regional system. Thus far, it seems that the Israeli assessment was more accurate than the exuberant expectations in Europe. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood was quick to capitalize from the mass protests. And, being the best-organized movement in the country apart from the military and the old establishment, consequently won the first free elections in modern Egypt since the end of its “liberal experiment” in 1952. The Muslim Brotherhood failed to consolidate its power and its legitimacy, alienating the urban population and paving the way for a military coup d'etat. In Israel, while there were no tears shed for the end of the reign of Muslim Brotherhood and president Morsi, the perception of the events in Egypt by Israel was that revolution and democracy destabilized the region rather than bringing prosperity and peace. The Arab Spring in Egypt underlined the point made by Israel twice: Once, that democracy and free elections would only be beneficiary for political Islam. Second, that political Islam is not capable of ruling a nation and the Arab world is not ready for true democracy. Furthermore, Israel's border with Egypt became a “hot border” after the revolution, with the government in Cairo failing in securing the border and the Sinai peninsula. This allowed anti-Israeli militias and terrorists to roam freely between Egypt and Gaza.

Furthermore, the looting after the revolutions brought an ocean of new weapons onto the black market in North Africa and the Middle East. And the Sinai peninsula, with the anarchy that followed the ousting of Mubarak, became a hot sport for the selling and buying of weapons from Libya, Egypt and other countries. A share of these weapons

reached Hamas in Gaza, the notoriously anti-Israeli daughter of the Muslim Brotherhood. In Egypt, Israel saw all its fears and negative assessments turn into reality. The security situation at its border deteriorated, an Islamist party came to power and there was a certain anti-Israeli sentiment within the revolutionary movement.

In Syria, the situation was even worse. Syria is an ally of Israel's archenemy Iran, and despite that, Israel did not profit from the uprising in any way. The Syrian autocrat Bashar al-Assad was, although an enemy to the Jewish nation, an enemy they had come to know and were content with. The system that the two nations lived by had made the Israeli-Syrian border one of the most stable since the last war in 1973 and made it possible for the two countries to co-exist without a peace treaty. Israel knew that Syria was no imminent threat to its security, and Assad knew that his country was not able to challenge the enemy. Syria and Israel co-existed more or less peacefully. The Jewish nation knew that Assad sponsored anti-Israeli terrorism in Lebanon and Gaza, but refrained from direct punitive action against the regime itself. Now the whole country is at war with each other. The Sunni nations in the region saw a chance to cripple the Shiite sickle and funded, trained and equipped Sunni Jihadists in Syria, who escalated the war against the regime and made Syria the biggest humanitarian disaster the region has ever seen. Israel keeps a close watch on its northern neighbour. The security of another border is gone. The Arab Spring has thrown its northern neighbour into anarchy, battles are fought across the country and the organisations that are active in Syria are anti-Israel by their very nature. There is no indication that the situation will become an upgrade to the pre-Arab Spring-situation in terms of Israeli security. The fighting has destabilised the regime in Damascus, the Islamist militias are becoming more radicalised and Syria has become the prime battlefield for the Sunni-Shiite war. Whoever wins this war, it will be a victory that was bought at an extremely high price. The country is divided and in shambles, and there is no possibility that any regime (new or old) can restore the integrity of the Syrian nation anytime soon. For Israel, this means roaming Jihadists along its borders, all with a clear objective: opening the road to Jerusalem, the endpoint of Islamist ideology. The Sunni extremists will attack Israel at the moment they are prepared to do so. To think that they would not is naïve, and Israel will know better than that. And Shiite organisations like the Lebanese Hezbollah, the proxy used by the Islamic Republic of Iran for its war against Israel, will rather sooner than later attack the Jewish nation again.

Lebanon can not cope with the refugees from Syria, amounting to more than one million people, a fourth of Lebanon's own population. Terrorist attacks against Shiite Hezbollah targets and retaliatory strikes against Sunnis are common today, and the country is politically unstable. The situation in Syria threatens to cause a domino-effect across the Israeli borders, causing political unrest and fighting in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. The bloody Arab Spring in Syria is likely to threaten Israeli security for years to come. If Assad prevails, Hezbollah would return to Lebanon with high-tech weapons and experience in warfare unprecedented. And they will want to attack their main enemy sooner rather than later.

To sum it up, the Arab Spring has caused a notable deterioration of Israeli national security. Although the country was not (yet) directly affected by the revolutions in the region, they completely changed the political situation, resulting in a region marked by uncertainty and unpredictabilities for the Jewish nation. The Arab Spring was one of the worst things that could happen to the Israeli security perception and national decision-making processes. Because, slow and wary by nature, the Israeli political system can not gain anything from a sudden outburst like a revolution or an uprising. The Arab Spring changed the rules of the game in the region like no regional event before it. For the first time since 1967, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not the heart of the region. The wars and revolutions have pushed the issue of Israel aside, but only for the moment. For Israel, it is only a matter of time until the new structures will restore their anti-Israeli agenda, and the new governments might well act bolder than before. Because in times of the American "pivot" to Asia and a new popular legitimization of groups and governments, the realization of anti-Israeli agendas could become less and less risky. That is, at least, the Israeli concern. That they will be isolated more and more, while the anti-Israeli sentiment will flourish. Therefore, the Palestinian issue is not likely to be resolved anytime soon. Israel feels that the resolving of this issue to the satisfaction of the Western world would not benefit their security situation. The Arab Spring, therefore, is no fountainhead for optimism for the Jewish nation. Their security situation has been shaken to the very foundations, turning the security assumptions about the region upside-down. Israel feels that it has nothing to win in this game of regional power and sectarian conflict. There is no possibility that Israel might gain anything from the Arab spring. Because the very existence of Israel is the root of the hatred that fuels the various groups that are fighting for power in the region. And as long as Israel exists, they will have a cause to fight for.

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Appendix

Curriculum Vitae

ANGABEN ZUR PERSON

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ANGESTREBTER

Master of Arts (MA) Politikwissenschaften

AKADEMISCHER GRAD

WISSENSCHAFTLICHER WER-

DEGAN

2007-2010

Studium der Politikwissenschaften (BA)

Leopold-Franzens Universität Innsbruck

Studienschwerpunkte:

- Internationale Beziehungen, Konfliktforschung und Sicherheitspolitik
- Österreichische Politik

Titel der BA-Arbeiten:

- Stop The Bomb
 - Lehrveranstaltung: SE Österreichische Politik (Vertiefung): NGOs in Österreich
 - Semester und Jahr: Sommersemester 2009
 - eingereicht bei: a.Univ.Prof.Mag.Dr.Reinhold Gärtner
- Die Dunkle Seite: Sexismus, Homophobie, Rassismus und Antisemitismus im europäischen Hip Hop
 - Lehrveranstaltung: SE Europäische Integration – Vertiefung)
 - Semester und Jahr: Wintersemester 2009/2010
 - eingereicht bei: Ao. Univ.-Prof Mag .Dr . Erna M. Appelt

2011-2014

Studium der Politikwissenschaften (MA)

Universität Wien

- Spezialisierungen:
 - Politische Theorien und Theorieforschung
 - Internationale Politik und Entwicklung
- Studienschwerpunkte:
 - Internationale Beziehungen und Konfliktforschung mit Schwerpunkt Naher Osten
 - Sicherheitspolitik
 - Politische Theorien, Systeme und Gesellschaftsentwürfe
- Titel der Master-Arbeit:
 - Warsaw 1989 or Tehran 1979? The Consequences of the Arab Spring on Israeli National Security and Israeli Options in the Middle-East Conflict
 - Eingereicht bei: Ao. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Otmar Höll

2011–Heute	Student der Politikwissenschaften (MA) Universität Wien, Wien (Österreich) ▪ Spezialisierung auf politische Theorie und internationale Beziehungen ▪ MA-Abschluss im Sommer 2014 ▪ Spezialgebiete: internationale Sicherheit und Konfliktforschung, Naher- und Mittlerer Osten, Osteuropa, Antisemitismus, Rassismus, Politische Ökonomie
2011–Heute	BA-Studium English and American Studies Universität Wien, Wien (Österreich)
2007–2010	BA-Studium Politikwissenschaften Universität Innsbruck, Innsbruck (Österreich)
2008–2011	BA-Studium Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität Innsbruck, Innsbruck (Österreich)
2000–2006	Matura Bundesgymnasium Feldkoch-Rebbergasse, Feldkirch (Österreich)

BERUFSERFAHRUNG

08/2013–Heute	Verwaltungspraktikant Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung und Sport, Wien (Österreich) ▪ Erstellung von sicherheitspolitischer Wocheninformationen für den Bundesminister ▪ Erstellen von Mappen und Zusammentragen von Unterlagen für offizielle Anlässe und Treffen des Bundesministers ▪ Recherche sicherheitspolitisch relevanter Themen und Ereignisse ▪ Verfassen von Rezensionen wissenschaftlicher Artikel von sicherheitspolitischer Relevanz ▪ Redigieren wissenschaftlicher Texte und Korrektorat für Publikationen des BMLVS ▪ Erstellen von Präsentationen, Sprechbeiträgen, Artikel ▪ Besuch von wissenschaftlichen Veranstaltungen, Kontaktpflege mit wissenschaftlichen Partnerinstituten des BMLVS
02/07/2012–27/07/2012	Praktikant Nachrichtenmagazin PROFIL, Wien (Österreich) ▪ Erstellen von Artikeln für das Nachrichtenmagazin im Bereich Außenpolitik ▪ Selbstständige Recherche, Führen von Interviews und verfassen von journalistischen Artikeln
04/07/2011–30/09/2011	Mitarbeiter Redaktion

ORF Vorarlberg, Dornbirn

- Mitarbeit im Aktuellen Dienst von Radio Vorarlberg
- Recherche von Radiobeiträgen
- Einsprechen von Radiobeiträgen für Ö2, Ö1 und Ö3; inkl. Schnitt und Einfügen von Interviewpassagen und anderen Originaltönen
- Verfassen von Radiobeiträgen
- Führen von Interviews für Fernsehen und Radio
- Mitarbeit in der Onlineredaktion von vorarlberg.orf.at
- Insgesamt fünf Monate Mitarbeit

07/02/2011–04/03/2011

Mitarbeiter Redaktion

ORF Vorarlberg, Dornbirn

19/07/2010–06/08/2010

Mitarbeiter Redaktion

ORF Vorarlberg, Dornbirn (Österreich)

09/08/2010–03/09/2010

Praktikant

VN - Vorarlberger Nachrichten, Schwarzach (Österreich)

- Mitarbeit in der Chronik-Redaktion
- Interviewführung
- Recherche für Artikel
- Verfassen von Artikeln
- Design von Zeitungsseiten

01/09/2006–31/05/2007

Zivildienst

Lebenshilfe Vorarlberg, Rankweil

- Arbeit mit Menschen mit Behinderung
- Tägliche Arbeit in der Werkstätte, Betreuung
- Betreuung in Wohnheimen

PERSÖNLICHE FÄHIGKEITEN

Muttersprache(n) Deutsch

Weitere Sprache(n)

	VERSTEHEN		SPRECHEN		SCHREIBEN
	Hören	Lesen	An Gesprächen teilnehmen	Zusammenhängendes Sprechen	
Englisch	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1
Spanisch	B1	B1	A2	A2	B1

A1/2: elementare Sprachverwendung - B1/2: selbstständige Sprachverwendung - C1/2: kompetente Sprachverwendung
[Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen für Sprachen](#)

