

The Importance of International Partnerships for Israel's Progressive Camp

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The progressive camp in Israel has been trying for years to find its way back to the corridors of power and influence, so far unsuccessfully. Those seeking strategies and tactics for change often wonder whether the solution to Israel's problems will emerge from without, for example driven by international pressure, or from within, by convincing and mobilizing the Israeli public. A third option to this dichotomy has emerged in recent years in the shape of combined and coordinated moves both within Israeli society and in cooperation with allies abroad.

The counter reaction we are witnessing to the global rise of nationalism, populism and the far-right encourages connections among progressive forces around the world and the creation of shared frameworks and coordinated action. Such cooperation occurs in both the political arena and civil society. The grim state of Israel's progressive political camp makes it hard to realize potential ties with political parties and leaders in other countries. However, Israeli civil society is forging significant international cooperation born of its distinct and well-honed progressive ideology and wide array of highly motivated organizations and activists seeking change.

Greater emphasis on forging international partnerships is a key stage in the renewal of Israel's progressive camp and its empowerment. This article presents the developments, trends, needs and opportunities relevant to the issue, which could encourage positive change.

A. A global counter reaction to the rise of nationalism, populism and far-right

The turning point occurred in 2016. The UK referendum approving Brexit in June of that year and Donald Trump's victory in the November US presidential elections marked a new trend in global politics. The rise of populism and the far-right had begun previously in some countries (for example, Hungary's 2010 election of Viktor Orban as prime minister), but developments in the UK and the US highlighted this shift, giving it prominence and signaling its escalation. They also provided an impetus for other parties and leaders in the world – whether Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, Mateo Salvini and Marine Le Pen in Europe or Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil. These leaders and their associates formed a de facto network of mutual support and aid as evidenced, for example, in the extensive help provided by Trump associate and far-right US ideologue Steve Bannon to political allies in Europe ahead of the May 2019 EU parliamentary elections. The rise of the far-right coincided with the crises

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experienced by liberal democracies around the world, generating a desire for coordinated counteraction in the face of their common challenges. The Covid-19 crisis also created momentum for this process. For example, in June 2020, a Progressive Governance Digital Summit took place online, hosting some 100 international speakers and claiming that “for progressives, this is the moment to come together and discuss shared visions of what a post-Covid-19 world should and could look like [...] it is imperative for progressives to promote international solidarity in times of crisis.”

Senator Bernie Sanders, whose campaign for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination against Hillary Clinton generated a grassroots movement of motivated young progressives, was the chief flag bearer of this counter reaction. In September 2018, Sanders penned [an op-ed](#) in the British Guardian, arguing that the new global authoritarian axis demands the establishment of an international progressive front. “Nothing less than the future of the planet – socially, economically and environmentally – is at stake,” Sanders wrote. He pointed to several shared attributes of the regimes against which he was railing: hostility toward democratic norms, antagonism toward a free press, intolerance toward ethnic and religious minorities, and a belief that government should benefit their own selfish financial interests. Sanders also listed several examples attesting to the authoritarian wave sweeping the world and threatening the post-World War II order, among them the Israeli Knesset’s approval of the Nationality Law several months previously. Confronted with this trend, Sanders urged all those who hold a progressive worldview based on solidarity, humanism, democracy, and equal distribution of wealth to struggle together for a better world. His call resonated with international partners. Yanis Varoufakis, Greece’s former Syriza Party finance minister was among his enthusiastic supporters. Stav Shafir, who served at the time as a Labor party Member of Knesset (MK), argued at an international conference held by the Mitvim Institute and the Hebrew University’s Leonard Davis Institute that progressives from around the world must form an international movement to protect liberal democratic values. Its goals should include, according to Shafir, helping Israelis and Palestinians overcome obstacles to the resolution of their conflict.

The global progressive camp had an established organizational infrastructure, albeit a far from effective one. The most veteran of its organizations was the Socialist International, formally founded in 1951 but in fact, the successor to an organization established in the second half of the 19th century. The organization currently includes 135 parties and organizations and represents all continents of the world. In 2013, parties and others who left the Socialist International formed an offshoot network called the Progressive Alliance. Based in Germany, it includes over 140 progressive and social democratic organizations and parties. The Progressive Alliance declares itself an organization devoted to dealing with the key issues of progressive politics – peace, democracy, human rights, social justice, fair labor, gender equality and sustainability. Yet another organization, the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY) formed in 1907, includes 136 social organizations (among them the young guard of the Israeli Meretz and Labor parties) from over 100 countries.

However, the shifts and trends of recent years have given rise to new organizational frameworks. In May 2020, Sanders (through the Sanders Institute) and Varoufakis (who had established the pan-European “Democracy in Europe Movement 2025”) launched the Progressive International, an organization devoted to uniting social-democratic and progressive organizations and activists from around the world in response to the rise of the nationalist wave. The organization, initiated in November 2018 as an open call to all progressive forces to form a common front, operates through networks to create broad-

based civil movements, formulate a shared vision and worldview, and disseminate and resonate progressive contents.

While the name of the new organization established by Sanders and Varoufakis is similar to the other two major organizations active in the international progressive arena, it is directed at the grassroots level and activists, the breeding ground of Sanders' movement and of Varoufakis's Syriza, rather than political parties. It is becoming obvious that the leading political response to the rise of the extreme right is not necessarily emerging from the progressive camp. Leaders such as Angela Merkel (Germany), Emmanuel Macron (France) and Justin Trudeau (Canada), portrayed as the great hope of blocking the nationalist wave, do not hold left-wing views. They are closer to the political center, each in her or his way. Their commitment to the values of liberal democracy rather than to progressive concepts is what placed them at the forefront of the camp. Such was also the case with centrist Joe Biden's victory over Sanders in the Democratic primaries ahead of the November 2020 elections. The US presidential elections, which resulted in a Biden victory over Trump, are likely to be another turning point in the struggle between liberal democracy and populism.

On the international stage, this phenomenon has manifested itself in an official German-French initiative led by the respective foreign ministries, known as the Alliance for Multilateralism. The informal network of states, launched in April 2019, sets out to "defend and preserve agreements and international institutions under pressure or threat", and emphasizes the importance of the UN as a leading international body. An event held by the Alliance on the sidelines of the September 2019 UN General Assembly drew the participation of France, Germany, Canada, Mexico, Chile, Singapore, Ghana and other states. In 2020, the Alliance held additional online conferences and forums, participated by more than 60 countries (Israel did not take part).

In sum, the developments of recent years point to different types of responses to the global rise of the far-right. At the grassroots and civil society level, they are manifested in progressive activism, and at the political level, those leading them are party leaders closer to the center, both on its left and right. These developments are relevant and significant for Israel, too, although the impact of the recently formed multilateral frameworks is still limited, serving mainly to network like-minded participants around the world.

B. The complexity of political ties between progressives in Israel and abroad

Israel's two 2019 general election campaigns demonstrated the extent to which the a-liberal global network operates as a de facto political alliance. Netanyahu's allies around the world – Trump, Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi, Bolsonaro, Orbán and Salvini - mobilized one by one to help him position himself as an arch-statesman and garner public support. Their "aid package" consisted of meetings, photo-ops, diplomatic goodwill gestures and friendly pronouncements. These leaders had no qualms about being accused of interference in Israel's domestic politics as they mobilized to help their friend Netanyahu. Similar mobilization by foreign leaders has occurred prior to elections in other countries, but such a broad effort was highly unusual in the context of Israel's political system. It also reflected the increasingly close relationship formed in recent years between right-wing elements in Israel and far-right and populist elements in Europe. These ties are not simply a bridge between leaders, as prominently expressed in the relationship Netanyahu forged with the leaders of the Visegrad Group (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia), but also ties between parties and politicians.

Representatives of European parties with anti-Semitic roots sought to obtain public legitimacy in their countries through ties with elements in Israel. To that end, they were willing to express support for Israel's settlement enterprise in the West Bank and for other Israeli policies. They even found common language with politicians on the Israeli right in their hostility toward Arabs and Muslims. Some Israeli right-wing lawmakers ignored the advice of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to boycott these European groups, such as Austria's Freedom Party, and even expressed support for far-right European political candidates. President Reuven Rivlin was a prominent exception to the rule. In an unusual step, he expressed public backing for Macron's victory over Le Pen and avoided meeting Salvini on his official visit to Israel, ostensibly due to scheduling conflicts. In so doing, the President was also responding to the wishes of European Jewish communities that urged Israel to avoid support for politicians tainted by anti-Semitism. This is how Nitzan Horowitz, currently chair of the Meretz party, summed up a [2017 article](#) he wrote for the Mitvim Institute on Israel's relationship with the far-right in Europe: "Much of Europe's political argument against the far-right is that its methods have already led the continent to a terrible disaster. If Israel, the state of the Jewish people, embraces parties that espouse xenophobia and discrimination, it could be seen as 'proof' that these parties have seemingly changed. This is precisely why they yearn for Israeli legitimacy, and why Israel must not grant it to them. This could seriously harm Israel's standing. It would be an unforgivable move".

Leaders of Israel's political left and center opposed the ties forged by right-wing elements with European far-right parties. In February 2018, MK Amir Peretz convened a special conference of the Israel-Austria Parliamentary Friendship Group to discuss relations with the Austrian Freedom Party, arguing, "The memory of the victims of the Holocaust and voices of the survivors are far more important for Israel than any tactical alliance." Ksenia Svetlova, then an MK on behalf of the Zionist Union, argued at the conference, "personalities and parties tainted by anti-Semitism and fascism cannot be friends of Israel and their visits here must be prevented". However, in parallel to these publicly stated objections, the heads of Israel's center-left political camp have avoided encouraging their foreign friends to intervene in recent election campaigns, fearing accusations that they were trying to exert external pressure on Israel and encouraging foreign intervention in domestic politics. They were also concerned that expressions and actions by outsiders critical of the Israeli government on the eve of elections would unite public ranks against the center-left and drive voters into the arms of the political right. Thus, Israeli progressives generally rejected or avoided responding to messages from their foreign colleagues offering help and seeking recommendations for activities to encourage political change. In 2019, foreign politicians did decide to take matters into their own hands and intervene. Several days prior to Israel's April 2019 elections, a series of US Democratic presidential candidates directed unprecedentedly harsh criticism at Netanyahu and accused him of racism and corruption. Sanders said publicly at the time that he hoped Netanyahu would lose. These comments were motivated not only by anger at Netanyahu but also by his tight alliance with Trump.

Nonetheless, in the absence of a progressive Israeli candidate of Netanyahu's stature, the criticism from the US did not translate into clear support for one of his rivals. This was also a recurring argument in conversations with members of the European progressive camp – that the political weakness of the Israeli left made it impossible to field and support a prime ministerial candidate. After all, Netanyahu's rivals had emerged from the political center, taking pains to distance themselves from any identification with the left, so why would progressives support them? And would such support even benefit these candidates? Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Macron, who heads a centrist political camp,

was the sole European leader who made a move to benefit Netanyahu's rivals. Four days prior to the April 2019 elections, Macron welcomed Netanyahu rival, centrist Yair Lapid, for a meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris. However, this low-key, one-time move could not compare with the diplomatic barrage Netanyahu mounted prior to the elections. Lapid's party (Blue and White at the time) hoped the meeting would nonetheless boost its image on foreign affairs issues and provide some sort of response to Netanyahu's international maneuvering.

The difficulty for progressives abroad in forging ties with their Israeli counterparts does not stem only from the identity of the left-wing camp's candidate for prime minister and his or her prospects of winning, but also from the views and decisions of Israeli leaders on the left. Pronouncements by Labor party members, when the party still played a significant role in the political arena, pointed to a significant political and values gap. For example, while Israeli lawmakers equated the EU directive on settlement product labeling with the BDS movement, the progressive European camp highlighted the need to differentiate between sovereign Israel within its 1967 borders and Palestinian territories. Israeli MKs from the center-left also stressed to American audiences the need to wage an uncompromising battle against the BDS movement. At the same time, the progressive camp in the US fought efforts to muzzle boycott supporters' freedom of expression. In avoiding self-identification as political leftists and in failing to present an alternative worldview on foreign affairs and security issues, senior Labor party figures generated a sense of frustration and miscommunication among progressive politicians with whom they met abroad. The Labor party's recurring willingness to join governments led by Netanyahu also created tensions with natural partners in the global progressive camp, especially the 2020 decision by Labor leader Amir Peretz to join the Netanyahu government that planned to annex territories in the West Bank.

This government's annexation intentions and Labor's entry into the government prompted condemnations and expressions of concern by progressive forces around the world. The Socialist International (SI) [announced](#) that "Labor's decision to join that government runs counter to the organization's principles, which require its members to support international action in favor of peace, tolerance, dialogue, understanding and cooperation among peoples". The statement went on to say, "The SI deeply regrets that a party with a long and rich history in the global family of socialist, social democratic and labor parties has chosen to take a path that contradicts its fundamental values and positions, damaging the prospects of peace in the Middle East." The president of the Socialist and Democratic bloc (S&D Group) in the European Parliament, Iratxe García Pérez issued [a statement](#) saying, "The possibility to close the Netanyahu era was at hand. We regret the decision taken by Israel's Labor Party to join the coalition government, missing the historic opportunity to contribute towards turning the page on this infamous chapter of Israeli politics." The change of leadership in the Labor party, which took place on January 2021 marks a change in direction. MK Merav Michaeli, who refused to enter the Netanyahu government and adheres to a progressive worldview, became party leader, and her first decision was to pull the Labor party out of the government.

Criticism often emanated from the opposite direction. In July 2018, to protest the Socialist International's decision in favor of the BDS movement, MK Hilik Bar, Labor's international secretary, announced that the party was suspending its membership in the organization pending a change in its decision. Subsequently, under the direction of the Meretz party representative, the SI adopted a decision expressing reservations about any boycott of Israel, and in July 2019 the SI even held a joint conference with Israeli and Palestinian colleagues in Tel Aviv and Ramallah to express support for the two-state solution. Along with

criticism, there were also displays of international solidarity by progressive Israeli politicians. Thus, for example, Joint List Chair MK Ayman Odeh met in 2015 in Washington with the leader of the pro-Kurdish Turkish party, Selahattin Demirtaş. In 2016, Meretz Chair MK Tamar Zandberg stood alongside Keith Ellison of the US Democratic Party to deflect accusations of anti-Semitism and hostility toward Israel leveled at him. In 2017, left-wing Israeli politicians met with Sanders at the J Street conference in Washington. In 2018, Odeh and additional Joint List colleagues met with EU Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini in Brussels, and in 2019, MK Nitzan Horowitz criticized the decision by then-Foreign Minister Israel Katz to bar the entry into Israel of Democratic Congresswomen Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib. This type of solidarity also comes into play in party cooperation. The S&D Group in the European Parliament views Israel's Labor, Meretz and Ra'am-Ta'al as "sister parties", mounting joint activities with them such as agreements, visits and mutual participation in events. Germany's political foundations affiliated with left-wing parties, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung and Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung conduct ongoing joint activities with left-wing Israeli parties as well as with progressive civil society organizations.

C. Growing, beneficial cooperation with progressive civil society groups

While inter-party ties have proven complex and failed to yield appreciable benefit in recent years, real progress is evident in civil society cooperation between Israeli and foreign organizations. This stems from several factors: A conceptual change within Israeli civil society organizations regarding ties with counterparts abroad; a more egalitarian reality between Israeli and Western organizations; and new ties with organizations in states where democracy is under erosion, chief among them in central and eastern Europe.

1. *A conceptual change within Israeli civil society organizations regarding ties with counterparts abroad* – Civil society organizations devoted to foreign affairs and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are accustomed to cooperation with international partners and acknowledge its value. That is not the case with organizations devoted to domestic issues, which have not always realized the benefits of international cooperation. For years, their activity and rhetoric reflected the idea that reality in Israel and the challenges it presents are unique and there is not much to learn from cooperating and exchanging knowledge with organizations in other countries. What is more, the de-legitimization by senior right-wing government officials of organizations active in the international arena, mostly B'Tselem and Breaking the Silence, filtered into organizations that are less politically controversial. It prompted aversion to cooperation with foreign organizations, to participation in international platforms and to providing advice to progressive politicians in other countries (such as members of the European Parliament) seeking to affect Israeli policy change. In addition, both type of organizations, those devoted to domestic issues as well as those dealing with foreign policy, tended to eye ties with international organizations in terms of fundraising prospects rather than as content partners.

A conceptual change has begun in recent years, leading more organizations to relate favorably to international activity and cooperation. The change stems, inter alia, from recognition of the fact that progressive organizations in other countries are confronting similar challenges and from the intensifying threat to Israel's liberal democratic values, which has prompted a search for new tools and partners to confront it. The change also stems from the understanding that absent a significant political alternative to Israel's right-wing leadership, it is up to civil society to fill the opposition vacuum; from the

growing accessibility to information about foreign organizations provided by social media, facilitating contact; and from the growing representation of Israelis in international forums and multinational umbrella organizations.

2. *A more egalitarian reality between Israeli and Western organizations* - The interface between progressive Israeli organizations and American and European partners did not tend toward equality over the years. Other than the fact that foreign organizations were generally larger, more established and wealthier, their representatives arrived at meetings with Israelis with a desire to give rather than to receive. Changing political reality has generated a shift in direction. Some five years ago, representatives of progressive organizations from Israel, the US and Germany convened in Berlin to formulate a joint multi-year action plan on foreign affairs issues. The discussion focused mostly on the question of how the foreign organizations could help their Israeli colleagues advance Israeli-Palestinian peace, bolster democracy and obtain politically influential positions. Two years later, when the project was about to go into operation, reality had undergone a sea change. Trump's election and the rise of the radical European right created an egalitarian discourse. All the participants were facing similar problems requiring joint action, and the Israeli organizations, used to their oppositionary posture in challenging the governing political right were now the ones that could advise and help their foreign colleagues forced to adjust to a changing landscape. However, on the civil society level, too, a gap is often evident in ideological language and priorities between Israeli and Western progressive organizations, but to a lesser extent than on the political party level.
3. *New connections with organizations in states where democracy is under erosion* - Israeli civil society groups largely ignored organizations in central and eastern Europe for many years. These states did not play a key foreign policy role in the EU, they lacked financial resources to donate to organizations in the Middle East and they did not display great interest in the Israeli arena. Two intersecting processes in recent years have resulted in change – the erosion of democracy, on the one hand, and the political alliance between the leaders of those states with Netanyahu, on the other. Nationalist leaders, most prominent among them those of Hungary and Poland, instituted centralized forms of government in central and eastern Europe. International indexes pointed to a process of democratic erosion in these states characterized by similar patterns to those evident in Israel. This attracted the attention of Israeli organizations, motivating them to seek connections, exchange knowledge and tools and establish cooperation. Organizations in the European countries were often the ones that took the initiative, seeking partners in Israel's progressive camp.

At the same time, central and eastern European states were forging strong alliances with Netanyahu, peaking in his participation in the July 2017 Visegrad Group summit in Budapest. These relationships have been serving Israel since 2016 in blocking various EU initiatives and declarations considered critical of Israel, and have contributed to the growing divisions among EU members. The states of central and eastern Europe have thus attracted the interest not only of pro-democracy Israeli organizations but also of peace organizations realizing that the EU's ability to engage in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was being compromised. The challenge to developments in central and eastern Europe spearheaded by George Soros, the American philanthropist of Jewish-Hungarian origin, was also relevant in terms of Israeli organizations. Through his Open Society Foundations, Soros sought to promote democracy in those states through new multinational networks in which Israeli organizations could participate. While Soros does

not engage in much philanthropic activity in Israel itself, his foundation supports Israeli human rights and Jewish-Arab equality organizations, helping establish international connections. Over time, Israeli organizations which have been used to cooperating with counterparts in the US and Western Europe, turned their attention to new areas of the world. Such partnerships were also formed with pro-democracy organizations in other states confronting similar challenges, among them Turkey and Brazil.

These trends gave rise to different forms of cooperation between civil society groups in Israel and abroad – in terms of organization, ideology, politics and contents. The trend in the organizational sphere began relatively early, with Barack Obama's election in November 2008. The activity of Democratic Party-affiliated organizations in the days of the George W. Bush Administration in rebuilding an ideological (Center for American Progress), financial (Democracy Alliance), media (Media Matters) and activist (MoveOn) infrastructure attracted the attention of progressive groups in Israel, among them the New Israel Fund. This, in turn, affected the way new organizations were established, among them think tanks such as Mitvim and Molad (and subsequently also existing and new ideological groups, such as the Berl Katznelson Foundation and Idea). The founding and rise of J Street in the US in those years, which provided a new home for progressive American Jews and brought together representatives of Israeli organizations with their counterparts in the US and decision makers in Washington D.C., also made its mark, facilitating new ties and cooperative ventures. The large J Street national conferences in Washington, with the regular participation of progressive Israeli organizations, became an arena for side-meetings between institutes, organizations and policy influencers from Israel and the US, as well as for attempts to promote partnerships among progressive Jewish organizations in different states, including Israel. Such initiatives include SISO (Save Israel, Stop the Occupation), for example, founded by Prof. Daniel Bar-Tal ahead of the 50th anniversary of the occupation; the Progressive Israel Network, established by 10 US Jewish organizations; and the J-Link network comprised of some 50 progressive Jewish organizations from 17 countries that campaigns against the occupation.

Additional examples of civil society cooperation include the "Turkish-Israeli Civil Society Forum" led by Arik Segal and the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, bringing together "The Whistle" fact checking platform, the Mitvim Institute, the Forum for Regional Thinking and additional Israeli organizations with like-minded Turkish partners. The involvement of Zazim, a community action movement, in the network of pro-democracy and civil engagement organizations, which also includes partners from central and eastern Europe; and the EuroMed Rights network of human rights organizations from Israel and the Mediterranean Basin. In 2020, former MK Zehava Galon established an organization called Zulat, whose action plan includes international activity as one of its key areas, defined as "Work with Israeli and international NGOs, forging alliances with progressive partners to combat the anti-liberal agenda at home and abroad."

D. The potential of integrated and inter-sectoral activity

In-between the difficulties of forging international progressive cooperation by political parties and the growing achievements of Israeli civil society organizations in creating such cooperation, lies important and untapped potential. This space includes progressive partnerships that are not only international but also inter-sectoral and bring together political, diplomatic and civil society elements. In some countries, such as the US and the UK, where such partnerships are a long tradition deeply rooted in local political culture, they have proven themselves central in bringing back progressives to positions of influence, power

and relevance. Grassroots organizations and think tanks that promote ideological worldviews, generate ideas and initiate action have an impact on political parties, politicians and policy makers. This interaction is still not sufficiently prevalent in Israel, certainly not on the political left, but it appears to be gradually developing and international connections can help it grow.

Several examples reflecting the potential for inter-sectoral international activity are already evident. Thus, for example, a European Parliament S&D Group lawmaker took part in a project by Mitvim, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the US-based Middle East Institute designed to bring together progressive policy experts from the three countries and generate insights and joint actions. That politician's participation in the project led him, along with three other members of the European Parliament to direct an official letter to Netanyahu in 2016 protesting legislation undermining the capacity and activity of Israeli civil society. Another project participant was subsequently named Sanders' foreign policy adviser, in which role he met in Israel with the heads of progressive civil society organizations. Israeli peace organizations, among them the Geneva Initiative and Peace Now, are in regular contact with foreign diplomats in a bid to promote international steps to advance the two-state solution. Links have also been established between political advisers working together to help progressive candidates running for election in different countries, and among policy makers who brought into play the lessons they learned from victories in municipal election campaigns (for example in Budapest and Istanbul) with candidates who challenged a-liberal ruling party candidates. Partnerships have also been forged between progressive foundations abroad and Israeli organizations, as well as between movements and activists from Israel and abroad who are exchanging ideas about building political power and advancing policy change.

This increased activity on the progressive side has prompted intensified efforts to undermine it – for example by attempts to curb the international activity of civil society organizations and to curtail foreign funding. The existing and emerging progressive partnerships must provide a response to such attempts and to false claims spread by government entities (such as Israel's Ministry for International Strategic Affairs in the years 2015 to 2019) and right-wing non-governmental organizations. A policy-working group led by retired Ambassador Ilan Baruch and the German Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung undertook one such response in 2019 in a joint report that focused on NGO Monitor, a right-wing pressure group.

E. Conclusion

The formation of international partnerships is a goal of prime importance for Israel's progressive camp, and it must constitute a central part in the process of its ideological, political and organizational renewal. The international arena is riper for this than ever before, given the need to confront the global crises of liberal democracies and the rise of populism, nationalism and the far-right. The Israeli arena is also ripe for such change with the weakening of the left-wing political party frameworks that have jettisoned some of the values and beliefs they are supposed to represent. Israeli progressive parties and civil society organizations must keep this in mind. They can find like-minded partners not only in Israel but also abroad, and investment in developing ties with them will yield benefits both in terms of advancing local change and empowering the liberal counter-wave to the rise of nationalism and the far-right. The progressive camp in Israel must shake off the delegitimization practiced by the political right of those on the left involved in international activity. After all, the political right is heavily involved in partnerships with like-minded groups abroad, with considerable success. The left could have a distinct advantage in the

international arena and it must take action to realize the extensive potential it holds. Progressive organizations and parties in Israel that open themselves up to the world and present a coherent ideological alternative to current policy will discover a wide range of options and numerous opportunities. This in itself will not bring about the hoped for change in Israel, but it will provide a significant impetus to efforts to generate that change, and it could contribute to instilling progressive ideas in public opinion, advancing progressive solutions to current problems, and catapulting progressives to leadership positions.

This concept also aligns well with the intersectionality trend gaining traction in the American progressive camp, based on the assumption that different organizations each working in a different field for different goals but guided by a shared compass of values must help each other in dealing with shared issues. In Israel, pro-democracy, human rights, peace, Arab-Jewish equality and social-economic justice groups still operate separately by and large, but signs of cooperation and networking are already emerging in the face of shared challenges, such as the threat of an Israeli annexation in the West Bank. The Covid-19 crisis and its repercussions on the progressive camp, chief among them a growing sense of solidarity, acknowledgement of the need for joint action in the face of global challenges and the desire to bolster organizations and mechanisms for international cooperation are expected to encourage this trend in Israel and beyond.