

On May 16th, 2022 Mitvim, in conjunction with the Delegation of the EU to Israel, the French Embassy in Israel, IASEI, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and Tel Aviv University, held an event focused on the future of European security. There were a number of panelists who discussed the new Strategic Compass, and its significance for Israel and the Middle East.

To open the event, Amb. Eric Danon, Ambassador of France to Israel, underlined the significant steps taken by the EU to enhance its defense and security posture. He encouraged more structured political dialogues in order to create a stronger EU. With new geopolitical shifts, Europeans must be ready to take responsibility to act. He believes that a “more strategically sovereign Europe” will allow for greater relations between Israel and the EU. The second keynote speaker, Amb. Dimiter Tzanchev, Ambassador of the EU to Israel, emphasized his support of Israel as a solid strategic partner of the EU. He stressed the dangers that the EU faces as the war in Ukraine continues, and encourages greater investment in defense and multilateralism.

The first panel focused on the European Union’s Strategic Compass and European Strategic Sovereignty. Deputy Director of FRS, Dr. Bruno Tertrais sees the Strategic Compass as a guiding principle for France. There is no grand plan for France when it comes to EU strategic autonomy, but he encourages increased action by all parliaments. He discussed many other elements that have great effects such as cyber space and health.

Tara Varma, Senior Policy Fellow at ECFR, described strategic autonomy as “the capacity to act independently in a dependent world.” She highlighted the continued cooperation between the EU and NATO in bringing aid to Ukraine. Varma discussed how the EU is trying to think more strategically and acting on its gained power in order to respond to major geopolitical shifts. She discussed how the new EU strategy covers a wide range of issues, and the potential it has.

Dr. Marcin Terlikowski of PISM, offered suspension and skepticism towards the Strategic Compass. He argues that if it is implemented wrongly, it could lead to repercussions. He emphasized the threat of Russia, and how that threat is continuing to change. He shares the opinions of many member states that there will be more investment opportunities, and they should be taken advantage of.

Stijn Mols from EEAS led the audience through a EU level threat assessment. His first point was focused on military conflict and how in an interconnected world, there will always be

security threats. He then discussed the power of cyber attacks and misinformation. These practices lead to attempts to destroy democratic processes. Not all threats are military in nature. Mols argued the issue of immigration and the need for state aid. He stressed the need for action in order for Europe to protect itself. Not only must Europeans act, but they must act together as “the threats are too big for member states to deal with on an individual basis.” Mols continuously emphasized the need for partnerships around the world, especially when it comes to emerging technologies. NATO, the United States, and Israel can be key partners in this new fight.

Lastly, Amb. Michel Duclus expressed the importance of international order, and the need for supranational organizations to make decisions. He addressed the war in Ukraine and the increased financing the EU has taken on. The war in Ukraine also creates new responsibilities as the EU acquires geopolitical credentials. Their energy will be focused more towards European security and the Russian threat, while distancing themselves from the situations in the Middle East.

The second panel focused on connecting the Strategic Compass to Israel and the Middle East. First Amb. Ronny Leshno-Yaar shared the lack of significance for Israel when it comes to European sovereignty. He argued this is because of Israel’s ability to defend itself, by itself. However, Israel must be ready to consider any European request as it is in Israel’s interest to cooperate with Europe. In the past Europe has given little reasons for trust, so Israelis must pay close attention.

Aliza Bin-Noun of MFA, Israel began by celebrating 65 years of Israel-EU relations. She states the importance of holding and participating in events that discuss Israel’s relations with the EU. She focused on the similarities when it came to Israel and the EU when it came to climate change, R&D programs, and shared knowledge against COVID-19. With more European leaders traveling to Israel, and relations with Sweden being normalized again, there is great potential for continued partnership between Israel and the EU. She also mentioned the obstacle of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She believes it will not have a negative effect on the strengthening of European relations.

The final speaker, Eran Etzion supported EU-Israel relations. He discussed the importance of Israel to the EU as Israel is a global expert on the threats that Europe is facing. Israel has been successful in dealing with military, cyber, land, and air threats. He believes the Europeans need to reframe how they look at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - it is not mentioned

in the Strategic Compass. Etzion emphasized the need for a joint Strategic Compass with Israel, to show new cooperation with a new model. He believes that we need to jointly confront external threats. As a new geopolitical situation emerges globally, it is best for Europe to align with Israel on overall strategy.