

future lab

Scenarios for the German-Israel

Youth Exchange

in the Year 2025

A project of ConAct, Koordinierungszentrum Deutsch-Israelischer Jugendaustausch,
in Co-operation with the Institute for Prospective Analysis e.V. (IPA)
and the Center for Applied Policy Research (CAP)

WHY, HOW

*"Scenarios transform information into perceptions.
It is a creative experience that generates an "aha" ...
and leads to strategic insights beyond the minds previous reach".
Pierre Wack, the "founder" of modern scenario planning*

*"Scenarios are stories. They are works of art, rather than scientific analyses.
The reliability of (their content) is less important than the types of conversations
and decisions they spark"
Arie de Geus*

*"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking
new landscape, but in having new eyes"
Marcel Proust*

Finding ways into the future...

Introduction

For German-Israeli relations, the year 2005 holds remarkable jubilee: the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the State of Israel. First encounters of young Germans and Israelis are often dated back even earlier - to the middle of the 1950s; thus encounters between young people have paved part of the way for the political relations between both countries.

Therefore the jubilee year has some specific significance also for the field of German-Israeli youth exchange: It means pointing out and celebrating the achievements and of the political youth cooperation as one central pillar of the bilateral German-Israeli relations. But it also means looking into the future: **Where are we going?** How are we going to transfer experience and knowledge of 50 years of German-Israeli youth exchange into the future of the contacts? How do we imagine the relationship between young people from Israel and Germany to develop in the future? What will be shared interests, connecting issues, aspects of a meaningful relationship? How will the political situation in the middle east and also in Europe develop, given the fact, that this is this is the context of all potential developments?

In order to find answers to those questions coming up while looking out for the future of German-Israeli Youth Contacts we decided to start a process of finding future ways and future tasks with young people from both countries, using a creative method to work with.

In May 2005 the whole project started: A group of 30 young people got together in Berlin for three days. Participants came from Israel and Germany, ranging from 16 to 35 years in age. On the Israeli side there were both Jewish and Arab youth participating, on the German side persons with a migrant cultural background were part of the group.

The method we chose out of different options is the **Scenario-Method**. It encourages to create concrete stories in a futural context, which is developed by the young people, keeping in mind the world of today and yet leaving it for a mental journey into the future.

After the three days workshop a smaller group of 8 participants met continuously to develop the stories further and to make the connections of developments as dense and best possibly connecting to one another.

The outcome – the stories – will hopefully inspire us all for this conference and workshop *Wishes – Visions – Perspectives – Future Lab 2025*.

THE TOPIC – Scenarios about ... what?!

Over the years, the German-Israel youth exchange in its various formats gave tens of thousands of young people from Israel and Germany the opportunity to visit the other country, to meet and to get to know each other.

Thus far, the overarching legitimisation of the German-Israel youth exchange has come from the knowledge of the tragic past and the determination of young people to create a future of mutual respect, understanding and friendship between our two countries and its people. “Historical wounds” needed to heal.

This year, the German-Israel youth exchange is celebrating its 50th anniversary – the perfect moment to look into the future of what has become a very important cultural institution. And this is precisely what we want to do at our scenario workshop.

Looking into the future could mean **asking ourselves questions** such as -

- How can we, 60 years after the Holocaust, keep the historic memory alive so that the knowledge of the past may guide us in present and future relations and decision making?
- At the same time, in a rapidly evolving world, are we possibly in need of finding new and additional “raisons d’être” to carry the youth exchange forward and ensure not only its survival but future success?
- Should the German-Israel youth exchange remain special, primarily bound by historic references or should it merge into the general sphere of international youth exchanges whose positive effects nobody doubts?
- How strong is the interest and what sort of motivation exists among the youth in Germany and Israel today and tomorrow to participate in these youth exchanges?
- What could be political values and incentives driving the German-Israeli youth exchange of the future? How could those affect the resources available for the German-Israel youth exchange?
- What structures and forms of expression could the German-Israel youth exchange evolve into?
- What forces and frameworks would shape and give life to the exchange of German and Israeli youth in the next 20 years?
- Are these the right sort of questions to ask, what else should one take into account?

However, asking questions is only half the job... **trying to find different – and probably challenging – answers** for a changing world is what we are really after...

Today we do not know, what dynamics the German-Israeli youth exchange will develop in the next 20 years. The aim of scenarios is help to structure an open future by way of a systematic examination of various development possibilities.

THE METHOD:

Scenarios are dealing with change. Before we start with explaining some basics about Scenario Building, a short quote from Ulrich Golüke, an outstanding expert on the question "Why is it worth to invest time in building scenarios?":

"It was in school that I learned that **there is no text without context**. (...)

In the old days, a mere two, three generations ago, context was geographical -- and slow. You grew up into it and used it all your life.

Today, as you fly for a 2-week vacation to the Caribbean, you meet more cultures in that plane than your grandmother did in her lifetime. **Context** isn't that warm, fuzzy feeling you know from childhood any more, it **has become a variable**. You don't absorb it any more with your mother's milk, you need to help create it on the fly.

One of the better ways, we found, to do that is to create alternative stories about the reality that currently surrounds you. Not, we hasten to add, to become your very own spin doctor, but *to center yourself (and your group) with integrity* in the swirl that surrounds us and pulls us here and there and everywhere.

In creating these stories, we learn to re-perceive reality. In ways that create possibilities, give us new options and open up horizons. So that we are no longer *enduring* the future, but begin to influence and shape it.

Scenarios enable individuals and groups to shift questions about the future away from "will something happen?" to "**What will I do if it does happen?**" They let you create your own script, rather than living out someone else's. They can help resolve conflicts. Scenarios provide deep insights, are hard work but also very rewarding.

That's the essence of scenarios."

Source: www.blue-way-net.de

So let us have a closer look at how to create scenarios.

• **What is a scenario?**

A Scenario is *not* a prognosis, which tries to predict the future. It is also not an exercise in wishful thinking or dreaming up the perfect vision...

Building scenarios means to develop several alternatives of the future, several possible futures so to speak. They are sketches to help you realise, become aware of the various possible paths and to compare and reflect upon these paths - maybe even to invent new ones, hitherto unheard of... Scenarios enable and encourage you to actively shape today's developments to achieve a wanted outcome in the future.

Scenarios have a plot – a causal chain of events that make clear how it has come to a certain development in the future. Scenarios further have shaping actors, such as individuals or states that influence events on various levels.

The medium of the scenario method is storytelling – because stories are not only something that everyone understands, it is also a way to intellectually and emotionally experience complex and ambiguous issues and relationships.

Making up stories about possible futures is a fun and creative way of learning and your personal participation in their creation promises deeper involvement and perhaps a better understanding of the factors and complexities facing the German-Israeli youth exchange in the future.

Good scenarios also do not work with categories such as “good and bad” or “right and wrong”. They aim to develop a differentiated picture of the future that is full of contrasts and where the judgement of a certain development depends on attitudes and perspectives of various actors – just as is true for the present.

Good scenarios are plausible, but nevertheless challenging and unusual – they should both be “realistic” and include an element of surprise, which could shape the future in a way not thought of today. Good scenarios are more than a linear progression of today's developments. They allow for a high degree of change without sliding into utopia.

This is why we picked a time horizon of 20 years – much can and will change and some of it along lines we can envisage today. At the same time, humanity will not live on Mars or use flying soccers to get to the pub... In 2025 the teenagers of today will be in the midst of their adult life and many of them will probably have children in school.

• **How does it work?**

The development of scenarios is a group effort. As a group you have to agree on your own priorities, identify central influencing factors for possible development trends and decide on probable consequences and causal interrelations. In a Scenario-Workshop from 28th – 30th May this year, a group of almost 20 participants from Germany and Israel with various backgrounds developed four scenarios for the year 2025. The reason for creating four scenarios is that it is easier to analyse possible future scenarios having the luxury of comparison between various realistic alternatives. These scenarios and an illustrating story for each of them will be the starting point for our workshops in this conference.

To structure the endless range of possible futures it is necessary to develop some kind of navigation system, or let's say a compass. What are the basic directions in which we can move into the future? This needs both, the identification of what is really important for the future at question and the identification of what we consider really uncertain for the time horizon of - in this case - the next twenty years. What are the basic alternatives, we are really interested in to explore further?

So, to make sure, that we are really creating four *various* alternatives, one way of structuring is to select two central and fairly uncertain driving forces for the future. These two driving forces have to be really uncertain in their course for the next twenty years. What questions would we ask first, if we met a time voyager coming back from the year 2025?

• **Factors, frameworks, developments – what are you talking about?**

Factors driving the German-Israeli youth exchange are things such as:

- The knowledge of the past and its meaning and interpretation,
- The structures of exchange (city or school partnerships, youth exchanges, virtual communication and exchange, etc.),
- The interest in and motivation for a lively exchange by German and Israeli youth,
- The political value and importance placed on such exchange/ resources made available.

Dimensions of Context that in the future would be the backdrop to and influence of the German-Israeli youth exchange are things such as:

- The dynamics of societies' development/ social, political and cultural changes and the self-image and national identities of Germany and Israel in the next 20 years,
- Anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Germany/ the life of the Jewish Diaspora in Germany,

- The conflict in the Middle-East: strategies of the conflict parties and the stability of agreements,
- The economic interweaving/ interdependence and cooperation of both countries by 2025,
- The influence of European integration on German-Israeli relations/ differing images and understandings of Europe,
- Global challenges – common solutions (ecology, security, etc.).

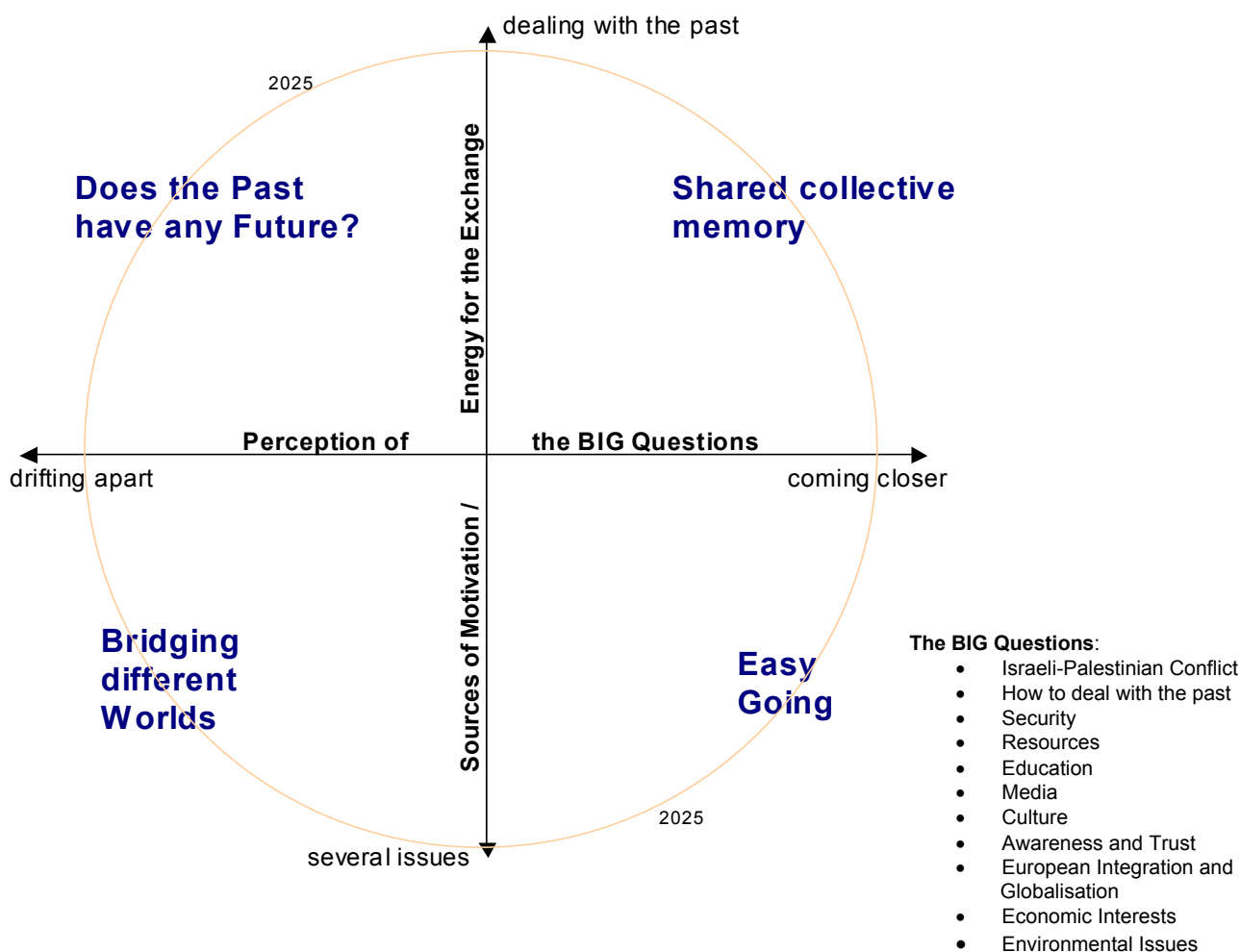
Although by no means a complete list, it is such factors and frameworks that we can pick and combine in our endeavour to develop alternative pictures of possible futures, with other words to **build scenarios**.

Discussing a wide range of issues and possible trends which might build up the future of the German-Israeli youth contacts, two big questions emerged in the workshop:

1. After a long way of coming closer over the last five decades, will we continue and succeed in our search for a common understanding or will we drifting apart in our interpretation of the big questions in the course of the next twenty years?
2. Where will the energy and motivation for a lively German Israeli youth exchange come from in the year 2025? Will it – like more or less today – still be the remembrance of the Shoah, or will new issues become also a strong source for intensifying youth contacts between Israel and Germany?

This brought us to a **basic navigation system**, how to structure the alternatives, which we are facing for the future of the German Israeli youth exchange in the next 20 years:

(next page)



The **first scenario** deals with a future in which

- the perception of the Big Questions (like how to deal with the past, the Israel-Palestinian conflict, security policies, societal visions, ecological responsibility, etc.) between Germans and Israelis are drifting apart, i.e. in 2025 they see the world more differently than they do today.
- the youth contacts between the two countries in the year 2025 derive its energy mainly from “dealing with the past” – the remembrance of the Shoah, that means this is the main driver (contents, resources, motivation, legitimating) for the mutual exchange (and sometimes disagreement).

The story “Does the past have any future” is one illustration how this world might become reality. Of course there are many other stories, we can imagine, how to end up in this scenario.

In the **second scenario** we find ourselves in a world where

- the perception of the Big Questions between Germans and Israelis is coming closer over the next twenty years (compared with today).
- as today – and as in the first scenario, the youth contacts between the two countries in the year 2025 derive its energy mainly from “dealing with the past” – the Shoah, that means this is the main driver (contents, resources, motivation, legitimating) for the exchange between young people from Germany and Israel in the year 2025.

“Shared collective memory” is a story about this world.

The **third scenario** deals with a future in which

- the perception of the Big Questions between Germans and Israelis is coming closer over the next twenty years (compared with today).
- the youth contacts between the two countries are getting its energy from various sources, whereby the dealing with the past is still, of course, a key issue, but gradually loses its central position in favour of e.g. actual political and cultural issues, economic interests, and other topics of exchange.

The story “Easy Going” illustrates, how we might come up with such a Context for the German Israeli youth contacts in the year 2025.

The **fourth scenario** deals with a future where

- the perception of the Big Questions between Germans and Israelis are drifting apart. That means Israelis and Germans will see and interpret the world in 2025 more differently (compared with today), and
- the youth contacts between the two countries gets its energy from various sources, whereby the dealing with the past is still, of course, a key issue, but gradually loses its central position in favour of e.g. actual political and cultural issues, economic interests, cultural and other topics of exchange (and sometimes disagreement).

“Bridging different worlds” tells a story how this kind of change might come along.

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Scenario 1

Does the past have any future?

A report on the Screen in May 2025 on NTV.

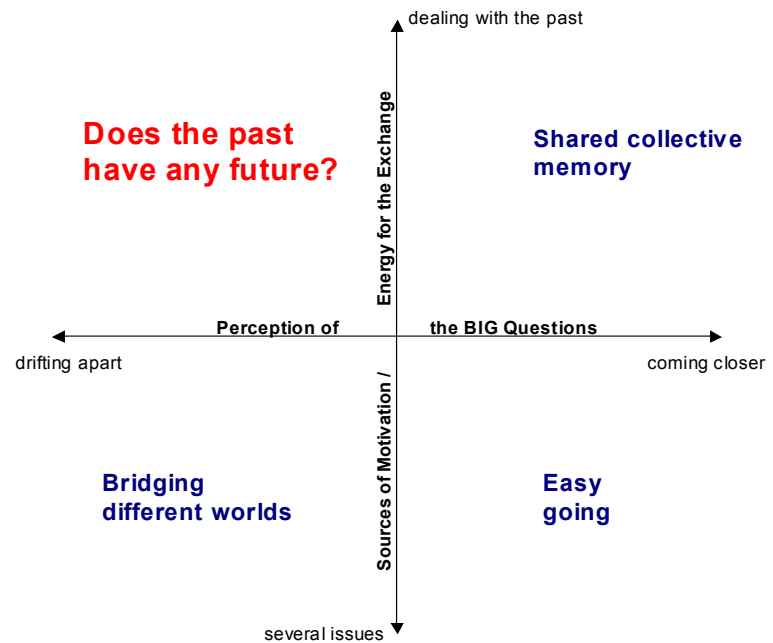
An attack on Tel-Aviv – according to Israeli sources 3 Troia-Bombs exploded in the center of Tel-Aviv killing more than 200 people and injuring more than 1000. The Hamas has taken responsibility for those actions. This is the biggest attack on Israeli civilians since the declaration of the Palestinian state more than 3 years ago.

As a result, Israeli forces invaded the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and are arresting Hamas leaders. Palestinian

officials in Europe are calling for international interference. The Arab world is warning Israel to withdraw and release the Palestinian leaders. The international community declares an embargo on Israel and demands to let in UN troops to restore order in the region.

Franz Kluster, the President of the EU for the next two years from the German delegation, has condemned the occupation of the Palestinian State by Israeli forces and has compared it to the invasion of Iraq by American forces 20 years ago.

After more than 35 years of the Intifada and although the Palestinian state has been officially recognised by the UN, the EU and Israel, the situation seems to deteriorate. The fence had stopped attacks for a certain time. The way was open for the declaration of a Palestinian state, recognised by the world and by Israel. A short time of cold but accepted cooperation followed. Nevertheless, the life conditions in Palestine have not really changed yet. The Israeli pressure on the Palestinian government to control its militant groups on the one hand and the political difficulties of the government on the other have made it hard for the Palestinians to keep a stable coalition. The Palestinian people, having waited for more significant changes in their life conditions for more than 5 years now, have grown tired of the corruption and inefficiency of their government and want a stronger leadership. The Hamas,



supported by Syria, had managed to open many religious schools and day care centers and had organized food distribution for the poor for many years now. In the elections last spring they managed to win the majority of the seats in Parliament and are now claiming that Israel has deprived them of their birth right to their land, their water and their holy temples. With that, they declared they would neither recognize the agreement nor the Israeli state. There is in fact a state of continuous attacks by extremist Palestinian groups endangering life in Israel despite agreements between both states. Violence still reigns and there are still Palestinians prepared to die.

Israeli fear of the growing violence and political power of the Palestinian state brings about a strong right wing coalition on the Israeli side. The Israeli prime minister declares “Israel will not stand aside and watch how its civilians are murdered [...] We will not wait any more to be rescued by an anti-Israeli international community”. Israel resists UN troops on its land and is considered as aggressive and very unreasonable in the public opinion in Europe.

Johannes and Yariv: two teenagers in two countries

Johannes, who is 16 years old, is sitting and watching the news report on TV. He sees the pictures and doesn't feel any emotions, Middle East problems again, he thinks. He was asked to take part in a youth exchange with Israel at his school. Israel is one option among many others and not recognized as something special, it is presented just like any other option. He refused because he felt it didn't interest him and was too dangerous. Instead he decided to join the exchange programme with Spain – and after watching the report he knew he had made the right choice. The only thing he knows about Israel is this conflict, which he doesn't want to hear about any more. He vaguely recalled a history lesson where in relation to Israel they talked about something else than the conflict; something called “the Holocaust”. This was only an optional chapter in the new European curriculum called “The history of European suppressed minorities” and he has chosen a much more relevant subject - “The history of Sinti and Roma in the Balkans”. Yet he learned that the persecuted Jews now have a country and that there are no more survivors of the historical persecution of Jews in Europe, the Holocaust. So it does not really bother him, it happened a long time ago.

After the report had finished, he had to start packing his bags. He was happy with his decision to go to Spain, after all Spain is in the EU along with Germany and all his friends are going to Spain and it is so “cool”. Looking at the events on the screen again he for moments imagines going there: Israel seems so far away, it is always talked about as a dangerous country, which leads very controversial politics. He had often heard that Israelis are very opinionated and aggressive, so how could he get along there? Going to Israel sounds like a risky thing, like an insecure adventure. The exchange with EU countries is far more encouraged by Johannes' teachers and parents. In fact there are hardly any non-European countries, with which exchange programmes are being offered. It seems that the suggestions to gain international experience are pretty much focused on Europe: His older sister participated in a European summer school in France last year, which was paid by the government. There, she met other young people from all over Europe and made very good

friends with two girls from Poland. Since the school curriculum has been Europeanized 5 years ago, she can apply for a year of European scholarship to live in Poland and attend school there. Her chances are extremely good because she already chose Polish as her third foreign language. Later, she plans on doing her volunteer Europe year, which is compulsory, in Prague. There, she will be working together with the Polish group at Amnesty International, creating cooperative projects to guard human rights in Europe. The project was started many years ago to strengthen German-Polish relations, which have suffered greatly during the Second World War. This would probably increase her chances later in applying for the Erasmus-Mondos programme. Many Universities in Europe offer multilateral cooperative programmes which can take place somewhere else in Europe every semester. Johannes' parents are very pleased with the choices of their children, since they know the employment market in Germany is demanding a great deal of European knowledge and mobility within Europe.

At the very same time in Tel-Aviv, Yariv, a 16 year old boy who had participated in a two-day workshop about the Holocaust in "Yad Vashem" the day before, is surfing on the Internet. He had taken part in the workshop because it was obligatory according to the national curriculum and also because his great-great grandparents had fled the death chambers of the Nazis over 80 years ago.

Yariv was looking forward to going to Poland later that week. His brother had lived for a year in Germany last year. He had worked as a volunteer at the Wannsee Villa in Berlin on behalf of an Israeli government organisation which aims at supporting the commemoration of the Holocaust in Europe. Yariv wanted to go to the concentration camps ever since he had learned about it in middle school.

On the trip he will be travelling with 5 German students and 15 other Israelis. The Israelis are looking forward to find traces of the past. They are expecting to find their picture of the history of the anti-Semitic Europe confirmed and also they are at some point curious to see what Europe has learned from the past. Getting to know present Europe is not on their agenda.

The youth exchange in 2025

The German-Israeli exchange in 2025 is very different from the exchange 20 years ago. Since European exchange programmes are in great focus for all European countries, the German Government has significantly reduced the funds for German-Israeli youth contacts. The only project supported by public money are joint programmes of Israeli and German youth visiting traces of Nazi-history in Poland. Responsibility for the past has been transferred into mere commemoration projects in Poland, given the fact that Israel was increasingly wanting to perform these programmes in order to strengthen the Jewish Israeli identity of their youth. Politically, the German government at some point welcomed the idea to follow Nazi-traces in Poland rather than in Germany. Given this development, the past is no longer the strong motivation for the investment into present bilateral relations. Since funds

were getting more and more restricted, priorities of the German government have changed and are now supporting only exchanges and connections with EU-member countries. This meant that ConAct – the Coordination Center for German-Israeli Youth Exchange – had to close down because of a lack of resources and political interest. Instead, programmes with the old Eastern Block countries have been expanded and are well funded and promoted. Consequently, young Germans are identifying themselves more in an European context and grasping their national past as a part of the European history of wars, where a lot of people and nations were victimized. They see their responsibility as Europeans that are now able to contribute to the world's peace. Because of the closeness of the EU and the feelings towards the Palestinians, there were many more exchanges taking place between the EU countries and Palestine than with Israel – for security reasons mostly not in Palestine itself. During the past years, many Germans had visited Palestine, a lot due to strong leftist political movements and organisations like human rights movements, and had built lots of mutual connections.

The fact that exchange-programmes Israel are officially hardly supported anymore goes with the mainstream of German public with opinion that seems to have an overall negative picture of Israel and Israelis. Accordingly, the number of Germans who want to take part in the exchanges with Israel has significantly dropped. Today only those participate in meetings with Israel who are interested in the past and in the historical context of the relations. Nowadays, there is approximately one German to every four Israelis who want to take part. The exchange does hardly take place in Germany or in Israel anymore but mostly in Poland because the most important concentration camps and death camps were located there. The programmes only last for 5 days and there is heavy security provided for the participants, especially the Israelis.

Exchange programmes as they once existed, including a visit in the presence of each country's culture and daily life, is hardly existent anymore. Bilateral partners don't have enough financial resources for performing those exchanges, since the political interest has dropped. German-Israeli youth contacts have declined, organisations and schools which had bilateral partners 20 years ago have found different European partners and have different agendas that promote and motivate their cultural activities.

Further existing youth exchanges with Israel are now only financed by non-Governmental organisations, who receive money from religious groups, as they have always been strong supporters of Israel. A very limited part is funded by the German government, as a part of the larger promotion of teaching European history. The programmes taking place in Poland are those officially being funded. One cannot speak of 'exchange' anymore since visiting Israel is not supported. Yet the Israeli side is very supportive of these programmes, also financially speaking: Anything related to commemorating the past in any kind is supported by the Israeli government and Jewish communities from America.

Within this Israeli frame of youth politics, compulsory Holocaust studies are in focus: A very popular optional programme among Israeli teenagers is to volunteer for a year in Germany or Poland in the national programme for commemoration of the Holocaust after their army service. Participating in this programme is regarded as an honour since the government is

financing travel costs, accommodation and gives fairly good pocket money. Most young people take that as a good opportunity to travel through Europe later together with the Israeli group of volunteers. Most of them stick to the Israeli group and have very little contact to other Germans, who do not think highly of them as openly known.

Scenario 2

Shared collective memory

Yom Ha'Shoahh in the year of 2025. Idan is on his way to school in Tel Aviv. At 10 o'clock - like every year – the sirens start. All the traffic stops and people stand still for the next two minutes, no matter where they are at this very moment. At the same time in Munich, Anna and her friends are on their way to school and witness the same way of commemoration. Anna is surprised. Since this way of commemorating was started in Germany a few years ago, it has never worked out like today.

20 minutes later, Anna sits in school reading her history book – the same book that Idan uses. She has to hurry up because in 15 minutes the VPC - the virtual parallel class - will start. This is a new class taking place once a week during the tenth grade. The cooperation in this new subject "German-Israeli Holocaust-studies" is part of a politically supported and initiated subject, obligatory to all schools and educational institutions in Israel and in Germany. Schools and youth projects with previous relations have right away adopted the new curricula. Often the cooperation is based on partnerships which have been existing for more than 30 years.

Anna will be able to discuss the content of the book via Internet conference with Idan's class. Anna and Idan have already known each other for some time. They met at a common school trip to Auschwitz not long ago which German and Israeli schools organize every year.

In the discussion following the trip to Auschwitz, the kids share the emotions which came up while visiting the site and discuss the thoughts which have come up afterwards. Anna expresses how she felt a mixture of guilt and a strong responsibility for what had happened – she felt guilty and at the same time opposes her feelings, as she knows she is not guilty. She feels desperate that there is actually no one to ask about how everything really was and happened. She feels disconnected from the history as the only things for her to learn from are books and documentaries. The past at some point feels artificial. She is struggling with the fact that she is German and all this was done by Germans. Yet, Anna had brought a



German flag to Auschwitz. She had felt proud to represent a democratic state, the present Germany, which has been dealing with the past a lot. She identifies with a feeling of positive belonging to Germany 80 years after the historic events.

Idan has been holding an Israeli flag. He was proud that his grandparents and great-grandparents have built the state - Israel - where he lives today. He felt proud of being a Jew, which always throughout history was a reason to be persecuted and to be ashamed of – there he stood nowadays and felt alive and part of “keeping the fire burning – keeping Jews alive”. He also felt angry about how the world did not do anything then, how the victims could not resist this horrifying discrimination and murder.

Anna and Idan have been preparing this visit together. On the one hand each, one was pretty much relating to the given and historic roles of the ancestors as victims on the one hand and perpetrators on the other. There was something dividing them while visiting the site together, they felt a gap was separating them. On the other hand, they felt strongly connected in relating to the past. They felt a shared awareness regarding the awful crimes that human beings did to one another and suffered from one another. Interestingly, there seemed to be room for both, the dividing and the connecting parts of this history.

Ranja, an Israeli pupil of the Arab partner school, who had also been partaking in the programme, felt somehow disconnected. What was her part in this emotional happening? First of all, the curriculum in the Israeli-Arab schools is different, there she only got a vague idea about the persecution of Jews in Europe. Then, while preparing for the programme, all the Israeli participants shared a joint preparation. Yes, that was actually interesting. They had met with a former youth-exchange participant, who had personally met with a Holocaust survivor. He had openly related also to them, the Arab kids. So Ranja agreed and was happily looking forward to partake in this joint “Holocaust-Study-and-Exchange-Programme”. During the intensive preparation process they had gone through, one part was also relating to the universal danger of phenomena like anti-Semitism, as ways of discrimination against groups due to their nationality, religion or minority status. But then, when it comes to the consequences of this Holocaust history, her Jewish friends, like Idan, always come to stand up for Israel. They have strong emotions connected to Israel as the Jewish state. And then she does not feel part of the happening anymore. She cannot relate to the Jewishness of the state, only to its open and democratic character. But that’s just not in focus when the ‘past is on’. While visiting the memorial site of the former concentration camp Auschwitz, the Germans and Israelis identified with their flags and now exchange their feelings about it. She did not know what to identify with back there. So she does not really have anything to contribute to the conversation at the virtual class now.

Also, Ranja thinks now: One of her great wishes was to take part in the exchange in order to visit Europe, to see what all her relatives keep on talking about after having been there. She actually really enjoyed the visit, the programme. And most of the participants, the Jewish girls and also the Germans, were o.k. She became most friendly with Idan and with this German girl, called Anna. Yet this Holocaust-topic somehow leaves her out, it’s just not as relevant for her; she feels that her history is a different one. And at some point this does not interest the

others. Yet, the whole topic leaves her with a conflict related to her life today – living in Israel as a state that was founded as one consequence of the Holocaust and herself living here as part of a minority with a different background. It actually leaves her with a lot of questions.

German Sibel of Turkish origin seems to feel a little like Ranja. She is also partaking in the virtual class from her German-Turkish school in Kreuzberg but she keeps silent, does not feel comfortable to speak. It occurs to her how she got to be part of this whole thing: Somehow she got in touch with this open youth club in Kreuzberg. And one day, there was a meeting there and they interviewed all the Turkish kids and wanted to know what they knew and thought about the Jews, Israel and the Holocaust. After the interviewing session they offered this German-Israeli-exchange programme on the Holocaust and something drew Sibels interest. She suddenly felt a strong identification with those Jews – she knows how it feels when people are unfriendly because they know you are Turkish. They think you don't know German, they make jokes and expect you not to understand! They don't even think about talking to you. And that, even though she has always been Turkish and German. She and her parents were already born in Germany. Her grandparents immigrated from Turkey and many of her friends' families once came from Palestine, Lebanon and Syria some 50 years ago. Anyway, those interviewing guys said, there would also be Israeli Arabs taking part in the programme. That seemed interesting – to meet with Muslims from another country. So she spontaneously applied to participate. But then, visiting Auschwitz together with the other Germans, with the Jewish and the Arab Israelis was weird. When she heard and saw what the Germans did in Auschwitz, she rather not wanted to be considered 'a German'. She felt she had nothing to do with this history, her roots were somewhere else. She rather identified with the discriminated Jews, but at the same time felt drawn to the Arab youth who were standing aside a little. In fact, she felt a strange mixture not really knowing where she belongs to and who to identify with. She is Turkish, her family is very involved in Turkish life in Kreuzberg, but she has never lived in and hardly visited Turkey. She is German but not considered German by the Germans. For her, this programme was a strange experience. And to be honest, only now, that they have this virtual class, she gets to think about it again. When she sees Ranja silent at the other end of the screen, she also decides not to say anything. This emotional exchange of words between the Germans and the Jews here does not inspire her to join. She actually feels drawn to Ranja and seems to have much more in common with her. They are both Muslims, both ethnic-minorities in their countries and both stood in Auschwitz and commemorated a history which was not theirs.

After finishing school, Anna wants to study biotechnology at the Weizmann-Institute in Rehovot. Idan wants to go to an acting school in Germany. Their parents are excited about the exchange, too. Since the low cost airlines are flying to Israel, it's possible for them to visit their children frequently.

The whole story of the wide spread virtual classes on Holocaust history in Israel and Germany began with the engagement of young participants of a youth exchange programme, both from Germany and Israel, who addressed historians, teachers and social organizations.

The motivation for this joint action came as an opposition to two events that occurred in the year 2015 without a direct link to one another. The first was the conclusion of the European commission for remembrance of the World War II, which, for budget reasons, decided not to restore Auschwitz after it was set on fire in 2011 by right extremists in Poland. Israel decided to start lobbying for the importance of commemoration and asked Germany for help in financing the restoration and influencing the public opinion in Europe. Germans and Israelis understood the importance of finding new methods of keeping history alive; after all, back then, there were hardly any Holocaust survivors alive anymore.

The second event that brought the awareness for a need of a German–Israeli cooperation occurred later in the same year, when an official declaration of the UN defined “Zionism as Racism”. The decision was to consider closing down Zionist movement centers in Europe and in this train of thought and action the existence of the state of Israel as a Jewish state was openly in question. A movement of young people in Germany felt that it was their responsibility as German Europeans to oppose this political development by all means.

How could this happen?

The completion of the security fence by Israel in 2009 was considered a one-sided political step on the new borders, which left the Palestinians unsatisfied. They wanted to declare a Palestinian state, but were not willing to accept those borders defined by the Israelis.

As a result of growing Arab communities in Europe on the one hand and strong economic relations between Europe and the Arab world on the other, a strong lobby for the Palestinians was founded. Palestinian refugees in Europe, Lebanon and Jordan, supported by Islamic fundamentalists, started violent riots demanding to put pressure on Israel to renegotiate its borders, particularly in East Jerusalem, and to allow Palestinian refugees and their families to go back to their land. Europe was afraid of having to deal with those problems on European territory. Afraid of its growing Muslim population on the one hand and being even more afraid of the growing racist actions of Arabs in their countries on the other, the EU decided, the best solution for the Palestinians would be to have their own country. With new negotiation about the land and Israel to allow the return of Palestinian refugees, danger could be reduced. The open resistance of Israel to accept this approach led to the following declaration by the UN: “...if Israel remembers the reason for its own recognition it should also consider that the Palestinians have the same right to their land ...Israel can not expect the world to recognize its existence going back to the persecution of its own ethnic group and at the same time keep racist policies going.”

The historians, teachers and social organizations motivated by the young Germans sent a letter to members of the German Bundestag where they expressed their fear of increasing anti-Semitism in the world and therefore emphasized the necessity of remembering the Shoahh. They suggested to remember and to teach the Holocaust in both countries – in Israel as well as in Germany – in the same way. This should set a sign of the shared values

which have been drawn as consequences from history and should this way openly support the existence of the state of Israel.

When the number of attacks against foreigners and Jews in Europe increased, the suggestions exposed in the letter became picked up by the politicians and finally, the Israeli prime minister and the German chancellor started an engagement to improve the relationship between Israel and Germany and to negotiate the foundation of a common institute of Holocaust research and National-Socialism studies in 2012. This was a political decision with wide-ranging consequences: In Israel it could at first not be accepted to work on the same level with Germany in research and education of the Shoahh. On the German side, negotiations started and were troubled by revisionist older statesmen who felt no need to invest in a project of this kind anymore. Had they not been dealing and investing in the past for about 65 years now? Enough was enough! The difficulty of the federal German states to agree with this educational programme took an enormous amount of time and energy in addition. Finally, the mandate on Shoahh-education was given to the new institute, since all schools and educational institutions were supplied with the techniques for installing the Virtual Parallel Class System.

The “Israeli-German Institute of Holocaust and NS-Research” was founded in 2014 – one faculty at Haifa, the other one at Hannover. The institute as a central institution is responsible for research about the Holocaust, to save testimonies, to create school curricula, to teach German and Jewish history and to improve the dialogue between Israel and Germany. Furthermore, students have the opportunity to study about the National Socialism, Anti-Semitism and Racism and to learn Hebrew and vice versa German – in shared courses.

The new quality of this institute is to focus on a curriculum, which states the necessity of the existence of Israel not only as a Jewish, but as a shared international concept. At the same time, it aims to support the finding and spreading of more general, universal conclusions drawn from the Holocaust, a tendency which has started some 25 years ago but did not receive enough support throughout the years.

The political aim was to show the world that if differing opinions on Zionism and Racism exist in other countries, the German-Israeli cooperation is aware and carried by a strong agreement in essential questions of human rights and life.

The institute is partially financed by the German government, foundations and economic companies. The latter are interested in a good relationship between the two countries, since Germany has become the most important partner for Israel in terms trade. Exchange programmes of highly skilled experts and workers support the numerous cooperative projects in different areas of science and trade: The main areas of cooperation are biotechnology, alternative energy resources and medicine.

During the last years, the Weizmann institute had focused on cloning human DNA. In those days, Germany has changed its opinion about cloning and therefore started to profit a lot from Israel, being ahead in these issues.

The world is running out of oil. Germany is desperately looking for alternative energies. The strong cooperation with Israel strengthens the wish to profit from their experience in using sunlight. Germany develops and supplies the necessary new technology and Israel is selling the energy to Germany. Germany in return takes care of supplying Israel with water. This whole project is a good example for the intensive development of economic and scientific relation between both countries.

A few years later, after the establishment of the institute, students of the 11th grade are going to an exchange programme to Israel for one year, which is nearly as popular as to go to the USA or GB or France. There is no language problem: Hebrew is taught in several schools in Germany as a possible second foreign language.

Through these shared interests, Israel comes closer to the European Union in many aspects which could have a positive influence on the German Israeli youth exchange, as well as on administration matters.

Since the establishment of the Holocaust research institute, public opinion in Germany on remembering the Shoahh has changed. The dynamics of dealing with the topic on an openly cooperative level, gaining thereby political support on the highest levels in both countries and in addition the good work in public relations has a great impact on the public. As one symbol of this change, both in Germany and Israel the Israeli Yom Ha'Shoahh is being celebrated as the main memorial day in both countries.

In 2020, the 75th anniversary of the end of the World War II sets a demanding date: Germany and Israel are celebrating the end of the Nazi regime together. Unfortunately, all the Holocaust survivors have meanwhile passed away so that from now on early and former participants of German-Israeli youth exchange programmes speak about their experiences with the German-Jewish history. They feel responsible for telling the stories which Holocaust survivors told them personally to the next generation. One of the institute's tasks is to organize these meetings.

A lot of former volunteers and youth exchange participants are working in the institute. Due to their experience and action, the idea to establish the Yom Ha'Shoahh in Germany gains honest support and is being put into reality.

Every year, there are youth exchanges of German and Israeli teenagers going to Auschwitz together. The idea is to create a collective shared memory, which will be the common ground for a new era of deep friendship.

The Germans feel responsible for contributing to the Israelis' security and thereby to the peace process – at meetings of young Israelis, Palestinians and Germans in the year of 2025, these issues are in the center of controversial debates.

Scenario 3

Easy going

May 2025: Both Israel and Germany are members of the European Union (EU). Israel has just entered the European Union in the framework of the latest enlargement. This last enlargement was celebrated in many events throughout Europe, bringing a new flair to the tension filled region. But the tensions in 2025 are not nearly as flamboyant as 20 years ago when the region was in the middle of a long conflict, finally solved by a peace treaty between Israel and the new independent state of Palestine. Both the people and the representatives of both states were finally tired of the conflict – everybody was yearning for better living conditions and therefore the tiredness of the people caused a change of politics on the high scale.



Now, behind the new glamorous façade of optimism and renewal, it is hard to put one's finger on the problems and tensions of the new situation. Entering the European Union, Israel must now begin with a series of reforms: the state has to guarantee minority protection and equal rights for all its citizens, questions of migration and integration have to be taken care of, the social welfare system has to be reformed and state-finances have to appear with a stable character. The changes both in terms of surrounding political conditions as well as intrastate evolving changes are not easily accepted in the Israeli society, but things move. Within the frame of the EU, Israel is left with some special regulations: The Jewish character of the state is still preserved, Jewish people have predominant rights to immigrate. EU-citizens can come to live in Israel, but can only receive the right to vote on the local level.

As a part of the integration of Israel into the EU, there's a change in the definition of the German-Israeli relations, resulting in a decline of the perception of the relations as special. Dealing with the problematic history of the Holocaust is still, of course, a key issue, but gradually loses its central position in favour of current political and cultural issues. German intermediation in Israeli-Palestinian matters gets gradually more important and central, financing and initiating triple cooperation programmes and backing inter-regional connections. On the political level, Germany is also a very close partner of Israel in the internal EU-relations. Cultural issues are being pushed up on stage, taking a more central

role in the Israeli-German debate. The identity search of the EU, and of Israel as its newest member, results in a tightening of all forms of cultural cooperation in programmes aiming to “bring the people together” – may this be music workshops, book fares, theatre exchanges or cooperative opera performances. Israel tries to rediscover its own European character, worsening the cultural alienation already existing with the Palestinian state, but trying to get closer to Europe. Within the Israeli society, the struggle has grown on the question of whether Israel belongs to the Western and European style of life or to the Middle East and the so called ‘oriental world’....

Youth contacts as a part of politics

German-Israeli youth exchange is now institutionalised as an integral part of European programmes. Exchange programmes are becoming widely spread, but taking a more European character. A certain loss of interest on the German side causes a decline in the number of participants in German-Israeli programmes, in favour of a larger involvement in different multinational programmes. The loss of interest in German-Israeli programmes has several reasons: On the one hand, the interest in the whole of Europe is very strong and Israel is now part of it. On the other hand, the growing European identity comes with a decline of a past-related identity and thus the interest in getting together especially with Israelis has gone down remarkably. At the same time a new German identity within Europe goes together with a growing German bond to European ideas, values and a future-oriented spirit, leaving behind outstanding national history.

The EU has started to initiate new Israeli-Palestinian trust-building projects on different societal levels, usually preferring to finance such youth exchanges over simple Israeli-German ones. An outstanding pilot-project has gained a whole lot of publicity and great evaluation. It is called the ‘*Jericho-Eilat-Akaba-Taba-Youth-Trust*’: In this programme, young Egyptians, Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis are spending a month to go on shared survival-training-experiences: scuba-diving-programmes, mountain-climbing-experiences, desert-walking-tours. The aim is to pass together moments of total dependence on one another and to get out of those life-endangering situations by honestly having to rely on one another, by giving mutual trust. The initiative to finance those programmes has actively been offered and promoted by the European Union, meant as a political impulse to fill the peace treaty between Israel and Palestine with a visual and fast showing impact for the population of the whole region. Given the growing bond of Israel to Europe, these programmes were also to show the necessity of Israel ‘acting locally’ and belonging to the region.

As an integral part of Europe’s youth politics, the European Volunteer Service Programme is being widened. Services in Israel are fully financed and considered a welcome part of all existing options. More and more European volunteers are on their way to try and serve in countries of the Middle East. This goes together with another development which 20 years ago was not even thought of: Given the decision of a greater number of European states having decided against a general army and instead for a professional army, the EU has passed a law for the youth of all European countries to deliver a year of social service in

Europe. The service has to be performed outside the home country. The aim is both to support the social and welfare system, but also to initiate and strengthen a growing European identity of the young people.

National remembrance has become a subject of the 'all-mighty' Brussels administration. A Committee is responsible for working on European phenomena, regarding the practice of remembrance of the Holocaust, the World War II and its consequences in Europe. The committee, which has been established following an intensifying European process, tries to define a common norm of debate and treatment of the subject. This institutionalisation causes a common understanding between the people on the one hand, but on the other hand a marginalisation of the subject of individual and national memory. Groups of intellectuals and politicians from all sides, but especially the Israeli and the Polish ones, take an active part in the acrimonious discussion. They oppose the fact that the dominance of a united European perspective fades out a distinctive history with both victims and perpetrators and with the crimes having been done to their people and countries throughout history, especially by the Germans during World War II.

After a few years of relative peace and quietness in the region, Israel starts blossoming as the new hype tourist destination in Europe. The streets and beaches of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa are flooded with tourists from Germany, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. The larger German cities, on the other hand, are now included in every European family package trip offered by any self-respecting Israeli travel agent. The Israelis start complaining about masses of Germans flooding Israeli beaches: badly dressed, beer bellied tourists, looking like walking tomatoes, as you could once only see on Spanish beaches. Israelis, however, are now to be seen everywhere as rude, loud chaps, walking on private inaccessible territories with their freshly bought white trainers. New stereotypes emerge on a broader level, based on everyday experiences at numerous places in many moments, at this point not being related to the trauma of the Holocaust anymore.

German is now a language taught at Israeli high schools, as a part of the newly found Europe-oriented-tendencies in the Israeli society and the attempts to strengthen the cultural bonds with Germany, the largest member of the EU. For the pupils, it is also possible to learn the other EU-languages as a second foreign language. Given the ongoing strong cooperation with Germany, the Ministry of Education goes out with a new campaign called "Assaf lomed Germanit" (= Assaf is learning German), trying to persuade young Israelis to choose German as a third language and thus increasing the cultural interrelations, communication and mobility. The campaign shows beautiful young people from both sides talking to each other, completely ignoring being conscious of the past in the relations between the two states. This also leads to a large violent debate in the Israeli Media about the new Europeanisation of Israel, ignoring its own history and geographical situation.

Dani, 16, lives in Rehovot and plays the cello. When he was 14, the “Assaf lomed Germanit” campaign made a great impact on him, and he decided to choose German as a second foreign language in high school. Taking part in an exchange programme between the Rehovot and Kiel conservatories, he was able to communicate and make friends with quite a few people. He, since then, keeps in touch with Robert (16 as well), a German clarinetist, through the portal. Being able to use its functions of video-conferencing, they gradually fall in-love with each other, deciding to start a common life together at some point. The new EasyJet line from Hamburg to Tel Aviv enables them to meet regularly in person, keeping the flame burning. In the summer and school vacations, they rotate spending the vacations in the other country, being able to work and live the local routine thanks to the new European Integration. In fact, there are so many inter-European couples that their relationship does not stand out as something special anymore.

Despite the normality of their relationship, six generations after the dark chapter of the so called ‘German-Jewish history’, Dani and Robert had to go through some weird situations when they first visited each other’s families: In Israel a remark of Dani’s grandmother caused some irritation. While meeting Robert for the first time, she had stated that her mother had said their family would never want any contact with Germans. Dani was very embarrassed. How could his grandmother be thinking that categorically and acting against people she does not know personally? How could she openly relate to something which was said generations before and does not have anything to do with young people like his friend Robert? Thank god, Robert did not initially understand what she said. Afterwards, Dani told him what had happened and was thankful that Robert did not take the whole thing personally.

While spending a summer vacation in Germany they experienced a similar situation: The first question Robert’s grandfather asked, when he heard Dani was from Israel, was how the Israelis could have done this to the Palestinians more than 20 years ago. Robert was ashamed of this question. What the hell does his grandfather know about Israel and the Middle East? And how can he be so tactless to accuse Dani of some political development, having taken place this way or the other decades ago, at a time when Dani had not even been born? Whenever there had been political discussions at home, the whole region of the Middle East was just condemned as a ‘lost and desperate case’. Surprisingly, Dani initially related to this remark and answered very self-consciously, that the Israel of today was a very different country compared to the one 20 years ago. Back then, fear and hate were the dominating conditions of all developments but meanwhile the atmosphere has changed: People on all sides understand that coexistence brings a better life for everyone and actually kids like himself have already grown up in a different spirit. He sees himself as a new generation with new options for life in the region.

After these two situations during the beginning of their relationship, the dynamics, which seemed to show some pattern of German-Israeli relations of past times, did not get to be relevant again. It seemed to them that their life, focusing on the shared interest in music, was what was central for their relationship.

How it all happened

The trigger for the process of the acceptance of Israel in the EU was the peace treaty, signed between the new Israeli social democratic government and the Palestinian leadership at the end of 2008. The treaty called for the creation of a new, independent Palestinian state within fixed borders. The main questions dominating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were addressed and officially solved, but the relations of the two countries could not really be described as warm or friendly yet. Israel still suffered terror attacks. After violence had at first still been very present, the Palestinian government fought the extremists openly and by doing so improved the situation somewhat. During the first few years of Palestinian independence, the Palestinian state lived in constant fear of an Israeli invasion because of the still existing extremists. But then, slowly, the difficult relations improved constantly, even though tensions and mistrust are still present in any contact between the two nations and people. International intermediation is still needed very often.

The signature of the treaty, however, improved the Israeli status in the world, especially in Europe. Directly after the signing of the treaty, the Israeli government, with German backing, filled an application to join the EU. Negotiations officially started in the year 2012. After a negotiation period of 7 years, a date was set for the official entrance of Israel into the EU as part of the latest enlargement. A series of reforms and institutional demands was imposed on Israel during the negotiations. These reforms included the recognition of Arabs as a national minority, changing migration laws and traditional structures. The Israelis decided on these reforms in a row of referenda, on which the debate was long and painful, and left traces and bruises in the Israeli national consciousness.

Scenario 4

Bridging different worlds

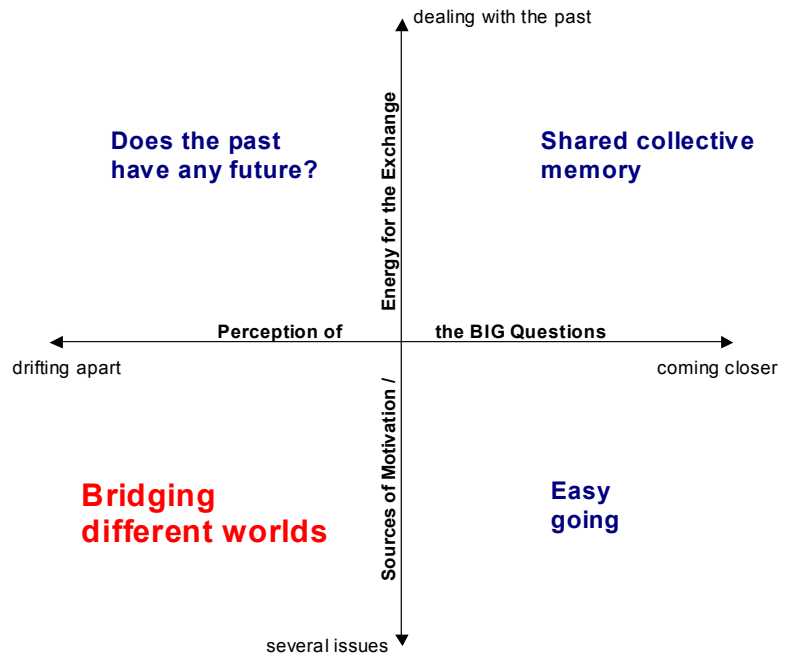
“Teheran 20th January 2015: The Iranian rebels take over the Parliament building of Teheran. According to reliable sources, Iranian Prime Minister Navid manages to escape to Tunis. The Tunisian Prime Minister refused to comment on this information.

The Iranians have managed to liberate themselves from the hard orthodox regime and are calling for abolishment of the discriminating laws against women, the restrictions of clothes, alcohol and ask for a free democratic state. There are celebrations in the streets of Teheran and preparations for democratic elections. The new situation in Iran is predicted to bring change also to other Arabic countries.”

At that time, Israel develops a new “wells for flourishing the desert system” which was a success in the Negev and a new way to distil water. Iran is really interested in such complicated technology and in order to be able to receive that technology, they start negotiating an exchange of diplomatic contacts with Israel.

The USA and the EU, who have already supported the rebels in Iran financially had announced they will strongly support this positive change for the Iranian people if they will help solving the conflict in the Middle East.

After building the security wall, Israel allowed less and less Palestinians to enter the country for work purposes or family visits. It managed to prevent most of the attacks against its civilians and, despite international pressure, the Israelis felt more confident and secure about the situation. The Palestinians on the other hand were growing poorer, their territories were overpopulated and they were very frustrated from the lack of change their government or even the resistance groups were managing to bring. Until the year 2010, there were two attempts to negotiate peace treaties between Israel and the Palestinians but they failed due to lack of trust and support from both sides. As a result of international pressure on Israel-



Palestine to resolve the violence in the Middle East, the attempts finally ended in a ceasefire agreement that unofficially recognizes the authority of the other party over certain regions and includes certain cooperation treaties on issues of employment and water.

The new progress in Iran in 2015 put pressure on Syria to start negotiating with Israel. The Iranians managed to negotiate between Israel, Lebanon and Syria. They managed, with a lot of diplomatic help from different sides, to come to a compromise about territories, citizens and current borders.

The Hisbollah, Hamas and Jihadic-Islam, which were financed by Syria and Iran for more than 30 years, had then started to fall apart. As a result, the Palestinian government gained more public support to engage in negotiations with the Israelis. The new road map developed by the Egyptians was accepted on both sides and in May 2020 both states officially recognized one another and signed a full cooperation treaty. At the official peace celebration, the Israeli President announced that the wall will be taken down. The new borders were now being built.

More and more Palestinians and Israelis are now trying to deal with one another in order to overcome the pain of the past. A great number of projects, dealing with cultural cooperation and peace building, are put into practice. Theatre groups, music events and youth concerts, not to forget a strong cooperation in the field of sports. Money for peace building projects predominantly comes from the United States. But large donations also support this long awaited process of cultural bond building: Rich Jews as well as rich Arabs from different parts of the world support these projects.

Within a short time, the process has also been introduced into the education system: both Hebrew and Arab are obligatory subjects and are taught in every school and integrated in the Bagrut, the Israeli final school exams.

Due to the peace agreement, Israel's economy starts to grow. Israel also develops good relationships with its Arab neighbors, which is another reason for the booming economy. Given the economically improved situation, Israel has also been able to start dealing with its inner problems like the multi-cultured population, social imbalances and conflicts in the field of religious and secular life. The so called 'Oriental' spirit has increased in Israel and it becomes a tourist attraction, offering the experiences of a Middle-Eastern oriental country.

Only recently, Israel has been invited to participate as a guest in the regular meetings of the Arab world. Especially new ways of trading are a great field of interest. Developing these new ways of trade, the old railway between Beirut and Tel Aviv has been restored for already 3 years now and is reopened in order to celebrate the notion of a more connected Middle East. The great potential of the region has proven itself far more than expected in the last 5 years: The amount of tourists coming to the region has increased 200%, the foreign investments in the Middle East countries are 10 times higher than they were in 2015. Cooperation in desert technology has improved life of the population living in the desert and new companies opened branches in those areas creating more workplaces and bringing in

young successful people. The Arab countries in the Middle East acknowledged the financial and political improvement that followed the peace in the region and are interested in strengthening the technological and cultural cooperation with Israel.

Three strong fields of cooperation are being established in the region:

1. Restoration and preservation of religious places for all religions in order to encourage tourism but also as a way of overcoming religious conflicts.
2. Technological cooperation as a way of making the Middle East more modern and more successful.
3. Cultural cooperation that unites and strengthens the Middle-East cultural symbols and values; the adaptation of the Western culture for the sake of modernization is not wanted.

In order to put these fields of cooperation into concrete action, the Middle-East countries decided to encourage, finance and build:

- Joint faculties and exchange programmes for studies of religion, technology and culture. Exchange students from Middle-East countries can move each semester and study at a different university of the Middle East.
- Youth exchange programmes in the fields of music, dancing, religion and young sciences are offered and supported .

One outcome of the new cultural cooperation is a great and emotional event: In 2024, the Middle Eastern song contest 'Arabvision' is taking place for the third time, in that year at Beirut. Israel is sending a young singer called Yael Goldstein. She is singing a song about life and love in the Middle East, partly in Hebrew and Arabic and wins the contest with great support from different countries.

The globalization of Europe has brought Germany much closer to the EU. Germany has taken several key positions in the EU and continues to be a core force in it. Given the fact that oil prices rose so high, Germany initiated the development of new energy sources that could not be imagined 20 years ago. This made the Western world less dependent on the Arab world. Europe is very much concentrated on and investing in inner European issues. Germany identifies itself more and more through its European contacts and increasingly distances itself from its national history including the Holocaust.

The situation in Germany is that the society is growing older and becomes more individualistic. The former welfare state has been changed dramatically into a society of winning and losing parts. Therefore, the German youth is under a lot of stress, because the country is ruled by a smaller number of young and middle-aged people. This young generation is in great conflict with the older generations and has the feeling of not being able

to carry the burden of taking care and nourishing the great part of the old society. Education is becoming more competitive and has great challenges regarding the necessity of handling new technologies. Highly skilled people do not have difficulties to find a job, but youngsters of low social/economic status have difficulties to make a living. Official education hours have been cut down in order not to waste any time. Following the strong European process, a European educational platform has been decided. Here, a topic focusing on European culture and society has taken the central place. Time for history lessons has been reduced and thus there is also less time to concentrate on teaching the history of the Holocaust. This part of history has become one among others, it is not emotionally loaded as it once was.

During the last years, Israel has become much more of a Middle Eastern country than it was 30 years ago. The greater part of the population by now has its roots in Arab countries. This has its effect on many parts of the cultural life: Middle Eastern and Arab restaurants are widely spread, but you would hardly find a 'French cuisine'. Oriental style music keeps its places in the Israeli charts and is appreciated all over.

Both the stable political and financial situation in the Middle East in general and in Israel in particular, together with the opportunity to explore the Arab countries and culture now, brings a certain loss of interest in the "boring, old and arrogant" Europe, as it seems to appear. Learning about the Holocaust as a part of the Jewish history is still very important, but dealing with and wanting to understand Germany with this past has lost its actual relevance. The history of the Middle-East conflict and peace building with the Palestinians appears to be much more relevant and important.

Since 2017, the former bilateral youth exchange does not exist anymore. The only possibility to get to the Middle East is through multilateral programmes of the European Union. But even here, budget cuts have reduced the number of options. The EU has decided to invest predominantly on inner-EU-programmes.

Laura is an 18 years old German girl who had already visited all of Europe within the frameworks of youth exchanges. She has just graduated high school. Now she felt she needed a break and decided to make a round trip through the Middle East. In Cairo, she buys herself a 'Middle Eastern rail ticket'. Here, she was told about this amazing party in Beirut. So she decides that her destination would be the great Middle East party taking place in Beirut once a month, which draws the attention of young people from the whole region. One special train is called 'the party train', where different kinds of music already bring the young people into a good mood.

The train passes Tel Aviv on its way to Beirut. Oren, who is a student at Tel Aviv University, has missed the last regular train north to Nahariah, where he lives. So he has no choice but to get on the party train.

Trying to escape the music, he sits down close to where Laura sits. Somehow they start talking. Laura tells him about where she is going. Oren has already been to many parties of this kind in Beirut. He doesn't understand what Laura finds that exciting about the huge party. Laura asks Oren to accompany her to the party, but he refuses saying he has to study for a very important exam next week. This exam in Islam will determine whether he will be accepted for the scholarship programme in Damascus next semester. Nevertheless, he invites Laura to stay with him and his family in Naharia. Having such a low budget for this very expensive region, she gladly accepts his invitation.

They start discussing the development in the Middle East and Israel and Laura is amazed to hear that Oren had a German great-grandmother that had fled Germany in the Second World War. She never realized Israel was such a young country. Being in a deep conversation, Oren misses to get off and suddenly sees himself going to Beirut with Laura. Laura is surprised to see how many Lebanese people he knows. He even met his old Egyptian friends, he studied with a year ago in Tel-Aviv. His Arabic was a bit rusty, but he plans to improve it in Syria next semester.

After staying with Oren's family for 2 weeks, Laura decides to stay in Israel for a while to study Middle-Eastern studies because she is amazed by the so called 'oriental' culture and realizes that her work and financial perspective could be much better in Israel and the Middle East. What in her western perspective is named 'oriental' is the natural character of the Middle East and the atmosphere of Arab life.

After living in Israel for 4 years, Laura decides to go back to Germany. She misses her culture very much. She asks Oren to come with her and open a center for Europe-Middle-East mediation and communication, which wants to help integrating Arab minorities in Europe and European minorities in the Middle East. She suggests, they should use the Israeli model of multi-cultural communication in the "being different but still the same" - theory, which was developed in Israel supporting the integration process into the Arab community. Oren decides to come to Germany, saying the European life still seems a little old-fashioned and boring, but he agrees to help her build up the center.

This idea is later adopted as a model for a new exchange programme: Israel sends young Arab-Israeli professionals to Germany and to other countries in Europe to teach the model of mutual integration of European and Arab population. The programme is being subsidized by Arab states in the Middle East who wish the young Arab population in Europe to feel good and to be well integrated in Europe.

The center, Laura and Oren have founded, becomes so successful and popular at both sides in the following years that the EU decides to make it a best practice example for the international community.