

SPANISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS  
AND SYSTEMIC PRESSURES, 1956-1986:  
THE CASES OF GATT, NATO AND THE EEC

Las relaciones hispano-israelíes y la presión  
del sistema internacional, 1956-1986:  
los casos de GATT, OTAN y la CEE

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**Abstract**

Based on the Constructivist theoretical approach for analyzing international relations by identifying the forces which influence states behavior, this article compares major junctions in Spain's international status and the way systemic changes influenced the course of Spanish-Israeli relations. The article looks at Madrid's entry into the international trade regime represented by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1963, Spain's joining the Council of Europe in 1977, Madrid's inclusion in NATO in 1982, and its entry into the European Economic Community

(EEC) in 1986. We argue that this last milestone left Madrid with little option but to establish relations with Israel. This proved that systemic pressure, derived from Spain's new status in the EEC, was crucial for the establishment of bilateral diplomatic ties.

### **Keywords**

GATT; NATO; EEC; Spanish-israeli relations; diplomacy; international relations.

### **Resumen**

Basado en la teoría constructivista de análisis de relaciones internacionales e identificando los factores que operan sobre el comportamiento de los Estados, este artículo compara los momentos cruciales en la evolución del estatus internacional de España en el período de la posguerra. Nos referimos a la entrada española en el régimen internacional de intercambio comercial representado por el Acuerdo General de Tarifas y Comercio (GATT) en 1963, la inclusión de España en el Consejo de Europa en 1977, la participación del país en la OTAN desde 1982 y, por último, la entrada de España en la Comunidad Económica Europea (CEE) en 1986. Argumentamos que este último hito en la trayectoria internacional española dejó poco margen a Madrid, no quedándole más remedio que establecer relaciones diplomáticas con el Estado de Israel. Esto demuestra que la presión del sistema internacional, derivada del nuevo status de España en la CEE, fue crucial para la formalización de relaciones bilaterales entre ambos países.

### **Palabras clave**

GATT; OTAN; CEE; relaciones hispano-israelíes; diplomacia; relaciones internacionales.

## SUMMARY

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I. INTRODUCTION. II. GATT MEMBERSHIP AND THE END OF A TRADE BOYCOTT ON ISRAEL. III. SPAIN'S JOINING THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE CAMP DAVID ACCORDS. IV. THE 1982 ENTRY TO NATO: NO PRE-CONDITION TO FORM TIES WITH ISRAEL. V. ENTRY TO THE EEC AND THE NORMALIZATION OF TIES WITH ISRAEL. VI. CONCLUSIONS. *BIBLIOGRAPHY.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In spite of a shared heritage dating back centuries and common national interests, such as a mutual fear of Soviet influence across the Mediterranean during the Cold War, it took 38 years after the establishment of the State of Israel (1948) and a decade after Francisco Franco's death (1975) for diplomatic relations to be formalized between Jerusalem and Madrid (1986). It was first and foremost Spain's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986 that left Madrid with little option but to establish relations with Israel. The trigger for this diplomatic milestone proved that systemic pressure, derived from Spain's new status in the EEC, was crucial for the establishment of diplomatic ties<sup>1</sup>. Earlier cases in which Spain underwent or was exposed to systemic change, however, did not lead to formal ties with Israel: Madrid's entry into the international trade regime represented by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1963, Spain's joining the Council of Europe in 1977, the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt in 1978 and Madrid's inclusion in NATO in 1982. Based on the Constructivist theoretical approach for analyzing international relations by identifying the forces which influence state behavior, combined with turning point decision-making analysis (TPD), this article compares the above mentioned systemic changes in the context of Spanish-Israeli relations. It does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the evolution of bilateral relations in between the cases identified as opportunities for change. The article highlights the unique factors which were in play with Spain's entry into the EEC and thus made the difference in 1986.

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of Spain-Israel relations during the years 1948-1956 see Rein (1997) and for the period from 1956-1992 see Setton (2016).

Constructivism became a leading force in International Relations (IR) theory in the early 1990s, following the end of the Cold War<sup>2</sup>. The two other major IR paradigms, Realism and Liberalism, failed to predict the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the fall of the Soviet Union. Constructivism provided a rational explanation based on its social interpretation of global affairs<sup>3</sup>. For its proponents, states are the primary actors in international politics. All research into important events must therefore begin and end with states<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, there is a “real” world out there, a myriad of forces, that are independent of the spectator and which are observable<sup>5</sup>. The international system is recognized as the cause while state actions are the effect. A change in the system may lead to an alteration in state behavior. The main variable is the relative power of the state within the system. Constructivism allows for state interests and perceptions to change over time. It seeks to identify and understand the sources of change, which are usually driven by institutionally mediated interactions at the systemic level<sup>6</sup>. These institutions are actual organizations, such as governmental and non-governmental groups, as well as various sets of identities and interests that do not exist apart from the participants’ ideas about how the system works<sup>7</sup>.

Relations between nations result from the decisions made by individuals. By definition, a turning-point decision (TPD) deviates significantly from previous policy on a specific issue. For states it can result in a dramatic shift in the relationship. A TPD is generated by stimuli which influence the decision-making process. The motivation comes from a situational change in either the internal or external environment of the decision-makers. The stimulus for change passes through the decision-maker’s cognitive system. Two conditions are then required to bring about a TPD. The decision-makers need to feel discomfort with the present situation they face and to believe that their new contemplated policy is the only viable option under the circumstances; the present strategy no longer provides an appropriate response<sup>8</sup>.

In the context of Spanish-Israeli relations there were always internal and external forces which influenced the development of bilateral ties. The more obvious or visible forces included, for example: the continuous Arab challenge

<sup>2</sup> Weber (2010): 62.

<sup>3</sup> Walt (1998): 41.

<sup>4</sup> Weber (2010): 66.

<sup>5</sup> Marsh and Furlong (2002): 18.

<sup>6</sup> Walt (1998): 40.

<sup>7</sup> Griffiths *et al.* (2008): 53.

<sup>8</sup> Auerbach (1986): 537.

to Spain's relations with Israel especially when there was any hint of bilateral progress; the Europeanization of Madrid's foreign policy particularly during the transition from dictatorship to democracy following the death of Franco in late 1975 and until Spain's ascension to the EEC in early 1986; Spain's limited efforts to involve itself in the Middle East peace process; Madrid's long standing support for the Palestinian cause; and also the gradual evolution of commercial and cultural ties between Israelis and Spaniards. There were less noticeable influential forces such as the Catholic Church and the shadow of anti-Semitism. Traditional anti-Semitic thinking was well-entrenched in Spanish society despite the absence of a sizeable Jewish community<sup>9</sup>.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century Spain fulfilled a marginal role in global politics as "at very best, a second rank European state"<sup>10</sup>. The historiography fittingly treats Spain as "a small power" with limited resources and capabilities yielding restricted international influence, definitely in the Middle East where the major powers were at play<sup>11</sup>. Spain's international position was boosted in the 1980s by its inclusion in NATO and the EEC. However, it remained all throughout at best a second tier power. Israel operated in a hostile environment, frequently involved in armed conflict with neighboring states, while facing varying levels of international isolation. Even though Jerusalem was often able to project strength in its own region, the same cannot be concluded for its position beyond the Middle East, particularly in international fora. Due to Spain's position of weakness and Israel's strategic focus, which was primarily military orientated and predominantly centered on its nearby geographic sphere of interaction, both countries had limited resources and capabilities available to pursue the development of their ties on a truly independent and bilateral basis. Unsurprisingly, the cultivation of their bilateral relationship was not perceived by either government as a primary national interest. Therefore, only under two scenarios could bilateral relations progress toward formalization. Either the establishment of diplomatic ties would not threaten other vital national interests or an external force would be powerful enough to push both sides forward toward each other, overcoming the fears, challenges and obstacles along the way. In the case of Spanish-Israeli relations it was the latter which proved true.

Actually, during the first years of Israeli statehood, Spain sought unsuccessfully to establish official ties with Israel as another means to overcome

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<sup>9</sup> For more on contemporary anti-Semitism in Spain see Álvarez Chillida (2002); Rodríguez Jiménez (2007); Rein and Weisz (2011).

<sup>10</sup> Rees (2003): 637 and Gillespie and Youngs (2000): 1-13.

<sup>11</sup> Balfour and Preston (1999); Rein (1999).

international isolation. By adhering to a moral foreign policy standard, anew out of the ruins of the Holocaust, Israel refused formal ties with the former Axis supporter. By 1953 Israel began adopting a more pragmatic view toward a relationship with Franco's Spain<sup>12</sup>. In a breakaway from its ethical approach to foreign policymaking, the Israeli government signed a Reparations Agreement with West Germany (1952). Officials in Jerusalem understood that there were benefits to formal ties with Madrid, particularly in the face of growing international isolation. This change of policy came too late. By 1953 the Franco regime had reached strategic understandings with the United States and the Vatican, while it had committed itself to a "special relationship" with the Arab world<sup>13</sup>. Two years later, Spain finally became a full member of the United Nations. The Spanish were legitimate players in the post-war international community. Madrid no longer deemed relations with Israel of strategic value<sup>14</sup>.

Thereafter until 1986, Spanish officials avoided calls to upgrade ties with Jerusalem. Israeli diplomats heard over and over again that Madrid did not consider that the present time "sea el momento oportuno para el establecimiento de las relaciones requeridas"<sup>15</sup>. There was no genuine desire to overcome the obstacles to formalizing relations with the Jewish state. The opportune moment ("momento oportuno") was illusive. Occasionally, there were pressures which challenged Spain's indifference toward Israel. Rarely was there a force capable of upgrading the bilateral relationship. The first such occurrence took place when Spain joined GATT in 1963. It became then apparent that only a powerful force, an external one at the system level, was capable of bringing about change in the relationship.

## II. GATT MEMBERSHIP AND THE END OF A TRADE BOYCOTT ON ISRAEL

The Spanish leadership realized half way through the 1950s that the autarky economic system had failed. Spain had bounded itself by tariff walls,

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed account of Spain-Israel relations during the years 1948-1956 see Rein (1997).

<sup>13</sup> For a general overview of Spain's foreign policy toward the Middle East see Delgado (2002): 299-330.

<sup>14</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the origins of Spain's close association with the Arab world see Algora Weber (1995).

<sup>15</sup> Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación (hereafter: AMAEC), R. 5522.2, 1 February 1956 from MAE to Spain's Embassy in Paris. See also Lisbona (2002); González García (2001).

the national economy was handicapped by its restricted buying power, without means to import raw materials or capital goods necessary to modernize and supply its industry. The Spanish economy reached a dead-end. A turn-around required that tariffs be lowered to boost trade, that economic controls be dropped and, above all, that Spain be integrated into the world market<sup>16</sup>. Franco needed modern capitalism to survive and the Economic Stabilization Plan of 1959, drafted by the Opus Dei led technocrat economic team, was pushed forward specifically to dismantle autarky by opening up Spain's economy while limiting liberalisation on other fronts: political, cultural and social<sup>17</sup>.

In the lead-up to 1963 the Franco government faced a classic turning point decision situation. Madrid understood that it was in Spain's best interest to join the GATT international trade in order to secure economic growth<sup>18</sup>. Consequently, as Spain's prepared for GATT membership it upgraded its commercial dialogue with other GATT signatories, including Israel which had already become a member during the summer of 1962. This included contacts with Israeli commercial attaches in a number of capitals, including for example, in Athens and London<sup>19</sup>. The Spanish representatives were asked to collect information on the status of commercial ties with various countries<sup>20</sup>. They suggested that Spain's commercial policy toward Israel would change in compliance with GATT. There were also higher profile activities taking place, such as the invitation to visit Spain handed over by Spain's Deputy Minister for Tourism to Meir De-Shalit, the Head of the Israel's state tourism company<sup>21</sup>. This was the first time an Israeli official received a formal

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<sup>16</sup> Carr (1980): 156.

<sup>17</sup> Balfour (2000): 268.

<sup>18</sup> As a result of joining GATT, Spain's international trade was boosted as it agreed to tariff reductions introduced between 1968 and 1972 during the Kennedy Round of GATT negotiations (1964-1967); see Prados de la Escosura and Sanz-Villaroya (2011): 9.

<sup>19</sup> ISA [Israel State Archives, Jerusalem] /RG 130/MFA/3142/7, 9 May 1963 from Bar-tur (Geneva) to the MFA on a noticeable increase in contacts between Spain and Israel regarding trade relations, particularly by Spanish initiative.

<sup>20</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/3142/7, series of telegrams between the Commercial Attaches in Athens (5 April 1963, 18 April 1963) and London (3 April 1963, 11 April 63, 17 April 1963) and the MFA on the contacts between Israel and Spain towards an expected upgrade in commercial ties between both countries after Spain's expected admission to GATT in the summer of 1963.

<sup>21</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/3142/7, 7 May 1963, by Moshe Alon, Head of the MFA's Economic Department, to Meir De-Shalit at the Prime Minister's Office, asking him to accept the invitation handed over to him by Spain's Deputy Minister for Tourism to visit Spain.

invitation from the Spanish government. De-Shalit reported afterward on the warm reception he received from his counterpart in Madrid<sup>22</sup>.

In the lead up to Spanish GATT membership, the most important sequence of communication and reciprocal visits took place from 1962 to 1963 between José Solís Ruiz (Minister and Secretary General of the Movement, 1957-1969) and his team with Israeli representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Israel's national shipping company Zim<sup>23</sup>. The Israeli diplomats involved included M. Alon, D. Golan, A. Reisner and R. Molcho and Y. Behar, while ZIM was represented by its General Manager, Zvi Yechieli. ZIM fulfilled a pivotal role in triggering these talks. The Israeli shipping company was a strong supporter of the liberalisation of trade with Israel. Its managers hoped their fleet could benefit from transporting goods between both countries as bilateral trade increased<sup>24</sup>. Solís wished to secure contracts to build new merchant ships for ZIM<sup>25</sup>. A mutually beneficial relationship was envisaged. During these talks, the Israelis also met with Manuel Fraga Iribarne (Minister of Information and Tourism, 1962-1969), Alberto Ullastres Calvo (Minister of Trade, 1957-1965), as well as senior representatives of the Ministries of Finance and Trade but noticeably not with any officials from the Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores at the Palace of Santa Cruz. Yet, Franco did not object to advancing commercial ties within limitations, despite the opposition to such progress at the Foreign Ministry in Madrid<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> *Maariv*, 14 February 1964.

<sup>23</sup> José Solís Ruiz, responsible for the Syndicates, wished to demonstrate that Spain could benefit from the ties with Israel, which in turn would be leveraged to gain support from Jews presumed to be in leadership positions at important financial institutions. The same applied to the General Federation of Labor in Israel, the Histadrut, viewed by the Spanish as an influential player in international fora; see Setton (2016): 34-35.

<sup>24</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/3142/7, undated report by Moshe Alon on his trade meetings in Spain, along with Zvi Yechieli of ZIM from 4-8 June 1962. It should be pointed out that from 1957 to 1962, Yair Behar had served in Spain as an official representative of the World Sephardi Federation.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*; ISA/RG 130/MFA/3142/7, 17 February 1963 by Yair Behar to Moshe Alon at the MFA. Solís also included his son-in-law, Fernando González Manresa, in the commercial talks with Israel preceding Spain's entry into GATT, possibly in the hope of personally benefiting from the expected trade between both countries; see Setton (2016): 35.

<sup>26</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/6528/7, 24 July 1963 by Moshe Alon and David Golan at the MFA to the Foreign Minister and Minister of Finance, Trade and Industry summarizing the talks with Solís and his team since 1962.

The delegations managed to formulate an understanding for promoting bilateral trade.

Solís and his Israeli counterparts agreed to four limited objectives which needed to be fulfilled for trade relations between both countries to grow: (1) termination of Spain's de facto trade embargo on Israel; (2) establishment of a bilateral trade framework between both states based on mutual most-favored nation (MFN) status; (3) formation of a private company dedicated to bilateral trade; and (4) a trade representative (unofficial and at Israel's expense) had to be appointed to manage the private company<sup>27</sup>. One can assume that these four objectives were reviewed by Franco. The embargo was lifted in May 1963. Franco ordered this ahead of Spain's entry into GATT. Israeli officials presumed that Solís was influential in delivering this positive result<sup>28</sup>.

The first two objectives were the minimum required by Spain to comply with its commitment to the GATT treaty. The next two goals were limited in order to keep official Spain at a safe arm's length. Trade between both countries would be promoted by a private enterprise. There would be no official Israeli representative on Spanish soil to support this initiative. Furthermore, the Spanish government would not assume any of the costs involved in setting up this private operation and managing it thereafter. They did not have a genuine desire to significantly boost trade with Israel. If Franco would have ever had such a serious intention, as the Israeli Consul General in Lisbon noted in April 1962, then he would have asked his foreign minister at the time, Fernando María de Castiella, to take the lead in the bilateral talks<sup>29</sup>. Perhaps only a Foreign Ministry led initiative could have resulted in commercial ties between both countries really taking-off. Such a move would have signaled an official endorsement for direct bilateral trade, which could not have been denied when confronted by the Arab states.

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<sup>27</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/3142/7, 17 February 1963 by Yair Behar of the Economic Department at the MFA which confirmed to the head of the department, Moshe Alon, that during a meeting with Solís in Madrid in June 1962, the steps which would be required to normalize commercial ties between Israel and Spain were formulated and agreed upon. A report also present in this file summarizes in detail the trip which took place on 4-8 June 1962.

<sup>28</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/981/5, 24 July 1963 to the Foreign Minister and Finance Minister on the developing commercial dialog between Solís and Israeli representatives to promote trade between both countries;

<sup>29</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/3142/7, 24 April 1962 from Amir (Lisbon) to the MFA questioning the motivation behind the move by Solís to promote a commercial dialog with Israeli representatives.

Still, the trade talks were most likely coordinated behind the scenes by the Palace of Santa Cruz and the Palace of El Pardo to minimize the potential fallout with the Arab bloc as a result of any progress in commercial ties with Israel expected after joining GATT. In order to guarantee that any advancement would be limited in scope and restricted to unofficial channels, Franco and Castiella likely managed the relationship with Israel through their trusted emissaries; Solís, Ullastres, and Fraga Iribarne.

At the end of the day, Spain needed to play by the rules of the international trading community if it wished to benefit as a member. Sufficient systemic pressure was created to push for change. The two conditions to generate a TPD were present once GATT membership was on the cards: (a) it was in the best interest of Franco's government, in pursuit of economic growth, to join GATT; and (b) liberalizing trade with Israel was the only viable option under the circumstances in order to comply with GATT membership rules. As a result, Spanish officials understood, albeit reluctantly, that commercial ties with Israel would need to be liberalized. In this spirit, the Spanish Ambassador to Geneva, Marquez de Minerva, was instructed as follows in June 1963: "Puede comunicar al Embajador de Israel que España, al adquirir su condición de parte contratante del GATT se consideraría obligado a la aplicación frente a este país del apartado I del Art. XIII del Acuerdo General sin discriminación"<sup>30</sup>.

But this instruction came with much reluctance. The Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (MAE) instructed its embassies abroad on Spain's obligations to GATT with respect to commercial ties with Israel: "Es muy importante impedir cualquier acto de formalización oficial de relaciones comerciales entre España e Israel, que podría tener repercusiones muy graves en la posición de los países árabes con respecto a España...dada la delicada situación en la Asamblea General..."<sup>31</sup>.

Castiella and the MAE were more concerned with securing Arab votes in Spain's favor at the UN General Assembly on debates concerning decolonization which could threaten Spain's hold of its territorial possessions in North Africa, specifically Ceuta, Melilla, Western Sahara and Equatorial Guinea. Madrid also did not want to let any advance in relations with Israel derail the grand objective of one-day restoring Spanish sovereignty over Gibraltar.

GATT membership obligated Spain to treat Israel on the basis of MFN status. The four objectives agreed by Solís and his Israeli counterparts back in 1962 and implemented by 1964 created a "win-win" solution. Bilateral

<sup>30</sup> AMAEC, R. 8702.4, 8 June 1963 from the MAE to Spain's Ambassador in Geneva.

<sup>31</sup> AMAEC, R. 8702.4, 11 July 1963 from the MAE to Spain's embassies abroad.

commercial ties were upgraded. In this context, before Spain signed up to GATT official records in Madrid referred to any trade with Israel as goods destined to the “Middle East”, whereas after 1963: “Only recently do they specifically mention Israel in official export publications”<sup>32</sup>.

The company EDEFI (Española de Desarrollo Financiero), owned by Israeli and Spanish shareholders, was established in 1964 to promote bilateral trade<sup>33</sup>. The Israeli shareholders were ZIM Israel Navigation Company and its subsidiary M. Dizengoff & Co. Ltd., while the Spanish shares were held by individuals associated with the Syndicates, including possibly a son-in-law of José Solís Ruiz. The shares were distributed equally between Israelis (50 %) and Spanish (50 %). It was launched with the approval of Franco and full knowledge of his cabinet<sup>34</sup>. Chaim Asher, Israel’s Commercial Attaché in Istanbul, was transferred to Madrid and appointed by Israel’s Ministry of Trade and Industry to be the company’s General Manager in January 1964. He was an unofficial Israeli trade representative in Spain under the cover of General Manager of EDEFI<sup>35</sup>.

Beyond the realm of trade and associated formalities, GATT did not require Spain to have full diplomatic relations with the other treaty members. Therefore, Spain complied with the treaty by paying a minimal diplomatic price in terms of its relationship with Israel and so avoided a potential fall-out with the Arabs. After all, Madrid could convincingly argue that GATT membership left it with no option but to liberalize its trade with all other member states, including Israel, and most important it did not take any additional diplomatic steps beyond the minimum required by the treaty. Meanwhile, no formal diplomatic upgrade in Spanish-Israeli relations would take place for the next two decades.

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<sup>32</sup> *Maariv*, 14 February 1964.

<sup>33</sup> The shares of EDEFI were split in two, whereby 50 % were held by an Israeli partnership between ZIM Israel Navigation Company, Ltd. and its subsidiary Dizengoff & Co. Ltd., while the other 50 % were held by Syndicate members in Spain, including Dionisio Martín Sanz (member of the Cortes and agricultural engineer); ISA/RG 130/MFA/3152/5, undated memo on Israel — Spain relations.

<sup>34</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/3142/7, 16 March 1963 by Stevenson Miller, Representative for ZIM in Spain, to Zvi Yechieli at ZIM headquarters in Haifa reporting on the Spanish trade mission which travelled to Israel 24 February until 1 March 1963.

<sup>35</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/3152/5, late 1963 from the Ministry of Trade and Industry to Chaim Asher announcing his appointment as General Manager of EDEFI and that in parallel he would also fulfil the role of an unofficial Israeli government representative in Madrid. See also Setton and Rein (2015): 678-695.

### III. SPAIN'S JOINING THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE CAMP DAVID ACCORDS

Only after the death of Franco in late 1975 and following Madrid's embarkation on a peaceful transition process to democracy did Spain's international position begin to shift for the better. In reality, however, Spain's road to democracy was long and progress was slow. The Spanish people wanted change but they did not want to achieve it through disorder, conflict and violence. Spain in transition was burdened by economic recession, with high social frustrations and tensions, which could have easily exploded into chaos. Spanish policymakers advanced cautiously fearing that if at any point the national consensus were lost, the whole project would be in jeopardy. An upgrade in Spanish ties with Jerusalem could have been part of the transition process. It made sense to include Israel in the diplomatic push for the universalisation of foreign relations called for by King Juan Carlos I during his coronation speech at the Cortes in Madrid on 22 November 1975<sup>36</sup>. Yet, Spanish governments also did not want to entertain foreign policy adventures. Their diplomacy for much of the transition period was a continuation of the country's foreign policy during the Franco years. Spain was still dependent on Arab oil. For the Palaces of Zarzuela, Moncloa and Santa Cruz, relations with the Arab countries, specifically Saudi Arabia, were a top priority. They needed to limit the economic damage to Spain's fragile economy caused by record breaking energy prices. At the time Arab diplomats in Madrid threatened that there would be repercussions against Spanish business interests across the Arab world should there be a rapprochement between Madrid and Jerusalem. The Arabs threatened to limit oil supplies and to cancel a loan of US \$450 million committed to the Spanish government<sup>37</sup>. Potential threats to Western Sahara, Ceuta and Melilla, the Canary Islands and to the freedom of navigation of Spain's fishing fleet off the coasts of North Africa remained real<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> "Mensaje del Rey", *ABC*, 22 November 1975.

<sup>37</sup> Setton (2016): 96. See also ISA/RG 130/MFA/8946/1, 16 October 1983, from Madrid to the Europe 2 Dept. at the MFA in Jerusalem on the cancellation of an order for Spanish armaments by Saudi Arabia following publication of a meeting between Spain's Foreign Minister, Fernando Morán (1982-1985), and the President of the World Jewish Congress, Edgar Bronfman Sr.

<sup>38</sup> Spain is one of the world's largest consumers of fish and seafood and the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem, extending from the coast of Morocco to Guinea Bissau, is the world's third largest fishery and the most important one in Africa, producing about two to three million tons of biomass each year; see ISA/RG 130/

Spain needed to orchestrate its foreign policy so as to not find itself in a potential major diplomatic showdown with the Arab countries, or even worse in a military confrontation, with one or more of its North African neighbors, specifically Morocco and Algeria. Meanwhile, the Spanish also faced the challenge presented by Libya's arming of the Basque separatist group ETA<sup>39</sup>. In an interview with *Informaciones* in early 1983 José María de Areilza concluded: "el 'lobby' de los intereses petrolíferos en Oriente Medio, amparado por el mítico pro-arabismo, inercia, el miedo y los prejuicios frustraron aquel intento, que era consecuencia de la declaración que España hizo en el sentido de establecer relaciones diplomáticas con todos los países del mundo"<sup>40</sup>.

A policy of non-recognition of the Jewish state was still used by Madrid to secure Arab support for its prime national interests, including its territorial possessions in North Africa.

Meanwhile, European policy toward Spain improved after Spain's first democratically elected government under Adolfo Suárez came to power in June 1977. As a result, Spain was admitted to the Council of Europe in November 1977. This move recognized the democratic ambitions of post-Franco Spain. It was an endorsement of Madrid's domestic transition policy but not a driver for foreign policy change. Council of Europe membership did not come along with a requirement for Spain to upgrade its relationship with Israel and so no change took place in the bilateral relationship between Madrid and Jerusalem.

In theory, the signing of the Camp David Accords on 17 September 1978 between Israel and Egypt supposedly created a new opportunity for Madrid to advance ties. The year before Spain's foreign minister Marcelino Oreja y Aguirre declared: "Existe un claro propósito del Gobierno de mantener relaciones con todos los países del mundo. Pero el Gobierno entiende también que, en el caso de Israel, debe producirse una circunstancia nueva que permita la negociación ajustada a las decisiones de la ONU..."<sup>41</sup>.

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MFA/8946/1, 27 April 1983, Israel Embassy in Paris reports back to the Europe 2 Dept. at the MFA in Jerusalem that Madrid was concerned of possible Moroccan reprisals against Spanish fishing interests off the coast of Morocco in the event of a rapprochement with Israel

<sup>39</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/8946/12, 18 September 1983, summary of bilateral relations with Spain in 1983 from the Europe 2 Dept. to the Deputy Dir. Gen. of the MFA in Jerusalem.

<sup>40</sup> *Informaciones*, 21 February 1983.

<sup>41</sup> Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Dirección General de la Oficina de Información Diplomática, (1986), quoting statement made by Marcelino Oreja on 14 July 1977 at the Palace of Santa Cruz.

Arguably, Madrid could have claimed that the new state of affairs in the Middle East justified a realignment of Spain's policy toward Israel. But this landmark peace agreement was limited to Egypt and Israel. Madrid still had to take into consideration its relationship with the rest of the Arab world, from its important oil suppliers in the Persian Gulf and all the way to its neighbors closer to home in North Africa. Meanwhile, Adolfo Suárez wished to promote a "third way" foreign policy initiative, whereby advancing the Palestinian cause, and leveraging Spain's relations with the Arab world, Madrid could assist the West in countering Soviet influence spreading across the Arab and Islamic countries<sup>42</sup>. The Spanish government was also afraid that Cairo's realignment with the Western bloc following the Camp David Accords would lead to a rise in Soviet activities elsewhere across North Africa to compensate for the loss of Egypt. Moscow needed to ensure that its reach into the Western Mediterranean, particularly as a means to counter movements by the U.S. Navy's Sixth Fleet in the region during times of crisis or war, was not adversely impacted by the pro-West political shifts in the Middle East. The Americans had a substantial advantage over the Soviets in the Mediterranean. First, NATO controlled the two major straits leading into the sea; Gibraltar and the Turkish Straits. The largest air forces and naval fleets in the region were aligned with NATO. The Americans also had access to support facilities across the region. The U.S. Navy had a supportive theatre in which to operate<sup>43</sup>. The Soviets feared that Western influence could spread to other North African states at their expense. Therefore, the Kremlin decided to bolster its position in the region. Through a series of arrangements and less formal agreements with Libya, Tunisia and Morocco, Moscow established its first shore-based access to the western Mediterranean<sup>44</sup>. This advance by the Soviets threatened Spain's territorial possessions in North Africa. Madrid could not afford to jeopardize its ties with the Arab world as a result of a peace

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<sup>42</sup> Setton (2016): 106-107. Spain set a European precedent in September 1979 when Suárez became the first European head of state to formally welcome Yasser Arafat in Madrid as Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). This was a move by Madrid to boost Spain's standing across the Arab world, reminding all that the Spanish did not maintain relations with the Jewish state and instead supported the Palestinian struggle for statehood. See also ISA/RG 130/MFA/8914/14, 4 April 1980, by Head of Propaganda Dept. to M. Sasson on the latter's visit to Madrid (20-23/05/1980) stating that Suárez pursued the "third way" foreign policy as a means to divert attention in Spain from his government's domestic policy failures.

<sup>43</sup> Roberts (1982): 1-2.

<sup>44</sup> McCormick (1987): 13-16.

agreement limited to Israel and Egypt. Ultimately, any thoughts by Oreja to seize the opportunity after the signing of the Camp David Accords to advance ties with Israel were dampened by their fears closer to home.

#### IV. THE 1982 ENTRY TO NATO: NO PRE-CONDITION TO FORM TIES WITH ISRAEL

Spain's Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez resigned in January 1981. He was replaced by Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo who thereafter served in the Palace of Moncloa between 1981 and 1982. Even though the Sotelo government was short-lived, it did give thoughtful consideration to formalizing ties with Israel. Calvo Sotelo's nomination by the Cortes impacted Spain's foreign policy direction in two major ways. After the failed military coup on 23 February 1981, commonly known as "23-F", the international community, particularly the EEC members, realized the need to complete Spain's transition into a full a member of the Western camp or risk losing their Iberian partner altogether<sup>45</sup>. Calvo Sotelo announced to the Cortes during his swearing-in speech that his foreign policy goals would be to: "conseguir para nuestro país una definición de política europea, democrática y occidental, clara e irreversible, lejos de sueños que puedan delatar una tentación aislacionista respecto del marco occidental"<sup>46</sup>.

After the failed coup, Spain's government aspired to become a full member of the Western camp; in terms of security through NATO and politically and economically via the EEC. It therefore pursued membership negotiations with both organizations<sup>47</sup>. In March 1981 Spain's Foreign Minister, José Pedro Pérez Llorca, declared that Spain's transition to democracy would only be complete once Spain became a full member of the EEC<sup>48</sup>. Talks with the EEC, however, stalled primarily due to French resistance. The Socialist government in Paris, led by Francois Mitterrand, preferred to delay progress until after the next general elections in Spain, scheduled for the end of 1982.

<sup>45</sup> Crespo MacLennan (2004): 227. For more on the coup of "23-F" see Reinlein (2002).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*: 228. See also Jorge Lafuente del Cano (2012).

<sup>47</sup> Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo has written about his experiences during the transition period (1990) and more can be learned from his speech "Sobre la Transición Exterior" given at the Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Políticas in Madrid on 16 November 2005 (<http://www.racmyp.es/docs/discursos/D7.pdf>).

<sup>48</sup> *El País*, 17 March 1981

Mitterrand anticipated that the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) would win the national election and he preferred to wait until then in order to negotiate an agreement with his ideological allies<sup>49</sup>.

Progress was only achieved on the NATO track. After brief negotiations, Spain joined the North Atlantic alliance on 30 May 1982. Spain's accession to NATO, however, was not conditioned on Madrid carrying out any foreign policy adjustment. NATO had greater concerns well into a second Cold War with the Soviet Union (1979-1985). The *détente* achieved between the two blocs earlier during the same decade collapsed. By the late 1970s the East-West rivalry in global politics heated up again and the blocs reverted back to competing against each other over their spheres of influence. The renewed tensions between the blocs was triggered by a series of events, such as the ongoing decolonization in Africa (independence of Angola and other Portuguese colonies), the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan<sup>50</sup>. Spain's direct access to the Mediterranean Sea and North Africa, as well as its ability to provide a logistical base for U.S. activities in the Middle East, were important for NATO. The North Atlantic alliance was also weakened from inside. The tensions between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus meant that the U.S. was limited in its use of military bases in either country. There were strong Communist and Socialist political elements with anti-NATO tendencies among the organization's Mediterranean members: France, Italy and Greece. Spain's accession to NATO not only strengthened the organization from a military perspective but it also gave it a political boost<sup>51</sup>. Altogether, NATO was eager for Spanish involvement. There was no call on Madrid to establish diplomatic ties with Israel, especially since the Jewish state was not a formal member of the North Atlantic alliance. Consequently, NATO could not be the mechanism at the international system level to apply pressure on Spain to advance its ties with Israel<sup>52</sup>. Beyond the context of NATO, the issue of Spanish-Israeli relations did come up here and there in meetings with foreign heads of state and politicians with their Spanish

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<sup>49</sup> Crespo MacLennan (2004): 231.

<sup>50</sup> For more on the second Cold War and a comprehensive analysis of increased tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union in the late 1970s and early 1980s see Halliday (1987); Westad (2007) and Gaddis (2005).

<sup>51</sup> Wojna (2008): 540.

<sup>52</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/8946/12, 18 September 1983, from Brussels to the MFA in Jerusalem on a meeting with NATO's General Secretary, Joseph Luns, during which he admitted that as the head of NATO he had no real leverage over Spain in the context of Israeli-Spanish relations.

counterparts. However, there was no systemic pressure on Madrid to upgrade ties<sup>53</sup>. Unsurprisingly, the veteran senior Israeli diplomat, Gideon Rafael, wrote in his memoirs from 1981 that: “The efforts with Spain, before and after Franco’s demise, were fruitless”<sup>54</sup>.

## V. ENTRY TO THE EEC AND THE NORMALIZATION OF TIES WITH ISRAEL

Even though there were no major diplomatic breakthroughs in the bilateral relationship during the years 1976-1982, there was an understanding on both sides that the status quo would not last much longer. As the transition progressed and Spanish EEC membership approached there was little doubt in Madrid that relations with Israel would be upgraded. In December 1984, the Spanish daily *Cambio 16* reported that Spain’s Prime Minister, Felipe González, repeatedly told his European colleagues that Spain would establish

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<sup>53</sup> The government of Calvo Sotelo was ready to formalize ties by early summer of 1982. However, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 derailed this plan. The government in Madrid could not justify the initiative, especially as the Spanish media was united in condemnation of the Israeli aggression. The opportunity resurfaced again in September that year as the Calvo Sotelo government thought that despite the Middle East crisis, the establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel could generate favourable sentiment amongst the Spanish electorate in their favour, with the PSOE already ahead in the public opinion polls just one month before the scheduled general election. Pérez-Llorca was scheduled to meet with Israeli Foreign Minister, Yitzhak Shamir in New York in 16 September 1982 at the UN General Assembly and to announce the exchange of ambassadors. Just before the meeting was to take place, reports spread worldwide of the Sabra and Shatila massacre of Palestinian and Shiite Muslim civilians in Beirut (16-18 September 1982) carried out by Christian Phalangist militia allied with Israel. Again, this was deemed not to be the “opportune moment” the Spanish sought for establishing ties with Israel. Consequently, the initiative never materialized. In essence, nothing happened in June and September 1982 since there was no international systematic pressure at the time to force Spain into normalizing ties with Israel or to neutralize any Arab threat of retaliation should a rapprochement take place; see Setton (2016): 113-114; see ISA/RG 130/MFA/8945/3, 10 October 1983, report by the Head of Europe 2 Dept. at the MFA in Jerusalem on Calvo Sotelo’s decision to formalize ties with Israel which were derailed by the June 1982 invasion of Lebanon followed by the Sabra and Shatila massacre; see also ISA/RG 130/MFA/8946/2, 11 February 1982, on the same topic by the Europe 2 Dept. to the Israel Embassy in Washington.

<sup>54</sup> Rafael (1981): 358.

diplomatic relations with Israel after its accession to the EEC: “En cuanto al establecimiento de relaciones, Felipe González dice a sus interlocutores europeos que lo hará ‘después’ del ingreso español en la CEE”<sup>55</sup>.

Indeed, nothing would happen before 1 January 1986. On 24 December 1984, *Ya* reported that at the PSOE 30<sup>th</sup> Conference, Felipe González told the Labor Party Member of Knesset, Michael Harish, that Spain: “establecerá relaciones con Israel en próximos meses, a más tardar en enero de 1986 (fecha en que está previsto el ingreso de España en la Comunidad Económica Europea)”<sup>56</sup>. In comparison to earlier times, the mid-1980s were undoubtedly the most comfortable time for Madrid to establish ties with Israel. Spanish military concerns related to its territorial possessions in North Africa were reduced. Madrid was aware of the diminished military capabilities of the North African states. The political divisions amongst these countries did not go unnoticed. These reduced the chance that a strong and united front would materialize into a credible threat against Spanish interests. Furthermore, Spain’s membership in NATO added to the sense of security amongst the decision makers in Madrid. Spain wisely increased its interdependence with North Africa through a series of defense and collaboration treaties<sup>57</sup>. Meanwhile, there was a growing recognition amongst the Arab countries that the formalization of Israeli-Spanish relations was for all practical purposes a done deal. Furthermore, Arab opposition to such a move was seriously weakened once Egypt, a major Arab power, had recognized the Jewish state with the Camp David Accords in 1978<sup>58</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> *Cambio 16*, 10 December 1984. See also ISA/RG 130/MFA/8946/12, 24 October 1983, from Paris to Europe 2 Dept. at the MFA in Jerusalem reporting on a meeting between Prof. Henrí Meshulam and Spain’s Deputy Foreign Minister Gonzalo Puente Ojea during which the latter stated that the normalization of relations was conditioned on Spain’s entry into the EEC and obtaining the “approval” of Saudi Arabia.

<sup>56</sup> *Ya*, 24 December 1984.

<sup>57</sup> Setton (2016): 142; Spain signed defence agreements with Morocco, as well as with Mauritania and Tunisia between 1987 and 1989. Madrid increased its economic involvement in the Maghreb, specifically Morocco. Spanish development aid funds to Morocco totalled over US \$500 million between 1977-1994, representing 58 % of Spain’s aid to North Africa and 7 % of its total global aid budget during those years.

<sup>58</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/8946/12, 13 October 1983 from Madrid to the Europe 2 Dept. at the MFA in Jerusalem on statements made by Iraq’s ambassador to Spain on Baghdad’s understanding that the formalization of relations between Madrid and Jerusalem was inevitable; see also ISA/RG 130/8946/12, 20 September 1983, from Madrid to the Head of the Europe Division at the MFA in Jerusalem on a meeting between Felipe González and Fernando Mujica.

The Spanish Prime Minister wished to regain Spain's position from centuries earlier as a European power. He needed a *tabula rasa* to do so which also meant resolving the anomaly of Spanish-Israeli relations. His foreign minister, Francisco Fernández Ordóñez, also admitted in an interview with *Diario 16* in March 1986 that: "Una vez dentro de la CEE era insostenible no mantener relaciones diplomáticas con Israel"<sup>59</sup>.

To avoid this unwanted situation, the state of affairs with Israel needed to be normalized sooner rather than later. In parallel, Israel launched an aggressive and effective diplomatic campaign linking Spain's EEC membership and the normalization of relations with Jerusalem. Israeli diplomats made every effort to ensure that the issue remained on the diplomatic agenda so that Spanish officials could not avoid the issue<sup>60</sup>. In May 1985, the Israel Embassy in Paris reported: "With respect to the diplomatic relations with Spain which was raised by the Ambassador, (Roland) Dumas ordered to include the subject on the agenda of the Franco-Spanish summit which will take place in France this month"<sup>61</sup>.

This campaign peaked when each of the EEC member states needed to ratify the agreement for Spanish membership<sup>62</sup>. The Spanish wanted to ensure that the ratification process advanced smoothly. They already understood that

<sup>59</sup> *Diario 16*, 5 March 1986.

<sup>60</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/8914/15, 13 February 1981, from the Head of Europe 2 Dept. to the Deputy Dir. General of the MFA in Jerusalem on the need to leverage relations with Denmark, West Germany and The Netherlands to pressure Madrid on advancing bilateral ties with Israel; see also on the same topic ISA/RG 130/MFA/8946/11, 19 March 1982, by MFA in Jerusalem to S. Hadas in Madrid on intentions of the Italian government to raise the issue of Israeli-Spanish relations during an upcoming meeting between Italian Prime Minister Giovanni Spadolini and Felipe González; and ISA/RG 130/MFA/8946/2, 11 February 1983, by Europe 2 Dept. to the Israel Embassy in Washington; and ISA/RG 130/MFA/8946/12, 12 September 1983, from Brussels to the MFA in Jerusalem.

<sup>61</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/8874/6, 7 May 1985 from Israel Embassy in Paris to the Head of Europe 1 Department at the MFA in Jerusalem following a meeting between the Israeli Ambassador and the French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas. A similar telex dated 5 June 1985 was sent from the Israel Embassy in Tokyo to the Director General of the MFA in Jerusalem indicating that the embassy had received information that Giulio Andreotti, Italy's Foreign Minister (1983-1989), discussed with his Spanish counterpart the need to normalize ties with Israel.

<sup>62</sup> *Haaretz*, 20 November 1985, a petition was signed by 72 members of the French Parliament on the eve of the debate in the French legislature to ratify Spain's ascension to the EC.

an inevitable result of the process would be the normalization of ties with Israel: “González appears to be someone committed to normalization and talks about it as something which will happen in the future... there is a connection between normalization and Spain’s entry into the Community, that is understood, maybe unpleasant but accepted — it is not talked about”<sup>63</sup>.

Despite Israeli efforts, the member states fell short of declaring the normalization of relations with Israel a formal precondition. In this spirit, following an interview in May 1985 by *Maariv*’s reporter, Esther Edelstein, with the Danish Foreign Minister, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, the Israel Embassy in Copenhagen reported: “Denmark communicates to Spain its expectation for the establishment of full relations with Israel, but it will not put pressure in the context of her ascension to the Community”<sup>64</sup>.

The same embassy reported in November 1985 that the Danish government: “Does not miss an opportunity to signal to the Spanish the importance in establishing relations, but does not link it as a condition for ratification”<sup>65</sup>.

Consequently, the Felipe González government made numerous commitments, public and private, to its peers in Europe, and the United States as well, that Spain would establish relations with Israel. The Danish Member of the Folketinget, Flemming Kofod-Svendsen, received in late August a letter from Spain’s Ambassador in Copenhagen, Joaquín Ortega Salinas, which stated outright: “The Minister Fernández Ordóñez has just confirmed the will of the Spanish government to establish diplomatic relations with Israel before next elections as a consequence of our entry in the Common Market”<sup>66</sup>.

The Spanish government simply could no longer justify the absence of relations with Israel. As a member of the EEC, Madrid had to comply with the *Acquis Communautaire*. This also meant normalizing ties with the Jewish

<sup>63</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/8874/6, 18 June 1985 by Y. Anug, Head of the Europe Division, to Shmuel Hadas (Madrid).

<sup>64</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/8874/6, 10 May 1985 from the Israeli Embassy in Copenhagen to the Europe 1 and 2 Departments at the MFA in Jerusalem on the update provided by *Maariv*’s reporter Esther Edelstein following her interview with Denmark’s Foreign Minister, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen.

<sup>65</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/8874/3, 21 November 1985 by Ilan Baruch (Copenhagen) to the Europe 2 Department at the MFA in Jerusalem following an update by the Danish Foreign Minister at a Foreign Affairs Committee meeting at the Danish Folketinget on Denmark’s efforts to convince Spain to normalise ties with Israel.

<sup>66</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/8874/4, 22 August 1985 by Spain’s Ambassador stationed in Copenhagen, Joaquín Ortega Salinas, and addressed to the Danish Member of the Folketinget, Flemming Kofod-Svendsen.

state since it would have been diplomatically challenging for Spain to be part of the Community, as well as to participate in the EPC (European Political Cooperation) and later the CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy)<sup>67</sup>. The Spanish daily *ABC* admitted that the Spanish government understood that their "...integración en la CEE era incompatible con la subsistencia de tal anomalía"<sup>68</sup>.

Nevertheless, Felipe González could not afford to be seen as having been pressured into upgrading relations with Israel<sup>69</sup>. Therefore, normalization only came after 1 January 1986 once Spain was a full member of the EEC. The transition to democracy was a success and Madrid was inside the EEC. Ties with Jerusalem were upgraded when it finally made sense for Spain do so. Felipe González realized that Madrid was on the verge of becoming a mid-level power in the arena of European and international politics. This was his opportunity to make his mark on history. Israel's successful multi-front campaign pressuring Spain to establish ties with the Jewish state disturbed González. Had there not been any such Israeli campaign, then Spain may have even delayed the establishment of ties even until January 1989. Only then was Spain scheduled to assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. At that point it would have been completely untenable for Madrid not to have diplomatic relations with Jerusalem. The MFA dreaded another delay and this was possibly an additional driver for the aggressive campaign undertaken in 1985 to pressure Spain to make a move by no later than early 1986<sup>70</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> A legal opinion formulated by the EEC at the request of the Spanish government confirmed that Madrid did not have to establish diplomatic relations with Jerusalem as a condition for ascension. However, Spain would have to honor the treaties between the EEC and Israel once it became a member; see ISA/RG 130/MFA/8914/15, 1 December 1980, a copy of the legal opinion formulated by the EEC and delivered to the Spanish is forwarded to the MFA in Jerusalem by the Israel Embassy in Brussels; see also Núñez Peñas (2013).

<sup>68</sup> *ABC*, 17 January 1986. See also Rein (2007); Hadas (2009): 75-87; Abadi (2004): 177-202.

<sup>69</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/8946/12, 12 July 1983, meeting between representatives of the Anti-Defamation League of Bnai Brith and Spain's Ambassador to the United States, Gabriel Mañueco.

<sup>70</sup> ISA/RG 130/MFA/8874/6, 20 June 1985 from Yaakov Peridan (Brussels) to the Heads of the Europe 1 and 2 Departments at the MFA in Jerusalem on the possibility that Spain will delay the establishment of ties with Israel until it assumes the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, as per the rotation schedule, in January 1989.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

It is important to point out that by the mid-1980s Spanish confidence was at an all-time high due to the combined military, political and economic protection which NATO and EEC membership provided. This enabled Madrid for the first time to overcome its fears of possible Arab reprisals to a rapprochement with Israel. The Spanish were aware of the diminished military capabilities of the North African states, the unlikelihood that they would unite into one front against Spain, all while relations improved markedly with the key potential aggressors; Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania. In addition, by the mid-1980s, Spain's dependence on Arab oil diminished. For their part, the Arab countries understood that their leverage on Spain decreased substantially into the 1980s. They probably never imagined that a Spanish rapprochement with Israel would take so long. In fact, only Iran and Kuwait recalled their Ambassadors from the Spanish capital after the relations were established. Both heads of mission returned a bit later to their posts as if nothing happened<sup>71</sup>. Years later, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, Spain's Foreign Minister from 2004-2010 and Bernardino León, a leading Spanish career diplomat and politician, admitted that the normalization of ties with Israel did not have any adverse effect on Spain's relations with the Arab world<sup>72</sup>.

It is evident from the above analysis that the only force which was capable of changing the state of affairs between Spain and Israel was strong and concentrated pressure coming from the international system. Systemic pressures were bearing down on decision makers in Madrid to change their policy toward Israel, convincing them that the benefits from a policy change outweighed the rewards resulting from the status quo overshadowed by its fears of falling out with the Arab world. Leading up to the summer of 1963, Spain's leadership faced a classic turning point decision situation. They understood that it was in Spain's best interest to join the international trade regime under GATT. They desperately sought to pursue economic growth and overcome the failures of its autarky economic system. Spain needed to play by the rules of the international trading community if it wished for its economy to grow. Israel was also a signatory to GATT and for Madrid to benefit from the international trade regime it had to comply with the basic requirement to liberalize trade affairs with all the other signatories to the agreement. Consequently, sufficient systemic pressure was created to push for change in the bilateral relationship, even though it was only limited to trade affairs. Since GATT did

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<sup>71</sup> *Ya*, 22 January 1986 and *El País*, 23 January 1986.

<sup>72</sup> Moratinos and León (2002): 112.

not require full normalization of ties between its participants, Spain did not advance its relationship with Israel any further than the absolute minimum required by the rules of the international trade regime. Just like with GATT membership, no preconditions were placed on Madrid with regards to its relationship with Jerusalem when it came to Spain's membership in the Council of Europe in 1977 or in NATO in 1982. Nor did the Spanish face any serious direct or indirect diplomatic pressure orchestrated by Jerusalem to upgrade ties with Israel in 1963, 1977 and 1982.

This, however, was different in 1985-1986. The coordinated Israeli diplomatic effort across European capitals and beyond, to link Spain's admittance to the EEC with the formalization of ties with the Jewish state, was the main driving force for Spain's informal commitment made to the other Community members that it would do so shortly after January 1986. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs should get the credit for having pushed Felipe González into promising his EEC counterparts that relations with Israel would be formalized once Spain's ascension was accomplished. Anyhow, Spain would have had to normalize ties with Israel at the very latest by January 1989, since it could not effectively assume the role of President of the Council of the EEC, without having ties with a country which had full diplomatic relations with all the other Community members. Spain could not represent the Community, especially as President of the Council, in its pursuit to contribute to peace efforts in the Middle East without having ties with both sides of the conflict. Felipe González understood that waiting until 1989 was not a viable foreign policy. His government had to establish formal ties with Israel as soon as possible in 1986 in order to complete the Europeanization of Spanish foreign policy as a member of the EEC. In doing so he achieved for Spain what Franco could only dream of attaining; Middle Power status. This was the highest international position for Spain since the Disaster of 1898 when it was defeated by the U.S. and lost the remnants of its colonial empire (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines). Unsurprisingly, when all was said and done, Felipe González asked during a televised interview following the establishment of diplomatic ties: "In any case, what did we achieve by not having relations with Israel?"<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> *Maariv*, 20 January 1986.

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