



NATO'S TRANSFORMATION, THE MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUE, AND NATO-ISRAEL RELATIONS

Conference co-organized by:

NATO Public Diplomacy Division
Atlantic Forum of Israel
Institute for Policy and Strategy, IDC Herzliya

Daniel Hotel, Herzliya, October 23-24, 2006

Monday, October 23

18:30 RECEPTION IN HONOR OF:
H.E. AMBASSADOR **ALESSANDRO MINUTO RIZZO**,
DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF NATO

19:30 OPENING GALA DINNER

Chair:

Prof. Uzi Arad

Director Institute for Policy and Strategy and Chair of the Atlantic Forum of Israel

I would like to share with you some reflections. NATO members here would all attest that initiatives by governments are sustained by wider society and bodies. Non-governmental, network of parliamentaries, think tanks etc. participated in the process. It should not be a surprise that when an interest began to arise about integration with the Atlantic community the Atlantic Forum of Israel was formed with the intention of facilitating this very important process. Some of those who gave us the nod – Americans Czechs and others – implied that we should implement formal as well as informal initiatives to help achieve our goals. The participants here attest to this process.

The course has born many fruits – an international seminar in Israel co-organized with the German Marshall Fund of the United States: “Israel and the Transatlantic Community: New Opportunities” (July 2004); brainstorming sessions on Israel and the Euro-Atlantic Community and meetings in Brussels with senior NATO and EU officials, including the Secretary General of NATO, co-organized with the German Marshall Fund of the United States (September 2004); dedicated sessions at the Annual Herzliya Conference by members of the North Atlantic Council, the official executive body of NATO, led by UK Permanent Representative (December 2004); hosting of the Secretary

General of NATO at IDC Herzliya to deliver a public address during his first official visit to Israel (February 2005); hosting and briefing the delegation of the Presidency of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly during its visit to Israel (May 2005); a visit to NATO of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, led by its Chairman, for a series of briefings and meetings, including with the Secretary General of NATO – in cooperation with NATO Public Diplomacy Division (15-16 June, 2005); organization of a special session on European-Israeli relations at the annual meeting of the Trilateral Commission's European Group in Madrid (October 2005); an international Seminar in Israel co-organized with the German Marshall Fund of the United States: “Growing Presence and Involvement: NATO and the EU in the Middle East – Israel in the EU and NATO” (November 2005); an International Symposium in Israel: “Israel and the Atlantic Community – Addressing the Challenges of Radical Islam and WMD Proliferation” – keynote address delivered by former Prime Minister of Spain, HE José María Aznar (March 2006).

And the most recent evolution; the agreement of an Individual Cooperation Programme between Israel and NATO was ratified on Monday, October 16th, 2006 at NATO headquarters in Brussels. **Israel is the first country outside of Europe – and the first among the Middle Eastern nations engaging NATO within the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue – to reach such an agreement.** This new initiative covers a variety of fields. Those here in the AFI and the many others who have put forth diligent efforts towards burgeoning the relationship between Israel and NATO cannot be but satisfied with the result.

Greetings:

Prof. Amnon Rubinstein
President, IDC Herzliya

I would like to congratulate Uzi Arad and his initiatives that we appreciate very much. Our friends from NATO – you are coming to Israel in hard days. We are smarting after the tragic Lebanon war, and listening to the threats from Teheran. For the past 60 years Israel has fought its adversaries victoriously, but we are on the threshold of a new era, an era of nuclear proliferation. One has to assume the worst scenario. This is very different from the cold war. The Soviet Union was a rational utilitarian state. Those who possess weapons in the Middle East and Asia are mad man. When I think of ways of escaping this doomsday scenario I can think of only one thing, extending NATO's umbrella over the region. Because of this and many other reasons, Ambassador Rizzo and NATO welcome to Israel.

Opening address:

H.E. Ms. Tzipi Livni
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel

His Excellency Ambassador Rizzo, Deputy Secretary General of NATO,
Professor Uzi Arad, Director Institute for Policy and Strategy,
Prof. Amnon Rubinstein, President IDC Herzliya
Distinguished Guests and Participants,

Opening Words

I would like to welcome to Israel Ambassador Rizzo, Deputy Secretary General of NATO, as a close ally.

NATO's role in the past

We are in a world of unfolding and diverse challenges. In meeting these challenges, Israel and NATO are natural allies and partners.

NATO was established in the early days of the Cold War to defend democracy and to secure the freedom of the western world. As NATO played a key role in meeting the threats during the Cold War, so today NATO can lead the way in meeting the current threats.

NATO's current role and strategy

Today, nearly two decades after the end of the Cold War, we face new threats – from Islamic radicalism, through global terrorism, to the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

NATO has to identify the up to date threats on the international agenda, make the necessary adaptations in order to play a significant role in meeting these threats and defend the values of the free world.

Diplomacy and the use of force – the correct strategy

The wise and just strategy was always a correct balance between the use of force and the encouragement of positive processes.

Diplomacy without the willingness to use force – in order to defend these values – is perceived as weakness, by those who use power to promote their ideology.

The new strategic threats threaten our values, our lives and the future of human society as we believe it should be.

From Nationalism to Extremism

Transformations in the world have influenced the types of threats which face us.

Traditionally, camps were divided by nationalistic trends and aspirations. Today, we can identify a common denominator which unites entities, which in the past were perceived as separate and even opposing sides.

The Hezbollah, El-Kaida and the Hamas – organizations which uphold extreme ideological views - and States founded on radical ideologies - like Iran - pose a threat not only to Israel – but to a wide range of countries including Islamic and Arab states.

In this context we must see the global terrorism phenomena. The ongoing terrorist attacks around the globe, from Cairo to Amman, from Bali to New York, all prove the fact that this battle is a global one, between the extremists and the moderates.

In this context, we must also understand the confrontation in the Middle East.

In contrast to the accepted opinion, the tension in the Middle East is not due to a local dispute about territories or borders. The confrontation comes as a result of this extreme ideology, and not a cause of it.

The most recent developments demonstrate that conflicts and threats cross borders and nations.

In addition to the threat of terror, we are threatened by a reality of rogue states seeking weapons of mass destruction and supporting terrorism, and failed states which harbor terrorism and lack responsibility.

Rogue and failed states

The rogue states, founded on extreme ideologies, also operate terrorist organizations as messengers of their radical ideology, just like Iran and the Hezbollah.

There are those who perceive the Iranian nuclear threat as a single isolated problem. That is not the case. The Iranian threat will have a domino effect. A compromising attitude will increase the tendency, and we will find other states seeking nuclear weapons as a deterrence factor, and in order to defend themselves against the Iranian threat.

This will lead to further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to terrorist organizations.

Yet, with rogue states we do have an address.
With failed states the situation is even more complex.

The failed states lack the basic responsibility of a state – thus allowing evil elements to grow and prosper.

The objective of the confrontation in Lebanon was to create the conditions for Lebanon to exercise its full authority on its entire territory.

So also, Israel's premise [or ambition] regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is to create a responsible state.

A state has responsibility for what occurs in its territory. States which renounce terrorism and accept the existence of other fellow nations are legitimate members of the family of nations.

The world cannot accept a situation by which a terrorist organization is regarded as a legitimate political partner, part of the governing entity of that country, while continuing its involvement in terror. The address must be clear.

This is true for the Palestinian Authority, for Lebanon and for other countries around the world which lack this responsibility.

We must establish a new system of cooperation – a system based on the cooperation of states. Perhaps we could call it a “state method of defense”, based on the states which share our values and principles, and take full responsibility over their territory.

Collective Security Approach

Israel’s traditional long term policy has been one of self reliance. In facing the challenges and threats of the new world, Israel believes also in a strategy of collective security. The current threats necessitate international cooperation and multilateralism. It should be said that a multilateral approach has its advantages and disadvantages.

In the most recent confrontation between Israel and the Hezbollah in Lebanon, Israel was faced with this dilemma. Israel decided to cooperate with the international community in bringing stability and security to the region. This is a test case for the success of the multilateral approach.

Israel decided in favor of the international path, as part of its broader foreign policy to bolster Israel’s multilateral diplomacy. Israel should be far more engaged in global and Western institutions and international policy-making.

In this regard, it is also no secret that Israel preferred the involvement of the forces of NATO in Lebanon.

In meeting these strategic threats, NATO is most essential.

NATO specifically has a leading role, due to its just value system, its special ability to adapt rapidly to the current strategic threats, and also due to its unique approach of diplomacy combined with the use of military force, when necessary.

NATO and Israel

The alliance between NATO and Israel is only natural, due to Israel being the one and only successful democracy in the Middle East. As also, Israel and NATO share a common strategic vision.

In Israel’s vision, the cooperation between Israel and NATO should be based on two pillars. The first being - our bilateral relations. The second – the Mediterranean dialogue and regional cooperation.

Our bilateral relations have been further empowered by the most recent signing of the ICP (Individual Cooperation Program) between Israel and NATO.

Israel is looking forward to an upgrading of our bilateral relations, such that will reflect our common visions, values and threats.

In looking toward the future, Israel will be glad to cooperate and participate in positive NATO regional and local initiatives, among them: the Mediterranean dialogue; the like minded global partnership; and the inclusion of Israel in the PFP (Partnership for Peace) NATO program.

Israel’s efforts to enhance relations with NATO are part of its broader foreign policy to enhance Israel’s multilateral diplomacy. It is our hope that a broad international alliance

will serve in meeting our strategic threats, and bring about a better world and a better future for us all.

These threats, aimed at Israel and the western-valued moderate community, position Israel more than ever before on the Euro-Atlantic side. In many ways, Israel is the front line defending our common way of life.

Thank You.

Keynote address:
H.E. Ambassador Alessandro Minuto Rizzo
Deputy Secretary General of NATO

Minister Livni,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much, Foreign Minister Livni, for these kind words, and for making us all feel so welcome.

Let me also express my sincere gratitude to the Atlantic Forum of Israel and the Institute for Policy and Strategy, for having organized, together with NATO's Public Diplomacy Division, what I am sure will be a most interesting conference.

My role here this evening is that of a dinner speaker, and I have no intention of pre-empting what will be said tomorrow, when we will tackle the relationship between Israel and NATO from several angles. Indeed, I have always been mindful of the saying that whoever invented the concept of the dinner speech neither knew much about speeches, nor about dinners. That said; let me share with you some general reflections on NATO, on the Middle Eastern region, and why these two can no longer be seen in isolation.

In about a month's time, NATO's Heads of State and Government will meet in the Latvian capital of Riga for their next Summit meeting. NATO Summits tend offer a fairly accurate depiction of where the Alliance stands. Riga will be no exception. Its agenda will reflect NATO's transformation from an Alliance geared to the territorial defense of Western Europe into a framework for addressing 21st century security challenges.

The Summit will have three main areas of work – operations, capabilities, and partnerships. The first and foremost area is, obviously, NATO's operations. Today, NATO Allies and many partner countries are deployed on operations and missions on three continents. In Europe, NATO is keeping the peace in the Balkans, notably in Kosovo where we are facing challenging times in the months to come. In the Mediterranean, in our Operation Active Endeavour, NATO is conducting naval anti-terrorist patrols. In Afghanistan, in what is clearly our most important and challenging mission, NATO is leading the International Security Assistance Force, a mission that ranges from peacekeeping to combat operations. In Iraq, NATO is training Iraqi security forces. In Pakistan, after last year's earthquake, NATO provided humanitarian relief. And in Africa, NATO is airlifting African Union troops to the crisis region of Darfur. It may surprise you, but today more than 50,000 soldiers are deployed under NATO command.

Why is NATO so much in demand? I would offer two reasons why. First, the Atlantic Alliance brings together North America and Europe – two continents that not only enjoy a unique level of cooperation with one another, but which also feel a strong obligation to contribute to global stability. And, second, NATO features both an exceptional political consultation mechanism and a multinational military structure to implement the decisions taken by its members. These two features make NATO unique. And they give the Alliance the cohesion to adapt and respond to new challenges like the multiplication of failed states, the fight against terrorism or the proliferation of Weapon of Mass Destruction.

This adaptation is also reflected in our military transformation, the second major area of work at the Riga Summit. It goes without saying that the missions and operations NATO is conducting these days are extremely demanding. We need forces that can react quickly; forces that can be deployed over strategic distance, and then sustained over a long period of time. And we need forces that are capable of performing both high intensity combat tasks and post-conflict reconstruction work.

We have made good progress in developing such capabilities. The NATO Response Force, which should be fully operational by the time of the Riga Summit, will enable us to react to new challenges even more quickly. We are also taking a hard look at our force planning and force generation procedures, to better match our political decisions and military commitments. And we are revising our funding arrangements – to make them fairer and more predictable, so that nations can more easily commit to operations. All these steps will ensure that future missions can be better planned, equipped, and paid for.

The third area is Partnerships. Partnerships with key institutions like the UN and the EU or third countries. In most of the missions and operations I mentioned earlier, NATO Allies do not act alone. They act with an ever broader group of countries from all over the world – from Europe, from Central Asia, from the Asia-Pacific region, from Northern Africa, and from the Middle East. Why? Because in a world of global threats and challenges, our security interests converge, irrespective of where our countries may sit on the map. And NATO's partnership and cooperation policies must reflect this.

It is here where the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative come into play. Already a decade ago, NATO launched its Mediterranean Dialogue – an effort to build trust with North African and Middle Eastern countries, including Israel.

The initial aim of the Dialogue was to improve mutual understanding, and to dispel misconceptions about NATO's aims and policies. And progress has been made even if some old stereotypes still have to be overcome. The Mediterranean Dialogue was not intended as a tool to play a direct role in the Middle Eastern peace process, or in handling other current challenges of the region, such as Iran's nuclear ambitions or the Lebanon crisis. These are issues that other actors remain better suited for. However, we felt that NATO could play a useful role in promoting the logic of cooperative security – a logic that has ultimately carried the day in Europe, and that has yielded very beneficial results.

The Mediterranean Dialogue started slowly, but it gathered momentum. The number of Dialogue partners grew from five to seven; our days: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and of course Israel. And the menu of concrete cooperation activities

went up as well. And I reveal no secret when I say that, from the outset, Israel has been among the most enthusiastic Dialogue partners.

Two years ago, at NATO's Istanbul Summit, we agreed on a more ambitious and expanded framework for the Mediterranean Dialogue. At the same time, we unveiled the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, to reach out to interested countries in the Gulf region. Four of them have already started political cooperation with the Alliance. Today, we are busy implementing the expanded Dialogue agreed at Istanbul. And, with very strong Israeli engagement, we are definitively moving from dialogue to true partnership.

On the political side, progress includes the first ever Defense Ministers' meeting in Taormina, Italy, earlier this year, as well as an informal ambassadorial meeting in Morocco, which was the first ever high-level meeting in a Mediterranean Dialogue country. In December 2004, we had a first meeting at the level of Foreign Ministers and we are now thinking about possible follow-up to those meetings. In addition to greater political dialogue, the number of opportunities for concrete, practical cooperation under the Mediterranean Dialogue process has increased dramatically. For those of you who like statistics I can tell you that, compared to 2004, the number of participants in Mediterranean Dialogue activities almost doubled to well over 800 last year and should be over 1000 this year.

The enhanced Mediterranean Dialogue now offers far greater opportunities to structure our cooperation in a more individualized way, so we can maximize the flexibility inherent in our outreach policy. New tools and mechanisms have been derived from the successful Partnership for Peace programme and open to Mediterranean Dialogue countries. And I very much hope that at Riga next month, Allies will agree to expand the toolbox of practical cooperation activities even further. We clearly need to retain a certain balance within the Mediterranean Dialogue, but we also need to give countries like Israel even more possibilities – and a greater opportunity for self-differentiation.

When I look more closely at the Mediterranean Dialogue and focus on the specifics of NATO-Israel cooperation, I am struck by how much we have achieved and how quickly things are now moving forward.

We have recently agreed an individual cooperation programme – or ICP. This programme is the first of its kind in the Mediterranean Dialogue. It covers many areas of common interest, such as the fight against terrorism and joint military exercises, where Israel's expertise is very much valued. And it should give greater focus and impetus to our cooperation. While talking about the ICP, I should like to take this opportunity to encourage Israel to publish this document as a way of persuading other countries to start a similar process – already Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia have expressed an interest in this individualized process.

Just a few weeks ago, an exchange of letters between NATO and Israel set the stage for an Israeli contribution to "Active Endeavour", NATO's maritime anti-terrorist operation in the Mediterranean Sea. This will be the first contribution from a Mediterranean Dialogue nation and represents another truly significant step forward for both NATO and Israel. The posting of an Israeli Liaison Officer to the NATO Command in Naples is a further indication of the vitality of our cooperation, as was the demonstration of a NATO AWACS plane in Israel. And, last but not least, over the course of this year,

Israel has participated in two major NATO/PfP military exercises in Romania and Ukraine.

Looking to the future, one area where I believe we could make further progress is education and training. Over the years, NATO has acquired a wealth of experience and expertise in this area. Education and training has been a highly successful feature of our outreach and partnership activities with our Euro-Atlantic Partners. They are an integral part, also, of several of our ongoing missions and operations. And it is no surprise; therefore, that several of our Mediterranean partners have also shown a growing interest in what NATO has to offer in this area.

I expect that next month's NATO Summit in Riga will advance that kind of cooperation, building on our tried-and-tested frameworks, such as the NATO School in Germany or the NATO Defense College in Italy. Over time, this process could evolve into a dedicated Training Centre in the Middle East.

Having said this, we are keen to pursue this initiative in close consultation with our partners, and we are pleased with the positive reception that it has already received.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A new chapter in the cooperation between Israel and NATO has opened. It is a development that was long overdue; a development that corresponds to the imperative of cooperation in a globalized world. But as we seek to write this new chapter together, we must remain realistic about one thing: without progress in the broader peace process in the Middle East, we will not be able to exploit the full potential of our cooperation. Without a renewed serious effort to solve the security dilemma of this region, we will find time and again that the cooperation in our Mediterranean Dialogue will be held hostage by outside events. We must do our utmost to prevent this from happening. Because our cooperation has acquired a strategic value in its own right.

Thank you.

Questions and Answers:

Q: Could you explain what the real advantages for Israel are after the ICP is concluded?

A: Israel has the right to come to NATO and say we would like to develop this activity with you, and NATO will answer. It enlarges enormously the possibilities for Israel. There are so many fields in the agreement; it is an instrument to widen relations. I would like in the future for other countries – Arab countries - to do the same. It would balance things. There lies great potential in the agreement.

Q: FM Livni has Israel joining Partnership for Peace, could you explain...

A: The PfP initiative started in 1994 to help the *CEECs* (Central and Eastern European Countries) join NATO or cooperate with it. Partnership for Peace seeks to promote reform, increase stability, diminish threats to peace and build strengthened security relationships between individual Partner countries and NATO. Think of Armenia back in 1994, the country faced a difficult process of the adoption of western values, and has to a certain extent fulfilled this adaptation. **It is more interesting for Israel to be a part**

in the Mediterranean Dialogue, and have the chance to cooperate with her neighbors.

Q: Do you see a possibility for Israel to participate in NATO's missions?

A: I think yes, if NATO operations are open to partners in general, I don't see why Israel should not participate. I am speculating. There are not only military aspects; there are also reconstruction teams, development projects, and other endeavors that Israel could participate in. There are about 23 reconstruction teams in Afghanistan right now. It will have to come down to details of the operation. If Morocco is participating in these missions, I don't see why Israel shouldn't.

Q: Is NATO preparing itself for military action in Iran?

A: No NATO is not preparing itself at the moment for such a thing. We hope that the negotiations will be fruitful. If not, we will cooperate with the UN and other international bodies. There is a gloom that we face confronting this issue, we condemn it in the strongest terms, but Israel is connected with the global community in this regard, and I think that taking part in this issue is a common effort by the international community. We at NATO will continue to follow the issue. We hope the EU will find some answer in this topic.

Q: Prof. Zeev Segal: How do you see the possibility of Israel joining NATO or forming an alliance with it?

A: It is difficult to make predictions. The Mediterranean-Dialogue was not meant as a waiting chamber for joining NATO. Israel is not a European country. I don't know if you have to be European to join NATO, this was never discussed. Such a decision would have to be taken by consensus. Accession to NATO is not a political decision, but it is prepared by a long process of adaptation. There is a program to check the achievement of the country – military, civil society, etc. before accession. It should be discussed fully. Even if there would be a request, it would take years. There are a few countries who asked to join NATO, and this is the answer that they have received.

Q: Prof. Uzi Arad: Looking at the ICP I must draw your attention to Israeli expectation and the ICP speed - Israelis are impatient, and on the other hand there are also Israelis that are skeptics. They would like to see something substantive. Should the process stall without moving to a deeper partnership and even without membership in line, many in Israel would begin to doubt the reasons for cooperation. What we in the Atlantic Forum to say to these skeptics?

A: You have to recognize two things. First with a multilateral organization of 26 members, the expectations for a quick process may be disappointing, but you have to understand how hard it is to find a common denominator between all members. I am surprised sometimes that it even works. It may be a bit slower than a bilateral track, but it should not be without benefit. It is not an easy thing that we come today in 2006 to have Israeli participate in a naval operation, an Israeli officer stationed in Naples, and Israeli officers in our schools, etc., and I am proud of the level of activity we have reached. These achievements also help to project peace and cooperation in the Middle East. Meetings of Ambassadors where an Israeli Ambassador is sitting with Egyptian and Morocco Ambassadors are extremely important in aiding to better relations within the region. This is what is being and has been achieved and what we hope to further

Tuesday, October 24

09:30 - 11:00 NATO'S TRANSFORMATION, THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST REGION

- NATO's Post Cold War Transformation
- The Track Record of the Mediterranean Dialogue

Chair: Mr. Tommy Steiner
Executive Secretary, Atlantic Forum of Israel

I am very happy to open this morning's sessions after a very powerful group of presentations last night. I would like to focus on two important statements made yesterday: first the Foreign Minister spoke about the natural strategic partnership of Israel and NATO being close allies, and the Deputy Secretary General also took a similar line, and said that with the conclusion with the new ICP the relationship between Israel and NATO is taking a strategic turn from the point of view of the alliance. The importance of these comments cannot be too much exaggerated, and to review this state of relations we have assembled for today's events the most engaged people in this issue.

Speakers:

Mr. Nicola de Santis
Head, Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Countries Section, NATO Public Diplomacy Division

I would like to thank the Atlantic Forum of Israel for giving NATO the opportunity for being here today. I would also like to thank Uzi Arad, and Ambassador Oded Eran, who are the reason for the enhanced relationship between Israel and NATO.

There are many different ways that one can look at NATO transformation. I would like to look at the Mediterranean Dialogue as part of this transformation. NATO decided to consult Israel and the other Mediterranean Dialogue countries on how this dialogue should be enhanced. The principle is one of joined ownership.

In November 1991 NATO took an historical step, it reviewed its strategic concept and revised it to take account of changes in the European landscape, and made public the strategic direction of the alliance. It built a long term vision of united Europe on a new security concept which signaled the transformation of NATO from confrontation to cooperation in Europe, with the CEECs, and with Russia itself. Nations across Europe could consult and discuss with NATO their security concern and situation. Dialogue was the main instrument.

Practical cooperation took place, on a political security and practical level. The use of military capability was to achieve political goal. In December 1995 NATO began to build on partnerships. The enlarged NATO mobilized its political and military capabilities to the most imminent threats to security. NATO moved from territorial defense to projecting power.

Under the Clinton administration partnerships with CEECs took form. Before partnerships could be made the countries needed first, democratic control of the armed

forces, second transparency of defense budget, and third interoperability between all NATO allies and partners.

The Mediterranean Dialogue started a few months later in Brussels, and was eventually expanded to the other interested countries in the Mediterranean; Israel, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia, Jordan and Algeria. Security cooperation and political dialogue between NATO and these countries was the aim, at its conception there was no membership demand from the area. The dialogue principles are: self differentiation – each country can tailor its dialogue according to its needs; and transparency is another principle. Countries may not have understood these principles in the beginning, but they are in place today.

After 9/11 it was acknowledged that Mediterranean security is indivisible from the security of Europe. With the strategic reality of the world changing– terrorism, WMD, failed states as a platform to those threats, many of which are occurring in the region of the Middle East, there was a need to move from a political dialogue to more enhanced dialogue. But many of the countries believed that partnership was not desirable.

In Rome 2004 there was the first debate whether to move from dialogue to partnership, and there was a unanimous agreement to enhance the dialogue. NATO involvement in the region that year changed. Six individual members of the Gulf were given the opportunity of partnership. The Mediterranean Dialogue was and still is the forum where the US, the EU, Arab States and Israel can discuss security. This is unprecedented and not happening anywhere else.

The Individual Cooperation Programme concluded with Israel was offered to enhance the practical dimension of the relations and is a major achievement. The new relationship will focus on interoperability, intelligence sharing, and participation in Active Endeavour among other cooperative activities.

I have highlighted how the relationship has grown. We should answer together in a multilateral fashion where it will go from here and we should promote this new culture of cooperation.

Col. (res.) Uri Naaman
Coordinator for NATO & European Defense Organizations, Ministry of Defense

I would like to thank the AFI and Uzi Arad for this conference. I'm proud to be a member of the team headed by Ambassador Oded Eran that initiated and created the Individual Cooperation Programme.

A few words about the ICP and how it started.

The first proposal of Israel to NATO was in the beginning of 2005. Less than a month later the Secretary General of NATO came to Israel, and he had no other option than to promise that he will promote the deepening of relations between Israel and NATO. NATO built the frame, and invented the name of this programme, and offered it to all of the Mediterranean-Dialogue countries.

In less than 2 years we succeeded to have this wild idea take shape and form. It is unique that in this short of time an initiative like this has taken form. I hope other

Mediterranean Dialogue countries will join and have Individual Cooperation Programmes of their own. It is a great achievement, I am very proud to be a part of it, and Israel is very happy with the ICP.

From this achievement though I would like to raise some questions and doubts. There is sun in the sky, but there are also some clouds. Prof. Arad raised some of these doubts last night. There are issues that raise skepticism, and we have to discuss them.

Whenever we talk of the relations between Israel and NATO we ask what the benefits for Israel are. In the last year we found more than one case in which NATO took us and the Mediterranean Dialogue some steps back, and we felt that these regressions affected only Israel. Even in the Operation Active Endeavour in which Israel was asked to participate and contribute its specialties and capabilities in terrorism we found obstacles from NATO.

My colleagues and I have to show profits all the time. With the ICP I believe that bilateral and multilateral can be successful in R&D, counter-terrorism, and regional security issues. I hope that previous obstacles will be removed so that this new relationship can function to the best of its abilities.

Another question is where is NATO going in the Riga summit? In Israel we expected that NATO will adopt some kind of a global concept in order to combat global threats. In such a framework Israel could be an important partner. But as we heard from Deputy Secretary General Rizzo yesterday this is not going to happen. NATO will not transform itself into a global alliance. Rizzo promised us that NATO will open most or all of the tools, but it is hard to believe that all the options will be open. Israel has many capabilities, and we will be happy to share our knowledge with NATO, and I hope that this may open many options to Israel.

NATO is going to offer to each of the Mediterranean Dialogue countries about 350 activities. From tomorrow we will start together to fulfill the ICP and fill it with content, and we will wait to see the outcome of the Riga summit.

Mr. Sammy Ravel

Director, Division for Multilateral European Institutions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

As it has been said Israel sees itself as a country that shares NATO's values, and for us NATO is an important partner and security alliance. The political dialogue is as important to us as the security one. The visit of NATO's Secretary General showed that NATO has a growing interest in the region, and we believe that the new Individual Cooperation Programme will contribute to these relations.

I would like to analyze some of the basic questions that face the region. The first question is that NATO has been under a process of transformation since 9/11, it is operating in the BME, but the mission in Afghanistan also shows the extent of the challenging issues facing NATO that are no longer just security related, but now include nation building and sound government forming. How can NATO with its existing tools deal with these new challenges? Is NATO the appropriate organization to confront these challenges? Immigration, cultural and religious tensions, education, incitement, and media; there is a big question mark whether NATO can deal with these aspects. There is

also a big question as to whether NATO can play this role alone. I think there needs to be much more cooperation with bodies like the EU that have some of the necessary tools to deal with these new elements already in place like the ENP.

The second question mark is regarding the dangers to our region. State sponsored terror is a serious challenge to the moderate regimes in the region. WMD, terror organizations, failed states, rogue states. We have to ask ourselves whether NATO is really willing to get involved in the region, and will NATO be ready to contribute to the big challenges that face us.

The third question is regarding the Mediterranean Dialogue and other multilateral arrangements in the region. The question mark was raised in NATO, to put together alliances with more like-minded countries. Japan, New-Zealand, South Korea and Australia were mentioned as possible new members. Maybe NATO should not be a regional alliance but a global one. Can Israel really have relations with Algeria? History has proven such cooperation is almost impossible. There is a non-discriminatory principle. Even though Israel relations and cooperation with NATO can be furthered, it cannot be too far advanced than the relations that NATO maintains with the other Mediterranean Countries. If we take the package apart, there is a better possibility to build cooperation not only between Israel and NATO, but also between the other Mediterranean Dialogue countries and NATO.

We need to have a good team, but to also let individual players play a more advanced role, and let more able players play according to their capabilities. I believe strongly, and so do many in the Foreign Ministry that relations between Israel and NATO should deepen. The test of the ICP will be in its implementation. To deepen political dialogue with NATO there needs to be more information sharing with NATO – this is also a burden on the Israeli side. Israel should decide how much and what to share.

The Mediterranean Dialogue framework is extremely important to Israel, and we should maintain it. The meetings of Foreign and Defense Ministers are highly important for Israel, but at the same time we should not be content with the lack of achievement in this club. We should not disregard the underachievement of the other members of this club. This is not to blame NATO; it is the same with the Barcelona process. Some countries in the region just don't want to increase relations with NATO. There has to be a stronger conviction within NATO to push forward with these relations, and there must also be more enhanced cooperation with like minded countries. The dialogue should be enhanced, but not according to the slowest participant.

These are some of the questions that I want to put in front of you, and we have to think of answers. Our answer is to defend the Israel and NATO relationship. We have to have stronger team capabilities, but we have to let players that want more important roles have them. I believe strongly that the relationship has to be deepened. It is not enough to have the structure, but it also has to be meaningful. The test will be the implementation, and this is not just up to NATO, Israel is responsible for this as well.

We will have to look at what is beyond the Individual Cooperation Programme. The aspirations of Israel are to move beyond it to a more significant relationship. One important principle in doing so will be flexibility. The Mediterranean Dialogue has many advantages and should be maintained. But at the same time we should not be content with what we have today.

NATO should also increase its confident building measures. If Israel benefits from CBMs only after peace agreements are concluded, you lose the meaning and aim of the CBM.

To conclude, Israel would like to maintain the Mediterranean Dialogue, and at the same time deepen it. Also, Israel along with NATO and other like-minded countries need to think globally and act locally according to the treats that this region faces. We are looking forward to the Riga summit to see what kind of decisions NATO will make.

Questions and Answers

Q: Prof. Alfred Tovias: What do NATO members nowadays share in common, that EU countries do not?

Q: In the context of NATO transformation, are you taking into account the Afghanistan case of failed state – think globally and act locally – that NATO needs to adapt its operation in the area?

Q: Mr. Tommy Steiner: what are the shortcomings of Israel? And couldn't Israel be offering more of its abilities like strategic airlifts to NATO operations?

A: Mr. Nicola de Santis: I don't think in terms of values NATO shares different ones than the EU. Those are different organizations, with different aims. NATO is intergovernmental, and not supranational as the EU. Still it is able to integrate security forces. This is unique. NATO allows the EU to develop and flourish and to bring its unique contribution to the stability of this region, especially the economic one. NATO capabilities were put at the disposal of the EU.

A: Mr. Sammy Ravel: Three points

1. Regarding the issue of Afghanistan as a lesson, certainly NATO as well as other Institutions should play a bigger role. And Israel has a right to be part of this issue. The challenge now is to build a state, and this is no small challenge. We shouldn't wait for countries to become failed states. We must work with countries before they get to this point
2. Israel NATO relations. ICP is extremely important, and we shouldn't get ahead of ourselves, but this does not have to take away from the ambition of Israel to go further because the ICP still exists within the Mediterranean Dialogue. We need to be more flexible. Take for example science and technology, there is no way that other countries in Mediterranean dialogue can offer what Israel can.
3. Should Israel provide cooperation with NATO security missions? Yes, but there are issues concerning resources and international issues, but in civil areas like disaster relief of medical facilities. These services can be offered.

A: Col. Uri Naaman: Since the Istanbul summit, we have started to take part in operations like Active Endeavour, but we should find other areas for dialogue. We can offer contributions in other activities, and we can contribute more in counter-terrorism and intelligence. Regarding the Mediterranean Dialogue there was a lot of criticism. The last year had very few activities, but it only started last year, and we hope it will be enhanced. More activities in the region for the region, for instance earthquakes – joint

preparation for a threat that faces us all. Egypt who for many years was an obstacle in the Dialogue has changed and is less anti-promotion of the dialogue. There is also wave of academic and research activities sponsored by NATO in Tel Aviv Universities, Haifa and hospitals, etc. There is a change in the Mediterranean Dialogue, and in the region.

11:30 – 13:00 REGIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES AND NATO'S ROLE IN PROMOTING SECURITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

- NATO's Role in Contributing to Security in the Mediterranean
- Israeli Perceptions of NATO and the Role of Mediterranean Dialogue Countries

Chair: Dr. Oded Eran

Speakers:

Dr. Patrick Hardouin

Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Regional Economic and Security Affairs, NATO Political Affairs and Security Policy Division

I would like to focus first on the history of NATO and its transformation. It is important to highlight the fact that NATO is different than Israel, we had the cold war, during which we did not look toward the Mediterranean or the Middle East. Some member states in NATO had interest in the region, but not the alliance as a whole. After the Cold War the focus moved to enlarging NATO to include Central and Eastern Europe. At this stage we did not include the South of the Mediterranean. We developed a "light" approach to the Mediterranean Dialogue countries. We did not develop a far reaching partnership as we did with the CEECs. Instead, we developed the Mediterranean Dialogue with limited ambitions, with tensions between the Mediterranean countries, but also with some achievement: growing from 5 to 7 countries that talk together. We began to build confidence and have common activities. Until 2001 these strides were a compliment to the main issues NATO faced.

After 9/11 a new assessment of the threats was made – the threats were global: terrorism, WMD, etc. there was development of operations abroad, Active Endeavour, humanitarian ones, etc. the main priority is military interoperability. We developed new relations with the EU and the UN, and also made new partners. We also put emphasis on greater development of the political dialogue within the alliance.

The decision to develop the Mediterranean Dialogue and to reach out to the Gulf countries is a consequence of 9/11 and the US policy shift. It was decided that the Mediterranean Dialogue should have more activities. We were thinking of the new threats and challenges that we have to "attack" politically. Terrorism is wide spread within the Middle East. We would like to combat terrorism together with those Middle Eastern countries willing.

I will not go further into proliferation. We are all at the same point. The economic disparities severely limit the ability of North Africa and certain Middle Eastern countries to adapt to the new global realities. Some of them will not be able to meet the demands of their own demographic trends. Migration is not a threat, but a challenge. Not

responding to demographic demands creates fertile ground for terrorist organization and activity.

All of these different difficulties explain the Istanbul summit results of enhancing the Mediterranean Dialogue and the ICP. Ownership of the relations, meaning the ability for more tailor made relations is very important. We have also attached another instrument- the mechanism where we combine NATO expertise to technical problems like distortion of dangerous chemicals, this way we can promote public support for NATO. The training and education is a major asset of the alliance that can be offered to the Mediterranean countries.

The role of NATO schools and training to Central, Eastern and Asian countries should not be underestimated. We would like to extend these tools to the Mediterranean countries. Perhaps we will have new proposals in Riga in November.

One challenge that we have to comprehend together – the Middle East peace process. The Israeli Palestinian conflict cannot be used as an alibi for not developing the relations. We are committed to develop the relations with Israel.

Maj. Gen. Ido Nehushtan
Head of IDF Plans & Policy Directorate

The NATO transformation and the Mediterranean Dialogue call for assessment regarding the security challenges of the region. Two months ago a cease fire came to place after 34 combat days were forced upon us by Hezbollah. This was a very difficult challenge for us. Hezbollah is the prominent example of the changes taking place in the region. Terror organizations have accumulated weapons of mass destruction and are becoming small armies. Some of the organizations have capabilities only a few countries have. The Hezbollah has high-jacked Lebanon and built military capabilities in another country. Two main threats today are the revolving Islamic terror attacks that have occurred all over the world, and the development of WMD.

There is an ongoing debate on the definition of terrorism. It is a different type of war. There are unique characteristics: suicide bombers, no division between military and civilians, damage can be created by very small and limited groups, and there are no more limits on who can get their hands on weapons of mass destruction. What is most frightening is that the enemy does not necessarily have the face of a country. There is no clear direction for responsibility. The international community must define terrorism and has to revisit its existing definition of warfare. It is a new type of war. We fought a different war in Lebanon; allied forces are fighting a different war in Iraq. Definitions are important. Revisiting rules of the international community are important. We in Israel do not have to define terrorism; we have lived it from day one.

How can we make this world a safer place?

After the threats at Heathrow airport in London, passengers can't carry toothpaste on planes. This is the world that we live in. As we speak countries are in the process of developing WMD's. Not only that Iran is threatening to destroy a member country of the UN, Israel. So what is going on here? How come these threats are coming so close to our families? These are some of the challenges that face NATO and all countries that share similar values and interests.

First and foremost the ICP is extremely important to us and we are looking forward to enhancing this relationship the world is changing, but the challenges have not dissipated. NATO and the IDF must protect its peoples. Israel and the IDF view NATO as a very important partner. We share common values in human rights. Focusing on regional challenges is a very good place to start. We need to unite efforts and focus to fight terrorism, radical Islam, and proliferation of WMD's. These are the clear and present dangers.

Col. (res.) Dr. Eran Lerman
Director, Israel & Middle East Office, American Jewish Committee

I would like to take what we just heard further. NATO is unique in frameworks that Israel can relate to. NATO was born with an enemy in mind. Today the enemy is very much out there. We have learned it the hard way. Its proper name is Islamist totalitarianism, not all Islam, but a perverted version of it. The commonality of these threats is key to our cooperation. We have seen a faction in Lebanon, part of the government, taking their country, not in the agreement or wish of the majority of the government to war. It did not occur to the government in Lebanon to say that the Hezbollah should face the responsibility. This is the same with the Palestinians. NATO is responsible; this is its political culture. NATO teaches us the possibility of transformation. We are like-minded.

We have to be careful of the implications we draw from the Lebanon war. There are two fundamental issues. Israel coming to NATO and asking for its strategic support, since it can no longer do it on its own. I think this is the wrong direction to take; it will harm our ability to take independent decision. I also think what Israel can bring to the table more in regards to fighting terrorism and if we come to NATO as contributors, than we have the option of being present of the creation of a real Mediterranean security identity.

As an Israeli there is a profound interest that the Mediterranean will have a security identity of its own. This is not the far end of the Middle East, but a crazy quilt, a mosaic, of identities which includes Arabs, Spaniards, French, Israelis, Italians, Croats, and all these identities should come to a common frame which respects diversity, but has also shares a common identity. I think that the building blocks for that are already there. I was in a forum a few months ago where an Arab representative took pride that his country is coming together to Active Endeavour shoulder to shoulder with Israel.

Col. Yair Zilberman
Head of Planning & Strategy Department, Israel Navy

I will give a short briefing of the maritime issues between Israel and NATO.
[Presentation]. Israel is a geo-political island. We have borders with several countries, but despite the peace agreement with Egypt and Jordan we have very little commercial relations with them. The sea is the main economic route for Israel. 99% of goods to Israel are transported through the sea; from this we can conclude that Israel is a maritime state.

Maritime Threats Facing Israel:

1. The sea as a channel

2. Illegal maritime trade
3. Supervising mechanisms and problem
4. Example: Karine A.

Currently the Israel navy is taking part in international and regional naval coalitions and partnerships with the navies of countries including Germany, Turkey, and Jordan. Israel is also taking part in NATO's Operation Active Endeavor.

Operation Active Endeavor:

NATO ships are patrolling the Mediterranean, monitoring shipping and providing escorts to non-military vessels through the Straits of Gibraltar to help detect, deter and protect against terrorist activity.

The operation began as NATO's immediate response to the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11 September 2001. As the Alliance has refined its counter-terrorism role in the intervening years, the operation's mandate has been regularly reviewed and its operational period extended.

Active Endeavor aims to demonstrate NATO's solidarity and resolve in the fight against terrorism and to help detect and deter terrorist activity in the Mediterranean.

Recently the Individual Cooperation Programme was signed. The 1st step in the ICP is to send an Israeli Naval officer to the command headquarters of NATO in Naples to share in the gathering of intelligence information gathering. This allows a more efficient use of NATO vessel resources in the Mediterranean. Taking this step has assisted to focus the activities to relevant targets.

In the future both the Israeli Navy and NATO will consider further options for cooperation

Questions and Answers:

Q: Former Director General of Foreign Ministry Ambassador Yaov Biran: NATO today is in a search of a common enemy. It suffers from the absent of a single common enemy, so solidarity and cohesion is not as it was. The EU has developed ESDP and has strengthened the European pillar in NATO, but I feel sometimes there is more competition than cooperation. Member states pursue their individual interests and tend to their own risks. NATO is not doing a good job dealing with threats from Iran. Direct Israel and NATO cooperation has tremendous potential, but I think the outcomes are limited. I begin to wonder of the usefulness of the Israeli – NATO relations. Maybe Israel should take a more modest and realist interpretation of its relationship with NATO, and put cooperation with NATO in its due order of priorities?

A: Ambassador Oded Eran: 2007 is year of decision regarding the Iranian challenge. We have to be clear about the threat of the enemy. The effort to acquire WMD and to de-legitimize the existence of Israel. I don't believe it would be fair to judge NATO's ability to respond to the Iranian threat during the next year as an indicator.

When we are partners the first to have ICP, it sends a message that we are a legitimate partners and legitimate partners in the Mediterranean.

A: Dr. Patrick Hardoin: It's legitimate when things are changing to ask what the organization is doing. I don't think that this would be the right angle to look at the situation. Why did NATO survive after the collapse of the Warsaw pact? Whatever are the differences between members the alliance is incredibly important link between Atlantic countries. Is NATO looking for an enemy? No. NATO is assessing the real world. The threats have changed and the new threats are multidimensional. There are phenomena that are threatening the things that NATO defends. It is not looking to build an enemy but to protect against real threats. There is not one org that can deal alone with these threats, but rather we must work together. And this is why we have to build efficient mechanisms to deal with the new threats. Operation active endeavor is a perfect example of a mechanism designed with multilateral cooperation in order to face these threats and Israel's support to the operation is unbelievable important. It's efficient it's built cooperatively. It sends a message.

13:00 - 14:30 LUNCH

Chair: H.E. Michael Žantovský
Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Israel and NATO Contact Point
Ambassador in Israel

In the ongoing debate about the depth and pace of the relationship between NATO and Israel we keep encountering the old glass half empty half full problem. After discussing this argument till late last night with participants of this conference I woke up this morning to realize that the cup is probably half full.

It is my honor to introduce to you today Ron Asmus. Ron was instrumental to the first wave of NATO enlargement as well s the second and will most likely be involved in a third. We will most assuredly need his wisdom and energy in the years to come

Speaker: Dr. Ronald D. Asmus
Executive Director, Transatlantic Center, German Marshall Fund of the United States

It is a pleasure to be here. I would like to thank Uzi and Tommy and the Herzaliya team I am here for a few reasons. I'm a veteran of NATO debates. I may have been there at the first dinner with Uzi Arad and Oded Eran when they said Israel might want to join NATO. I am also here because as an outsider I have both the liberty and the responsibility to push our discussion to a higher level of candidness.

Earlier we were having a technocratic discussion about a strategic issue. The strategic issue we need to confront is that we are moving into a dangerous world. The danger is centered not in Europe as it was in WWII, but in the Middle East. Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan are fundamental issues to the future of not only the Middle East but to the world. Looking at the current situations in these countries you don't need to be pessimistic to see things going wrong. This is an increasingly scary world that we are

entering into. And different things can go wrong throughout the region. Can the west reorganize ourselves to face these problems? That is the issue at hand.

Can the west re-constitute itself to face the new threats, as it did during the cold war? We have to re-organize the democratic western world. NATO's job is not over because the Berlin wall fell. NATO was not only about countering the USSR, but about building stability and peace in Europe. We enlarged NATO. In 1999 we asked whether NATO should still focus on Europe, or shift its focus also to the Middle East. The major European view was that the Middle East was too far.

That view was shattered by 9/11. 9/11 started the debate does NATO need to reinvent itself yet again? We are still in this debate, and have not yet resolved and answered this question. We have to answer yes to this question, and to face the consequences. Israel will be involved in that.

If NATO will say yes, what should it do? We need to debate this:

If NATO were to say yes to this proposition what should it be doing that it is not?

1. We need to succeed in Afganastahn. If we fail it will be a fundamental setback
2. it was a mistake that NATO was not active in UNIFIL we spent years training and it wasn't even discussed today NATO must prepare for Lebanon going badly
3. Iran, we today should be forging relationships that are willing to go further with relationships in the area, where our own bureaucratic failures are hindering us from making these partnerships.

If NATO truly wants to play a role in defending the west this is what we need to do.

Why is this not happening?

NATO only works when America is leading the Europeans in the right way. This will require us to make fundamental decision to make this transformation.

There is a big debate about enlargement and reconciling its relationship with the EU. Let's leave that aside for the time being. My point is that if NATO goes down this path it will be a very different kind of NATO. If NATO goes down this path it will be a different NATO and you in Israel should think different of NATO and the relations with it.

Why is this not happening? One, NATO only works when the US leads the Europeans in the right way. This did not happen in the last few years. Second, France at the moment is opposed to everything I mentioned. But we will have elections and new president may have a different stance, especially if Sarkozy will be the president

Third, common values – not all the Europeans think Israel shares its values, and not everybody in Israel think that getting closer to NATO is a good thing.

We have to look at our common values.

At the end of the day Israel has to make up its mind as to what it wants. It's not just NATO making up its mind about transformation. There is political will to take this relationship to the next step, but nil needs to decide if it wants it.

To conclude, we were having a technocratic discussion on what are strategic issues. We need to agree on a vision and a goal. The fundamental question: do we want to and can we reconstitute our alliance? As we go thru that debate, where dose Israel want to be?

Questions and Answers:

Q: Where is the coherent west on those issues?

A: The notion of the west should no longer be perceived as solely European.

Q: The price of joining this alliance for Israel could mean loosing its freedom of action. Is this a price worth paying?

A: If I was an Israeli I would aim at creating a much more strategic relation with NATO, not including membership as the goal, because it raises difficult issues and feelings. As we come closer Israel will build a greater level of confidence with European countries. Being in a partnership does not undermine Israel's freedom of action. Being in closer relations with NATO, similar to PFP, is not undermining Israel's relations with the US.

15:00 - 16:30 NATO-ISRAEL RELATIONS – THE WAY FORWARD

Chair: H.E. Michael Žantovský

**Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Israel and NATO Contact Point
Ambassador in Israel**

Speakers:

H.E. Dr. Oded Eran

Head of Israel Mission to the European Union

Questions of proliferation, terror, areas that border military threat, have to be adopted as a formal agenda of NATO. Once this is done we will find it easier to decide how far we want to go. As the Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni said, we are looking for more of a multilateral direction, and searching for new partners to share the burden such as proliferation and terror, failed states in this region and outside.

Ron exposed an Israeli weakness describing the late night talk between Uzi Arad, him and myself. To the best of my knowledge the government of Israel did not conduct even one debate over where it wants to take its relations with NATO. All was done by officials. The future will depend on political direction, and not on us, officials. There is a limit to what beurocrats can do in order to push this relationship. So how did we reach the ICP if we did not have a government decision?

We need a multilateral umbrella. NATO is an important component in it, even if we don't have article 5 of collective defense. We don't necessarily need article 5, it is a psychological guarantee. I don't think it will deter a madman from using WMD, but it may, just may, be in his mind.

There are other calculations and interests for Israel. We do have an industry. We can contribute to the mutual benefit of both sides. The approach presented today by Eran Lerman is half true. Yes, we should not come only as supplicants, but as suppliers. If we want genuine partnership with NATO we need to decide what assets we are willing to provide. I think the answer was deliberately blurred. As long as we don't cross this threshold in Israel we cannot achieve a genuine partnership with NATO. What does it mean for an Israeli officer to sit in front of 26 other officers and share knowledge, experience, etc. it is very difficult. In NATO you have to find the modus operandum for cooperation to become meaningful and effective.

In order to make the ICP a lively agreement and to further up the relations, we need to decide where we want to take the relations, and to what level.

MK Ambassador Collette Avital
Deputy Speaker of the Knesset

I would like to see Israel's relations with NATO advanced. I agree very much with the analysis of Mr. Asmus and Ambassador Eran. I will speak more of the half full glass.

Now, after the Lebanon war, for both sides, and especially for the Israelis it is more pertinent to complete and anchor its strategic relations with NATO. In recent years there has been a major transformation de-facto as part of its enlargement and roles it took on itself. The BME is part of NATO's role, we saw it in Istanbul. Obviously I understand that neither NATO nor Israel has come to any major decisions. But I think that if you look over the past few years there have been tremendous changes. How and where it will continue is what is questionable.

The ICP implements that NATO is willing to become a strategic actor in the region, and I think that currently we are on the road to disintegrating some of the mistrust between Israel and the EU. Now is the time to do things.

This is a time to reach to some decision. It is hard to set a new agenda. The membership issue is difficult because of the Israeli – Palestinian conflict. For the last 14 years Israel has tried to solve its conflict with its neighbors multilaterally via the Oslo Accords – this has failed, unilateral attempts have also failed. Is there a third model that would combine giving up settlements with international guaranties? The triangular model with international guarantee will be more successful and beneficial to the Israelis, Europeans, and to some Arab states.

A question that was raised earlier today is indicative of fears that Israel has about being a member of NATO. How much would it tie our hands? How much does a closer association with NATO endanger Israel's sovereignty? I believe that Israel's sovereignty would not be hampered. The advantages would overcome the disadvantages. I would like to take these relations further, even much further. It should have begun by the government, and I'm sorry it did not happen that way.

Prof. Shlomo Avineri
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Two Comments: First, I was very encouraged to hear Dr. Hardouin say that the Arab-Palestinian conflict should not be an alibi for not furthering the relations between NATO and Israel. Second, the fact that Israel has signed the first ICP lifts our side from our continuous strategic bilateral thinking. Most Israelis have not heard of multilateralism, and if they have, think that it is not good for Israel. This multilateral relationship with NATO is very important to Israel.

NATO since the fall of the Berlin wall and 9/11 has lost its identity. It needs re-thinking and inventing. During the Cold War NATO had a clear agreed mission. Since the fall of the Berlin wall NATO has been crisis driven, and not vision driven. Crisis driven initiatives are not very successful. Does NATO have a solution to Bosnia – Herzegovina?

For Kosovo yes, but for genocide? Afghanistan is not going to be a successful story, probably because it was never a modern state. Iraq was a composition by the British of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, and this may not work in the future. The US will get out of Iraq, hopefully with not more damage to its troops and the western image in the Arab world.

NATO has to think what does it do after Iraq is recognized as the failure that it is? What about Iran? It is a common threat to Israel and NATO countries, and Arab countries. It is not enough to say that Iran is a common threat, answers regarding what are we going to do about it are needed. We have seen within NATO an American approach that has failed The EU tried softer approach, and it failed. The Security Council will not have a clear policy to solve the issue. There is a need for NATO to make clear its policy toward Iran. There is no policy at the moment, only attempts to continue negotiations.

Response to the challenge of Iran has not been made by NATO today. Saying Iran is a common threat is not enough. Holocaust denial is not an Israeli Jewish issue, it is a universal issue. Genocide in Darfur is tacking place, and NATO is not responding. We would like to see a much clearer mission statement by NATO.

On the Israeli side there are great doubts regarding membership even if there will be peace achieved with the Palestinians. I think NATO will eventually say: yes, Israel can come in, but so can Palestine. This will not happen in the near future, probably because there will not be negotiations with the Palestinians for a long time. Israel is busy in daily security and not in strategy.

Israel's safety depends on the kind of world we live in. Israel and the EU and NATO have more in common than the EU or NATO has with any Arab Muslim states. This may not be a politically correct thing to say, but it is a truth we are aware of. Let us remember that even during 50 yrs of conflict Israel never had a fundamental disagreement about values with any democratic country and this is because of shared values.

We are here at the beginning of a very long march.

Israel has to know what this journey is about. NATO is not just military alliance. It is our role to disseminate this information and create a dialogue not just between strategists but between people, newspapermen, and civil societies. We must educate Israelis about NATO. We should disseminate this information and create dialogue between people, intellectuals, and civil society.

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