

**ISRAEL AND THE EURO-ATLANTIC COMMUNITY:
AN ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE**

Uzi Arad and Tommy Steiner*

Institute for Policy and Strategy
Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy
Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya

and

The Israeli Atlantic Forum

Working Paper – DRAFT

December 2004

* The authors acknowledge with thanks the assistance of Maya Sion.

Introduction

This working paper sets forth a strategy for Israel to pursue political association with the Euro-Atlantic community and to become a full-fledged and accredited member of it. Said otherwise, Israel should adopt a proactive strategy to establish a solid and comprehensive partnership with both the United States and Europe.

The primary Israeli course of action should be the institutional deepening of political and strategic relations with the community's principal organization, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Under certain circumstances discussed below, which some might call the British model, Israel should seek full membership in NATO. In the run-up towards that target, Israel should formulize a robust bilateral partnership with NATO, akin to the Swedish partnership.

This strategy incorporates and reinforces the concurrent efforts to further establish institutional relations with the European Union (EU), the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD), and obtain full admission to the UN Western European and Other States Group (WEOG). Assuming the political and economic costs do not outweigh the benefits, such a comprehensive institutional association would concretize Israel's belonging to the West – the Euro-Atlantic community.

The Euro-Atlantic community, which extends to Muslim countries as well,¹ is debating and changing its strategic orientation towards the Broader Middle East. The Broader Middle East agenda endorsed in principle by the G8, NATO, and the EU-US summits is a paradigmatic shift of the community towards the region. Despite the possible impact on Israel's strategic landscape, Israel is not taking part in this deliberation, nor has it defined or explicated its strategic objectives and interests.

Geographically, Israel is located in the Broader Middle East, but culturally, politically and economically, it is an advanced Western democratic nation. While this does not preclude peaceful cooperation and dialogue with its neighbors, Israel belongs to the Euro-Atlantic community of like-minded nations and has a role to play in it.

Moreover, there is a growing recognition of Israel's rightful place in the Euro-Atlantic Community in both Europe and the United States. While some might take this for granted with regards to the latter, in Europe as well the understanding that more than before interests and values tie the Euro-Atlantic community and Israel together is seizing ground. This understanding is evident in a series of statements made by senior European officials and concrete steps, particularly the mutual efforts leading to the conclusion of the EU-Israeli bilateral Action Plan in the framework of the new European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). It is also manifested by the approaches of senior officials of NATO to upgrade bilateral relations and establish a strategic partnership with Israel.

Notwithstanding, differences and misunderstandings concerning the Palestinian and the Arab-Israeli issues still plague EU-Israel relations. Institutionalizing political and strategic dialogue between both parties, as the ENP offers, and the decoupling of political conditionalities are a pre-requisite for enhancing Israel's relationship with the Euro-Atlantic community. Europe and the US, the de-facto leaders of the Quartet and the authors of the Roadmap, should fully endorse deepening the relations between the

Euro-Atlantic institutions and Israel, and particularly Israel's admission to NATO, to enhance Israel's security and encourage it to make the difficult decisions and take the inherent risks of the Israeli-Palestinian Roadmap process. Should Europe choose not to offer these guarantees to Israel as part of the final phase of the Roadmap, it will forfeit the political and moral right to demand painful concessions from Israel. Having Israel be part of the Euro-Atlantic community would be a contribution of the community to the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP).

This paper is a product of a now yearlong series of informal meetings and seminars held in Israel, Europe, and the United States, participated by public figures, senior officials, and academicians, all in their private capacity, co-organized by the German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Israeli Atlantic Forum. While these discussions and others have inspired us, what follows does not necessarily reflect the positions of all the participants, nor does it represent an official policy, though it perhaps should.

A Political Association with the Euro-Atlantic Community

Identifying the Euro-Atlantic community as the political association Israel should aspire to join might seem puzzling when assessing the current state of transatlantic relations. Likening the United States to Mars and Europe to Venus, Robert Kagan has consequently argued that “the reasons for the transatlantic divide are deep, long in development and likely to endure.”² Some of the community's steadfast supporters, such as Ronald Asmus, have portrayed the current discord in EU-US relations as “unprecedented in its scope, intensity, and, at times, pettiness.”³ Amid the rhetoric and emotions injected into the debate on the state of transatlantic relations, several key assertions regarding it inform the position herein.

First, the transatlantic relationship has been crucial in the shape of international politics ever since World War Two. The Euro-Atlantic community brought about the peaceful and positive resolution of the Cold War and will remain the nucleus of world politics for the foreseeable future. Noteworthy, this is not the first time, nor probably the last, that tensions and crises befall the Euro-Atlantic community, and doubts and skepticism concerning its durability loom high.

Second, consequently, and despite the evident differences, Europe and the United States share a common set of fundamental values and a broad range of major political, strategic, and economic interests. They diverge more on means, hardly on ends. A comparison between the US National Security Strategy and the European Security Strategy reveals that both documents identify the same fundamental threats; the measures they specify to confront those threats vary, but are not antithetical or irreconcilable.

Third, this observation is particularly potent in the Broader Middle East, the current focal point for transatlantic relations, cooperation and discord. In spite of apparent American unilateralism, the United States accepted, not to say encouraged, the European Union's role in shaping the Quartet's Israeli-Palestinian Roadmap and the Broader Middle East agenda in the G-8 and NATO summits. The Roadmap, in theory a practical approach to realize President Bush's vision of a peaceful resolution to the

Arab-Israeli conflict, reflects in practice the European positions and policies concerning the conflict.

Fourth, the Broader Middle East is home to the major threats facing the Euro-Atlantic community: international terrorism and WMD proliferation. These threats aimed at Israel as well, posit the latter more than ever before on the Euro-Atlantic side. History, particularly the history of the Euro-Atlantic community, proves that common threats can create closer allies.

Fifth, the major institutions operating in the sphere of the Euro-Atlantic community, the G-8, NATO and the European Union, are increasing their engagement in the region to confront these threats. Their actions and policies might well bear substantial strategic effects upon Israel. Therefore, Israel has a vested interest to be part of this process. The format and visibility of this involvement may fluctuate, as will the ability to affect decision-making, yet, at the very least, Israel should be at the table to share its experience, understanding and certain capabilities that could support an effective effort on behalf of the community's institutions.

The approach this paper advocates raises two fundamental questions: first, why should Israel pursue a multilateral political association? Second, why should Israel seek a comprehensive partnership with both the United States and with Europe?

In the post-Cold War era, multilateral forums – regional and universal – have become the major venue for shaping global and regional affairs. In an age marked by enhanced interconnectedness across multiple dimensions – from security to environment, from economics and trade to scientific research – governments find multilateral cooperation with other like-minded governments the most effective and efficient form of governance. Common threats are dealt with together, or in Anne-Marie Slaughter's succinct argument "networked threats require a networked response." Thus, the "new world order" is the emergence of a global web of government networks.⁴ Many of these networks are based on regional institutions, thus governments increasingly rely on regionally based governance. Governments cultivate regional institutions to foster political dialogue, policy coordination, and exchange of information.

Israel has a tradition of managing its foreign relations on a bilateral basis and has limited diplomatic and policy experience with multilateralism. Moreover, there is an ingrained belief that bilateralism ensures broader maneuverability and more freedom of action. Israel's international security relations are a useful case at hand – Israel has solid long-lasting working relations with several key members of the Euro-Atlantic community, not only with the United States. Israel however, is literally absent from the multilateral scene of the community, which through NATO and the EU, increasingly governs security and defense affairs.

Some argue that Israel is reluctant to engage its international interlocutors multilaterally because of its historical experience; at multilateral levels in comparison to bilateral ones, Israel was unable to get its message across, therefore, Israel has come to view international institutions warily. The overwhelming nominal majority that Arab and Muslim countries raise in international institutions has led Israel to generally perceive these organizations as hostile. The 2001 UN World Conference

Against Racism in Durban is a vivid example of how an official multilateral conference became the center stage for anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic rhetoric. Not surprisingly, most of Israel's dealings with multilateral organizations focus on countering or mitigating adverse resolutions.

Only in 2002, Israel was accepted to a UN regional group, the WEOG, but only in the New York regional group system. To date, Israel was endorsed only for 8 United Nations posts – all elected by the New York system and it remains excluded from the regional group system outside New York. This situation manifests Israel's geopolitical isolation and limited experience with multilateralism.

The bedrock for multilateralism is regional-based multilateral institutions, but Israel has had very little to do with regionalism. Israel is excluded from regional forums of the Middle East, ineffective and unproductive as they are. From time to time, Israel has proposed to create regional institutions, but was turned down.

The only regional experience Israel can account for is not really 'regional' – the short-lived Madrid-based multilateral track and the various regional forums of the Euro-Atlantic institutions: the EU-led Barcelona Process/Euro-Mediterranean Partnership; NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue; and the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation. Moreover, the outcomes of this involvement are somewhat poor. For instance, Israel found the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue particularly disappointing and frustrating. As it sought to develop meaningful cooperation, it was held captive to the lowest common denominator defined by other Mediterranean partners, that is, Egypt's antagonism to the process. This experience and others has driven home the assessment that Israel will not likely be welcomed to engage in effective and productive regional multilateral cooperation in the Middle East and the Mediterranean.⁵

Therefore, the senior Israeli leadership has by-and-large ignored the opportunities of multilateralism and political associations. Israel is apparently missing out. As discussed below, there is increasing interest to engage Israel in the Euro-Atlantic community. Israel should pursue this opening vigorously.

Seeking a comprehensive partnership with both the United States and with Europe does not discount the vital strategic alliance with the United States. Quite the contrary. Britain's strategic posture – a basic model developed further below – is a useful case at hand. Most observers consider the British integration into Europe since the 1970s as a factor that has enhanced Britain's strategic value for the United States, not diminished it.⁶ Dealing with the European-Israeli mutual misperceptions and misunderstandings could improve Israel's political and strategic relations with Europe. This in turn, could contribute directly to improving the state of transatlantic relations, as Israel and the Middle East Peace Process are one of the sources for dispute between the United States and Europe. Solid political relations between Israel and Europe will only add on top of what makes Israel today a strategic asset of the United States in the Middle East.

Moreover, Europe's international diplomatic and strategic profile is on the rise. While it still is difficult to consider the European Union as a major political power, it has made substantial progress in enhancing its diplomatic and strategic international role

apparent in the release of the European Security Strategy and several EU-led international peacekeeping operations.⁷ The United States expects European countries to increase its 'burden sharing' in carrying out Euro-Atlantic missions and not to rely solely on American military resources. This corresponds with the above noted European role in shaping the Euro-Atlantic approach to the Broader Middle East – through the Quartet and its Roadmap, through NATO and the enhanced Mediterranean Dialogue and the new Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), and finally, through the G-8 activities to promote political and economic reforms in the Broader Middle East.⁸

There is a growing recognition in Israel of the European Union's evolving international role, which corresponds with an apparent interest on behalf of Europe to improve relations with Israel. Israel welcomed the European initiative to enhance bilateral relations and to institutionalize political and strategic dialogue in the framework of the new European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The ENP is in itself an ambitious policy instrument. Following the enlargement of the European Union, it offers its 'new' neighbors in Eastern Europe and the Southern Mediterranean "sharing everything with the Union but institutions." That is to say, political and economic proximity on a differentiated custom-tailored basis – all instead of membership (while not precluding it in the long run).

The concluded ENP's Bilateral Action Plan falls short of the Israel's initial high expectations. It is intended to serve the parties in the next three years and sets in motion the potential deepening of Israel's institutional relations with the Union. Perhaps the most important outcome is the institutionalization of political-strategic dialogue between both parties, but it also provides a framework for necessary preparatory work to explore further economic integration into the European Union's Internal Market and Israel's participation in a series of European Union policy frameworks.

European officials have openly commented that "Israel is a natural partner for the EU" and a "country of first priority" for the ENP.⁹ Another senior European official pointed out that the common strategic threats facing both Europe and Israel establish a strategic partnership between them.¹⁰ Recently, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos endorsed offering Israel "virtual membership" in the European Union including participation in the Internal Market and the free movement of citizens.¹¹ These statements and concrete actions reflect a growing understanding in Europe that it should take steps to deepen political and institutional relations with Israel without explicitly assigning conditionalities related to the peace process. This is in line with the suggestions put forward by Rosemary Hollis: "Europeans could transform the chemistry of European-Israeli relations and thence the configuration of the conflict if they gave serious consideration to finding their own inducements for Israel instead of relying solely on threats."¹²

While these aforementioned positions are not yet consensual in Europe, Israel could realize the opportunities they create by pursuing an ambitious strategy that could offer it a stake in the Euro-Atlantic community, thus providing the most fundamental international political association and strategic guarantee. Whereas Israel's course in deepening relations with the European Union is charted along the lines of the ENP, Israel should also move to deepen its relationship with NATO, the primary

organization of the Euro-Atlantic community. It would be rather odd, that while Israel makes inroads in its relationship with the European Union, Israel should not make a similar effort to take advantage of the strategic opening in NATO and forge a strategic partnership with it. Notwithstanding, Israel's future relations with NATO depend largely on future relations with Europe. The new fluidity in the MEPP shaped by the passing of Arafat and the emergence of a new Palestinian leadership, along with Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian maneuvering, could help place Israel's relations with Europe on a new footing.

Israel and NATO – The Road Ahead

The confluence of processes and events addressed above has produced a unique opportunity to establish a robust bilateral relationship between Israel and NATO setting the ground for positioning Israel in the Euro-Atlantic community. Interestingly, these processes and events have more to do with NATO itself than with Israel.

The NATO Istanbul Summit in June 2004, coming shortly after the G-8 Summit in Sea Island and the EU-US Summit in Ireland, reflected the paradigmatic shift of interest of the entire Euro-Atlantic community to the Broader Middle East. It designated this region, stretching from the Mediterranean to Afghanistan, as the current focal point of NATO's strategic interests and sphere of action.

The Istanbul Declaration reaffirms collective defense as NATO's "core purpose", noting that the current threats the Alliance faces, terrorism and WMD proliferation, "emanate from a far wider area than in the past", i.e., the Broader Middle East. The main current focus of NATO in the region is the state-building process in Afghanistan, in which NATO leads the International Security Assistance Force. Despite the controversies between members of the Alliance over the Iraq issue, NATO is establishing a training assistance mission there.

More importantly for Israel, the Istanbul Summit decided to "enhance" the Mediterranean Dialogue and to launch the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. The precise mechanisms of both and their interrelationship are somewhat unclear, but these are the practical mechanisms that open the way for a substantial enhancement of Israel's relations with NATO.

In 1995, NATO initiated the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) "to establish contacts, on a case-by-case basis, between the Alliance and Mediterranean non-member countries with a view to contribute to the strengthening of regional stability". The dialogue currently involves seven non-NATO Mediterranean countries: Egypt, Morocco, Israel, Tunisia, Mauritania, Jordan and Algeria.

To date, the MD was a low-key forum, not a military cooperation program. The first ministerial level meeting took place only very recently to celebrate the MD's 10th anniversary. The dialogue has been a vehicle for information-sharing and for changing the perceptions about the Alliance. From NATO's side it raised the level of attention to the Mediterranean, yet it stood in the shadow of other agenda items, such

as Kosovo, Bosnia, the NATO-Russia relationship, and NATO enlargement. At best, it was considered by some as "yet another Mediterranean initiative."¹³

From an Israeli perspective, the fundamental problem of the MD process was that it failed to produce effective and meaningful cooperation programs. As mentioned above, it was held captive to the lowest common denominator among the non-NATO participants, as it was defined primarily by Egypt. Even in the bilateral framework of the MD process, NATO was unwilling to move ahead with interested countries, such as Israel, not wanting 'to leave behind' other MD participants. There were even some instances in which NATO's Military Structure wanted to develop mutually beneficial programs with some countries, but the political level rejected this.

The Istanbul Summit decided to elevate the MD to 'a genuine partnership', but it appears to us that it will stop short of a formal partnership status akin to the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and its formal institutional apparatus. Rather, the MD will focus on bilateral action plans dealing with "practical areas"; combating terrorism and contributing to NATO's work on WMD and their means of delivery. The Summit Communiqué invited the Mediterranean Dialogue countries to contribute to NATO's maritime surveillance and escort operation in the Mediterranean, Operation Active Endeavour (OAE).

The second mechanism, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), is an entirely new and evolving framework. The ICI is a bilateral cooperation framework aimed at 'interested' Gulf countries and the MD partners. The Summit Communiqué offers an extensive menu from which these non-NATO members could choose. The bilateral cooperation could include advice on defense policy and governance, military-to-military cooperation and interoperability, fight against terrorism, WMD proliferation, and illegal trafficking. As no country has signed up yet, the ICI's future operational aspects and political implications are unclear.

Following meetings in Brussels, it is evident that the confluence of regional processes and events affecting the Euro-Atlantic community coupled by these institutional openings offer a unique opportunity for Israel to enhance its bilateral strategic relations with NATO in an unprecedented manner.

Senior NATO officials and Permanent Representatives of NATO urged Israel to seek a deeper integration with the Euro-Atlantic Community. At this stage, Israel should focus on achieving partnership, without excluding membership down the road even if for the time being there is no consensus on Israeli membership.

A high-ranking senior NATO official suggested that Israel should take up a two-track strategy with NATO: Israel should maintain its participation in the MD process, however it should focus its efforts on the ICI and use this new framework to strengthen ties with NATO by setting up a bilateral partnership. Though it requires prudence, the ICI should be the preferred framework because it is un-chartered. The agenda could consist of issues related to WMD, terrorism, and weapons' development.

The high-ranking official also asserted that NATO and Israel should not focus on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. He further claimed that the Israeli-Palestinian issue should

not deter Israel and NATO from taking up the broader strategic dialogue and build a partnership.

Our interlocutors in NATO pointed out that NATO partners, such as Sweden and Finland, are becoming as valuable to NATO as many of its members. NATO is destined to focus much more on its partners and will need a better relationship with Israel as it begins to operate in the Broader Middle East. Moreover, they indicated that several major NATO members, such as the US and the UK, will not allow limiting the scope of Israeli Partnership for the sake of other NATO members because NATO-Israel will be a unique relationship. One of our senior interlocutors urged Israel to seek more interoperability with NATO through PfP exercises and to focus on practical cooperation. He stressed the urgency of putting forward a joint NATO-Israeli work-plan in the framework of the ICI. Such a move would obligate Israel to decide what it could offer the Alliance. He also pointed out that there is no limit to engaging Israel in tailored cooperation.

These positive messages place a considerable burden of action upon Israel. While there could be many tactical options that may be considered in devising the package of cooperative activities, in institutional terms the matter boils down to the qualitative and formative form of that partnership position.

Israel should not view enhanced relations with NATO as an end in itself; this would reflect a somewhat prevalent conservative approach focusing on the practical military benefits. Whereas NATO is a military alliance, it is also a multilateral political institution, where negotiation, clubbing and networking are becoming more and more important. Israel should consider and approach enhancing relations with NATO as a building-block of forging a new multilateral relationship between Israel and the Euro-Atlantic community.

While the new MD reinforces the bilateral track and recognizes “national and regional specificity”, NATO, due to its political make-up and unanimous decision-making processes, might remain captive to the lowest common denominator and reluctant to move ahead with Israel because of its multilateral nature. Moreover, enhancing Israel's partnership with NATO within the MD framework might not be a useful building-block in aligning Israel in the Euro-Atlantic community. Therefore, Israel should also pursue a strategic partnership through the ICI.

The Partnership framework that seems applicable to Israel is not the format used by NATO in the post-Communist context toward countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. Israel is an advanced Western democracy with military capabilities and industrial and technological capacities that are on par with those of most Western European countries. Some might even argue that in the military sphere Israel surpasses almost all European countries individually.

Yet Partnership with NATO is extended not only to transitional democracies in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. NATO maintains solid and robust partnership relations with several Western European countries that choose not to become full and formal members of the Alliance, yet are active members of the Euro-Atlantic community: Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Austria, and Switzerland. Sweden's active partnership role seems to be an appropriate model for Israel.

A Formal NATO-Israel Partnership – The Swedish Model

Since the ICI framework is entirely new and un-chartered, it might be important to use an acceptable institutional precedent as a model for formulating the relationship between Israel and NATO.

Sweden's Partnership with NATO is based on its participation in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). Sweden is one of NATO's 20 partners, most of which, 15 in number, are "eligible for funding".¹⁴ The Western "other" Partner countries have a history of international neutrality and chose not to join a military alliance. The PfP and EAPC involve the same countries but have distinct, though complementary, functions.

The PfP is the operational wing and is based on *bilateral relations* between the Alliance and individual participating countries, focusing chiefly on *practical operational cooperation* prior to participation in peace-keeping operations alongside NATO troops. Each of the 20 countries engaged in PfP has a unique NATO program tailored to its security needs. The EAPC is the political framework for PfP cooperation and a multilateral forum for political dialogue. The 26 NATO member states and 20 Partners meet regularly to consider cooperation activities and current political and security questions. The 2002 NATO Prague summit decided to increase Partners' involvement in programs and joint activities "to the maximum extent possible".

The PfP mechanism is designed to encourage practical cooperation with individual partner countries. Each country is invited to draw up a 'shopping list' of concrete activities. All PfP activities are guided by *the principle of self-differentiation*: each partner country decides the type and extent of its co-operation with NATO. While this may seem similar to the MD framework, the PfP is far more structured and supportive of individuality. For example, Swedish-NATO partnership, as others, is administrated through the annual Individual Partnership Program (IPP) and the biannual Partnership Goals established within the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP). The PARP is similar to NATO's own defense planning system and it was set up to develop the interoperability and performance of partner country forces.

The EAPC mechanism provides the overarching framework for regular political and security-related consultations and cooperation, with a particular emphasis on military crisis management. The EAPC is convened monthly on ambassadorial level and its work is carried out in committees and working groups. Meetings at the political-ministerial level are held biannually, while summit meetings, at the level of Heads of Government take place every few years (Washington 1999; Istanbul 2004). The EAPC *two-year action plans* complement the PfP programs and focus on consultation and cooperation on a range of political and security-related matters. The EAPC played a valuable role as a forum for consultation on the crisis in Kosovo.

Since acceding to the European Union in 1995, Sweden is committed to the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Consequently, neutrality has de facto been redefined to mean military non-alignment. This status determines policies towards

NATO. Sweden regards the presence of the US and NATO in Northern Europe as important factors for balancing Russian power and therefore cooperates increasingly with the Alliance, but with no intention to join.¹⁵

Those frameworks allow Sweden to assure a proper presence in, and influence on, decisions and arrangements that closely affect its security and that are managed primarily by NATO or within the PfP/EAPC framework. The main achievement of the PfP and EAPC frameworks for the Western countries of the PfP was to facilitate the development of political and institutional interoperability between NATO allies and partners. Sweden has an explicit strategy of making its entire defense forces interoperable with NATO, which indirectly serves mutual cooperation in crises affecting Sweden as well. Moreover, Sweden has a particularly active and high profile as a participant and lead nation in PfP.¹⁶ Sweden has contributed military forces to three operations under NATO's lead: the SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, KFOR in Kosovo, and to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.¹⁷

Sweden's active role in NATO stems from its considerable experience in UN peace operations. Thus, Sweden can make a more meaningful contribution to the Alliance, than some of its members. It is in this sense, Israel could prove as important to NATO as Sweden, and develop a substantial and intensive bilateral program. Not necessarily by committing military forces to international interventions – something that Israel is inexperienced in, but rather in providing capabilities and offering its experience to deal with other core issues on NATO's agenda, i.e., intelligence sharing and operational experience in anti-terrorist maritime surveillance.

Israel should also seek to be part of the EAPC, even if it is not offered. In the EAPC Israel would find several like-minded countries – Western, democratic members of the Euro-Atlantic community, whom for various reasons choose not to join the Alliance at this stage. EAPC membership would be the official accreditation of Israel as a member of the Euro-Atlantic community. In practical grounds, EAPC membership would expand the scope and intensiveness of Israel's relations with NATO, open the way for full admission into various programs Israel is interested to partake in, and also end the anomaly of Israel having no official ambassadorial accreditation to NATO.

In the EAPC, Israel could join hands with Sweden and Finland in promoting reforms intended to strengthen and improve the Partners' position in political consultation and decision-making, operational planning and command arrangements concerning their contribution to NATO-led missions. Israeli membership might be welcomed by the Western Partners as they have been seeking in recent years to assure that the EAPC does not only focus on the needs and issues of those "eligible for funding". In other words, sitting around the EAPC table could offer Israel a modest ability to affect NATO's activities in the Middle East.

For all practical purposes, the operative objectives of Israel present the case that Israel should aim at securing an analogous status to Sweden. The present political circumstances are suffice to sustain such a relationship, which would be mutually advantageous, considering the common interest, but without raising more profound issues, the kind of which full membership might give rise to.

The Roadmap: Israel's High Road to NATO Membership

Our colleagues, Ronald Asmus and Bruce Jackson, review in their paper the pros and cons of Israel's membership in NATO.¹⁸ The position advocated herein is that once balancing the various considerations, three principles should be met to facilitate Israel's admission to NATO.

One, Israel should preserve and enhance its bilateral strategic alliance with the United States irrespective and independent of any relationship with NATO. While NATO membership will *de jure* enhance Israel's official ally status from non-NATO Ally to NATO Ally, this insistence would manifest that NATO membership does not come instead, but rather complement the special Israel-United States relationship. For that matter, opening up Israel's strategic relations to the multilateral scene should not necessitate, nor lead to, any adverse effects on Israel's important bilateral relations with European NATO members either, on the contrary.

Second, even with NATO membership, which entails Article 5 guarantees, Israel should preserve independent strategic capabilities. Multilateral alliances do limit strategic freedom of action. Notwithstanding, Israel, as a country capable of defending itself and maintaining an independent deterrent posture, would be a far more valuable strategic asset to NATO than a country far too dependent on its Alliance guarantees.

Third, NATO membership will be the institutional-political foundation of Israel's alignment with the Euro-Atlantic community, and reflect a substantial strategic and diplomatic improvement in its relations with the European Union. At that stage, both Israel and the Union will be able to review the institutional status, and assess whether Israel's full accession is warranted, or whether the full realization of what the ENP could offer, "virtual membership", is sufficient.

The closest example, the country that incorporates all three principles in its international positioning and strategic posture, is the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom maintains the closest possible strategic relationship with the United States. These countries share exclusive strategic relations and intelligence exchanges administrated by official agreements.¹⁹ These unique and exclusive relations have weathered United Kingdom's integration into Europe and participation in the evolving Common Foreign and Security Policy, while reserving independent capabilities. As noted above, conventional wisdom has it that British integration into Europe has increased its strategic value for the United States. Moreover, these three principles are the main sources of Britain's contemporary international power and role.

It is clear to us, that at this stage, the majority of Alliance members will be loafed if not objected to offering Article 5 guarantees to a country that is still at war. Yet as most Europeans we have engaged told us, when comprehensive peace will be reached, Israel's place in NATO and the Euro-Atlantic community should be at the very least seriously considered.

Beyond that, when Israel will need to make concessions, territorial and others, should the Euro-Atlantic community want to be an effective player in bringing about peace, it

will have to encourage Israel's taking such risks. The community will have to support peace and stability by bolstering Israel's security to offset the adverse consequences to its security. The European Union and its member-states will have to understand that investing in Palestinian statehood without commensurate steps to contribute to Israel's security will deprive it of any moral claim vis-à-vis Israel and of any role in the MEPP. As Rosemary Hollis recently put, Europe can make a difference in the peace process "by volunteering to take some innovative steps and risks themselves, and to share the burden of reconfiguring the prevailing regional dynamics."²⁰

Assuming that the three-phased Roadmap will continue and the Quartet, especially its Euro-Atlantic component, will govern the process, Israel's membership in NATO should be part and parcel of Phase III. Thus, providing for the formal establishment of a Palestinian state should simultaneously bring about the full normalization of Israel's status in the region and its admission to NATO and to the Euro-Atlantic community.

Conclusion

The Euro-Atlantic community is Israel's natural habitat. This is the fundamental premise for the arguments put forward above. While it may seem that a considerable burden of responsibility for realizing these objectives is placed upon the European Union, Israel should assertively state its long-term objectives vis-à-vis the Euro-Atlantic community. Israel also has an important role in narrowing misperceptions and misunderstandings.

More importantly, though, Israeli senior decision-makers are not actively seized of the issues discussed above. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Israel has not been able to devise a comprehensive, explicit, and long-term strategy regarding its foreign policy and international orientation. This cannot continue for long, because if so senior NATO officials are engaged on this, Israeli upper echelons must deal with this proactively as well.

Senior officials have played an important role so far; so has unofficial network we have formed together with American and European counterparts. This network has played an instrumental role in increasing the policy awareness to NATO-Israel relations, and to enhancing Israel's relations with the Euro-Atlantic community. These exchanges have led to an understanding that positioning or anchoring Israel in the Euro-Atlantic community would be a considerable contribution to the peace process.

As such, this process accounts for the increasing importance of unofficial networks for international governance. As Anne-Marie Slaughter argues this is a new world order. Israel and its political leadership should recognize this new multilateral order and engage it vigorously.²¹

¹ Turkey is a NATO member and several other Muslim countries are members of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). On the EAPC, see below.

² Robert Kagan, *Of Power and Paradise: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003, p. 4.

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- ³ Ronald D. Asmus, "Rebuilding the Atlantic Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 5, September-October 2003, p. 20.
- ⁴ Anne-Marie Slaughter, *A New World Order*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- ⁵ On this, see also Oded Eran, "Israel and Europe – Option for Future Relations," September 2004.
- ⁶ Gideon Rachman, "Is the Anglo-American Relationship Still Special?" *Washington Quarterly*. Vol. 24, No. 2, 2001, pp. 7-20.
- ⁷ Nicole Gnesotto (ed.), *EU Security and Defense Policy: The First Five Years (1999-2004)*. Paris: Institute for Security Studies, European Union, 2004.
- ⁸ On the role and performance of the European Union and the Israeli-Palestinian issue, particularly on relations with the United States, see Martin Ortega (ed.) *The European Union and the Crisis in the Middle East*. Chaillot Papers No. 62, Paris: Institute for Security Studies, July 2003.
- ⁹ The negotiations between the parties on the bilateral Action Plan of the ENP are nearing conclusion. Respectively, Commissioner Verheugen addressing a conference in Jerusalem, June 15, 2003 <http://www.eu-del.org.il/newsletter/english/default.asp?edt_id=9&id=96> and Press Release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel following the meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council, November 17, 2003 <<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/MFA+Spokesman/2003/Israel%20Country%20of%20First%20Priority%20for%20Upgrade%20in%20Re>>
- ¹⁰ Ambassador Marc Otte, European Union Special Representative to the Middle East Peace Process, speaking at an international conference held at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, October 26, 2004.
- ¹¹ Andrew Beatty, "Spanish Foreign Minister Backs 'Virtual Membership' for Israel," *EU Observer*, December 3, 2004 <<http://euobserver.com/?aid=17914&rk=1>>.
- ¹² Rosemary Hollis, "The Israeli-Palestinian Road Block: Can Europeans Make a Difference," *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 2, 2004, p.6.
- ¹³ Alberto Bin, "Mediterranean dialogue," *NATO Review*, Autumn 2001. See also Chris Donnelly, "Building a NATO Partnership for the Greater Middle East," *NATO's Review*, Spring 2004.
- ¹⁴ The 15 Partner Countries Eligible for Support are: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
- ¹⁵ Bo Huld, Teija Tiilikainen, Tapani Vaahtoranta and Anna Helkama-Rågård, "Finnish and Swedish Security - Comparing National Policies," in: <http://www.upi-fia.fi/northerndimension/finswe.html>
- ¹⁶ Kari Möttölä, "Military Cooperation and Military Non-Alliance: An Analysis of the Policies of Finland and Sweden in Transatlantic Relations," Paper prepared for 43rd ISA Annual Convention, New Orleans, LA, 23-27 March 2002. See also Bo Huld, et. al, *op cit*.
- ¹⁷ For further details on Sweden's operations in the PfP, see http://www.gwu.edu/~iar/WS01_Olsen.pdf
- ¹⁸ Ronald D. Asmus and Bruce Jackson, "Israel and the Euro-Atlantic Community: An American Perspective," December 2004.
- ¹⁹ Those include the 1948 UK-USA Agreement and the secret 1958 US-UK Mutual Defense Agreement.
- ²⁰ Hollis, *op cit.*, p.9.
- ²¹ Slaughter, *op cit.*