

# **Australia–Israel**

## **Be'er Sheva Dialogue**

*Proceedings and Outcomes*

1 November 2015

Tel Aviv, Israel





## **Introduction**

The relationship between Australia and Israel is long and positive.

Our countries are close friends with similar strategic and cultural world views. In the defence arena, both countries maintain high-quality, high-technology military forces with the capacity to interact as peers.

Australia and Israel recognise the importance of maintaining a strategic presence and security ties in the Indo-Pacific, and both nations are grappling with the defence implications of the rise of Asia, US rebalancing, Russian chauvinism and instability in the Middle East.

There are also important historical connections linking our two societies. In its naming, the Dialogue commemorates the Battle of Be'er Sheva. On 31 October 1917, the 4th and 12th Regiments of the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade galloped on Be'er Sheva; they took less than an hour to overrun the Turkish trenches and, in the evening, captured the city. The stunning tactical victory relied on shock, speed, daring and bravery from the Australian mounted infantry. Notably, it was the regiments' first major conflict and marked a decisive turning point in both the battle for Gaza (which fell a week later) and in the allied campaign in World War One.

The Be'er Sheva Dialogue brings together experienced voices from Australia and Israel to share perspectives and analyses on the challenges facing the world today. It is the only bilateral dialogue that brings together government officials, serving and retired military representatives, academics and non-government officials to discuss security issues and strategic perspectives between the two countries.

The Australian delegation was led by ASPI Council Chair Stephen Loosley AM and included elected representatives from both houses and major parties, Australian diplomats including our Ambassador to Israel, a former senior intelligence official and senior Army officers both retired and serving. BESA Center Director Efraim Inbar headed the Israeli delegation which comprised former and current Foreign Affairs officials, strategists, leading academics and representatives from both defence industry and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

As we approach the centenary of the Battle of Be'er Sheva, the Dialogue provides an opportunity for Australians and Israelis to come together in remembrance of our history and in consideration of our future.

## **Session One: The strategic outlook in the Indo–Pacific and the Middle East**

The first session provided an opportunity to consider the strategic outlook in the Middle East and the Asia–Pacific, as well as establish points of convergence and divergence as to Israeli and Australian conceptions of the global strategic environment.

The session opened with a considered intervention from the Israeli side, the central thesis of which noted that the Middle East is in a period of fundamental transition. It was held that change will continue to unfold over the coming years as nations across the region jostle to reorganise amongst themselves as they are buffeted by a diverse range of factors. Israel specifically, it was proposed, should keep to itself as much as possible, except when it comes to guarding against factors or situations that might have a negative bearing on the Israeli security position. Three major areas of concern were identified: one, dealing with Iranian progress towards an atomic bomb and the implications of the US-Iran nuclear deal; two, working towards a sustainable solution on the Palestinian question, noting that peace would beget deeper cooperation with more countries; and three, Moscow’s interests in Syria, specifically Russia’s growing military prescience. All warrant deep consideration of how Israel should act today while bearing in mind future strategic challenges.

The Australian intervention opened with consideration of the significant divergence in the strategic environments between the continental theatre of the Middle East and the maritime theatre of the Asia–Pacific. The Asia–Pacific was recognised to be a strategically contested system and the site at which Western military primacy is coming under sustained challenge. The US, having long maintained a strong presence in the region, was labelled an ‘easily distracted superpower’, one in pursuit of a ‘pivot’ that lacks substance. Many questions as to the future of the region centre around the future of China: What does China want? How will China achieve its aims? What reforms are possible under one party rule to allow China to continue to grow to realise the Chinese Dream? Southeast Asia was identified as the region where the most significant and fraught competition between the US and China will take place; Vietnam was noted as one of the most interesting and consequential countries in the region, and decisions like the China v Philippines case at the International Court of Arbitration are thought to be crucial when it comes to supporting the current rules-based global order. Questions abound as to China’s intentions in the South China Sea, but what is clear is that the US and others must manage the situation through diplomatic channels as well as through the assertion of Freedom of Navigation.

The discussion allowed for a broader consideration of Chinese policies and goals and the US role in both the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific. It was noted that while China is challenging some international law and norms, it is not trying to undermine the rules of the world economy as it seeks better representation in global financial institutions. It was also noted that China might not want to ascribe itself with the superpower label, given the significant global obligations they realise are borne by the US. The retreat of US leadership was seen by some delegates to be an important element tying the Israeli and Australian strategic pictures together. It was held that a lack of credible and sustained US leadership has created a power vacuum in both the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific.

## **Session Two: The implications of evolving military technology and nuclear proliferation**

Having established the broad operating context of the Indo–Pacific and the Middle East as seen from both Israel and Australia, the second session provided an opportunity for participants to consider the implications of emergent threats, evolving military technology and nuclear proliferation.

The Australian presentation focused on the changing nature of conflict. Future threats were likely to be hybrid in nature, as indicated by the diversity of operations across theatres including Ukraine, Gaza, Syria, Iraq and Mali, to name just a few examples. It was noted that nuclear proliferation is on the rise. The ‘human factor’ was seen to be a decisive issue: while technological prowess has grown considerably to assist the management of a wide range of security concerns, leadership and decision-making capabilities remains the same as ever. The Ukraine was identified as a country that faces a wide range of disparate threats through a range of domains and players, from electronic and cyber warfare through to kinetic artillery-focused modes through to the activities of non-state actors.

The Israeli presentation was focused on the prospect of a nuclear Middle East, which was characterised as a ‘strategic nightmare’ for Israel. The fundamental points to keep in mind include: one, a recognition that no extended deterrence is going to stop proliferation; two, the difficulty in building an effective second-strike capability; and three, the Israeli priority should be the prevention of a nuclear Middle East. Technology transfer from state to non-state actors was deemed to be a major strategic concern. Technological innovation was judged to be a positive factor, allowing militaries to be more discriminate in their operations which occur alongside a civilian population, so as to limit collateral damage. A problem was identified in the fact that the best technology on the market can be bought from private economic enterprises by legitimate actors as well as those who we would prefer didn’t get their hands on such capabilities, as they do not behave rationally.

The discussion allowed for a deeper exploration of some of the big questions around the evolution of the battlefield, specifically around the character of war and victory today. It was proposed that the nature of the human exchange of violence has fundamentally changed, with the emphasis shifting from manoeuvre to firepower. Social media has also had an indelible impact on the nature of war and the battlefield; some believe it to be ‘a weapon’ as it reaches out to many and leads some to radicalise. Australia was seen to be in the midst of an unprecedented outbreak of radicalisation among young people via social media and the internet. To assist the prevention of radicalisation, states should be sure not to buy-into or propagate ISIS’s rhetoric about its own success.

Delegates identified the growing centrality of intelligence as a common thread through the session. The indelicacy of nuclear weapons means that Israel and others should seek to apply intelligence in ways that the adversary has not. The point was also made that greater investments in intelligence can also translate to positive economic success in the society.

### **Session Three: Asymmetric threats (urban conflict, counter-terrorism and cyber security)**

The third session allowed delegates to further explore some of the fundamental questions around asymmetric threats that had percolated through the previous session.

The Australian presentation focused on counterterrorism. The foreign fighter phenomenon, where thousands of young Muslim men have headed to Syria to participate in the conflict, was shown to be a significant concern in Australia. Around 200 young men are thought to have left for the Middle East—a huge figure on a per capita basis. The concern extends not only to what they are doing in Syria and Iraq, but also to what sort of threat they pose when they return to Australia. Lone wolves were also identified as a challenge for Australian policy makers and law enforcement, with the Australian policy and policing focus trained on preventing departure. While counterterrorism legislation can continue to be developed, it was acknowledged that Australia cannot keep arresting until security is achieved—there is a point there where the organs of government impinge on the fundamental freedom that they are fighting for. Instead, the Australian government and society needs to foster an environment where these young men do not want to radicalise and are not easily led toward radicalisation.

The Israeli presentation considered developments in insurgency and counterinsurgency. It was noted that there has been a gradual improvement in the quality of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance activities, command and control, cyber capabilities and the ability to wage information warfare operations. Despite this, the indecisive results of military actions have shown that traditional warfare cannot provide the only background for training and planning to meet asymmetric threats. To this end, considerable investment has been made to improve the efficacy of the Israeli Defence Forces' counterinsurgency operations.

The discussion allowed for consideration of Operation Protective Edge, which an Australian contributor said illustrated that Israel's ability to join political and strategic imperatives with the operational and tactical level is second to none. Another offered that while the operation was a success for a pure military perspective, from a hearts-and-minds perspective, it was a loss and that significant issues arise from this sort of action.

After repeatedly coming up in discussion in the previous two sessions, Indonesia's democratic transition was a source of much discussion. One Israeli delegate designated Indonesia to be 'the great success story of modern times', reflecting a deep curiosity and interest in the country. It was recognised that while some extremist elements persist, Indonesia's successful emergence as the world's only Muslim-majority democracy is 'the great hope on the international stage' and offers a model for the proliferation of democracy through the Middle East. Australian delegates reflected on the hard-won nature of the transition, noting that 70 years of quite brutal integration and reform have given way to a more pluralistic society.

Violent Islamist extremism was noted as a concern for both countries. In Australia, for example, the domestic terror threat has morphed from dedicated plots involving groups to lone actor plots which are low-tech and difficult to disrupt. Similarly in Israel, the current spate of low-tech violence using knives was seen to be much harder to respond to with the current suite of high-tech systems.

#### **Session Four: Defence industry opportunities and challenges**

The fourth and final session provided an opportunity for delegates to consider the different requirements, environments and philosophies underpinning the defence industries in Israel and Australia.

The Australian intervention noted that Israel's requirement of military self-reliance has led to a demand for innovation and excellence that matches well with the Australian experience. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) are predominately viewed as a citizen army, meaning that equipment has to be both robust and simple to use. There is also a requirement that the IDF can act quicker than their opponent and that they can maintain technical superiority. These aspects were seen as points of convergence with the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Australia was identified as a demanding customer and one that is not a threat to the intellectual property of others. Indeed, it was noted that Australia seeks access to intellectual property so that its enterprising young members can understand the technology and make it work better for Australian requirements. It was noted that open technological architecture was on the horizon as a fundamental part of the operating environment for defence industry.

The Israeli presentation explained Israel's approach to defence procurement, which centres around the unique challenges faced by various countries that face different operating environments. The intervention was also an opportunity to acquaint the Australian delegates with defence capabilities that had been developed by Israel's indigenous defence industry, including tanks, unmanned aerial vehicles, missiles and satellites, along with air and missile defence systems like Iron Dome. The new challenge for Israel is about protecting gas projects in the Mediterranean.

The point was made that there is significant scope for Australia and Israel to embark on a significant and mutually beneficial defence industry partnership. The purpose would be to adapt Israeli-developed capabilities for Australian requirements, to take the technology out of Israel and modify it for Australian operators. The synergy between the two countries was noted, as was Israel's can-do attitude and ability to innovate.

It was recognised that part of Israel's success as a 'Start-Up Nation' comes down to the fact that many entrepreneurs the country is turning out have direct experience with the challenges faced by the IDF. Conscriptation allows entrepreneurs to refine a knowledge of the tools and tweaks needed by the IDF along with how procurement processes work. They've also had the chance to forge relationships that endure into civilian life.

## Reflections and next steps

In the final session, participants considered the contributions proffered across the dialogue and reflected on the potential for cooperation between Israel and Australia.

The Be'er Sheva Dialogue provided delegates with a valuable opportunity to focus on critical defence and security issues while reflecting more broadly on the status and outlook for the relationship between Australia and Israel.

Delegates noted the ease with which Israelis and Australians related to one another, and how such good-natured interactions had underscored comprehensive discussions on matters of continuing concern and interest to both countries.

The day's stimulating and engaging discussions did much to uncover similarities between Australia and Israel. They moved delegates toward a clearer articulation of our overlapping strategic interests and encouraged thinking around a common global strategic picture.

As a closing exercise, delegates reflected on the dialogue and made suggestions for policy initiatives to strengthen the bilateral relationship. Proposals included:

- Undertaking to repeat the Australia–Israel Be'er Sheva Dialogue in 2016 and beyond
- Working to ensure that the Charge of the Light Horse is as well-known as the Balfour Declaration, which happened on the same day.
- Establishing a Be'er Sheva Address to provide an opportunity for the Prime Ministers of each country to look at the bilateral relationship, particularly the strategic dimension.
- Working to enhance cooperation between the Israeli Defense Force and the Australian Defence Force, including military exchanges between respective staff colleges.
- Identifying and pursuing opportunities for corporate cooperation.
- Expand the dialogue to include deeper discussion of policing and law enforcement.
- The ADF and IDF should work together to learn from each other's experiences.
- The Australian government should appoint a Defence Attaché to Israel.
- Strengthening existing intelligence exchange and cooperation, as well as information exchange on radicalisation
- Establishing an annual Track 1 dialogue, including more formal dialogue between respective military services.
- Building law enforcement relations.
- Harnessing the Australian government's innovation agenda to leverage greater awareness of links and interests amongst Australian parliamentarians.
- Establishing a Free Trade Agreement between Israel and Australia.
- Encouraging a comparison of experiences: Israeli's could learn a lot about Australian experiences in counter insurgency, for example.
- A Start-Up Australia should be explored, in a similar vein to Start-Up Israel
- The production of a report examining current security and strategic relations between Australia and Israel and exploring opportunities for cooperation





**THE BEGIN-SADAT CENTER  
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

# Israel-Australia Dialogue

**A Closed Workshop at the BESA Center  
Sunday, November 1, 2015**

BESA Center Seminar room (Building 203, Room 131) Bar-Ilan University

9:00 Greetings and introductions

Prof Efraim Inbar, BESA Center

Mr. Peter Jennings, PSM, ASPI

9:15-11:00 The Strategic Outlook in the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East

11:00-11:15 Break

11:15-13:00 The Implications of Evolving Military Technology and Nuclear Proliferation

13:00-14:15 Lunch

14:15-16:00 Asymmetric Threats (Urban Conflict, Counter-Terrorism and Cyber Security)

16:00-16:15 Break

16:15-18:00 Defense Industry Opportunities and Challenges

19:00 Dinner hosted by H.E. Dave Sharma, Australian Ambassador to Israel

## Australia–Israel Be’er Sheva Dialogue

Tel Aviv, Israel  
1 November 2015

### Agenda

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 0845 – 0900 | Registration and coffee   |
| 0900 – 0915 | <b>Introductory remarks</b><br><br>Prof Efraim Inbar, BESA Center and Mr Stephen Loosley, ASPI  |
| 0915 – 1100 | <b>Session One</b><br><b>The strategic outlook in the Indo–Pacific and the Middle East</b><br><br>Australian speaker: Mr Allan Gyngell AO<br>Israeli speaker: MajGen (res) Yaakov Amidror                 |
| 1100 – 1115 | <i>Coffee</i>   |
| 1115 – 1245 | <b>Session Two</b><br><b>The implications of evolving military technology and nuclear proliferation</b><br><br>Australian speaker: MAJGEN (retd) Jim Molan AO<br>Israeli speaker: BrigGen Ram Yavne       |
| 1245 – 1400 | <i>Lunch</i>  |
| 1400 – 1530 | <b>Session Three</b><br><b>Asymmetric threats (urban conflict, counter-terrorism and cyber security)</b><br><br>Australian speaker: The Hon Mark Dreyfus MP<br>Israeli speaker: BrigGen (res) Moni Chorev |
| 1530 – 1545 | <i>Coffee</i>   |
| 1545 – 1715 | <b>Session Four</b><br><b>Defence industry opportunities and challenges</b><br><br>Australian speaker: Maj. Gen Gus McLachlan<br>Israeli speaker: Dr Uzi Rubin  |
| 1715 – 1745 | <b>Reflections and next steps</b><br><br>Comments from Dr Colin Rubenstein AM, AIJAC, Prof Ifraim Inbar, BESA Center and Mr Stephen Loosley, ASPI   |
| From 1900   | <b>Dialogue dinner hosted by H.E. Dave Sharma</b>   |

## Be'er Sheva Dialogue Delegates

**Maj. Charmaine Benfield**

Military Assistant to Maj. Gen. Gus McLachlan

**Dr. Anthony Bergin**

Deputy Director, Australian Strategic Policy Institute

**Ms. Gai Brodtmann MP**

Member of Parliament representing Canberra (ALP)

**The Hon Mark Dreyfus QC MP**

Shadow Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for Arts

**Mr. Allan Gyngell AO**

Former head of the Office of National Assessments

**Mr. Peter Jennings PSM**

Executive Director, Australian Strategic Policy Institute

**Mr. David Lang**

Analyst and Editor, Australian Strategic Policy Institute

**Mr. Stephen Loosley AM**

Chairman, Australian Strategic Policy Institute

**Maj. Gen. Gus McLachlan**

Head of Modernisation and Strategic Planning, Australian Army

**Maj. Gen. Jim Molan AO (ret.)**

Former senior officer in the Australian Army

**Senator Linda Reynolds CSC**

Senator for Western Australia (LNP)

**Dr. Colin Rubenstein AM**

Executive Director, Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council

**Mr. Ahron Shapiro**

Policy Analyst, Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council

**His Excellency Mr Dave Sharma**

Ambassador of Australia to Israel

**Mr. Zeke Solomon AM**

Consultant, Allens Lawyers

**Maj. Gen. (res.) Yaakov Amidror**

The Anne and Greg Rosshandler Senior Fellow, Former National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister, Military Secretary to the Defense Minister, and Director of the Research Division in Military Intelligence.

**Mr. Nevo Barchad**

Department of Regional Security and Counter Terrorism Division for Strategic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel

**Brig. Gen. (res.) Moni Chorev**

Specializes in military and strategic doctrine, and evaluation of military performance. Former Division Commander and Commander of the IDF Officer School.

**Prof. Hillel Frisch**

(Ph.D. Hebrew U.) Expert on Palestinian and Islamic politics, institutions and military strategies; and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan.

**Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Hacohen**

Served with the IDF for 42 years as a military doctrine and training battalion; brigade, Division and Corps Commander. Former Head of Department and Head of the National Defense Colleges.

**Col. (res.) Aby Har-Even**

Former head of the Israel Space Agency and of the satellite launching program at the Israel Aircraft Industries.

**Prof. Efraim Inbar**

Director of the BESA Center. Expert on Israeli strategic doctrine, public opinion on national security issues, nuclear matters, U.S. Middle East policy, U.S.-Israel relations, Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy, and Israel-Turkey relations.

**Col. (res.) Dr. Eran Lerman**

(Ph.D. London School of Economics) Former deputy for foreign policy and international affairs at the National Security Council in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office. Held senior posts in IDF Military Intelligence for over 20 years. Also served as Israeli director of the American Jewish Committee.

**Admiral (res.) Eliezer ("Chiney") Marom**

Former Commander of the Israeli Navy – Security Perspectives

**Mr. Raphael Morav**

Director, Pacific Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel

**Amb. Jacob Rosen**

Senior Counsellor Center for Political Research, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Jerusalem

**Mr. Uzi Rubin**

Preeminent Israeli expert on missile defense. Founder and director of the Arrow Defense Program against long-range missiles in the Israeli Ministry of Defense.

**Dr. Jonathan Rynhold**

(Ph.D. London School of Economics) Specializes in Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy, the Arab-Israeli peace process, U.S.-Israel relations, Israeli politics and foreign policy, U.S. public opinion, UK-Israeli relations, and issues related to NGOs and BDS.

**Dr. Maj. Gen. (res.) Emanuel Sakal** Specializes in ground forces, training and doctrine, armored warfare, weapons development, and the future Mideast battlefield. A 36-year veteran of the Israeli military, he was head of the IDF Ground Forces Command

**Prof. Shmuel Sandler**

(Ph.D. Johns Hopkins U.) Expert on Israeli electoral politics, Israeli foreign policy and national security, and U.S. foreign policy.

**Mr. Itzik Rabinovitz**

Representative from the Australian military industries

**David M. Weinberg**

Director of Public Affairs of the BESA Center. Editor of the BESA Bulletin. Was founding coordinator of the Global Forum against Anti-Semitism in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, and spokesman of Bar-Ilan University. Directs the Israel office of Canada's Center for Israel and Jewish Affairs. Specializes in Israel-Diaspora relations, anti-Semitism, U.S. and Canadian Middle East policy, and pro- and anti-Israel advocacy.

**Brig. Gen. Ram Yavne** Head of the Strategic division in the IDF

**BESA and ASPI gratefully acknowledge the support of the Pratt Foundation and the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council for the Be'er Sheva Dialogue**

