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Interview with David Ivry

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Summary:

David Ivry was a Major General in the Israeli Defense Forces. He was the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, a commander of the Israeli Air Force, and director of the Israeli National Security Council. He served as the head of the Israeli delegation to ACRS.

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David Ivry, Israel**Oral history interview conducted by Hanna Notte on Zoom on October 27, 2020****Hanna Notte**

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today for this project on the ACRS history, which I'm doing at CNS with Chen Kane and the Wilson Center. Thank you for that. And maybe before we start the conversation, can you tell me how much time you have today so I can tailor my questions accordingly?

David Ivry

I have about one hour. I'll suggest that I'll start and give you, in general terms, how it started, I mean, the background and so on, and then I'll answer your questions. Alright?

Hanna Notte

That sounds perfect, that's absolutely all right with me. Please go ahead with your introductory recollections.

David Ivry

I am David Ivry. And my position during the ACRS talks was the Director General of the Ministry of Defense. And I just started, actually, that position around 1986, June. Normally, in most of the countries, those who are leading the talks, bilaterals and multilateral talks, are normally the Foreign Office. And this was in some way exceptional that I, as the Director General of the Ministry of Defense, was leading those kinds of talks, but I'll try to give you the background for it. It started with Desert Storm or the first war in the Gulf against Iraq in 1991, after the invasion of Saddam Hussein to Kuwait, in August 1990. And, as the Director General of the Ministry of Defense, I used to have a real tight, trusting relationship with the leadership of the administration of the United States. And in this very complicated situation of the Gulf War, where the United States established a coalition with some Arab countries of the Middle East to try to fight Saddam Hussein, it was very sensitive for those coalition partners to have a relationship with Israel, because they didn't want to be blamed for cooperating with Israel against an Arab country, against Saddam Hussein.

So, the relationships were very sensitive, and I was the only one, I think, or almost the only one to have the contact with the United States administration. And this was because I used to be the one who was heading the JPMG meetings, which used to be a bilateral meeting of a joint political-military group, it was called. First, in some ways, strategic dialogue, which we used to have bilaterally, and I was leading it as Director General. And I met, and I knew most of the leaders of the multilateral talks from the administration. And so, during the war, I've been, actually, five times in the United States, almost once a month, to coordinate what can be done, but kept it in very low profile, because they trusted me that I'm not going to go to the media. And this way, we could communicate and achieve much more during the war. And in some way, giving much more option to Israel not to retaliate and not respond to the missiles being launched against Israel, at the time. It was 41 Scud missiles, actually upgraded Scud - they called it Al Hussein - which, almost every night, were launched against Tel Aviv and Haifa. Luckily, we didn't have too many casualties, but it was a real crisis over there. Many people left the cities.

In spite of it, we didn't retaliate, and this kind of strategy, by which Israeli Prime Minister then Shamir, made Israel's participation in Madrid Conference much more legitimate in the eyes of the other regional participants. And it was already at the end of 1991, when the idea was, of course, to make progress on a new kind of peace process in the Middle East, talks and so on, but the legitimacy for establishing it, was actually by not retaliating during the Desert Storm to the Scud missiles. The United States was leading Madrid. And during Madrid it'd been decided to have five multilateral committees, among them was ACRS, and it was in some way normal that I was going to be the head of the talks leading the Israeli side. And this was because, first, I had the background of military experience by having been chief of the air force, or commander of the Israeli air force and deputy chief of general staff of the

IDF. So, I was very much involved in all the sensitivities of security which we had. And the other side was, I was very much involved in a strategic dialogue with the United States and very much involved in the policy of Israel related to weapons of mass destruction, mainly as related to all kinds of conventions...

Hanna Notte

Hello, can you still hear me? I've lost you.

David Ivry

Can you hear me now?

Hanna Notte

Oh, yes. Now I hear you. I lost you when you said that you also had background dealing with weapons of mass destruction related questions.

David Ivry

Okay. I was very much involved in the policy of Israel related to weapons of mass destruction and all kinds of conventions like the CWC, BWC, NPT and all. So I was very much involved in it. The government decided that I'm going to be the head of the team. The director general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was actually in the team as well, Eytan Bentsur was the name. And we had very good experts on the team like Dr. Levite, I don't know if you know him, Dr. Uzi Arad, which had been at the time in a high position in the Mossad and many other intelligence people which have been very active in those kinds of issues. Mainly on weapons of mass destruction. The steering committee, which I was heading - we were sitting quite a lot to try to learn, first, the language and what should be done. So, we did some preparation meetings for some time and learnt all the, I mean - ACRS has a different language. It's the same English, but it has those kinds of expressions which you have to learn to understand.

I think that the government, the Israeli government, was much more open to make progress on the kinds of economic efforts like water, agriculture, and so on. But I'm not sure they were too much keen to make progress on weapons of mass destruction, an agreement, unless there's going to be major peace with all the Arab countries. So, the policy was in some way not to make progress over there, but if you can, do anything to make progress in other fields, that's okay. The concept of Israel at the time was that we cannot join the NPT or any kinds of international convention - like the chemical (CWC) and others, we agreed but didn't ratify. So, the idea was such that even one country, which is not part of any conventional agreement and doesn't have any commitment for keeping it, remains kind of an existing threat for Israel to exist. I mean, if one of the countries cannot join in, it means we have a 100% threat, never minding all the other people. That's why, in some ways, our policy was to try to come up to a regional agreement, including all the countries in the region. And this was in some way the policy which we were pursuing during the meetings.

But the idea was, from my perspective - and we were sitting, talking about it quite a lot - to try to find water, the items or interests, which can be approved or can be accepted by all the partners, not including the weapons of mass destruction. And this is, in some way, very much going with the policy of the United States on CBMs - what they call, and called at the time of ACRS - CSBMs, confidence and security building measures. So, CBMs was in some way the major point. And we were looking very much to try to build up the confidence by dialogue and trying to find related security issues, which could be accepted by all the partners. So we tried that, we made all kinds of understanding with the United States which held the sponsorship. Related to the sponsorship, I'm not saying... it was led by the United States and Russia, but Russia was kind of, after Glasnost, didn't have too much a budget for it. So, it mainly was led by the United States and the Russian side was semi-active, I'll put it this way.

We used to have a dialogue, mainly preparation dialogues with the United States leadership for the meetings of ACRS, to try to give them our ideas and not to propose ideas first during the plenary meetings. At the beginning, any proposal which we were putting on the table used to be objected to immediately by some of the countries, never mind if it was good or bad. So we understood that the United States can, if they decided to share our ideas, if they are going to propose it, most of the countries are going to be at least positive about trying to understand if it can be done. We did all the work, actually, with the United States, and we started not to propose anything

from our side. On the other side - normally, the leadership of the United States team used to change according to the timetable they had - we had Dennis Ross, we had Bob Einhorn, we had Dick Clark, and others, each time we had preparation meetings with them to try to come up with some positive ideas. So, this was it from the Israeli, our perspective.

14 countries joint ACRS, it meant Israel and another 13. That's why we decided that we have to decide that any decision or any agreement should be by consensus, because otherwise we could have been the minority all the time, on any kind of decision. So, each country had a veto. It had some advantages, but it also had a lot of disadvantages, of course, because you need all the countries to agree on any paper.

At the beginning of this, the people saw that there's not too much chance over there, in ACRS, to make too much progress, because Israel is not going to speak on weapons of mass destruction, and nothing can be done. Later, the more the meetings came up with ideas which we had - and I try to go into it later on - a lot of countries tried to join those kinds of meeting. Mainly European countries. Turkey was very active, and others intensively tried to get into the committees which, normally, we didn't want to have any foreigners inside. And that's why we made, in some way, the Track Two, since over there, those countries couldn't have been taking much more part in it.

The Palestinians were, at this stage, there as observers. I don't know if this was the exact definition, but this is what I can remember. They didn't have any voting rights. But they were over there in some way. They used to be not too much supportive of any idea, because they're actually against any normalization and CBMs. Normally, it [CBMs] is normalization, partly. So, the consensus in some way made it such that Egypt was very active in yielding the veto, and we came up to a lot of agreements on different issues. And I can recall some of them, I mentioned it. Normally, Egypt was stalling on signing all kinds of papers, until we are going to get in some ideas on the nuclear, on the NPT and so on. We tried to, actually, make progress on the security of the region. And to try to prevent unintentional conflict, which - sometimes, because of misunderstanding, you can end up with a conflict, though nobody meant to do it. We have to remember that, at the time, we had only peace with Egypt. Later on, we got to peace with Jordan, but at the time, we had only peace with Egypt. And it was in some way a bit strange for me, having Jordanians sitting on my right side and Palestinians on my left side, without any peace treaty signed yet. I must say that the major point here we have to take into account - and this made all our policy related to weapons of mass destruction very decisive: three countries, major, important countries from our perspective, didn't join the meeting. I mean, we had 14, but Iraq, Iran and Syria didn't participate. And this means quite a lot. It means, first, that they are not obeying all the treaties they were signing, and this issue was brought up again in the lead to the 2003 war in Iraq; Iran's nuclear capabilities are an issue now, as well as chemical weapons in Syria, which were used extensively during the war in Syria. So, we couldn't accept any discussion or any kind of agreement to come up on weapons of mass destruction as long as the three countries - which are a major threat for Israel - are not joining and not committing. It means that we would be the only ones going to commit.

There were other interests between countries, but what we tried to find [was], what is the common interest which we can move, and coordinate it? Like, they made all kinds of CBM ideas, like search and rescue, and we discussed it several times. Towards the end of it, we came even to an understanding about centers, control centers in three or four points in the Middle East; not in Israel - but Jordan, Tunisia and others. Which, once there is an earthquake, any kind of disaster, and search and rescue is needed because of accidents at sea, they are going to coordinate with all the countries in the region to try to assist and to try to solve it. This is, in some ways, a security issue, but it's an interest of all of us. It was really accepted by all the countries except Egypt, which accepted the idea but wanted to get into it some weapons of mass destruction ideas. And Palestinians were acting behind the screen sometimes to prevent normalization.

I can give another example, because we held a lot of talks about it. We decided that we are going to ask every country of the 14 to write a paper on their security

concerns. And some of the countries delivered the papers. And it was very interesting, because most of the countries didn't put Israel as a threat. It wasn't on their paper on security concerns. And if I took, for instance, the paper of Kuwait, I could change the name between Kuwait to Israel, because Iraq was much more a concern for them than Israel. So, it was very, very telling out of those kind of... just to understand, and they find it much more easier to make peace with those countries than with those who are not accepting it [phone connection bad during preceding phrase].

So, the idea again, it was to try to find common interest or common issues, which can be accepted by all, and then to give some advantage to some of the countries like Jordan, Tunisia, Egypt, saying that it [those centers] are going to be located over there. And money's going to get into it as well. So, to generate on their part some interest to implement some of those kinds of CBMs. I think the more the process came up, more countries came to be much more supportive of those kinds of deals, except Egypt, which used to be very much objecting all the time. European countries wanted very much to join. And with time they got much more officially involved in those kinds of talks.

We were working a lot with the United States on preparation. And the major question was, which I can ask even now: is this the way in which we can make better peace? We tried to make it step by step, by dialogue, via confidence building measures, and tried to get to assist on the background peace talks. But we couldn't make it to the end. Especially because we couldn't come up to an understanding about any of the weapons of mass destruction. Track Two was very active as well, and the United States was pushing it. And beyond it, we had some side talks with some of the countries, mainly European countries, which wanted to understand our positions, France, Germany and others. So there were some effective meetings with Europeans as well.

I can tell you only my personal feelings: at the beginning, in the first meetings, I used to go on a break to have a coffee. No problem. I could go by yourself. Everybody was moving aside. Not to be perceived that maybe he is coordinating with this one. Towards the end of it, never could I get coffee on the break; always people would see me (and talk to me) on the way, and I couldn't get the coffee. Just to make you understand what happened.

Hanna Notte

What changed?

David Ivry

Personal building of relationships and trust came up quite high, in my opinion. And people wanted to talk with us.

Hanna Notte

Great.

David Ivry

I think this is - in general I gave you all the background and what's behind it. But if you want to have some questions, please.

Hanna Notte

This has been excellent, actually. And you covered so many questions I was going to ask. So, this has been really useful. I do have just a couple of follow up questions, if I may. And I want to come back to what you said, which is that Israel felt, going into this whole process, that it couldn't really engage on the WMD issue unless there would be what you call comprehensive peace in the region. How did Israel see the relationship between the bilaterals that also came out of the Madrid conference and the multilateral working groups? What was Israel's understanding of the relationship between these two tracks?

David Ivry

They kept the same relation, the same idea, the same policy, because from our perspective, a regional agreement is a way we can accept. We cannot accept international ones because we don't care if Alaska is joining it or not, or Australia. From our perspective, Israel is depending on *regional* security. And even the Baa'th countries - as long as Iran and Iraq and Syria are not joining - we cannot even talk

about weapons of mass destruction agreements. This is a major concept which we had.

Towards the end of it, I mean, there were some bilateral talks with Egypt, we thought they were disturbing. I'm calling it disturbing because it was done in this way, stopping, stalling any kind of agreement which was agreed upon on search and rescue, and so on. And they stopped it, they didn't want to sign, and we had to adopt it by consensus. So, what happened actually, after the assassination of Rabin, Peres accepted a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt. And he made a statement that Israel is going to sign, to discuss (the) NPT after there is going to be peace on a zone, on the Middle East WMD free zone. Something like this. I don't remember the definition. But this is the first time that Israel accepted the idea to discuss the NPT with other countries. But they didn't make progress. But the policy stayed the same. Only a declaration that we are ready to do it.

Hanna Notte

Great, thank you. And you've mentioned a few times now the fact that Iran, Iraq and Syria were absent from the process. And I want to ask you, what was Israel's position in terms of who should be included in these regional talks? I mean, I also understand that Turkey was not included as a regional power, but as an extra-regional actor. What was Israel's preference here, in terms of the inclusivity of the process?

David Ivry

No, we wanted to accept everybody in the region, even Afghanistan can join in. From our perspective, the bigger the zone, the regional zone, the bigger security we're going to have.

Hanna Notte

And those pushing back against that suggestion were other regional players or the Americans, or...?

David Ivry

I didn't understand.

Hanna Notte

Israel had the position that all these countries should be included in the process. But that's not what happened. So, who was -

David Ivry

It was agreed at the Madrid conference who was going to participate. So, it was agreed as well that - only the Palestinians couldn't join in, because they hadn't been a country yet.

Hanna Notte

Right. Okay.

David Ivry

And Turkey was not in the Middle East at that time, it was Europe from their perspective.

Hanna Notte

Okay, so it was a Turkish preference not to be included in the process?

David Ivry

I don't know if these are, they were not included in Madrid under the agreement.

Hanna Notte

Okay. And I wanted to ask you about the work on the confidence building measures which you mentioned. Now, I understand from looking through the historical material that in the first plenaries, it was decided to take this kind of educational approach, to bring in experts from Europe who would talk about the Helsinki process or confidence building measures between the Americans and the Soviets during the Cold War. I wanted to ask you whether you thought that that kind of approach was useful and how it was sort of received by the other regional delegations?

David Ivry

You see, this was the only option to try to have some more meetings, because at the beginning they didn't want to talk about any kinds of tangible issue. I mean, even

search and rescue. So, to learn, to get ideas from others - nobody can object. So, this was mainly the idea for how to continue those kinds of talks.

Hanna Notte

Okay. Great. I want to come back to that work that you called, sort of, step-by-step work on the confidence building measures, versus the issue of discussing the WMD. So I think it was at the fourth plenary session, which happened in Moscow sometime, I think in, yeah it was in late 1993, that a formal decision was taken to split the work into the two baskets: an operational basket to continue to work on the CBMs, and then what they called the conceptual basket, to work on a kind of declaration. Do you have any recollections? You know, who suggested that basket approach? And how it came about? And was everyone in agreement with that?

David Ivry

I cannot recall who suggested it.

Hanna Notte

Okay. No problem. So, I wanted to ask you about the significance of moving the plenaries of the process to the region at some point. It was in 1994 that the plenary moved from, initially Washington and Moscow to Doha, to Qatar for the first time. And could you talk a little bit about your recollections of being in Doha and what it meant for the Israeli delegation and how you felt the atmosphere was between your delegation and maybe some of the Gulf delegations and the other regionals?

David Ivry

Yeah, I think this step was out of the CBMs. So, what I said about the coffee, this is the process which evolved. I mean, slowly, slowly, they accepted - maybe it's a good idea to even meet over there. Nobody was coming to Israel by then. But at least Doha and then Cairo and then Tunisia. So, it was a major step forward on confidence that we achieved in these kinds of meetings. Second, about us flying to Doha: First they were flying to Cairo, and over there we took the Gulf airline to fly to Doha. And for me, as a pilot who had been flying during the Six Day War and so on, flying over there to Egypt, and then on Saudi land, and so on, to land over there - it was a major personal experience, from my perspective. Beyond it, it was such that in Doha, we were sitting as 14 missions. At the head of the table was Russia, the United States and Russian sponsorship, with European blessing. And along the tables, around the tables, were sitting all the delegates of the Arab countries, most of them in traditional dress, and only us Israelis in European-style dress. So, it was very, very significant for me to see how this Middle East looks from this perspective. Significant to understand. Entering the conference room was really a major impact for me. And then talks happened. But again, when we'd been to Doha, it was after a major phase in which we understood that people are people, we can talk, we can talk freely. And so, it was a major step forward. And then it was the same with Tunisia, we were celebrating over there, and then Egypt. So, this was a major progress, now I can say.

Hanna Notte

Great, great, thank you for that. And generally, in the plenaries and in the working groups in which you participated - and I'm sure as head of delegation you must have participated in all the meetings - which delegations from these other 13 regional countries did you find to be particularly active, or more active than others? Or did you also find their level of expertise on some issues to differ? Maybe you could talk a little bit about that.

David Ivry

I think the Tunisian delegation was very positive. They had some good relationship with the Jordanians which (we) made later on peace with. Even the Palestinians, they had a friendly relationship, even though they were not very much part of the meeting. They were sitting at the table, but they were not a part of the decision process. Turkey was very much active, trying to get into the talks, so intensively. I didn't know why, officially they couldn't get in, but they wanted very much to be involved. And we had quite good relations with some of the Turkish experts.

I must mention the American side. They very much had expertise on those kinds of - mainly Bob Einhorn, Dennis Ross - they knew their stuff very good. And they had a lot of experience. And we had some lectures given on a Track Two by [Max] Kampelman,

those kinds of experts which used to be on the negotiation on the Cold War between Russia and United States on (inaudible) and so on. So they had a lot of experiences which we could get from them. And including some of the European countries. We had meetings with the French, Jean Claude Mallet, and others, and we tried to understand how we can make progress on the positive side, to try to find positive issues, which can be agreed, and not getting in those doors which cannot be accepted even if by one.

Hanna Notte

Great, that's very useful. And building on what you said about sort of the good contact you had with the Tunisians, with the Jordanians, others: Did you feel that throughout that process, Israel had more similarities in terms of interests with some of the Arab delegations, versus others, and which, which of the countries would that be? Or was it more uniform?

David Ivry

I mentioned it when talking about the security concerns paper, which we were asking everybody to write. You could find that most of the Gulf countries had the same concerns that Israel does, much more than others. That's why the Palestinians didn't like it much. As I said, on most of the concerns, the security concerns of those countries like Tunisia, Morocco, others - Israel wasn't a threat at all, they didn't care about the security of Israel, from their perspective. So, there was much more commonality with those countries than with the Palestinians, Iraq, Iran and those who didn't accept it. So, it was the - I didn't mention Lebanon, Lebanon didn't accept it, but it wasn't the country which makes a major change like Iraq or Iran or Syria, so we didn't care too much about Lebanon. But all the others, I must say - except Egypt, which even though we had a peace process with them, was emphasizing all the time the NPT - we could get easy agreements on search and rescue, on crises and so on. They didn't want to be seen that they are normalizing with us because of the Palestinians, but they didn't agree on anything.

Hanna Notte

Right. I want to ask you a follow up question on Egypt. This, you know, fundamental disagreement with the Egyptians over sort of discussing the WMD issue and the Egyptian insistence on this: Did you feel throughout those years that you engaged in the process, did you feel the Egyptian position on this to be static? Or did you feel it ever to change over time? Or were there moments when you were more optimistic that maybe, with the Egyptians, you get could get more towards the same page on this?

David Ivry

There were some times during which we thought maybe they can accept some of the compromise declaration which we have. I had quite a good relation with Fahmy, who was heading the Egyptian delegation. Then he was the Ambassador to the United States when I was Ambassador over there, so we kept connection, even family was... But they had a concept - which, maybe this committed them inside - to not let any kind of progress be done, unless Israel is going to agree to get into the NPT. Once we got into the regional zone, what we call the nuclear regional zone here, they almost compromised about, but again, it was a bit too late when they accepted it, and most of the paper which we agreed upon before hasn't been actually signed because of Egypt.

Hanna Notte

Okay. Great. I want to come back once more to the, to what you said at the very beginning, about the Israeli delegation. You explained to me that you led it as director general of the Defense Ministry at the time, and that you then had people from the Foreign Ministry, but also from your intelligence community participating in the delegation. From your recollection, do you recall whether the other Arab regional delegations were structured in a similar way? I mean, were they also civilian and military? And did you interact mostly with militaries on the other side? Or also with the diplomats? How can I think about that?

David Ivry

We had in our delegation some military people, or from the intelligence corps mainly,

all the others had been civilians. On the other delegation, they used to have always one military guy, at least - Jordan had at least, I think, three of them. One of them came later to be a prime minister in Jordan. So, we had relationships with, and the military people could talk even by themselves. And there were some talks about it. We had military people in our delegation and there were military people in all the teams as much as I can recall.

Hanna Notte

Okay, great. And I want to ask you a slightly, slightly different question. So, from what I understand - I mean, this is all at the beginning of the 1990s. Now, I imagine that this was, of course, a very elite driven diplomatic process. I'm wondering whether there was any public diplomacy, any educating of the wider public that surrounded this process at the time, maybe to also try to bring the populations of these countries, you know, to support this kind of process and what it was trying to achieve? Was there anything like that? I mean, at least in Israel, or was it more, quite a secretive or discrete process? And how do you think about that?

David Ivry

I think there was some effort, it was mainly driven by the United States, but not too much success as much as I can see. It was the Track Two, the major effort, and Track Two came to be in different cities, including Jordan, for instance and so on, but I'm not sure they've been ready to go for too much to the public about it, unless there's going to be major progress on peace.

Hanna Notte

Yeah. Okay. I want to ask you, actually, just a clarification on Track Two. So, some of the other former diplomats I've interviewed, they sort of seemed to suggest that Track Two really only became important once ACRS broke down - that's when Track Two kind of kicked in, so in the second half of the 1990s, but Track Two wasn't really so much important while ACRS was still ongoing. So I mean, from your recollections, was there Track Two in parallel to ACRS or more subsequent?

David Ivry

It was parallel.

Hanna Notte

Okay, and how was the relationship between the Track Two and the Track One, if you want to call it that, process?

David Ivry

There is no relationship between both. But most of the people which had been on Track One had some delegation on Track Two. So, I think that Track Two was much more open to other countries to put their ideas. And we were listening to it. I mean, European countries could speak over there much more than they could do in the Track One. So, it was open to other countries, and Turkey was very active and so on. So, it was complimentary, much more than, to some of that, I mean, of the ideas of what's going on in ACRS, and we could manage to talk about it much more, CBMs, over there. So, I think it was, it wasn't very, very efficient, but it was in some way contributing to the process.

Hanna Notte

Great. Yes. Thank you. I think I'm mostly through with my questions. I just have one or two kind of summarizing questions. And, I mean, you've spoken to some of this already, but I just want to bring it back: If you now reflect on this time, what were to your mind the greatest successes of the ACRS process, and what were the greatest shortcomings?

David Ivry

I mean, the success was such that we managed to have some interests, which have been common to many countries in the region, and they understood that there can be cooperation on those kinds of issues, like search and rescue, and so on. And it's important, when you have fires coming up, other countries in the region can provide resources and try to assist. I think that made people understand that if you are going to look for positive items, we are going to find them, we can have a lot of cooperation on those kinds of things. And weapons of mass destruction is not the major point. It's

not, you're not coming in the morning, waking up and saying, "I'm threatened by nuclear," but other issues are really a concern of yours. On a daily basis, we could achieve much more cooperation than on the strategic issues. And this made the CBMs much better.

Hanna Notte

And so, and the shortcomings? I guess what I'm asking is, what could have been done differently, if anything, with hindsight, if we now could go back and reconstruct the ACRS process? What would we change if we had the chance?

David Ivry

I think we could make, we could come up with a formula, which - I'm not sure that the Israeli side would accept what I'm saying, I mean the political side. Because once you're not involved in details, you don't understand how you can make much more progress. But the idea we touched, that we could go as far as we can without the commitment on weapons of mass destruction commitment - like saying, once there is going to be peace in the region with all the countries and so on, we are going to accept, and so on and so on, which normally you cannot get, because Syria and Iraq are not going to talk, and Iran. But to make it much easier for some of the countries in the region, if we say "well, Israel is accepting it under the conditions such and such, and can make the other CBM implemented." I think we didn't use as much as we can to go forward on this one. We could make it a bit better. But this is my assessment, I'm not sure that it could have been accepted by the other countries.

Hanna Notte

Okay. I understand. And I mean, now we're in a very much changed Middle East, 30 years later. But can we use any of the lessons from ACRS if we want to think about a regional security architecture today? Do you think there's even appetite today or a possibility to talk about it?

David Ivry

I think we can use quite a lot of what's been achieved over there, like the centers, control centers for search and rescue, assisting other countries. So, there is an option, once you are building these kinds of centers of control, there is a dialogue, and in the centers there is going to be representatives of the countries. And they will exchange information about what's going on at sea, on rescue, and fires and so on. So, you can assist each other. I'm not sure that the time didn't erode it, what's been achieved, because most of the people who were involved during ACRS are not too much in positions by now.

Hanna Notte

Yeah. Well, thank you for that. And this was my last question. And just to your last point, I mean, I think this is exactly why we're trying to construct this oral history and really speak with, you know, everyone - to the extent that we can - who was involved in these delegations 30 years ago. And I have to say, I mean, I've spoken to quite a few on the Israeli delegation already, Egyptian delegation, American, Turkish, so we're having quite good access for the study. It's a bit more difficult to identify and find contact for the people who were in the Gulf delegations and the Maghreb delegations, some of the smaller delegations, it's very hard to find out where these people are today and how to get in touch with them. But we will keep trying. I wanted to ask you at the end, you mentioned some documents, the papers, for instance, on security concerns that were produced by all the delegations. Do you still have any sort of written documentation or papers or proposals related to ACRS? Or would know where we could find such documentation, we obviously want to have the most comprehensive historical record possible. And so, we're also asking everyone whether, you know, they still know of any reports or papers that might exist.

David Ivry

I don't have any papers with me. This is according to our... but I think Dr. Levite, you know Dr. Levite? Maybe he has. Because he was assisting me very much, as was Uzi Arad, who was the head of the National Security Council. They normally used to prepare the papers for me. And they were familiar with the language of ACRS.

Hanna Notte

Okay.

David Ivry

The major idea, I think, from ACRS, the major lesson, is to try to find interest, issues, any action, which is not, which can be accepted by all the partners, and to build up slowly, slowly, step by step the confidence, then to try to get into those.

Hanna Notte

Yeah, yes. Well, thank you. Thank you so much for speaking with me. And this very useful interview.

David Ivry

Thank you very much.

Hanna Notte

Thank you, have a good day. Thank you. Bye.

[End of transcript]