

# On the Eve of the Bucharest Summit: The New Romania, NATO and Israel

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*Adrian Cioroianu was the foreign minister of Romania until his resignation in April. This article is adapted from his remarks before the Israel Council on Foreign Relations on February 21, 2008. The session at which Dr. Cioroianu spoke was sponsored by Bank Leumi.*

I am delighted to be here with you today to address the Israel Council on Foreign Relations, on this, my first visit to the State of Israel in the capacity as minister of foreign affairs of Romania. Over the last two days, I have had very productive meetings with high-ranking government and parliamentary officials. I have had the opportunity to witness, once again, the very special nature of the relationship between our two countries—one based on common values and shared cultural and historical ties.

A distinctive feature of the ties between our two countries is the presence in Israel of more than 400,000 people of Romanian origin. The Romanian community in Israel constitutes a remarkable cultural, linguistic, economic and human bridge between our two countries.

The year 2008 is very important for us and for our special relationship. We will shortly celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the birth of the State of Israel and, at the same time, we will commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of uninterrupted diplomatic relations between Romania and Israel.

Over those years, our bilateral relations have undergone numerous remarkable moments, even during the very harsh and gloomy times of Communism in my country. I would like to point out that Romania was the only state in the former Soviet bloc that continued to maintain diplomatic relations with Israel even after the 1967 war.

Furthermore, we have always actively supported the international peace initiative in the Middle East. The contribution made by Romania in laying the foundation for the historic visit of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Israel, in November 1977, is still fresh in our memory.

I would now like to turn to NATO and its involvement in this region, which is the focus of my presentation today. From the outset, I would like to stress that the basic

rationale of NATO's engagement with Israel is grounded in today's unpredictable security environment, a situation which I would dare to describe as "globalized insecurity." Building closer relationships between NATO and Israel is emerging as an increasingly strategic imperative, especially as the interplay between Middle Eastern and transatlantic security is becoming readily evident.

Never before have we been confronted with more rapid and complex international changes. Compared to the relative predictability of the Cold War period, we find ourselves today in a very volatile, fast-changing international environment. All nations and citizens face a multitude of common threats and risks that require a common response.

Globalization continues to link many regions, but it also poses a growing number of challenges. In certain societies, it actually fosters radicalism and terror—providing, at the same time, a means to inject these dangers into our own societies. All these different challenges must be met without compromising the huge benefits that globalization brings.

NATO has had a positive impact on security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Starting with the end of the Cold War, the alliance has been in a permanent process of transformation, in order to adapt itself efficiently to the new security framework.

NATO's comprehensive process of transformation is multifaceted and involves not only capacity building, but also the development of a wider network of security partnerships with like-minded states. This network stretches well beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.

The aim of NATO's partnerships is to make the transition from a geographical to a functional approach to security. The spread of new security threats in the strategically important neighboring areas highlights the value of dialogue and cooperation on specific security and defence reform issues between allies and partners.

A key element of this partnership policy is the Mediterranean Dialogue process. The Mediterranean area, together with the Black Sea region right up to the Baltic, form the immediate neighborhood of the alliance, whose security and stability is closely linked with Euro-Atlantic security.

We are pleased with the increased cooperation between NATO and the Mediterranean Dialogue countries. Romania, a southern flank ally, is interested in consolidating the Mediterranean Dialogue as a framework of dialogue and

cooperation aimed at strengthening stability and security in the Mediterranean basin.

We attach great importance to the development of the political and practical dimensions of the dialogue in order to further build confidence and dispel misperceptions. Most of all, our enhanced cooperation should help us better understand one another and the values and goals of a NATO in transformation, and those of the societies from the Mediterranean region.

Israel is a valuable partner to Romania and NATO. Israel has advanced its cooperation with NATO to the level of implementing a highly appreciated Individual Cooperation Program. I am convinced that this tailored approach will only strengthen the cooperation between NATO and the State of Israel and provide it with an appropriate structure.

Allow me to make further reference to our ambitions for the next NATO Summit and its opportunities. The twentieth NATO Summit, hosted in Bucharest from April 2–4, 2008, will be the biggest event ever organized in Romania. Given the number of participants and the format of the meetings, the event is the biggest summit in the alliance's history. During the summit, we expect to host about 6,500 delegates from NATO member states, partner countries and contributors to the NATO operation in Afghanistan, as well as representatives from other international organizations, academics and journalists, and participants in public diplomacy events.

Just four years ago, Romania became a member of the alliance. The tremendous efforts we made in order to fulfil the membership criteria are still fresh in our memory. NATO's "open-door" policy has proved to be a significant catalyst for domestic transformation and modernization in Romania and also in the other countries that joined the alliance after the end of the Cold War.

This is the case with the current candidates as well. Bucharest strongly supports a decision in favor of the inclusion of all three candidate countries from the Western Balkans—Albania, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We hope that their individual performances and internal progress will provide the necessary basis for their inclusion. Their inclusion in the alliance will significantly add value to the security and strategic stability of south-east Europe. An upgrading of NATO's relations with Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, the countries that acceded to the Partnership for Peace at the previous summit, would be, in our opinion, another major contribution of the alliance to the goal of stabilizing the western Balkans.

At the same time, we support the ambitions of Georgia and Ukraine to establish a closer relationship with the alliance. Both countries have made great efforts, although much more remains to be done. However, giving them a strong incentive is extremely important. We know this very well from our own experience.

We are happy that the Bucharest Summit includes a high-level meeting of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). It is the oldest NATO partnership, and we believe that it still maintains its relevance. At the same time, it needs a new impetus. This could be brought about through a shift of this partnership's focus from EAPC as a dialogue structure to NATO's strategic Euro-Atlantic partnership based on flexible formats.

The Bucharest Summit should reaffirm the unity of purpose and action of NATO member states in Afghanistan. Given Romania's contribution to NATO's Afghanistan operation—the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)—from its inception, we hope that at the summit, the alliance will agree on a comprehensive political-military strategy on Afghanistan. This should also send a strong signal from the rest of the international community regarding the growing need for solidarity regarding action in Afghanistan.

Romania is a strong supporter of the development of a NATO niche capability in the realm of energy security. We hope that at the Bucharest Summit, steps will be taken in this direction. We also approach the issue of energy security in tandem with Romania's demarches in favor of anchoring the wider Black Sea region to NATO and the EU. This region has increased relevance for European and Euro-Atlantic security and stability.

Taking into consideration the new threats and challenges to Euro-Atlantic security, we hope that at the Bucharest Summit, a decision will be taken in favor of developing a NATO missile defense capability, complementary to, and integrated with, the one developed by the US. This is, at the same time, a matter of adequately addressing current security challenges and a matter of solidarity among the members of the alliance.

The outcome of the Bucharest NATO Summit will depend upon the decisions adopted by heads of state and government. It is our hope that "Bucharest" becomes synonymous with important decisions contributing to the modernization of NATO, and to increasing the ability of the alliance to face current threats and challenges.

I know there is curiosity about the stance of Romania regarding the Kosovo situation. As you know, Romania has chosen not to recognize the Kosovar

unilateral declaration of independence. This has nothing to do with any purported pro-Serbian sympathy or anti-Albanian antipathy, but rather with the preservation of international law, as we understand it. Had the declaration of Kosovar independence been a bilateral one, it would have been another story.

We believe in the individual rights of all minorities and we do our utmost to uphold them, but collective rights are another thing altogether. We have national and ethnic minorities in Romania, including Hungarians, Slovaks and Bulgarians, and we have good, even excellent, relations with Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria. Happily, we do not have Hungarian radicals in Romania, nor are there Romanian radicals in Hungary. But we believe that in encouraging the unilateral creation of a new state, a dangerous precedent is being set, one that could send the wrong message to many countries which suffer from the potential of local insurgencies and/or of irredentism.

It is, of course, the national prerogative of every country to recognize or not to recognize new states, and Romania has exercised this right. Certainly, the lack of a consensus on this issue should give us all pause.

With respect to Iran, which poses an especially ominous threat to Israel, let us be clear. Iran's long-range capabilities are probably not directed at Israel alone. They may also be designed to reach Europe and for that reason Iran is a potential menace to us all. Therefore, we must keep an eye on Iran and prevail upon the Iranians to keep their promises. We shall have to take appropriate action in the event that they fail to do so. Economic sanctions are one possibility. We do not know yet whether that will be the most effective course of action, but whatever we do, we must act resolutely to ensure that this threat is contained.



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