

Report: Canada-Israel Strategic Dialogue

Pathways to Resetting the Bilateral Relationship

A Report on Strategic Renewal, Defence Cooperation, Economic Security, Democratic Resilience and the Future of Canada-Israel Relations



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Foreword

The inaugural Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue was convened at a moment of unusual geopolitical consequence. Canada and Israel are geographically distant countries, shaped by different histories, threat environments, political cultures, and regional realities. Yet both countries now confront a world in which the assumptions of the post-Cold War era are giving way to a more dangerous, more competitive, and more fragmented international order.

For Canada, the strategic environment has changed faster than the national policy culture has adapted. For several decades, Canada benefited from favourable geography, proximity to the United States, a relatively stable international order, and the ability to participate selectively in global affairs. Many of the foundational assumptions of Canadian foreign and defence policy rested on the idea that threats were distant, that economic interdependence would moderate state behaviour, that continental security could be treated as largely assured, and that Canada could preserve influence through diplomatic reputation rather than hard capability.

Those assumptions are now under strain.

For Israel, the stakes are more immediate. Israel has lived with perpetual insecurity since its founding. It has developed a national security culture rooted in resilience, innovation, civil preparedness, intelligence integration, and rapid adaptation. Its threat environment is severe, but its institutional response has produced lessons that are increasingly relevant to other democracies facing new forms of coercion, technological disruption, disinformation, and hybrid conflict.

The Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue was created to examine these realities in a serious, non-partisan, and analytically disciplined setting. It was not intended to substitute for official diplomacy, nor was it designed to advocate a single political position. Rather, it sought to create a space where senior leaders could assess the bilateral relationship in strategic terms.

The dialogue was held under the Chatham House Rule to encourage candour. This was essential. The Canada–Israel relationship is increasingly politically sensitive, and the broader public discourse surrounding Israel, the Middle East, antisemitism, humanitarian concerns, defence cooperation, and democratic values has become deeply polarized.

Yet precisely because the subject is difficult, dialogue is necessary.

The opening proposition of the initiative was that Canada and Israel require more, not fewer, channels of communication. These channels cannot be limited to official diplomatic mechanisms. They must also include think tanks, educational organizations, former officials, industry leaders, military professionals, academics, civil society representatives, and informed citizens capable of sustaining relationships during periods of political strain.

The Ottawa roundtable was the first step in what is intended to become a broader strategic process. The next stage will be the Second Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue Roundtable in Toronto on October 28, 2026. Additional roundtables are anticipated in the lead-up to 2027 to further deepen dialogue, refine policy recommendations, and broaden stakeholder engagement. That roundtable should build on Ottawa’s diagnostic work and begin the process of developing practical policy options. The longer-term objective is to convene a Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue Summit in 2027, bringing together senior leaders from government, defence, industry, academia, civil society, and the policy community.

This Report is intended to serve as the strategic foundation for that process.

Executive Summary

On June 10, 2026, the Policy Insights Forum and Exigent Foundation convened the inaugural Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue at the Rideau Club in Ottawa. The event brought together approximately fifty-five senior participants from government, diplomacy, defence, intelligence, academia, industry, civil society, and the public policy community for a closed-door discussion on the future of the Canada–Israel relationship.

The dialogue examined the bilateral relationship in the context of a rapidly deteriorating global security environment. Participants considered the implications of great-power competition, regional conflict, defence modernization, economic security, technological sovereignty, foreign interference, democratic resilience, public diplomacy, and strategic communications.

The central conclusion was that the Canada–Israel relationship has entered a period of strategic drift. The relationship is not broken, but it is underperforming. Political disagreement, domestic polarization, public controversy, and diplomatic caution have narrowed the space for serious engagement. At the same time, the underlying strategic rationale for cooperation remains substantial.

The event revealed a clear distinction between political disagreement and strategic interest. Participants did not suggest that Canada and Israel will or should agree on every issue. Nor did they argue that Canada should abandon its positions on the Middle East. Rather, they emphasized that serious foreign policy requires the capacity to manage disagreement while preserving cooperation in areas of shared interest.

Several such areas were identified.

First, defence and security cooperation remains a significant opportunity. Israel’s experience in integrated air and missile defence, counter-drone operations, intelligence fusion, reserve force mobilization, urban warfare, civil preparedness, emergency response, and rapid defence innovation offers lessons relevant to Canadian defence planning.



Image 1: Goran Samuel Pesic opens the Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue Roundtable in Ottawa on June 10, 2026.

“The risk of doing nothing may be greater than the risk of engagement.”

Second, economic security and technology should become central pillars of the bilateral relationship. Israel’s innovation ecosystem has produced world-class capabilities in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, dual-use technologies, medical innovation, defence technology, secure communications, and advanced research commercialization. Canada’s own challenges in productivity, defence procurement, research security, critical infrastructure protection, and technological sovereignty make this area increasingly important.

Third, democratic resilience should be treated as a strategic issue. Canada and Israel both confront threats related to disinformation, polarization, foreign interference, institutional distrust, ideological extremism, and the weaponization of identity. These threats are not peripheral to national security; they increasingly shape the operating environment for democratic governments.

Fourth, public diplomacy requires sustained investment. Participants repeatedly observed that the Canadian public conversation about Israel and the Middle East is often fragmented, emotional, and shaped by social media, not strategic literacy. More effective public diplomacy should include educational exchanges, study missions, youth leadership programs, academic partnerships, civil society engagement, and serious policy dialogue.

Fifth, Canada requires a more disciplined national interest framework. Several participants expressed concern that Canadian foreign policy is too often shaped by domestic political pressures, diaspora dynamics, symbolic positioning, or short-term communications priorities. A serious middle power must be able to define its interests, align its instruments, and communicate consistently.

The inaugural dialogue also demonstrated the importance of civil society and Track 1.5 engagement. Formal diplomacy remains essential, but official channels are often constrained. Think tanks and civil society institutions can provide a constructive space for candid discussion, relationship-building, and policy development.

The next stage of the initiative should move from diagnosis to design. The Toronto roundtable on October 28, 2026, should focus on practical workstreams: defence innovation, economic security, democratic resilience, public diplomacy, and a future bilateral cooperation framework. Additional roundtables are expected to follow, providing opportunities to further develop these themes, refine policy recommendations, and expand stakeholder participation. The 2027 Summit should consolidate these workstreams into a durable Canada–Israel Strategic Cooperation Agenda. This report argues that Canada’s relationship with Israel should not be allowed to drift passively. It should be actively managed, strategically assessed, and institutionally renewed.

Canada and Israel will continue to disagree on some issues. That is normal. Mature democratic partners do not require uniformity. They require strategic seriousness, open communication channels, mutual respect, and the capacity to cooperate when interests align.

The Ottawa dialogue established the foundation. The Toronto roundtable should develop the framework. The 2027 Summit should institutionalize the process.

Key Judgements

1. The Canada–Israel relationship is strained but not irreparable.

The relationship has deteriorated in tone, political confidence, and practical cooperation. However, the underlying foundations of shared democratic values, people-to-people ties, trade, innovation, security interests, and institutional familiarity remain significant.

2. Canada risks allowing political controversy to obscure strategic interest.

The intensity of domestic debate surrounding Israel has made serious policy discussion more difficult. However, Canada's national interests require a sober assessment of Israel's capabilities, regional role, and relevance to Canadian security and economic priorities.

3. Israel offers important defence lessons for Canada.

Israel's experience in integrated air and missile defence, counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), rapid innovation, reserve mobilization, civil preparedness, intelligence fusion, and national resilience deserves systematic Canadian study.

4. Economic security should become a central pillar of renewed engagement.

Technology, supply chains, critical infrastructure, cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence (AI), dual-use innovation, and research security are now core elements of national power. Canada and Israel have complementary interests in this domain.

5. Democratic resilience is no longer a domestic-only issue.

Foreign interference, disinformation, antisemitism, extremism, polarization, and institutional distrust are strategic vulnerabilities. Canada and Israel should explore ways to strengthen democratic cohesion and civic resilience.

6. Public diplomacy must be rebuilt for a new information environment.

Traditional diplomatic communication is insufficient in an era of algorithmic amplification, social media fragmentation, and youth-driven narrative formation. Study missions, educational programming, and informed civil society engagement are essential.

7. Track 1.5 dialogue can preserve strategic relationships during political strain.

The Ottawa roundtable demonstrated that think tanks, foundations, former officials, industry leaders, academics, and civil society actors can play a constructive role when official channels are limited or politically constrained.

8. The Toronto roundtable on October 28, 2026, and following roundtables should move from diagnosis to policy development.

Toronto should produce a structured set of workstreams and preliminary recommendations for the 2027 Summit.

9. The 2027 Summit should produce a Canada–Israel Strategic Cooperation Framework.

The summit should not merely restate broad aspirations. It should produce a practical agenda for defence, economic security, technology, democratic resilience, public diplomacy, and institutional exchange.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Why the Canada-Israel Strategic Dialogue Matters

The Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue matters because it addresses a broader problem in Canadian foreign policy: the difficulty of sustaining strategic relationships in an era of domestic polarization.

Israel is one of the most politically contested subjects in contemporary international affairs. In Canada, debates surrounding Israel, the Palestinians, Gaza, Iran, antisemitism, human rights, arms exports, protests, campus politics, and international law often generate intense public disagreement. The result is that policy discussion can become reactive, emotional, and symbolic.

However, serious foreign policy cannot be conducted solely through symbolic politics.

Canada must be able to distinguish between four separate but related questions:

1. What are Canada's values?
2. What are Canada's interests?
3. What are Canada's capabilities?
4. What relationships are necessary to advance those values, interests, and capabilities?

The Canada–Israel relationship sits at the intersection of these questions.

Canada's values include democracy, human rights, pluralism, the rule of law, and international stability.

Its interests include security, economic prosperity, technological competitiveness, defence modernization, continental security, and a stable international order.

Its capabilities are constrained by defence capacity, bureaucratic processes, fiscal pressures, and strategic culture.

Its relationships depend on both formal alliances and informal networks.

Israel matters because it is relevant to each of these dimensions. It is a democratic state in a hostile region. It is a technological and defence innovation power. It is a key actor in the Middle East. It is a partner of Canada's principal ally, the United States. It is central to the identity and security concerns of Canada's Jewish community. It is also a country whose policies generate disagreement and criticism.

A mature foreign policy must be able to hold these realities together.

The Ottawa dialogue was therefore not merely about Israel. It was about Canada's ability to think strategically and critically.

The event's structure reflected this ambition. The program included opening remarks, strategic context-setting, Canadian geopolitical perspectives, Israeli perspectives, ambassadorial remarks, a discussion on resetting the bilateral relationship, and a moderated roundtable focused on the circumstances under which Canada and Israel may need to align capabilities to address shared security, economic, and geopolitical challenges.

The question was carefully framed. It did not assume automatic alignment, instead asking under what strategic circumstances alignment may become necessary. This distinction matters. It places the discussion in the realm of national interest, not sentiment.

The dialogue was also designed as part of a series. Ottawa was the beginning of a broader process intended to include additional dialogues and ultimately a 2027 summit. The next roundtable in Toronto on October 28, 2026, should therefore be understood as a crucial bridge between initial analysis and policy development.

The success of this initiative will depend on whether it can remain serious, non-partisan, and strategically disciplined. It should avoid becoming a platform for slogans. It should avoid being captured by any single political argument. It should remain focused on long-term interests, institutional relationships, and practical cooperation.

That is what will give the process value.

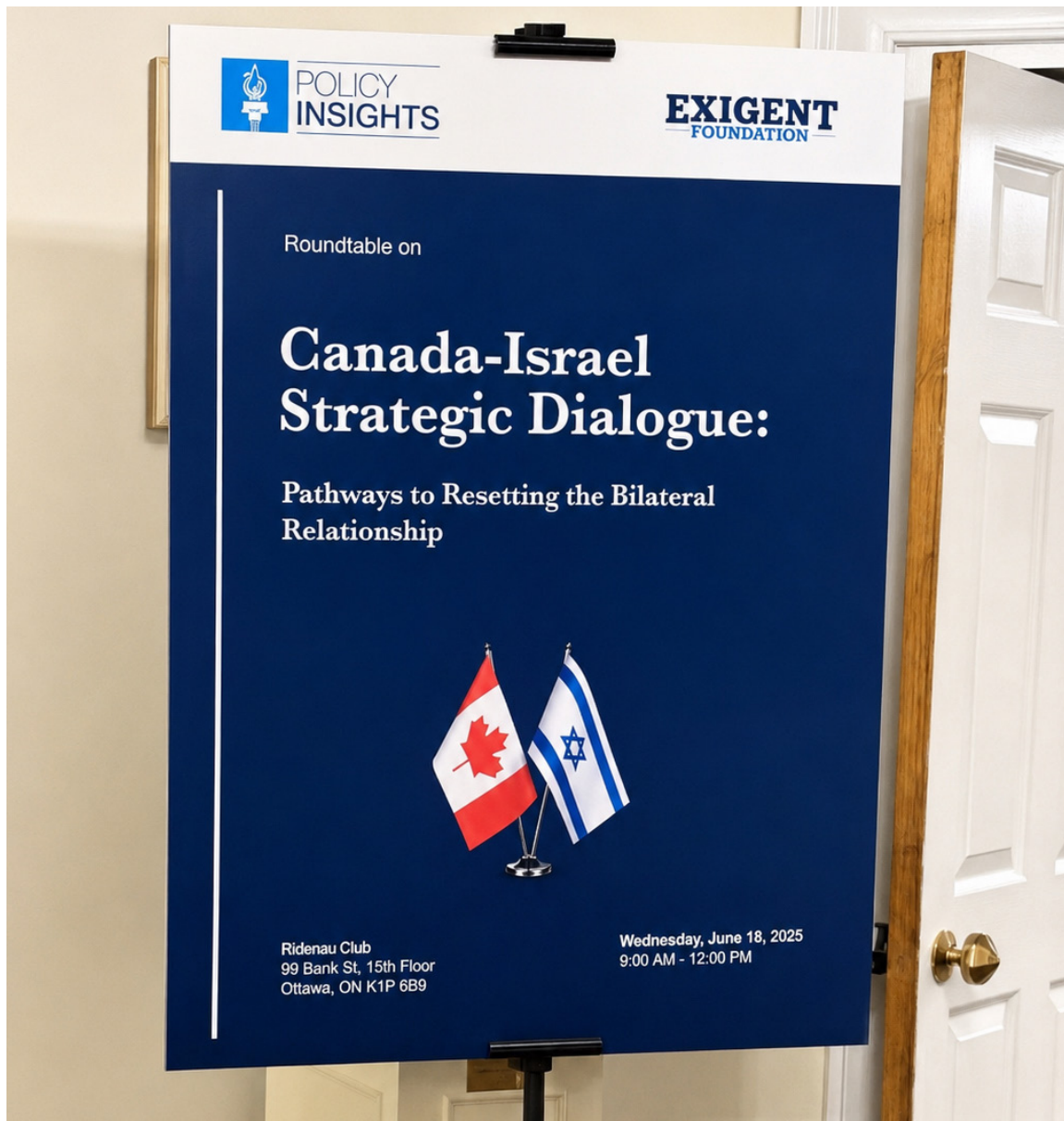


Image 2: The Rideau Club in Ottawa, Canada, was the venue for the roundtable event.

Chapter 2

The Global Strategic Environment and the Return of Hard Power

The inaugural dialogue took place during a period of systemic global change. Participants repeatedly returned to one core proposition: the world is becoming more dangerous, and Canada must adjust accordingly.

The post-Cold War order was built on several assumptions: United States dominance, expanding globalization, relative economic openness, technological optimism, and the belief that major-power war was unlikely. These assumptions shaped Canadian policy profoundly. Canada developed soft power; it reduced defence spending, relied heavily on the United States for continental security, and pursued trade liberalization, often defining its international role in terms of diplomacy, development, peacekeeping mythology, and values-based engagement.

The emerging order is different.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has demonstrated that large-scale conventional war remains possible in Europe. China's rise has transformed the global economic and technological landscape. Iran and its regional proxies have reshaped the security environment of the Middle East. The Indo-Pacific has become a theatre of strategic competition. Cyber operations have created persistent vulnerabilities. Disinformation campaigns have weakened democratic cohesion. Economic coercion has turned trade dependencies into strategic liabilities.

In this environment, the boundary between foreign and domestic policy is collapsing. A cyber-attack on a hospital, a foreign interference operation targeting a diaspora community, a disinformation campaign spreading through social media, a supply-chain disruption affecting defence production, or a foreign acquisition of sensitive technology can all become national security issues.

This is the environment in which the Canada–Israel relationship must be reassessed.

Israel has long operated under conditions that many Western states are only beginning to understand: constant threat, societal mobilization, technological urgency, intelligence-driven decision-making, and the need to integrate military, civilian, economic, and diplomatic instruments. Canada does not face Israel's threat environment, and the two countries are not directly comparable. However, the broader lesson is relevant: national security is no longer confined to armed forces and foreign ministries.

The dialogue identified five structural trends that should inform future Canada–Israel engagement.

1. The Weaponization of Interdependence

Globalization created efficiencies, but it also created dependencies. Critical minerals, semiconductors, energy systems, telecommunications networks, pharmaceuticals, defence components, and digital infrastructure are now strategic assets. States that control chokepoints can exert coercive leverage.

For Canada, this means economic security must become a central part of foreign policy. Israel's experience in building resilient technology ecosystems, securing critical infrastructure, and integrating innovation into national security planning may offer useful lessons.

2. The Acceleration of Defence Innovation

Modern conflict is evolving rapidly. Drones, loitering munitions, electronic warfare, cyber operations, AI-enabled targeting, space-based surveillance, precision fires, and low-cost autonomous systems are altering battlefield dynamics. Traditional procurement systems struggle to keep pace.

Israel's defence ecosystem is designed around urgency. Operational needs are rapidly translated into technological requirements. Industry, military, intelligence, and research institutions interact closely. Canada's defence procurement culture is far slower. This gap is strategically significant.

3. The Growth of Cognitive and Information Warfare

Adversaries increasingly target perception, trust, identity, and social cohesion. Information operations can shape public opinion, influence policy discussions, and weaken democratic institutions. The dialogue's transcript materials identify cognitive warfare, social media, public diplomacy, and strategic narrative as recurring themes.

Canada and Israel both face these challenges, though in different forms. The ability to communicate strategically is no longer optional.

4. The Return of Civil Preparedness

Western governments are rediscovering the importance of civil defence, emergency preparedness, and societal resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, cyber incidents, and war in Ukraine all demonstrated the fragility of public systems.

Israel's experience in civil preparedness, emergency response, sheltering, crisis communications, and societal mobilization should be studied carefully. Canada's geography is different, but its vulnerabilities are real.

5. The Erosion of Strategic Patience

Democratic governments increasingly struggle to sustain long-term policy under conditions of media pressure, polarization, and electoral volatility. This affects foreign policy coherence. Several participants noted that Canada must recover the ability to define what it wants to be in the world and speak with greater consistency.

This is not merely a communications problem. It is a strategic governance problem.

Chapter 3

The Evolution and Strain of Canada-Israel Relations

Canada and Israel have a long relationship rooted in diplomacy, immigration, trade, shared democratic traditions, educational ties, and community connections. Canada's historical role in the creation of Israel, including the diplomatic legacy associated with former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, remains part of the relationship's historical memory.

For many years, Canada–Israel relations were supported by a broad political consensus. Differences existed, but the relationship was generally understood as one of enduring value. Cooperation expanded in trade, science, innovation, education, culture, and security.

In recent years, however, the relationship has become more strained. This forum identified several drivers of this strain.

Domestic Polarization

The Israel–Palestinian conflict has become a major issue in Canadian domestic discourse. It affects political parties, campuses, labour organizations, advocacy groups, communities, media, and municipal politics. As a result, Canadian governments may be tempted to approach the file primarily through domestic political management.

This tendency is not unique to Canada. Many democracies struggle to separate foreign policy from domestic pressures. However, Canada's challenge is intensified by its diverse population, strong diaspora communities, and increasingly polarized information environment.

Diplomatic Caution

As the public debate becomes more contentious, institutions may become cautious. Government departments, universities, companies, and civil society organizations may avoid engagement for fear of reputational risk. This caution can reduce practical cooperation even in areas unrelated to the core political dispute.

The result is a quiet narrowing of the relationship.

Generational Change

Younger Canadians often encounter Israel through social media, campus activism, or highly simplified narratives. Many lack the historical memory of Israel's founding, previous wars, peace processes, terrorism, regional threats, or the long arc of Canadian diplomatic involvement. This does not mean younger Canadians are incapable of nuance. It means public diplomacy must adapt to the way information is now received.

Information Fragmentation

The modern information environment rewards intensity, not complexity. Events are now compressed into images, slogans, and emotionally charged narratives. This is especially true for conflicts involving civilian suffering, identity, religion, and historical grievance.

Participants expressed concern that complex realities are being reduced to moral binaries. This weakens the possibility of serious policy discussion.

Policy Incoherence

Several participants suggested that Canadian foreign policy sometimes appears reactive rather than strategic. Statements may be issued in response to immediate events without a clear connection to longer-term objectives.

The result can be confusion among allies, domestic communities, and Canadian officials themselves.

The challenge is not simply to improve messaging. It is to clarify policy.

The central problem is strategic drift, the cumulative effect of these pressures. Canada and Israel are not necessarily moving toward a formal rupture, but the relationship is losing structure, confidence, and ambition. Strategic drift is dangerous because it can occur without a deliberate decision. A relationship can decline through neglect, caution, avoidance, and the absence of sustained engagement.

The Ottawa dialogue was designed to interrupt that drift.



Image 3: Vice-Admiral (Ret'd) Mark Norman and Israeli Ambassador Iddo Moed discuss Canada-Israeli Relations.

Chapter 4

Canada's National Interest Analysis

A serious assessment of Canada–Israel relations must begin with Canada's national interest. This requires moving beyond slogans and asking what Canada needs in the international environment now emerging.

Canada's national interest can be organized around six broad categories: security, prosperity, sovereignty, technological competitiveness, democratic resilience, and international influence.

Security

Canada's security environment is changing. This country faces threats from cyber operations, foreign interference, espionage, terrorism, transnational extremism, Arctic vulnerability, supply-chain disruption, and military pressure on allies. Canada is also under increasing pressure to contribute more credibly to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), continental defence, and Indo-Pacific stability.

Israel is relevant to Canadian security because it has significant experience in several areas Canada must strengthen: intelligence integration, cyber defence, counterterrorism, critical infrastructure protection, emergency response, and technological adaptation under pressure.

This does not mean Canada should copy Israeli models outright. Canada's legal system, geography, political culture, and threat environment differ. However, Canada can study Israeli practices, adapt relevant lessons, and build institutional channels for exchange.

Prosperity

Canada's prosperity increasingly depends on innovation, productivity, secure supply chains, and access to advanced technologies. Israel is a global innovation hub proficient in cybersecurity, AI, defence technology, medical technology, agritech, water technology, and venture-backed commercialization.

Canada's innovation challenge is not a lack of talent. It is often the difficulty of scaling companies, commercializing research, linking innovation to procurement, and sustaining strategic industrial policy. Israel's ecosystem provides a useful comparative model in this domain.

Sovereignty

Canadian sovereignty is often discussed in relation to the Arctic, natural resources, border management, and continental defence. In the twenty-first century, sovereignty also includes data, infrastructure, technological standards, research security, and the ability to make independent decisions free from coercion.

Israel's focus on self-reliance, domestic capability, and rapid innovation offers lessons for Canada's sovereignty debate. Canada cannot be self-sufficient in all areas, but it must identify where dependency creates unacceptable vulnerability, both now and for future possibilities.

Technological Competitiveness

Technology is now central to state power. AI, quantum computing, cyber capabilities, autonomous systems, biotechnology, space systems, and advanced manufacturing will shape future security and prosperity. Canada and Israel have complementary strengths. Canada has world-class research institutions, talent, resources, and access to North American markets. Israel has a high-velocity innovation ecosystem, defence-driven commercialization, venture networks, and a culture of rapid experimentation.

A renewed bilateral agenda should prioritize technology partnerships that support both commercial and security objectives.

Democratic Resilience

Canada's domestic cohesion is a national interest. Foreign interference, disinformation, antisemitism, extremism, and polarization weaken Canada's ability to act internationally. Israel's experience with persistent information warfare, social division, and security stress provides comparative lessons, though again not all are transferable. Canada should approach democratic resilience as a strategic capability.

International Influence

Canada's influence depends on credibility. Credibility depends on coherence, capability, and consistency. If Canada wishes to be taken seriously as a middle power, it must be able to sustain mature relationships with difficult but important partners.

Israel is a test case. If Canada can manage disagreement with Israel while preserving strategic cooperation, it demonstrates seriousness. If it cannot, it risks reinforcing perceptions that Canadian foreign policy is reactive, limited, and domestically constrained.

National Interest Conclusion

Canada's national interest supports renewed strategic engagement with Israel. This engagement should not be unconditional or uncritical. It should be mature, structured, and interest-based.

The goal should be neither symbolic embrace nor symbolic distance. It should be strategic management.

Chapter 5

Shared Defence Insights from Israeli Experiences for Canada

Shared defence insights drawn from Israeli operational experiences emerged as one of the most significant themes of the Ottawa Dialogue. Participants highlighted that Israel's experience in addressing evolving security challenges offers valuable perspectives for Canada's ongoing defence modernization efforts, particularly in the areas of readiness, innovation, resilience, and the integration of emerging technologies.

Canada should study these insights systematically.

Insight 1: Defence Innovation Must Move at Operational Speed

Israel's defence innovation system is shaped by urgency. The gap between battlefield need and technological response is often compressed. Operators, engineers, intelligence professionals, procurement officials, and industry partners interact closely.

Canada's system is different. Canadian defence procurement is often slow, risk-averse, legalistic, and process-heavy. This creates capability gaps. In an era of rapid technological change, slow procurement becomes a strategic vulnerability.

Canada should examine how to create faster pathways for experimentation, prototyping, fielding, and iterative improvement. This does not mean abandoning accountability. It means recognizing that excessive delay carries its own risk.

Insight 2: Integrated Air and Missile Defence is Rapidly Becoming Essential

Israel's layered air and missile defence experience is highly relevant to modern conflict. Drone attacks, cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, rockets, and loitering munitions are now common features of war. Ukraine has demonstrated similar lessons.

Canada has historically underinvested in air defence. Its deployed forces, Arctic infrastructure, critical assets, and continental defence architecture may face growing vulnerabilities as threat technologies proliferate. Canada should explore how the conflicts in Israel and Ukraine can inform Canadian and allied air defence planning, particularly in relation to layered defence, sensor integration, command-and-control, and protection of critical infrastructure.

Insight 3: Counter-UAS Capability is No Longer Optional

Drones have transformed conflict. They are cheap, adaptable, and increasingly lethal. They can conduct surveillance, deliver munitions, overwhelm defences, and impose psychological pressure. Both state and non-state actors use them.

Israel has extensive experience confronting drone and rocket threats. Canada should treat counter-UAS capability as a priority for the Canadian Armed Forces, domestic security agencies, critical infrastructure operators, and potentially Arctic installations.

Future Canada–Israel defence dialogue should include counter-UAS doctrine, procurement, training, and industrial collaboration.

Insight 4: Intelligence Fusion Determines Operational Tempo

Modern conflict rewards swift understanding. Intelligence must be collected, analyzed, fused, disseminated, and acted upon quickly. Israel's national security system places significant emphasis on intelligence integration.

Canada has strong intelligence institutions, but rapid coordination across departments, agencies, military commands, law enforcement, and industry remains a persistent challenge. Foreign interference, cyber threats, and hybrid warfare require better fusion.

Canada should study models of integrated threat assessment, operational intelligence sharing, and rapid decision support.

Insight 5: Reserve Forces can Strengthen National Resilience

Israel's reserve system is central to its defence model. Canada's reserves play an important role but are often underutilized in national strategy. A renewed Canadian defence posture should consider how reserve forces can contribute to Arctic security, cyber defence, domestic emergency response, critical infrastructure protection, and surge capacity.

The insight is not that Canada should copy Israel's reserve model, the insight is that reserve forces can serve as a bridge between military capability and society.

Insight 6: Civil Defence is a Strategic Capability

Israel's experience demonstrates that civilian preparedness is not separate from national security. Public alert systems, shelters, emergency response, community readiness, medical surge capacity, and crisis communications all contribute to resilience.

Canada's civil preparedness remains uneven. Natural disasters, pandemics, cyber-attacks, and infrastructure disruptions reveal gaps in coordination and public readiness. Canada should consider a national resilience review that examines civil preparedness in light of allied and Israeli experience.

Insight 7: Doctrine Must Adapt Continuously

A recurring theme in the dialogue was the tension between traditional doctrine and emerging lessons. Modern conflict is changing too quickly for static doctrine. Militaries must learn in real time.

Canada should create more structured mechanisms for absorbing insights from Israel, Ukraine, NATO allies, and Indo-Pacific partners. These insights should inform doctrine, procurement, training, professional military education, and defence industrial policy.

Defence Conclusion

Israel's defence insights are not universally transferable. Canada's threat environment is different. However, the relevance of Israeli experience is increasing. Canada should move from informal observation to systematic learning.

The Toronto roundtable should include a dedicated defence insights session focused on integrated air defence, counter-UAS, intelligence fusion, reserve mobilization, civil defence, and defence innovation.

Chapter 6

Economy Security, Technology, and Industrial Cooperation

Economic security emerged as a central theme because the distinction between economics and national security is disappearing.

For decades, economic policy was often treated separately from defence and foreign policy. Trade was trade. Investment was investment. Research was research. Procurement was procurement. That separation is no longer sustainable. Technology, capital, data, intellectual property, supply chains, and industrial capacity are now instruments of national power.

Canada's Economic Security Challenge

Canada faces several economic security challenges.

Productivity growth remains a concern. Defence industrial capacity is limited. Procurement cycles are slow. Commercialization of research is uneven. Critical minerals require strategic development. Cyber vulnerabilities affect public and private infrastructure. Foreign investment screening must balance openness with security. Research institutions face risks related to intellectual property theft and foreign interference.

These challenges require a more integrated approach.

Israel's Relevance

Israel has built a globally recognized innovation ecosystem. Its strengths include cybersecurity, AI, defence technology, medical technology, agritech, water technology, and venture-backed commercialization. Its military and intelligence sectors have also helped generate technical talent and entrepreneurial networks.

Canada should not romanticize the Israeli model. Israel has unique conditions: compulsory service, a smaller population, a high-threat environment, dense networks, and a different risk culture. Still, several features are relevant:

- Close links between security needs and innovation;
- Rapid experimentation;
- Strong venture capital networks;
- Global commercialization orientation;
- High tolerance for risk; and
- Integration of technical talent into national priorities.

Areas for Cooperation

A renewed Canada–Israel economic security agenda could focus on seven areas.

1. Cybersecurity: Critical infrastructure, hospitals, universities, municipalities, energy systems, ports, telecom networks, and financial institutions face increasing cyber threats. Canada and Israel could explore public-private cyber resilience partnerships, joint exercises, and information-sharing frameworks.

2. Artificial Intelligence: AI will shape defence, intelligence, logistics, health, finance, and public administration. Canada has significant AI research capacity. Israel has strong commercialization and security applications. Cooperation should focus on trusted AI, defence AI, cybersecurity AI, and governance standards.

3. Defence Industrial Cooperation: Canada's defence industrial base requires modernization. Israeli firms possess capabilities in sensors, electronic warfare, training systems, unmanned systems, air defence, communications, and simulation. Cooperation should be evaluated according to Canadian needs, allied interoperability, and industrial benefit.

4. Research Security: Universities and research institutions are vulnerable to foreign interference and technology transfer risks. Canada and Israel could share best practices in protecting sensitive research while preserving academic openness.

5. Critical Infrastructure Protection: Energy systems, ports, water infrastructure, transportation networks, and digital systems require protection. Israel's experience in infrastructure security may be relevant to Canadian federal, provincial, municipal, and private-sector actors.

6. Emergency Technologies: Technologies supporting emergency management, public alerts, medical surge, disaster response, and continuity of government should be explored.

7. Arctic and Remote Operations: Canada's Arctic creates unique challenges in surveillance, communications, logistics, infrastructure protection, and emergency response. Some Israeli technologies may be adaptable to remote and harsh environments, though careful testing would be required.

Industrial Policy Implications

Canada should view industrial cooperation not only as trade promotion but as strategic capability development. The goal should be to strengthen Canada's own resilience, productivity, and security.

This requires coordination among federal departments, provincial governments, industry, universities, venture capital, and allied partners. The Canada–Israel dialogue could provide a platform for identifying specific industrial opportunities.

Economic Security Conclusion

Economic security should be one of the central pillars of the Toronto roundtable. The discussion should move beyond general admiration for innovation and toward specific areas where cooperation could produce measurable outcomes.

Chapter 7

Democratic Resilience, Foreign Interference and Social Cohesion

Democratic resilience was one of the most important underlying themes of the dialogue. The challenge facing democratic societies is not only external aggression, it is also internal fragmentation. Adversaries exploit social divisions, identity conflicts, institutional distrust, economic anxiety, and information disorder.

Canada and Israel both face these pressures, though in distinct ways.

The Strategic Meaning of Resilience

Resilience is often misunderstood as simply the ability to recover after a crisis. In national security terms, resilience is broader. It includes preparedness, deterrence, continuity, adaptability, public trust, institutional legitimacy, social cohesion, and the capacity to absorb shocks without political breakdown.

A resilient society can withstand pressure without losing its strategic direction.

Foreign Interference

Canada has become increasingly aware of foreign interference risks. These include political influence operations, intimidation of diaspora communities, cyber activities, research theft, covert funding, and manipulation of public debate.

Israel has long confronted hostile influence operations, terrorism-linked networks, and coordinated campaigns targeting legitimacy. Canadian and Israeli experiences differ, but the underlying problem is shared: open societies can be exploited by hostile actors.

A future dialogue should examine how democracies can protect openness without undermining civil liberties.

Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

The dialogue identified antisemitism as both a community security concern and a democratic resilience issue. Antisemitism is not merely prejudice against one community; it is often an indicator of broader institutional and social vulnerability. It thrives in environments of conspiracy thinking, extremism, ideological radicalization, and institutional hesitation.

Addressing antisemitism requires law enforcement, education, political leadership, community engagement, and public clarity. It also requires avoiding the normalization of intimidation in public spaces and institutions.

Campus Polarization and Youth Engagement

Participants expressed concern about younger Canadians and the information environments shaping their views. Universities and schools have become key sites of debate over Israel, Palestine, human rights, colonialism, identity, and protest.

The response should not be censorship or avoidance. It should be serious education, exposure to complexity, instruction on information discernment, factual debate, and opportunities for direct engagement.

Study missions, academic exchanges, and youth leadership programs may be among the most effective tools available.

Public Trust

Democratic resilience depends on public trust. Citizens must believe institutions are competent, lawful, fair, and honest. Disinformation thrives where trust is weak.

Canada must strengthen trust through transparency, competence, and leadership consistency. Strategic communications cannot compensate for policy incoherence.

Democratic Resilience Conclusion

Canada and Israel should develop a dedicated dialogue on democratic resilience, including foreign interference, antisemitism, disinformation, civic education, public trust, and institutional preparedness.

This should be a central theme in Toronto and a major workstream for the 2027 Summit.

Chapter 8

Strategic Communications, Public Diplomacy and Narrative Competition

Modern foreign policy is shaped by narrative competition. States and non-state actors compete not only over territory and resources, but over legitimacy, perception, identity, and moral framing.

The Canada–Israel relationship is deeply affected by this reality.

The Information Environment

The public receives information through fragmented channels: social media, short videos, activist networks, influencers, partisan media, community organizations, and peer groups. Traditional diplomatic messaging often fails to reach these audiences. This is especially true for younger Canadians.

Complex conflicts are compressed into emotionally powerful narratives. Images often matter more than context. Speed often matters more than accuracy. Algorithms reward outrage.

Public Diplomacy Gap

Participants identified a gap in public diplomacy. Israel’s perspective, Canada’s strategic interests, the history of the bilateral relationship, and the complexity of Middle East security realities are often poorly understood.

This does not mean public diplomacy should become propaganda. Effective public diplomacy must be credible, fact-based, respectful, and open to complexity.

Direct Exposure Matters

One of the strongest arguments made during the dialogue concerned the value of direct exposure. People who visit Israel and the region often develop a more nuanced understanding of the security, political, social, and humanitarian realities involved.

The Exigent Foundation’s educational missions were identified as one model for firsthand learning. Such missions could be expanded to include journalists, students, policymakers, public servants, civil society leaders, and emerging political leaders.

Strategic Communications Principles

A renewed Canada–Israel public diplomacy strategy should follow several principles:

- Speak to shared democratic values;
- Avoid overly narrow community targeting;
- Engage younger audiences directly;
- Use credible messengers;
- Acknowledge complexity;
- Separate policy disagreement from delegitimization;
- Promote dialogue rather than slogans;
- Support educational depth;
- Respond quickly to misinformation; and
- Invest in long-term relationships.

Public Diplomacy Conclusion

Public diplomacy should not be treated as secondary to policy. It is part of the strategic environment. If Canada and Israel cannot communicate effectively with populaces, especially younger ones, the space for policy cooperation will continue to shrink.

Toronto should include a session on narrative competition and strategic communications.



Image 4: Larry Maher welcomes speaker Brigadier General (Ret'd) Amir Avivi of the Israeli Defence Forces.

Chapter 9

Participant Analysis and Emerging Dialogue Themes

The Ottawa dialogue's value was shaped by the seniority and diversity of its participants. The room included former national security leaders, senior military figures, diplomats, academics, industry representatives, civil society leaders, policy practitioners, and individuals with direct experience in Canada–Israel affairs.

This diversity produced several analytical benefits.

Former Government Officials

Former senior officials brought an understanding of how policy is actually made. They emphasized the importance of coherence, Cabinet discipline, departmental alignment, and clarity regarding national objectives.

One theme emerging from this group was concern that Canadian foreign policy has become too reactive. Participants questioned whether some decisions are consistently aligned with Canada's national interests, including domestically, economically, and from a defence perspective, or are influenced by short-term political considerations. Canada must decide what it wants to be in the world and align its instruments accordingly.

Former Military Leaders

Former military participants emphasized the practical realities of capability, readiness, doctrine, and operational learning. They focused on the need to study Israel not through sentiment but through lessons relevant to Canadian defence. They highlighted the importance of air defence, counter-UAS, reserve forces, intelligence fusion, and the speed of modern warfare.

Diplomats

Diplomatic participants emphasized communication, relationship management, and the importance of maintaining channels even during disagreement. They recognized the political complexity of the file but cautioned against allowing disagreement to become disengagement.

Industry Representatives

Industry participants brought attention to technology, procurement, innovation, and market opportunities. They emphasized that strategic cooperation should include the private sector, especially in defence technology, cybersecurity, AI, infrastructure protection, and dual-use innovation.

Academics and Policy Experts

Academic and policy participants contributed historical context and analytical framing. They helped situate the Canada–Israel relationship within broader debates about middle-power strategy, democratic resilience, public diplomacy, tactical communication, and international order.

Civil Society Leaders

Civil society participants emphasized education, social cohesion, societal communication implications, antisemitism, and public dialogue. They argued that the future of the relationship cannot be shaped only by governments. Communities, foundations, think tanks, universities, and civic organizations must be involved.

Major Themes

Several themes cut across participant categories.

Theme 1: The Need for Strategic Seriousness

Participants repeatedly called for a more serious Canadian approach to foreign policy, one rooted in national interest and long-term thinking.

Theme 2: The Importance of Relationships

The dialogue emphasized that relationships built before crises are often decisive during crises. Personal trust matters.

Theme 3: The Distinction Between Disagreement and Disengagement

Participants recognized that Canada and Israel may disagree on policy, but disagreement should not eliminate cooperation.

Theme 4: The Urgency of Defence Learning

Israel's recent and historical security experience provides lessons that Canada should examine systematically.

Theme 5: The Challenge of Public Narrative

Participants expressed concern that public discourse is often shaped by misinformation, polarization, and a lack of context.

Theme 6: The Role of Civil Society

The dialogue itself demonstrated that non-government actors can help sustain strategic relationships.

Participant Analysis Conclusion

The event succeeded because it brought together individuals who could discuss difficult issues seriously. Future dialogues should preserve senior participation while also incorporating younger leaders and sector-specific experts.

Chapter 10

The Toronto Roundtable: October 28, 2026

The Second Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue Roundtable will take place in Toronto on October 28, 2026. This event should mark a transition from strategic diagnosis to policy development.

Ottawa established the core problem: the relationship is drifting, but strategic interests remain. Toronto should begin defining the practical agenda for renewal.

Objectives for Toronto

The Toronto roundtable should pursue five objectives:

1. Refine the strategic findings from Ottawa;
2. Identify specific areas of cooperation;
3. Create workstreams for the 2027 Summit;
4. Broaden participation, including from industry, academia, younger leaders, and relevant community organizations; and
5. Begin drafting a Canada–Israel Strategic Cooperation Framework.

The proposed Toronto agenda may include, but is not limited to:

Session I: Canada's National Interest and the Future of the Bilateral Relationship

This session should ask what Canada needs from the relationship and how Israel fits into Canada's broader foreign, defence, and economic strategy.

Session II: Defence Insights from Israel and Contemporary Conflict

This session should examine integrated air defence, counter-UAS, reserve mobilization, intelligence fusion, urban warfare, civil defence, and rapid innovation.

Session III: Economic Security and Technology Cooperation

This session should focus on cybersecurity, AI, critical infrastructure, dual-use technology, research security, and industrial partnerships.

Session IV: Democratic Resilience and Public Diplomacy

This session should examine antisemitism, disinformation, youth engagement, campus polarization, civic education, and community resilience.

Session V: Building the 2027 Summit Framework

This session should identify deliverables, working groups, institutional partners, and possible policy outputs for the 2027 Summit.

Expected Outputs for Toronto

- A short chair's summary;
- A refined list of strategic findings;
- Draft workstream mandates;
- A proposed 2027 Summit structure;
- A preliminary Canada–Israel Strategic Cooperation Framework; and
- A list of recommended policy papers.

Toronto Conclusion

The Toronto roundtable is the most important next step in the process. While the Ottawa dialogue was successful in opening and framing the conversation, the Toronto roundtable should focus on translating those discussions into a practical agenda for action. It will serve as a foundation for subsequent roundtables and workstreams, ultimately culminating in the 2027 Canada-Israel Strategic Dialogue Summit.

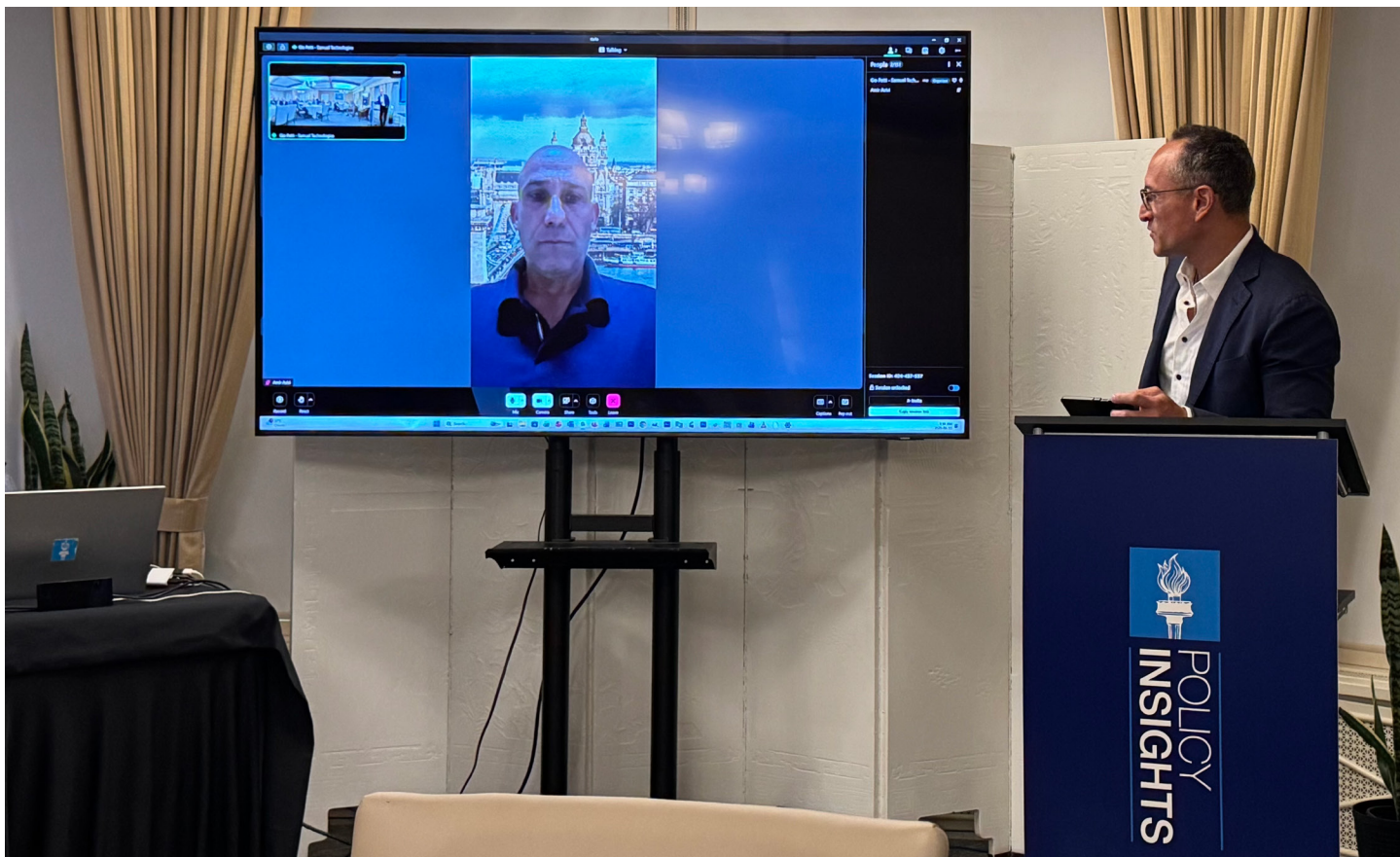


Image 5: Larry Maher speaks with Brigadier General (Ret'd) Amir Avivi of the Israeli Defence Forces.

Chapter 11

Toward a 2027 Canada-Israel Strategic Dialogue Summit

The 2027 Summit should be the culminating event of the dialogue series. It should not be a ceremonial conference. It should be a policy platform. The summit should aim to produce a durable framework for renewed Canada–Israel cooperation.

Summit Purpose

The summit should:

- Consolidate findings from Ottawa and Toronto;
- Bring together senior Canadian and Israeli leaders;
- Create institutional partnerships;
- Identify practical cooperation areas;
- Produce public and private policy outputs; and
- Establish a recurring dialogue mechanism.

Proposed Summit Workstreams

Workstream 1: Strategic and Diplomatic Renewal

This workstream should address the overall relationship, including how Canada and Israel can manage differences while maintaining cooperation.

Workstream 2: Defence and Security Cooperation

This workstream should examine defence innovation, operational lessons, training, procurement, doctrine, and military education.

Workstream 3: Economic Security and Technology

This workstream should focus on cybersecurity, AI, critical infrastructure, research security, and industrial collaboration.

Workstream 4: Democratic Resilience

This workstream should address foreign interference, disinformation, antisemitism, public trust, and social cohesion.

Workstream 5: Public Diplomacy and Education

This workstream should focus on youth engagement, study missions, academic partnerships, media literacy, and civil society dialogue.

Workstream 6: Future Leaders

This workstream should engage emerging leaders from politics, public service, academia, defence, technology, journalism, and civil society.

2027 Summit Deliverables

- A Canada–Israel Strategic Cooperation Framework;
- A defence lessons paper;
- An economic security and technology cooperation paper;
- A democratic resilience paper;

- A public diplomacy strategy paper;
- A future leaders program proposal; and
- Recommendations for annual continuation.

Summit Conclusion

The 2027 Summit should institutionalize what the Ottawa dialogue began and what Toronto will develop. Its success should be measured not by attendance alone, but by whether it produces a durable platform for future engagement.



Image 6: Larry Maher summarized the key points of his presentation.

Chapter 12

Strategic Risks, Constraints and Opportunities

A serious initiative must assess risks honestly.

Political Risk

The Canada–Israel file is politically sensitive. Any dialogue may be mischaracterized as partisan, ideological, or one-sided. The initiative must therefore remain disciplined, non-partisan, and clear in purpose.

Reputational Risk

Some institutions or individuals may hesitate to participate publicly. Chatham House formats can help, but the initiative should also produce carefully crafted public summaries that explain the purpose without exposing participants.

Policy Risk

The initiative may fail if it remains too general. Dialogue must lead to specified workstreams, papers, recommendations, and institutional follow-up. Real, concrete material and results should be the goal.

Generational Risk

If younger Canadians are not included, the dialogue may fail to address the demographic and narrative shifts shaping the future of the relationship.

Community Risk

The initiative must avoid becoming confined to one community or constituency. It should speak to Canadian national interests broadly.

Diplomatic Risk

The initiative must complement, not complicate, official diplomacy. It should avoid claiming to represent governments.

Opportunity

The opportunity is significant. Canada needs more serious strategic dialogue. Israel remains an important democratic partner with capabilities relevant to Canada's future. Civil society institutions can help rebuild trust and create policy space.

The risk of doing nothing may be greater than the risk of engagement.

Chapter 13

Policy Implications for Canada

The dialogue produces several policy implications.

1. Canada Should Preserve Strategic Communication Channels with Israel

Even during political disagreement, Canada should maintain dialogue on security, technology, economic resilience, and democratic institutions.

2. Canada Should Study Israeli Defence Lessons Systematically

The Canadian Armed Forces, defence policymakers, think tanks, and industry should examine Israeli experience in air defence, counter-UAS, intelligence fusion, civil preparedness, reserve mobilization, and rapid innovation.

3. Canada Should Integrate Economic Security into Foreign Policy

Technology, supply chains, data, research, and industrial capacity must be treated as strategic assets.

4. Canada Should Strengthen Democratic Resilience

Foreign interference, disinformation, antisemitism, and polarization should be understood as national security issues.

5. Canada Should Invest in Public Diplomacy

Study missions, education, youth engagement, and civil society dialogue should become central tools.

6. Canada Should Recover Middle-Power Seriousness

Canada must define its interests clearly, speak consistently, and align policy instruments with strategic objectives.

7. Canada Should Support Track 1.5 Mechanisms

Think tanks and civil society organizations, such as the Policy Insights Forum, can provide valuable spaces for difficult but necessary dialogue.

Conclusion

The inaugural Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue demonstrated that serious conversation remains possible even on difficult issues.

The relationship is strained, but it is not beyond repair. More importantly, it remains strategically relevant. Canada and Israel do not need to agree on every issue to cooperate where interests align. Mature democratic partners should be capable of candour, disagreement, and practical cooperation at the same time.

The world is becoming more dangerous. Economic security, defence modernization, technological sovereignty, democratic resilience, and strategic communications are now central to national power. Israel has experience and capabilities in many of these areas. Canada has interests that require deeper engagement with capable democratic partners.

The Ottawa dialogue established the foundation.

The Toronto roundtable on October 28, 2026, and subsequent roundtables should build the framework and the 2027 Summit should institutionalize the agenda.

The central strategic judgment of this Report is straightforward: Canada should not allow the Canada–Israel relationship to drift. It should manage it deliberately, assess it strategically, and renew it where interests align.

In an era of geopolitical competition and democratic vulnerability, relationships built on trust, seriousness, and shared purpose are not optional. They are strategic assets.

Annex A

EVENT OVERVIEW

Event: Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue: Pathways to Resetting the Bilateral Relationship

Date: June 10, 2026

Location: Rideau Club, Ottawa, Ontario

Hosts: Policy Insights Forum and Exigent Foundation

Format: Invitation-only roundtable

Operating Rule: Chatham House Rule

Program: The event included opening remarks, strategic context-setting, Canadian and Israeli perspectives, ambassadorial remarks, a moderated roundtable discussion, closing perspectives, and final remarks.

Participants:

Approximately fifty-five participants from the following broad categories:

- Former national security officials;
- Former senior military leaders;
- Diplomats;
- Defence and security practitioners;
- Industry executives;
- Academic experts;
- Civil society leaders;
- Public policy professionals;
- Community representatives; and
- Participants joining virtually from Israel.

The diversity of participants was essential to the quality of the discussion. It ensured that the relationship was examined not only through diplomacy, but also through defence, economics, technology, civil society, public narrative, and democratic resilience.

Annex B

STRATEGIC QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE DIALOGUES

1. What are Canada's core national interests in relation to Israel?
2. How can Canada and Israel manage political disagreement without losing practical cooperation?
3. What defence lessons from Israel are most relevant to Canada?
4. How should Canada adapt its defence procurement and innovation systems in light of modern conflict?
5. What role should Israel play in Canada's economic security and technology strategy?
6. How can Canada and Israel cooperate on cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection?
7. What can Canada learn from Israel's approach to national resilience and civil preparedness?
8. How should Canada respond to foreign interference, disinformation, and social fragmentation?
9. What public diplomacy tools are most effective with younger Canadians?
10. What should the 2027 Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue Summit produce?

About the Policy Insights Forum

The Policy Insights Forum (PIF) is a non-partisan Canadian think tank focusing on strategic over-the-horizon public policy issues through independent research, analysis and engagement.

Through high-level conferences, publications, roundtables, and convening sessions, the PIF brings together senior leaders across Canada, the United States, Europe, and allied nations to deliver actionable insights in economic security, national defence, international affairs, sovereignty and emerging technologies.

A cornerstone of this work is the NATO Private Sector Engagement (NPSE) program, an annual transatlantic mission that connects Canadian executives directly with NATO, EU, and allied defence institutions to strengthen industrial cooperation and strategic alignment.

The PIF is equally committed to developing future leaders through flagship initiatives, including the Emerging Young Leaders Program, the Dr. Robert Spencer Internship and the North Star Internship. The Policy Insights Forum — **Engaging Canada's Best Minds**[®]



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About Exigent Foundation

Exigent Foundation is a Canadian educational organization dedicated to countering extremism, ideological polarization, and disinformation while strengthening democratic discourse through education, public engagement and firsthand learning.

The Foundation advances civic dialogue by creating opportunities for Canadians to engage directly with complex issues affecting democracy, security and social cohesion. Its work includes immersive educational missions, including visits to Israel and the broader Middle East, where Canadian journalists, policymakers and public voices can gain firsthand perspectives from local leaders, communities and institutions.

In Canada, Exigent Foundation also convenes public forums, community workshops and educational discussions designed to foster informed, respectful and fact based dialogue on issues of national and international importance.



exigentfoundation.org

Author's Note

This Report is intended as a strategic assessment and planning document by the Policy Insights Forum, Exigent Foundation, and selected stakeholders.

It is designed to support the next phase of the Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue process and to inform preparation for the second roundtable on October 28, 2026, in Toronto, and the anticipated 2027 Canada–Israel Strategic Dialogue Summit.