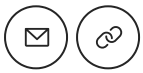


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## New Israeli envoy: Japan can become one of Israel's key strategic allies

Tokyo has the potential to become as important in Asia as Washington and Berlin are in the West, Emmanuel Navon told JNS.

**AMELIE BOTBOL**



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Emmanuel Navon, Israel's incoming ambassador to Japan, at the JNS International Policy Summit, June 23, 2026. Credit: JNS.

(June 26, 2026 / JNS) Israel can no longer rely solely on the United States and Europe for strategic alliances, given how quickly geopolitical dynamics can shift, Israel's incoming ambassador to Japan, Emmanuel Navon, told JNS in an interview at the JNS 2026 International Policy Summit in Jerusalem this week.

A co-founder and CEO of the Euro-Med Middle East Council and a lecturer in international relations at Tel Aviv University for the past 24 years, Navon has combined careers in academia and business consulting. His areas of expertise include Israeli diplomacy, foreign policy, energy, security and geopolitics.

“That’s what I bring to the table as the incoming ambassador to Japan. I am not an expert on Japan, but I have a very good understanding of foreign policy issues and the geopolitics of East Asia. I just published a major article on how Japan has changed its security perception in East Asia and how this can have implications on relations with Israel and the Middle East,” he said.

Japan, Navon said, is increasingly recognizing that it can no longer rely solely on the United States for its security, given the challenges posed by China’s growing military power, North Korea’s nuclear capabilities and Russia’s increasingly aggressive posture.

“All this creates potential for interaction between Israel and Japan. The main challenges are that Japan is still very much reliant on Middle Eastern energy, which pushes them to maintain good relations with Iran and Qatar,” Navon said.

“We also have a problem of public opinion, which I think has been very much influenced by hostile media such as *Al Jazeera* and *BBC*, where they perceive the Middle East in a very biased manner and misunderstand Israel,” he added.

At the same time, Navon noted, Iran is aligned with many of Japan’s principal security concerns—including China, North Korea and, to a lesser extent, Russia, which, while not formally an enemy of Japan, remains a source of territorial tensions. As a result, Japan recognizes that Israel has significant expertise to offer in defense, cybersecurity and maritime security.

(BRI), it requires a lot of work,” Navon said.

Japan, Navon said, has traditionally viewed the Middle East as a zero-sum arena in which it had to choose between maintaining ties with Israel or with the Arab states. Since the signing of the Abraham Accords, however, that dynamic has shifted, as Israel and several Arab countries are now working together.

“IMEC and the Abraham Accords create a potential for progressively bringing Japan much closer to Israel, that’s the end game,” he said.

Asia, Navon noted, is home to the majority of the world’s population and several major global powers. While China is unlikely to become an ally of Israel, India already is, and Japan—currently undergoing a major reassessment of its foreign and defense policies—has the potential to become one as well.

“The idea is to bring Japan at the same level as India and to have both New Delhi and Tokyo as the equivalent in Asia of what Washington and Berlin are for Israel in the western hemisphere,” Navon said.

Japan is expected to expand its role as a major defense and security actor in East Asia as it increases defense spending and implements reforms to its national security decision-making process. The country’s National Security Council, for example, has even discussed revising Article 9 of Japan’s constitution, which restricts the use of military force outside the country.

Ahead of his departure, Navon was among a group of ambassadors who met with Israeli President Isaac Herzog last week during a meeting organized by the Foreign Ministry.

Although Israel’s president does not traditionally hold executive authority, the office carries significant soft power and, Navon said, most presidents—particularly Herzog—play an active role in the country’s foreign relations.

“He has a lot of interest in Japan. One of the objectives early on is to have a state visit with the president in Japan. His late father paid an official visit to Japan when he was president and now that the war seems to be over, I think and hope the Japanese will be more open to taking a more public approach about relations with Israel, which was almost impossible during the war.

“I think that hopefully now if and when the situation stabilizes, we’ll be able to organize such a state visit—that’s the objective.”

Addressing the Jewish presence in Japan, Navon said the country has historically not had a large Jewish community.

“You do have a significant community of Jewish business people from Europe, America and Israel. There is a nice Jewish community center in Tokyo. There are also a few Chabad houses in Tokyo and other cities like Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe. The size of the Jewish community in Japan doesn’t compare, though, to countries like the United States, France or the United Kingdom,” he said.



JNS 2026 International Policy Summit



## Amelie Botbol

Originally from Casablanca, Morocco, Amelie made aliyah in 2014. She specializes in diplomatic affairs and geopolitical analysis and serves as a war correspondent for JNS. She has covered major international developments, including extensive reporting on the hostage crisis in Israel.

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