TURKEY'S ISRAEL POLICY IN THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD:

THE STRUGGLE OF IDENTITY OVER REALPOLITIK

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Selin Nasi, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
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- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

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Date 7/September/2020

ABSTRACT

Turkey's Israel Policy in the Post-Cold War Period:

The Struggle of Identity Over Realpolitik

This study offers a neoclassical realist analysis of Turkey's post-Cold War Israel policy. By looking at both foreign and domestic developments, this study analyzes the course of Turkish-Israeli relations from a historical perspective, with the aim of identifying elements of continuity and change, while it also sheds light onto the contradictory forces at play in shaping Turkey's Israel policy, at the systemic and unit levels. As such, it argues that the institutional foundations along with common threat perceptions that facilitated a strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel in the 1990s, began to erode, in part due to changes in the structure of the international system as well as domestic political developments in the 2000s. Against a backdrop in which Ankara has perceivably shifted its strategic orientation away from the West, this study asserts that Turkey's Israel policy has been marked by a struggle between realpolitik and identity, in which, the former encourages cooperation between the countries while the latter drives them further apart.

ÖZET

Türkiye'nin Soğuk Savaş Sonrası İsrail Politikası: Kimliğin Realpolitikle Mücadelesi

Bu çalışma Türkiye'nin Soğuk Savaş sonrası İsrail politikasını neo-klasik realist perspektiften incelemektedir. Buna göre, Türkiye'nin İsrail ile ilişkilerini şekillendiren sistemsel ve bölgesel gelişmelere ek olarak, karar alıcıların algı ve tercihlerini etkilediğinden hareketle, devlet düzeyinde cereyan eden iç siyasi gelişmeler de veri olarak kabul edilmektedir. Devamlılık ve değişim öğelerini tespit etmek amacıyla, geniş bir tarihsel arka planda Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinin seyrini inceleyen bu çalışma, aynı zamanda kimlik ve stratejik çıkarların Türkiye'nin İsrail politikasına etkisini sorgulamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, 2000'li yıllarda, hem uluslararası sistemin güç dengelerindeki değişim hem de iç siyasi gelişmelere bağlı olarak, iki ülke arasında 90'lı yılların stratejik ortaklığını mümkün kılan ortak çıkarların ve ilişkileri taşıyan kurumsal temellerin aşındığını iddia edilmektedir. Dış politikada stratejik yönelimin batıdan uzaklaştığı ve kimliğin etkisinin daha görünür hale geldiği bir arka planda, Türkiye'nin İsrail politikasının, iki ülkeyi iş birliğine teşvik eden stratejik çıkarlar ile birbirinden uzaklaştıran kimliğin mücadelesine sahne olduğunu savunulmaktadır.

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PUBLICATIONS

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For my beloved, Aldo, Aksel, and Semih

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADL	Anti-Defamation League
AKP	Justice and Development Party *(Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)*
ANAP	Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*)
ASALA	Armenian Secret Army for Liberation of Armenia
CHP	Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*)
DP	Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti*)
DTP	Democrat Turkey Party (*Demokrat Türkiye Partisi*)
DYP	True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*)
EC	European Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FP	Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*)
GAP	Southeast Anatolia Project *(Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi)*
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GOSB	Gebze Organized Industry Zone *(Gebze Organize Sanayi Bölgesi)*
G8	Group of Eight
HSYK	High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (*Hakim ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu)*
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAF	Israeli Air Forces
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IHH	Humanitarian Relief Foundation *(İnsani Yardım Vakfı)*
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
IŞİD	Islamic State of Iraq and Damascus *(Irak Şam İslam Devleti)*
JDP	Justice and Development Party *(Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)*

MEC	Middle East Command
MEDO	Middle East Defense Organization
MIT	National Intelligence Organization *(Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı)*
MOSSAD	Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PKK	Kurdistan's Workers Party *(Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê)*
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
RP	Welfare Party *(Refah Partisi)*
RTÜK	Radio Television Supreme Council *(Radyo Televizyon Üst Kurumu)*
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Turkey *(Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi)*
TIKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency *(Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı)*
TURKSTAT	Turkish Statistical Institute *(Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu)*
TURAB	Turkish-Arab Countries Business-person Association
UAR	United Arab Republic
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
YÖK	Council of Higher Education *(Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu)*

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Turkey and Israel, two non-Arab and arguably western-oriented countries surrounded by an unstable geopolitical landscape, has always been a topic of academic interest.

From a historical perspective, Turkish-Israeli relations have followed a tumultuous path with periodic ups and downs, albeit continuing without any interruption. On June 27, 2016, after a long and grueling negotiation process, Turkey and Israel signed a reconciliation deal, ending a six-year rift. Diplomatic relations, which were downgraded to the chargé affairs level a year after the Mavi Marmara Incident – a deadly assault on a Comoros-flagged flotilla that was carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza – resumed in November 2016 after the two countries exchanged ambassadors. Yet, this normalization was only short-lived. In May 2018, Turkey once again recalled its ambassador, protesting both the United States' decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem and Israel's violent crackdown on protesters in the Gaza border, afterwards. Diplomatic relations have remained downgraded since then, despite a number of signs of a coming thaw recently (Oruç,2020).

This research explores elements of continuity and change in Turkey's Israel policy in the post-Cold War period, from Turkey's perspective, with the aim of determining the push and pull factors that have shaped Turkey's relations with Israel. Main focus of this study is on the post-Cold War period, offering a comparison between the strategic partnership of the mid-1990s and the course of bilateral relations in the 2000s under the Justice and Development Party-Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi AKP rule. However, in terms of putting the development of Turkish-Israeli

ties into context, a broad historical background is provided, including the early contacts between the Young Republic of Turkey and the Zionist movement during the Second World War as well as Turkish-Israeli relations in the Cold War era.

This study argues that the basic parameters of Turkish-Israel relations that enabled the emergence of a strategic partnership in the mid-1990s have changed in the 2000s. Historically structural factors, particularly geopolitical interests, have been more dominant in shaping Turkey's Israel policy, however, ideological preferences have started to gain influence from the mid-2000s and onwards, parallel to the transformation of domestic politics. Thus, geopolitical interests and domestic concerns appear to be the two currents guiding Turkey's policy towards Israel, at times flowing in opposite directions, undermining consistency and predictability of bilateral relations.

Literature Review:

This integrated literature review provides a survey of relevant academic literature published in the post-Cold War period. Studies on Turkish-Israeli relations largely consists of historical analyses that either provide an overview of bilateral relations starting from the early years of Israel's foundation and onwards or focuses on a specific period or an event. There are only a limited number of studies on Turkish-Israeli relations that apply a specific theoretical perspective in examining the country's mutual ties.

Studies in the former group can also be divided into further categories. The Palestinian issue, or the Arab-Israeli Conflict, constitutes an important aspect of the studies on Turkish-Israeli relations. Academic studies by Aras (1998), Aktar and

Özel (1999), Pehlivan (2006), and Şahin (2012) are valuable resources featuring archival research in this regard.

Aras (1998) focuses on the internationalization of the Palestinian issue and the course of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and reflects upon the discussions that took place at the UN, as well as the exchange of messages between Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

Aktar and Özel (1999) pose an important question as to what extent Turkish foreign policy towards Israel was influenced by religion or religious solidarity with Palestinians in the wake of Israel's foundation. Drawing upon archival accounts (the collections of daily newspapers such as Ulus, Cumhuriyet, Vatan and Ayın Tarihi, and compilation of news and commentaries published by the Press office of the Prime Ministry), Aktar and Özel (1999) conclude that the Turkish attitude towards Israel was, in fact, guided by rational calculations. In this respect, their work tries to lay out the inconsistencies of the Young Republic's policy toward the Zionist Movement in the path to the recognition of Israel in 1949 as well as the role of the West in fostering closer relations with Israel.

Both Pehlivan (2006) and Şahin (2012) underline the fact that Turkish-Israeli relations developed as a function of Turkish-American relations, influenced by the bipolar power structure during the Cold War. Pehlivan's (2006) extensive study of press reports and columns displays Turkey's difficult position in maintaining a balanced and neutral strategy between the Arabs and Israel during the Arab-Israeli Wars.

A majority of scholars analyze the bilateral relations from a realist perspective without mentioning a theoretical framework, focusing on the impact of regional and global changes in the balance of power. Studies by Inbar (2011), Özcan

(2005), Erhan and Kürkçüoğlu (2005), the SDE Report (2011), and Kanat (2012) fall into this category. A common point of these studies is that they offer a chronological account of important thresholds in the course of bilateral relations, while putting them in context, regarding international as well as domestic developments, which have shaped Turkey's foreign policy towards Israel.

Özcan (2005), for instance, provides a broad historical background of Turkish-Israeli relations, dating back to Israel's foundation in 1948. In his work, Özcan (2005) puts emphasis on how common security interests have driven cooperation between the two countries, despite Turkey's sympathy and support for the Palestinian issue. Özcan's (2005) research stands out as one of the few sources that sheds light on the course of bilateral relations in the 1980s.

Robins' "Suits and Uniforms*"* (2003) is another source which offers a detailed analysis on the development of strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel in the 1990s, with a focus on military-to-military relations. Robin (2003) asserts that aside from shared threat perceptions, the promotion of shared political values of secularism, democracy and a westward-looking identity by political elites fostered close cooperation in the post-Cold War period. Robins' book (2003) is particularly valuable in terms of tracing the timeline of high-level military visits, joint military exercises as well as the contents of military agreements in the 1990s.

Balcı and Kardaş (2012) pose a similar question to Robins (2003) in their article "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey's Relations with Israel: An Analysis of Securitization," and explore the factors that drove close cooperation between Turkey and Israel in the 1990s from a different perspective. Drawing on the "securitization" theory of the Copenhagen School, Balcı and Kardaş (2012) argue that the Turkish military securitized political issues such as the survival of the state and secularism as

if there was an existential threat facing Turkey. As such, they claim that "Turkey's relations with Israel in the 1990s were exploited by the military and Kemalist elites to fight against the rise of the social forces of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism (Balcı & Kardaş, 2012, p.116)."

In the literature of Turkish-Israeli relations, Bengio's "The Turkish-Israeli Relationship: Changing Ties of Middle Eastern Outsiders*"* (2004) deserves a distinct place, since she examines bilateral relations from Israel's perspective and covers social, economic and cultural interaction between the two countries, in addition to political and military cooperation. Bengio (2004) offers an analysis of how the political parties' approached Turkish-Israeli relations at the time, as well as the attempts to develop people-to-people interactions so as to diversify relations.

There are a number of studies that focus on the Turkish-Israeli relations under the AKP rule, such as Akgün, Gündoğar and Görgülü (2014), Aytürk (2009), and Uzer's (2013) "Between Crisis and Cooperation: The Future of Turkish-Israeli Relations."

A common point of these studies is that the authors regard Turkish policymakers' inflammatory rhetoric targeting Israel both in the run-up to and the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara Incident in 2010 as harmful in terms of alienating not only the Israelis but the Jewish population as a whole, and decreasing the chances of Turkey acting as a mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Özcan (2005) argues that the Mavi Marmara Incident was unprecedented in the history of bilateral relations for being the first conflict in which Israel directly attacked Turkish citizens; a crisis which involved the Israeli military, a key actor in the development of a strategic partnership between the two countries; and last, for

being a unique case in which a Turkish civil society initiative succeeded in mobilizing global support on a specific issue.

Aytürk (2009), on the other hand, points at the necessity of establishing academic institutes and launching programs to train Hebrew-speaking Israeli experts to diversify bilateral ties, and to cover Turkish-Israeli relations from the Israeli perspective.

Uzer (2013) asserts that bilateral relations did not deteriorate simply because of the Islamist ideology of the AK Party but due to the high number of Palestinian casualties in the Operation Cast Lead. While Uzer (2013) does not deny the sympathy expressed by the AK Party officials for the Palestinian cause, he claims that promoting the Palestinian cause suited Turkey's interests in the Middle East, therefore concluding that contingency weighed more than ideology in determining Turkey's relations with Israel.

Aside from these studies, which emphasize the interest-driven nature of Turkish-Israeli ties, there are also a number of studies influenced by the constructivist perspective which focus on the role of identity in explaining the rise and fall of bilateral relations in the last decade.

Proponents of this perspective claim that Turkish foreign policy has undergone a major transformation in the last two decades, reflecting a parallel change in its state identity. In his article, "Turkish-Israeli Relations Through the Lens of the Turkish Identity Debate," Yavuz (1997) draws attention to the polarization between Turkey's secular elite and the religiously oriented segments of society since the foundation of Turkish Republic. From this perspective, Yavuz (1997) argues that in addition to geopolitical considerations, the political orientation and legitimation of the Kemalist elite has also been influential in steering Turkey's

Israel policy. Accordingly, Turkey's Westward looking, secular state identity enabled Ankara to establish cautious, yet cordial, relations with Israel. However, in parallel to the rise of identity politics (i.e. political Islam and Kurdish nationalism), Turkish-Israeli relations became an issue of polarization and a zone of contestation that pitted the secular and the pious segments of society at odds with each other to determine Turkey's foreign policy orientation.

There are also studies which focus on the role of identity in shaping Turkish foreign policy during the AK Party period such as Balcı and Miş (2008) and Duran (2013). Even though the main focus is not on Turkish-Israeli relations, these studies make important contributions to the debate on identity politics and transformation in Turkish foreign policy under the AK Party government. They are useful in terms of comparing and contrasting different theoretical perspectives on Turkish foreign policy and putting Turkish-Israeli relations into context.

Altunışık and Çuhadar (2010) approaches Turkey's relations with Israel from a different perspective and discuss Turkey's mediating role in the Arab-Israeli Conflicts. Accordingly, Altunışık and Çuhadar (2010) argue that Turkey has played a facilitative and mediating role until the end of 2008, benefiting from the international context. However, from 2008 and onwards, Turkey's policy shifted towards acting as a *principal power mediator*, which failed to draw support from the parties-particularly from Israel-, eventually collapsed.

Lastly, Ünal (2017) and Oğuzlu (2010) can be counted among the few researchers who examined Turkish-Israeli relations from a specific theoretical perspective. Ünal (2017) applies the constructivist theory and claims that the tension between Turkey and Israel in the AK Party period has been the result of a change in Turkey's state identity from a pro-Western stance to one that privileged a Middle

Eastern/Ottoman discourse. In this respect, Turkish decision-makers redefined their interests on the basis of new identities and perceptions of the international system.

Oğuzlu (2010), argues that both the strategic partnership of the 1990s and the downturn of the Turkish-Israeli relations in the run-up to the 2010 can be explained through a structural realist perspective by examining systemic and exogenous factors which determine foreign policy preferences and behaviors. According to Oğuzlu (2010), Turkey's Middle East policy under the AKP government has been driven more by security concerns than identity. "What Turkey does is rather to help put out fires in the region so that the flames do not reach Anatolia," claims Oğuzlu (2010, p.281), which implies a defensive realist position, that is to say, Turkey followed an activist foreign policy in the Middle East so as order to secure itself.

Theoretical framework:

In light of the existing literature, this study aims to make a modest contribution to the field by applying a neoclassical realist perspective to Turkish-Israeli relations. Neoclassical realist theory has emerged with the aim of revising and revamping the realist paradigm by incorporating neorealists' structural analysis of the system with the classical realists' unit-level variables.

Rose (1998, p.148), who coined the term "neoclassical realism" in 1998, explains the basic premises of neoclassical realism as such:

> Neoclassical realism explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought. Its adherents argue that the scope and the ambition of a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. This is why they are realist. They argue further that, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why they are neoclassical.

Schweller (2004), Christensen (1996), Snyder (1991), Wohlforth (1993) and Zakaria (1998) can be counted among the prominent scholars of the neoclassical realist school. Seeking an answer to why comparable units do not behave in the same way under the same systemic constraints, these scholars have offered explanations on a number of topics such as why states opt for expansion (Zakaria, 1998), overexpansion (Snyder), or under-balancing (Schweller, 2004); the role of inflating external threats for domestic mobilization (Christensen, 1996), and the role of perceptions in determining state behavior (Wohlforth, 1993).

Neoclassical realists basically argue that systemic pressures are filtered through intervening domestic variables which affect the way states interpret systemic pressures and respond to their external environments accordingly. Since foreign policy choices are made by actual leaders, perceptions, ideological preferences, state-society relations, and domestic institutions, should also be taken into account, without overlooking the impact of systemic constraints. Thus, neoclassical realism offers an intermediary ground in the agency vs. structure debate[1] by highlighting the interaction between the structure and the agent in terms of determining state behavior.

In this context, this study presents a neoclassical realist account of Turkey's Israel policy in the post-Cold War period and therefore seeks an answer to whether Turkey's Israel policy is primarily shaped by geopolitical imperatives or identity concerns. Benefiting from the flexibility provided by the neoclassical realist paradigm, which enables the researcher to look at different levels of analysis, this study analyzes basic determinants of Turkey's Israel policy, examining both foreign and domestic developments.

[1] For further reading on the agency vs structure debate, see (Wendt, 1987) and (Carlsneas, 1992).

Methodology:

This dissertation intends to study Turkish-Israeli relations from the Turkish perspective by employing a qualitative method. In 2014, Turkey's Foreign Ministry declared opening the state archives. However, since access is very limited, in this study, data is obtained mainly through archival press research and interpreted in the light of interviews conducted with political officials, diplomats, academics and journalists.

In this respect, public speeches, party programs, official parliamentary reports, press releases and secondary resources such as books, articles, academic journals and press commentaries were utilized. Complementary to archival research, open-ended interviews were conducted directly, face-to-face,[2] where interviewees were asked to elaborate on Turkish-Israeli relations.[3]

Indeed, interviews with high-level officials and diplomats (some of whom spoke to a Turkish researcher on the topic of Turkish-Israeli ties for the first time in this study) constitute one of the strengths of this study, as they reveal some new information with regard to the background of significant developments that shaped the course of bilateral relations. However, because these interviews involved information not officially made public, most of the interviewees requested to speak on condition of anonymity. Nevertheless, personal accounts provided essential insight in charting the future of bilateral ties as well as confirming or putting into context the data obtained from open sources.

[2] The only two exceptions were my interviews with Philip Gordon, Yaşar Yakış, and Murat Yetkin. Due to their busy schedule, interviews were conducted over Skype.

[3] In addition to the set of questions presented in Appendix A, some interviews was specifically designed to shed light on a particular topic, such as the AKP's procedure for making foreign policy or the diplomatic mediation efforts which led to Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's apology to Turkey in 2013.

The contents of the dissertation:

This dissertation consists of seven chapters apart from this introductory part. Chapter 1 identifies the theoretical framework of this research, elaborates on the explanatory power of neoclassical realist paradigm, with a comprehensive literature review.

For practical purposes, historical background of Turkish-Israeli relations is divided into two parts. Chapter 2 opens with the Zionist Movement's ties with the Ottoman Empire and then with Turkey, and continues with significant turning points between until Turkey's recognition of Israel in 1949 ("Resmi Gazete"1949). Chapter 3 examines the course of bilateral relations in the Cold War era, covering the short-lived covert Turkish-Israeli strategic partnership established during the Democratic Party years, as well as Turkey's estrangement from Israel from the mid 1960s and onwards, in light of international as well as domestic developments.

Chapter 4 provides an account of Turkish-Israeli relations in the post-Cold War period (1991-2000), analyzing the strategic partnership developed in the mid-90s.

Chapter 5, examines the course of bilateral relations in the 2000s, focusing on the period from the rise of the Justice and Development Party AKP until the downgrading of diplomatic relations in the wake of the Mavi Marmara Incident in 2010.

Chapter 6 covers the post-Mavi Marmara period in Turkish-Israeli relations, covering the reconciliation efforts which led to the signing of the normalization deal in 2016 as well as the unfulfilled normalization process afterwards.

Last, the conclusion chapter provides an assessment of research findings and questions prospects for future cooperation between Turkey and Israel, taking into account the changing dynamics of bilateral ties.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A NEOCLASSICAL REALIST ACCOUNT OF TURKEY'S ISRAEL POLICY

This study aims to explore elements of continuity and change in Turkey's Israel policy from Ankara's perspective. Focusing mainly on the post-Cold War period, this work offers a comparison between the strategic partnership of the mid-1990s and the course of bilateral relations in the 2000s under the Justice and Development Party AKP rule. But in terms of putting the development of Turkish-Israeli ties into context, this study provides a broad historical background, including the early contacts between the young Republic of Turkey and the Zionist movement during the Second World War, as well as Turkish-Israeli relations in the Cold War era.

In terms of research inquiry, this study employs a qualitative method. In 2014, Turkey's Foreign Ministry moved to open its state archives, but access remains very limited. Hence, this study obtained data mainly through archival press research and interviews conducted with political officials, diplomats, academics and journalists. In these open-ended, face-to-face interviews, respondents were asked to answer the sample set of questions presented in Appendix A. The list of interviewees is also presented in Appendix B.

In addition to these, the content of some interviews was specifically designed to shed light on a particular topic such as the foreign-policymaking procedure under the AKP or the diplomatic mediation efforts which led to Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's apology to Turkey in 2013. Overall, these interviews conducted with

the high-level officials from both sides were very useful in terms of uncovering the background to significant developments that shaped the course of bilateral relations and in confirming the data obtained from the press archives.

1.1.Principles of neoclassical realism:

In analyzing the endogenous (domestic) and exogenous (international) factors that have shaped Turkey's Israel policy, this study employs a neoclassical realist perspective. Similar to various other theoretical approaches in the field of international relations, neoclassical realism developed as a response to realism, which is still considered one of the dominant theoretical paradigms in the field.

In the 1930s, realists and idealists argued over the nature of international politics and the possibility of avoiding war, which also marked the first intellectual debate in the field of international relations. In *the Twenty Years' Crisis*, Carr (2001) presents a critique of idealist or utopian thinking, contending that realists deal with the world as it actually functions- (and that's why they are called realists), while idealists focus on how the world "ought to be" instead.[4]

In his seminal work, *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau (2006) posits six principles of political realism. First, politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. Second, state leaders think and act in terms of interest defined as power. Third, sovereign nations compete for power, and survival constitutes the main goal of foreign policy and thereby the core national interest. Fourth, "universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their

[4] Carr (2001, p.12) contends that the utopian is necessarily voluntarist. He believes in the possibility of more or less radically rejecting reality, and substituting his utopia for it by an act of will. The realist, on the other hand, analyzes a predetermined course of development which he is powerless to change. Thus, the complete utopian, by rejecting the causal sequence, deprives himself of the possibility of understanding either the reality which he is seeking to change or the process by which it can be changed.

abstract universal formulation but must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place" (Morgenthau, 2006, p.12). Fifth, political realism does not identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe. And last, Morgenthau (2006) asserts the autonomy of the political sphere. In this respect, the political realist seeks an answer to the question of "How does this policy affect the power of the nation?"

The realist image of international relations relies on a number of key assumptions. To begin with, the state is the central actor on the world stage. Realists see international relations as a struggle of power among sovereign states. Thus, the natural state of international politics is conflictual and anarchic. Here, anarchy is not used in the sense of a war of all against all, but anarchy in the sense that there is no higher authority above states to impose order. Aspiration for power is intrinsic to human nature, meaning state leaders have a tendency to dominate (Morgenthau, 2006, p.35). This aspiration for power leads to a configuration that is called the balance of power and policies that aim to preserve it (Morgenthau, 2006, p.179). In their pursuit of power or security, Morgenthau (2006) assumes that leaders pursue policies in a rational manner.

Building on Morgenthau's (2006) work, Waltz (1954) adapted realist theory to incorporate a systemic dimension that influenced state behavior. In *Man, the State and War*, Waltz (1954) built on the works of classical political philosophers such as St. Augustine, Hobbes, Kant and Rousseau to identify three different levels of analysis for the researcher in exploring the causes of war, namely human nature, the state and the system in which states operate. Waltz (1954) argues that the first and second images help us understand the forces that determine policy, but without the third image, it is impossible to assess their importance or predict their results.

By putting emphasis on systemic analysis, Waltz (1954) has contributed to the development of structural realism. Yet, it is important to distinguish Waltz's earlier works from his *Theory of International Politics (1979)*. While in *Man, the State and the War*, Waltz (2001, p.14) accepts that "some combination of three images, rather than any one of them, may be required for an accurate understanding of international relations," he staunchly embraces a systemic approach in his other works.

In *Theory of International Relations*, Waltz (1979) defines the international system as a set of interacting units and argues that the organization of units affects states' behavior and their interactions. States operate in an anarchic self-help system in which they worry about their survival. That insecurity conditions their behavior and limits cooperation. According to Waltz (1979), it is the relative distribution of material capabilities which determine state behavior under anarchy. A change in the relative distribution of capabilities, in the event that there is a rising state, poses a challenge to others. Almost automatically in such cases, states either balance against the challenger or ally with it, which is called band wagoning. In order to survive in this anarchic order, states must anticipate power shifts and develop strategies to prevent them, including the option of preventive war.

In this context, Waltz (1979) portrays states as functionally like units. Structures may change in parallel to changes in the distribution of capabilities across units. Since system-level forces act as constraints on agents, one cannot predict outcomes merely by knowing the characteristics, purposes and interactions of the system's units, which is why Waltz deems structural analysis significant.

In 1986, Waltz shifted his position regarding the first and second image, contending instead that:

> …structures condition behaviors and outcomes, yet explanations of behaviors and outcomes are indeterminate because both unit level and structural causes are at play…Thinking in terms of systems dynamics does not replace unit-level analysis nor end the search for sequences of cause and effect…. Structures shape and shove. They do not determine behaviors and outcomes, not only because unit-level and structural causes interact, but also because the shaping and shoving of structures may be successfully resisted. (Waltz, 1986, p.343-344)

Indeed, Waltz's (1986) review of his earlier account paves the way for the development of neoclassical realism. The term neoclassical realism was first coined by Rose (1998), when he introduced an alternative theoretical approach addressing the shortcomings of structural realism, *Innenpolitik* theories and constructivism.

According to theories of *Innenpolitik*,[5] foreign policy is essentially driven by domestic concerns. There are several distinct branches to the *Innenpolitik* approach, each stressing a different specific domestic factor. For instance, Snyder, (1991) analyzes domestic causes of overexpansion in foreign policy and examines how parochial interest groups, such as the military or big business, hijack the organs of government for selfish goals and benefit from expansionist policies. Moravcsik's (1997) liberal theory of international relations focuses on the role of societal ideas, interests and institutions in shaping state preferences and behavior in world politics. Russett et al. (1993), on the other hand, reflect on the causal connections between democracy and peace. While neoclassical realists agree that domestic-level variables are relevant in explaining foreign policy choices, they criticize *innenpolitik* theories for downplaying the relative distribution of power and excluding power politics.

[5] For a brief review of *Innenpolitik* theories, see (Zakaria, 1992; Moravcsik, 1997; Snyder, 1991; Skidmore & Hudson, 1993; Russett, et al, 1993; Brown, et al, eds.,1996).

Constructivism offers an alternative understanding of international relations, challenging the fixed assumptions regarding the impact of the international system, as well as domestic political environment. Instead, this approach argues that both actors and the structure are mutually constructed and subject to change. In this respect, constructivists underline the importance of values, norms and practices in shaping an agent's understanding of the structure. Accordingly, actors interpret and intersubjectively ascribe meaning to their external environment and the behavior of other actors through interaction. [6]

Similar to constructivists, neoclassical realists agree that ideas, norms and identities matter, yet they find constructivist theory impractical in terms of making predictions or generating policy advice based on competing international norms, cultures and conflicting identities. According to neoclassical realists, by rejecting the relative distribution of material power, constructivism, like liberal theories, has limited explanatory power.

For structural realists, states are compelled to select foreign policies that provide the most appropriate responses to systemic circumstances. Domestic politics and leaders' characteristics play no significant role in determining policy. If faced with similar external threats and opportunities, states with different regime types, ideologies and political institutions can be expected to behave in a similar manner.

Neoclassical realists agree with the structural realists that relative power capabilities among states set the basic parameters of a country's foreign policy, but they reject the notion that states almost mechanically respond to changing international developments. According to neoclassical realists, systemic factors alone cannot explain the foreign policy behavior of states because systemic pressures

[6] To read further on constructivism, see, (Onuf, 1989; Wendt, 1992, 1999).

must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level, and the transmission belt which links material capabilities to foreign policy behavior is far from perfect. Since foreign policy choices are made by actual people, political leaders and elites, their perceptions of relative power should also be taken into account (Ripsman, Taliaferro & Lobell, 2016, p.19).

Neoclassical realists identify the shortcomings in structural realism as follows:

1-Leaders do not always perceive systemic imperatives correctly, even when they are clear

2- The international system itself does not always present clear signals about threats and opportunities

3-Decision-makers do not always respond rationally to systemic imperatives even when they perceive these imperatives correctly, and

4- States are not always able to mobilize their available resources efficiently and effectively (Ripsman, Taliaferro & Lobell, 2016, p.19-24).

Therefore, neoclassical realists try to fix these shortcomings by incorporating the intervening processes and variables that can influence states' response to systemic forces.

1.2. Intervening variables:

Neoclassical realists identify four major intervening variables for analysis. These are the images and perceptions of state leaders, strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institutional arrangements. Intervening variables reflect various

constraints on the central actors, the interactions within and between decision makers and society as a whole, and the processes and mechanisms by which states respond to external stimuli.

1.2.1. Leader images

One important set of intervening variables focuses on the beliefs or images of individual decision-makers who govern the state. These decision-makers, dubbed the foreign policy executive (FPE), include the president, prime minister or dictator, as well as key cabinet members, ministers and advisers charged with the conduct of foreign and defense policies.

Neoclassical realists argue that all people possess a set of core values, beliefs and images that shape their understanding of the outside world and thereby guide their interaction. These images reflect the individual's prior experiences and values. Once formed, they act as cognitive filters that affect leaders' information processing, shaping their perception of signals, information and events. Accordingly, leaders will react differently to international crises and opportunities depending on the content of their images (Ripsman, Taliaferro & Lobell, 2016, p.61-66). [7]

1.2.2. Strategic culture

Strategic culture is another intervening variable which shapes the understanding of political leaders, elites and even the general public. Through socialization and institutionalization (in rules and norms), these collective assumptions and

[7] Leffler (1992), for instance, argues that perceptions of the "Wise Men" in the Truman administration regarding Soviet power, rather than the actual distribution of power at the Kremlin, shaped U.S. policy during the initial years of the Cold War. See,
Similar to Leffler, Brands (2014) also claims that contradictory information was either ignored or twisted to fit existing assessments in formulating Washington's Cold War strategy.

expectations become deeply embedded in culture and constrain a state's behavior and freedom of action by defining what are acceptable and unacceptable strategic choices, even in an anarchic self-help environment.[8] Policymakers will choose to frame, adjust and modify strategic choices to reflect culturally acceptable preferences to shape domestic political support. [9]

1.2.3. State-society relations

Neoclassical realists argue that the character of interactions between the central institutions of the state and various economic and or societal groups also acts as an intervening variable by influencing state behavior. Accordingly, the degree of harmony between the state and society, the degree to which society defers to state leaders on foreign policy matters in the event of disagreements, the distribution of competition among societal coalitions to capture the state and its associated spoils, the level of political and social cohesion within the state, as well as public support for general foreign policy and national security objectives, can all affect whether state leaders have the power to extract, mobilize and harness the nation's power.

[8] Here, neoclassical realists maintain a flexible approach and contend that national strategic culture can be constructed and reconstructed over time either through the conscious agency of national governments or as a result of major historical events. The experience of West Germany and Japan after World War II illustrates the case of impact of victorious powers. While both countries had excessively militaristic strategic cultures, their catastrophic defeat in World War II and American-led state and social engineering after the war completely remade the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan and their respective strategic cultures after 1945. In fact, the norm of antimilitarism that was entrenched after the war has made it difficult for their governments to adopt assertive foreign policies. To read further on the debate, see (Ripsman, Taliaferro & Lobell, 2016).

[9] Dueck (2006), for instance, examines American foreign policy strategy by looking at four major turning points: the periods following World War I, World War II, the Cold War and the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He argues that in addition to international pressures, American political culture has had a push-and-pull effect on U.S. policy in competing directions over time.
Kupchan (1994) also argues that decision-making elites can be trapped in strategic culture, which can prevent them from reorienting grand strategy to meet international imperatives and avoid self-defeating behavior.

State-society relations are important in terms of deciphering whether political institutions allow the state to reach decisions autonomously from society, in order words, the degree to which the state possesses institutional autonomy from domestic pressures. From this perspective, for instance, Schweller (2006) asserts that the degree of consensus and cohesion at the elite and societal levels can condition the occurrence of inappropriate balancing behavior.

State-society interaction also takes into account the nature of civil-military relations in a state. The interaction between political elites, civil society and the military as an institution has an indirect impact on policy outcomes. The central issue is striking a balance between civilian control over the military and ensuring a strong and effective military which has its own narrow parochial interests. This balance is considered complicated in democracies.[10]

1.2.4. Domestic institutions

Last, domestic institutions act as filters between the agent and the system by determining who can contribute to policy formation, at what stage of the policy process and who can act as veto players by using their power to block policy initiatives. Neoclassical realists argue that the institutional structures of states shape their ability to respond to systemic pressures. For instance, democratic peace theories assume that democratic norms and rules promote peace among democratic states (Brown et al., 1996; Russett et al., 1993). An alternative explanation is that institutional structures inherent in democracies such as checks and balances on power act as constraints on state behavior. Still, democratic states harbor institutional

[10] To read further on the debate, See, (Ripsman, Taliaferro & Lobell, 2016, p.70-75).

differences. A number of factors, such as the degree of concentration of power, party systems, voting rules and the electoral system, affect whether state leaders can mobilize the nation's power so as to adjust and adapt in the face of external shocks.

Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016) advise any researcher to pick at least two of these intervening variables when analyzing state behavior. Leader images and strategic culture are considered to have a larger impact on short-term policy, particularly during crisis situations. Neoclassical realists argue that leader perceptions become more influential when decision-makers face time constraints, since "societal groups and domestic institutions that would normally constrain policymaking might be sidestepped" (Ripsman, Taliaferro & Lobell, 2016, p.93). Alternatively, when analyzing medium-to-long term policy projections, state-society relations and domestic institutions are considered better suited variables. Unlike, leadership images and to an extent strategic culture, these two variables refer to how the domestic process operates and thereby shape and constrain the formulation as well as implementation of foreign policy decisions. As such, "the degree to which state-society relations are cooperative rather than competitive and the degree to which domestic political institutions allow the executive greater autonomy are considered to have greater significance with regard to policy planning endeavors" Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016). Similarly, Devlen and Özdamar (2009) advise scholars seeking to explain longer-term dependent variables "to work with variables from the strategic culture, state-society relations and domestic institution clusters as the impact of individual leaders diminishes over time."

1.3. Why neoclassical realist paradigm?

This study aims to make a pioneering attempt at applying the neoclassical realist theory to Turkish-Israeli relations. The research question is whether Turkey's Israel policy is primarily shaped by geopolitical imperatives or identity concerns. Examining the basic determinants of Turkey's Israel policy, this study looks into the interaction between the structure and the agency. The main hypothesis of this research is that Turkey's Israel policy has been a function of the country's relations with the West and, especially, the United States.

Accordingly, this study argues that the basic parameters of Turkey's Israel policy changed in the 2000s in parallel to the transformation of the international system, as well as structural changes in Turkish politics. The shift in Turkey's Israel policy, which is considered an indication of Turkey's strategic reorientation away from the West, has been influenced by systemic developments as much as leaders' preferences. Looking into "state-society relations" and "domestic institutions" as the two major intervening variables, this study claims that the exclusion of the military from politics and the concentration of power in the hands of the executive led to the sidelining of traditional actors and institutions that participated in the making of foreign policy. As a result, foreign policy decisions have become more susceptible to the impact of ideological preferences and the actions of leaders seeking domestic political gain.

As mentioned above, this research particularly works with two clusters of intervening variables and examines their impact on foreign policy, namely "state-society relations" and "domestic institutions." In their book *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Relations*, Ripsman, Taliaferro & Lobell (2016), respond to criticisms leveled against neoclassical realism and argue that intervening variables

which often “distort national foreign policy responses to international systemic stimuli” (p.60) are indeed systematically organized in the neoclassical realist theory according to their respective relevance in shaping three main domestic processes: perceptions, decision-making and policy implementation. While the leader image and strategic culture condition perception of international developments by decision-makers, state-society relations, domestic institutions, and to an extent strategic culture are considered to have a greater influence on decision-making and policy implementation.

This research utilizes state-society relations and domestic institutions as the two key intervening variables to explain Turkey’s zigzagging Israel policy. Since this research is not limited to the study of a particular crisis, but it offers an analysis of Turkey’s Israel policy over more than two decades, these variables especially accord with the propositions of neoclassical realist theory. It is also possible to expand this research by including other intervening variables as well, such as leadership images and strategic culture. However, in the Turkish case, the study of unit-level institutional variables is particularly useful in analyzing the structural change in Turkish domestic politics from the mid-2000s on, which manifested itself through the exclusion of the military from politics and concentration of power in the hands of the executive.

Exogenous factors might have incentivized decision-makers to reorient foreign policy in a certain direction, but as this study argues, it was the institutional change at the domestic level that permitted such a shift to happen in the first place. To put it in another way, if the JDP government operated in a different institutional setting, the same political leaders with the same set of perceptions, values and goals might not be able to mobilize state power and implement certain policies. From this

perspective, the two intervening variables of state-society relations and domestic institutions seem to provide adequate explanation for how eliminating potential rival figures and institutions helped the government consolidate power, thereby creating a suitable environment in which decision-makers could implement their values, perceptions and ideological preferences in foreign policy decisions. Therefore, examining the impact of other intervening variables becomes less relevant for the purposes of this study, since "state-society relations" and "domestic institutions" provide enough evidence of the transformation of the institutional set-up, which has contributed to a shift in Turkey's Israel policy along with changing geopolitical interests.

As for the timespan of the research, the intention in focusing on the post-Cold War period was to keep the impact of systemic change limited by examining Turkish-Israel relations in a unipolar environment in which the United States was the superpower. However, as the events unfolded, unipolarity turned out to be short-lived, as it gave way to a multipolar world order that has witnessed the gradual decline of U.S. power, the erosion of U.S.-led institutions and the rise of challengers like Russia and China. This power transition continues today. What may seem as a handicap at first sight actually enabled this study to trace the regularities in bilateral relations during the bipolar, unipolar and post-American world order.

By incorporating systemic factors with intervening variables at the domestic level, the neoclassical realist perspective seems better-suited to explaining the shifts in Turkey's Israel policy. It also grants flexibility to the researcher in terms of looking into multiple levels of analysis and switching back and forth between the system, state and leadership levels. Indeed, the relevant literature review shows that studies on Turkish-Israeli relations that employ a structural realist perspective also

accept the impact of domestic factors on foreign policy behavior in addition to international and regional developments. By incorporating domestic aspect into their analyses, some of these researchers have argued a position similar to that of the neoclassical realist approach without fully acknowledging it.

For instance, Oğuzlu (2010), in "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations," argues that both the establishment of strong strategic relations during the 1990s and the growing tension toward 2010 can be convincingly analyzed through a structural realist perspective. Yet he also indicates:

> However, saying this does not mean to suggest that other factors, most notably domestic and identity-related considerations, have not played a role in Turkey's relations with Israel over the last two decades. The Islamist tendencies on the part of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the growing influence of the public opinion in Turkey and the nature of party politics in Israel might have affected the way bilateral relations have unfolded thus far. (Oğuzlu, 2010, p.274)

In a similar vein, Özcan (2017) underlines the impact of regional dynamics that shape Turkish foreign policy and thereby its Israel policy, but he also takes into account developments that have taken place in the domestic sphere:

> Throughout the 2000s, there have been three major dynamics which guided Turkish foreign policy: 1-Regional developments in the Middle East, 2-Domestic challenges against the AKP rule, 3-Strategies developed by the AKP to meet these challenges. (p.5)

Altunışık and Martin (2011) examine change in Turkey's Middle East policy under the AKP from a foreign policy analysis perspective, applying Hermann's (1990) four categories of change and Carlsneas' (1992) agent-structure dynamic onto Turkish foreign policy.[11] Their analysis comprises the examination of the interplay of domestic actors with the regional international systems including their economic,

[11] These four elevated categories of foreign policy change are, adjustment change (referring to a change in the level of effort), program change (changes in methods or means to achive a policy goal), goal change (purposes change), and lastly international orientation change as the redirection of foreign policy orientation (Altunisik & Martin, 2011; Hermann, 1990; Carlsneas, 1992).

identity and security components. Thus, the study underlines the importance of analyzing both agency and structure in terms of understanding change in Turkish foreign policy.

Constructivist approaches, on the other hand, put more emphasis on the role of values, identities and perceptions in shaping foreign policy behavior. For instance, Yavuz (1997) examines Turkish-Israeli relations in the mid-1990s from an identity perspective and argues that even though Turkey's strategic ties with Israel is a foreign policy issue, it has also become a symbol of Turkey's Western identity, which ultimately culminated in a showdown between the Turkish military and the Islamist-led civilian government. Indeed, Yavuz (1997) affirms how domestic and foreign policy are intertwined. Ünal (2017), on the other hand, provides a constructivist account of Turkey's relations with Israel in the 2000s and claims that Turkey's "state identity" changed with the rise of the AKP. According to Ünal (2017), the estrangement between Turkey and Israel from the mid-2000s and onwards stems from the AKP's Islamist ideology which came to dominate foreign policy decisions.

While ideology might have shaped Turkey's Israel policy under AKP rule to a certain extent, endogenous factors alone cannot fully explain why the same AKP government agreed to sign the normalization deal in 2016 and why President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan bashed the conservative critics of the deal when he said: "Have you consulted with the PM back then, with regard to sending humanitarian aid to Gaza?" in reference to the Mavi Marmara Incident ("Erdoğan'dan İHH'ya," 2016).

Similarly, relying purely on a structural realist account falls short of interpreting Turkey's foreign policy shift in the wake of the Arab protests of late 2010, where decision-makers set ambitious foreign policy goals that exceeded the

state's capabilities and were eventually forced to make a course correction later on. Structural factors alone cannot adequately explain why, for instance, Turkey and Israel waited until 2016 to sign the normalization deal, and why the deal failed to generate a genuine normalization of ties between the two countries afterwards.

While structural realism is criticized for its external determinism, neoclassical realist theory is particularly considered helpful in explaining foreign policy anomalies; that is to say, situations "when states cannot properly adopt to systemic pressures – particularly at regional level – because these pressures are translated through intervening variables" (Rose, 2018, p.146)[12] When applied to the post-2016 normalization process between Turkey and Israel, the neoclassical realist paradigm sheds light onto the contradictory forces at play at the systemic and unit levels.

Intervening variables identified in this research are also useful in explaining why, for instance, Turkey's Israel policy did not deviate when the Welfare Party – known for its Islamist roots and anti-Israeli stance – became a coalition partner in 1996. From a structural realist perspective, strategic interests and regional security concerns drove Turkey to maintain close defense cooperation ties with Israel, yet in addition to this, the role of the military should also be taken into account since the institution served as a bulwark against Welfare leader Necmettin Erbakan's attempts to undermine this cooperation, as occurred when the party delayed parliament's ratification of the Military Training Agreement with Israel in 1996.[13]

In conclusion, the neoclassical realist paradigm seems to provide a more effective explanation of Turkey's Israel policy in terms of determining elements of both continuity and change. Besides, the flexibility of looking into different levels of

[12] For further reading on underbalancing, see Schweller (2004).
[13] See, Chapter 4.

analysis enables the researcher to gain a richer interpretation of developments. The neoclassical realist theory also provides an analytical framework to analyze domestic factors through an examination of unit-level, intervening variables, unlike studies that pick domestic factors in an ad hoc manner. By employing the neoclassical realist paradigm to Turkish-Israeli relations, this study hopes to make a modest contribution to the field of international relations.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TURKISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS

This chapter aims to provide a historical background of Turkish-Israeli relations, with a focus on the Young Turkish Republic's ambivalent approach to the Zionist movement[14]- a political ideology that sought to establish a Jewish home in Palestine – in the path to the recognition of Israel in 1949.

From a historical perspective, Turkish-Israeli relations have followed a tumultuous course, with diplomatic ups and downs. Turkey was the first Muslim-majority country to recognize Israel in 1949, even though she voted against the United Nation's (UN) Partition Plan for Palestine in 1947.[15] After recognition, it took Ankara another year to establish formal diplomatic relations with Israel.

Bilateral ties developed within the bipolar structure of the Cold War. Turkey's Israel policy was, to a large extent, shaped by her geopolitical calculations, taking into account security and economic interests as well as regional power balances. In this regard, Arab-Israeli conflict has been central to, yet not the sole determinant of Turkish-Israeli relations. The Palestinian issue, has always constituted a sensitive topic for Turkish society, arousing sympathy from both the

[14] Shlaim (2014, p.5) defines Zionism as the idea of reviving the ancestral home of the Jewish people in Zion (the biblical name of Jerusalem). This plea which constitutes the essence of Jewish nationalism, has characterized Jewish prayers and rituals since the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BC, turned into a political goal to establish a Jewish state in Palestine.

[15] An 11-member Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was formed at the first special session of the U.N. Assembly in April 1947. The majority of the committee members recommended partition of Palestine into an Arab State and a Jewish State, with a special international status for the city of Jerusalem under the administrative authority of the United Nations. On Nov. 29, 1947, the U.N. General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II). The partition plan foresaw the termination of the British mandate, the progressive withdrawal of British armed forces and the delineation of boundaries between the two States and Jerusalem. Accordingly, the Arab and Jewish States would be created no later than Oct. 1, 1948: Palestine would be divided into eight parts, six parts of which would be allotted equally between the Arab State and the Jewish State, while the seventh, the town of Jaffa, would form an Arab enclave within Jewish territory. Jerusalem, the eighth division, would to be administered by the United Nations Trusteeship Council ("The U.N. voting on resolution 181," 1947).

left and the right of the political spectrum-albeit based on different narratives and causes. However, as it will be analyzed thoroughly in this study, Turkey's approach to Arab-Israeli conflict has shown parallels to her changing political alignments/foreign policy orientations which naturally caused a zigzagging in relations with Israel.

Geopolitical interests on the one hand, historical and cultural ties on the other, Turkish policymakers have faced a tremendously difficult task of striking a balance in their relations with Israel and Arab countries, that is pursuing economic and security cooperation with Israel without alienating the Arab world. It has never been smooth sailing, and there were times when the balance shifted toward one of the sides, parallel to conjunctural developments.

Technological sophistication, military power and intelligence made Israel, an important partner while the Jewish Community living in Turkey served as a cultural bridge between the two countries, connecting Turkish Jews with their relatives living in Israel. From Turkey's perspective, maintaining cordial relations with Israel has been considered beneficial in terms of facilitating close ties with the Western world on account of its friendly relations with Washington.

For Israel, gaining the support of Turkey, a secular, democratic and Muslim-majority country in the neighborhood that is also a member of the Western alliance, has been important in terms of countering Arab hostility through a strategy that has been dubbed the periphery doctrine[16], which was based on the pursuit of alternative

[16] The term "periphery alliance" was first coined by Baruch Uziel-who later became a member of the Liberal Party in the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset-in a series of lectures delivered before the establishment of Israel. Uziel advocated for the "periphery alliance" in a memorandum to the Foreign Ministery and later developed his ideas in an essay published in November 1948 in Beterem-a journal affiliated to the Mapai Party. Pointing at the insecure environment surrounding the embryonic state of Israel, Uziel advocated Israel's seeking "allies among ethnic groups that lived under the same political conditions and faced the same dangers as Israel." He laid the basis of a grand strategy designed to counteract Arab hostility through alliances with regional powers and potential friends over the course of many years. The doctrine would be put into practice by Israel's national founder and first PM Ben-

partnerships with non-Arab regional actors. However, relations with Ankara have never followed a linear path but have remained low profile throughout the Cold War, even at the height of bilateral relations during the Periphery Pact[17]. Frustration on Israel's side, caused by Turkey's ambivalence was at best expressed by Israeli PM David Ben Gurion who reportedly said: "Turkey has always treated us as one treats a mistress, and not as a partner in an openly avowed marriage" (Nachmani, 2005, p.76).

Still, it is important to underline that the periods in which Turkey's ties with Israel have cooled have always been followed by a return to normalization. The fact that cooperation in various fields continued between Turkey and Israel, albeit at a low profile, even when the relations seemed to reach their nadir on the outside, suggests that overall geopolitical interests have dictated Ankara's pursuit of well-balanced relations with Israel, a powerful player in the region. That is why, despite various sources of diplomatic tension, Turkish-Israeli relations have continued without a total rupture of ties until today.

2.1. Relations with the Zionist movement:

Although formal relations with Israel started in 1950, Turkey's relations with the Zionist movement date back to earlier periods, before the establishment of the Turkish Republic, to the years of the Ottoman Empire. Since Palestine was an Ottoman territory in those years, it is often claimed that Theodor Herzl,[18] known as

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Gurion and his close advisers such as Reuven Shiloah, the founder of Mossad, and Iser Harel, who headed both Mossad and Shin Bet, Israel's domestic intelligence and counterespionage service, starting in the early 1950s (Bengio, 2004, p.33-34).

[17] A military and intelligence alliance between Turkey and Israel, established in the late 1950s and lasted until 1966, and remained secret at the time (Alpher, 2015).

[18] Theodor Herzl, a Hungarian-born Jew who worked as a journalist and a playwright in Vienna, the capital of Austro-Hungarian Empire, is considered to be the father of the Zionist movement. He started to focus on the Jewish Question during the Dreyfus affair in the early 1890s, which he covered as the Paris correspondent of a Vienna newspaper.

the father of the Zionism, offered Sultan Abdulhamid financial support in return for his approval of Jewish settlement in Palestine, but was declined. However, a recent study by Balcı and Balcıoğlu (2017), which is based on an extensive survey of the Ottoman archives, sheds new light on the financial relations and loan transactions between the Ottoman Sultanate and the Rothschilds,[19] a prominent wealthy Jewish family, whose financial support Herzl sought -but failed to secure-for his project in 1895. Accordingly, the study also reveals that, contrary to common knowledge, Sultan Abdulhamid accepted the family's financial assistance and, consequently, allowed the Rothschilds to purchase land in Palestine, which paved the way for Jewish settlements in subsequent years.[20]

Following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, Great Britain and, to a lesser degree, France replaced the Ottomans as the dominant powers in the Middle East. In 1922, the League of Nations placed Palestine under a British mandate.

In the years following the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which served as a blueprint for British support for the Zionist cause, Jewish immigration to Palestine increased steadily. However, demographic changes led to growing tension between Arabs and Jews to the degree that the British had to revise their earlier policies regarding Jewish settlement in Palestine, leading them to attempt to limit Jewish

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He argued that the Jewish Question did not stem from economic, social or religious conflicts but was actually a national issue. As such, the only solution to the Jewish Question was the establishment of a Jewish state. He combined his thoughts in a book named the *Jewish State*, considered to be the blueprint of Zionism. In line with his political thinking, Herzl convened the First Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland. Participants declared that the aim of Zionism was to create a home for the Jewish people in Palestine (Avineri, 2008; Mayer, 2008; Shlaim, 2014).

[19] In June 1895, Herzl got in touch with Rabbi Moritz Güdemann in Vienna, hoping that as the leader of the Jewish establishment in Vienna, Güdemann's support would help him gain access to the Vienna branch of the Rothschilds and even to the German Emperor (Avineri, 2008).

[20] During the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II, the Ottomans borrowed twice from the Rothschild Family in 1891 and 1894. From 1854 till 1914, the Rotschilds periodically supplied financial loans and in return the family members were granted awards and medals by the Sultans ("Osmanlı´da Rothschild algısı," 2017)

immigration and land purchases through the White Papers of 1922, 1930 and 1939.[21] Disappointment with the flip-flops in Britain's Palestine policy prompted the Zionists to find new allies to pursue their goals.

While the Turkish Foreign Ministry's archives are not available for research, formal declarations, interviews and commentaries in the press prove that Ankara closely followed the developments in Palestine during the British mandate. Gruen's (1970) doctoral dissertation thoroughly examines the young Republic's perception of the Palestine issue as well as its ambivalent stance towards the State of Israel in post-war period, based on an extensive archival research of the Turkish press. Aktar and Özel's (1999) study also provides a rich survey of Turkish press, including collections of daily newspapers like Ulus, Cumhuriyet, Vatan and Ayın Tarihi, as well as news and commentaries published by the Press office of the Prime Ministry, over how Turkey's approach to the Zionist movement shifted parallel to changing foreign policy orientation in the wake of the Cold War and how recognition of Israel have been instrumental in securing support of the West. Bali's book (2013) on the migration of Jews from Turkey between 1946 and 1949 is another important source that examines the lives of Turkish Jews during the early republican years and studies the impact of economic and social nationalization policies at the time.

[21] "White Papers" are the official reports released by the British Government commission, that were usually issued following government investigative commissions. The most-significanWhite Papers on the arrangement of immigration to Palestine during the British Mandate were those issued in 1922, 1930, and 1939. The White Paper of 1922 was issued following the Haycraft Commission of Inquiry's findings on the Arab riots of 1921. While the British government tried to uphold its pledges stated in the Balfour Declaration, the area in the east of the Jordan River which was formerly under the control of the British mandate was given to the Emir Abdullah. This document had also enforced a quota so as to restrict Jewish immigration to Palestine.
The White Paper of 1930, was issued upon the findings of the Shaw Commission, in the wake of the Arab Riots of 1929. The paper introduced further restrictions on Jewish settlement in Palestine. Lastly, the White Paper of 1939, rejected the Peel Commission's partition plan and placed an immigration quota of 75 thousand Jewish people for the first years, based on concerns over Palestine's economic absorptive capacity and on Arab dissent. It also placed restrictions on land acquisitions by Jews ("British Palestine mandate," n.d.).

A common theme in these studies above is that Turkey has never had a consistent policy towards the Zionist movement and preferred to manage relations on an ad hoc basis. Struggling to maintain her neutral status at the international arena, Ankara's deepest concern was being sucked into a regional war.

Archival research indicates that Turkish policymakers had followed the deepening hostilities between the two communities following the Arab riots of 1929 and 1936 with concern.[22] The partition of Palestine was not desired since it would lead to further instability and violence in the region (Fenik, 1948). Initially, Zionism was treated as an imperialist movement associated with the expansionism of Western powers in the region. For instance, Belge (1937) elaborated on the developments in Tan newspaper as follows:

> Zionism can rightly be considered an imperialist movement. (…) History is the biography of all nations but it does not constitute a title deed for any nation. The Jews felt the need for a homeland of their own because of the persecution and insults they have suffered everywhere… The Jew had become universalistic, tolerant and liberal because of this suffering… Zionism denies all this. It adopts violence and uses money as its means (…) What difference does it make if it has been uprooted by force, insults and concentration camps or by the cold and material arrogance of gold? (Belge, 1937, as cited in Aktar & Özel,1999, p.132)

[22] Over the years, the struggle between the Arabs and Jews in Palestine paved the way for the emergence of a Palestinian national movement. In this context, there were two critical milestones. The Arab revolt of 1929 paved the way for the internationalization of the conflict. The outbreak of the Arab revolt in 1936, on the other hand, constituted a turning point in Great Britain's policy toward the Palestinian issue. As events spiraled out of control, Britain was forced to appoint a royal commission under Lord Peel to investigate the situation and offer policy recommendation. The Peel Commission issued a report in 1937 that suggested partitioning Palestine between the two communities. However, the project was shelved due to strong objections from the Arabs. Unable to maintain order and security in Palestine, Britain soon applied to the U.N. to find a solution to the clashes, which resulted in the termination of the mandate. Throughout the interwar years, the Zionist movement sought new sponsors in parallel to the rise and fall of the great powers on the international political scene. After convening in 1939, the World Zionist Congress was suspended during the war, while its headquarters were moved to the US due to security concerns in continental Europe. Frustration with the White Paper of 1939 also facilitated the Zionist movement's rapprochement with the US (Mayer, 2008, p.164).

In contrast to the media's cautious stance toward the Zionist movement, Ankara did establish contact and even engaged in commercial cooperation with the Jewish Agency. In this respect, Turkey participated in the Zionist-sponsored Levant fair in Jerusalem in 1936. The government also permitted the Foreign Trade Institute- which was founded by the Jewish Agency in cooperation with the Palestine Manufacturers' Association, to establish a branch in Turkey.[23] What is noteworthy, the Jewish Agency participated in the İzmir Fairs of 1938, 1939 and 1943, during which the Zionist flag/Jewish Star of David was the only non-state flag permitted by Turkish authorities at the event.

Although the Turkish government did not officially permit Zionist organizations to operate in the country, studies point out that it effectively turned a blind eye to their activities.[24] Throughout World War II, Turkey allowed representatives of the Jewish Agency to operate under the auspices of the British and American embassies to assist the transport of Jewish refugees to Palestine via Turkey.[25]

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[23] Turkey's economic policy during the Second World War aimed at decreasing shortages, preventing monopoly and inflation, and thereby maintaining social justice. In this regard, the National Protection Law of 1940 provided the İnönü government extensive authority over regulating the economy. In 1941, Trade Office, also known as Türkofis was founded under the Food Supply Office, to determine pricing in both domestic and foreign trade, and thereby support Turkish industry (Karpat, 1991; Koçak, 2017).

[24] The rule did not specifically target Zionist organizations; a large number of political organizations were also prohibited at the time.

[25] The Eretz Israel Delegation in Istanbul operated as an agent of the Jerusalem Rescue Council (Vaad ha-Hatzala). Previously established in Palestine by the Jewish Agency to assist European Jews experiencing Nazi persecution, the delegation was led from December 1940 to 1945 by Chaim Barlas, who had been head of the Jewish Agency Immigration Department in Jerusalem for a decade. Barlas represented the Jewish Agency in Istanbul as head of its Immigration (Aliyah) Department and Palestine Office and also acted as the World Jewish Congress Representative in Turkey from 1941 to 1943. Along with Eliahu Eilat, who had been appointed to direct the Istanbul office by the Jewish Agency's political department at the time, Joseph Golden of the Palestine (Eretz Israel) Bureau's Aliyah Department and Ruben Resnik, a representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, maintained offices at the American Consulate in Istanbul (Koçak, 2017).

Given the sensitive international political setting at the time, Ankara had to walk on a tight rope to avoid alienating either Germany or Great Britain. While the Germans demanded the return of Jews who had fled the country in order to send them to concentration camps, the British attempted to restrict immigration to Palestine in line with the White Paper of 1939- a document which limited Jewish migration to Palestine in order to reduce the tension between Jews and Arabs. In this respect, the tragic incident of the Palestine-bound *Struma*, a ship that was sunk off in the Black Sea, within territorial waters of Turkey -torpedoed by a Soviet submarine- with 769 Jewish refugees on board in 1942, illustrates Ankara's turning a blind eye to the plight of innocent people seeking refuge in order not to antagonize warring nations and get involved in the conflict.[26]

In fact, since its foundation, Turkish Republic has maintained an ambiguous stance with regard to the operations of the Zionist movement and the treatment of her own Jewish citizens. On the one hand, Turkish state forced the Jewish population of Eastern Thrace to migrate to Istanbul in 1934, closed the Turkish branches of B'nai B'rith[27] and introduced the infamous Capital Levy in 1942-a wealth tax imposed on citizens in order to prevent extraordinary profits during the wartime conditions, which in practice, turned out to be a means of nationalization of Turkish economy, by solely targeting minorities (Aktar, 2000). The same Turkey, however, extended invitations to Jewish professors escaping Nazi persecution in Germany during World War II. Moreover, several Turkish diplomats such as Behiç Erkin

[26] Aktar and Özel (1999) highlight the contradictory measures taken by the Turkish government regarding both the operations of the Zionist movement and the treatment of its own Jewish citizens. At a time when the Jewish population of Eastern Thrace was forced to migrate to Istanbul and the Turkish branches of B'nai B'rith were closed down, Ankara extended invitations to Jewish professors escaping Nazi persecution in Germany.

[27] B'nai Brith is the oldest and the largest Jewish organization founded in New York in 1843, committed to the moral, social and educational welfare of Jewish people (B'nai Brith international," n.d.).

(Turkey's ambassador to Paris between 1940-1945), Bedii Arbel (Turkey's Consul-General to Marseille 1940-1943), Mehmet Fuat Carım (Turkey's Consul-General to Marseille 1943-1945), Necdet Kent (Turkey's Vice Consul in Marseille from 1940 to 1945), and Selahattin Ülkümen (Turkey's Consul-General in Rhodes 1943-1944), each has taken initiative to save Jews of Turkish descent under Nazi occupation, at the expense of risking their own lives.[28] It is also noteworthy that representatives of the Jewish Agency's Joint Rescue Committee continued their activities in Istanbul from 1942 until 1944, maintaining contact with Jewish communities in Nazi-occupied Europe while coordinating aid and rescue operations (Shaw, 1993; Bali, 2009).

2.2. Emergence of Pax Americana and its impact on Turkey's policy towards the Zionist movement

Turkish foreign policy in the early years of the republic can best be characterized as pro-status quo and cautiously realist. In line with the motto of "Yurtta sulh, cihanda sulh" (Peace at home, peace in the world) of the country's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkish policymakers avoided political adventures abroad and channeled their energies into building a new state out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. As such, they avoided becoming embroiled in conflicts among other countries. This principle was also applied to Middle Eastern affairs and the Palestinian Question, in particular.Having suffered territorial, financial and humanitarian losses in the War of Independence, the founders of the Turkish Republic opted to maintain a neutral stance throughout World War II, remaining equidistant to the Allied and Axis

[28] For instance, Arliel's (2011) documentary of "Turkish Passport" tells the story of Turkish diplomats' heroic efforts in saving numerous Jewish people (mostly Turkish Jews) from the Holocaust.

camps.[29] Only in the final stages of the war, when the victory of the Allied Powers had become inevitable, did Turkey enter the war on the side of the Allies in February 1945, and that was in order to become a member of the UN (Kuneralp, 1999, p.227-231).[30]

The uncertainties of the post-war period, particularly the Soviet Union's denunciation of the Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality with Turkey on March 19, 1945,[31] forced Turkey to abandon its neutral status and choose its side amid the growing division of the world into two hostile camps.[32]

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[29] In the wake of the Second World War, Turkey found itself in the middle of a struggle between the Great Powers. At the time, Italy's expansionist policies in the Mediterranean such as the occupation of Albania in 1939 drove Turkey towards Britain and France. However, given the bitter memories of the First World War and an equally pressing issue of regime consolidation at home , Ankara was cautious not to be drawn into the war. Thus, only after the German-Soviet Non Agression Pact was signed in August 1939 and that Germany invaded Poland a month later, Turkey signed the Anglo-Franco-Turkish Treaty of mutual support on Oct. 19, 1939. Accordingly, Turkey was granted a loan of 16 million in gold and a creadit of 25 million pounds for arms purchase. "Turkey was also excused from any obligation which could involve her in a war with the Soviet Union." Still, Turkey had to walk on a tightrope throughout the World War II, struggled to pursue a policy of neutrality despite its former alliance with Britain and France. Maintaining that balance became harder after German made advances on near Turkey's western border. Shortly after the Nazis occupied Greece and Bulgaria, Turkey signed a Non-Agression Treaty with Germany on June 18, 1941. In the meantime, the Allied Powers, particularly the British continued to put pressure on Ankara to enter into the war, however the İnönü administration was not willing to get involved unless the allies provided Turkey necessary military equipment and besides they were sceptical about possible post war designs in the making to divide Turkey up . At the time, Turkey's support was also significant with regard to Britain's Foreign Minister Winston Churchill's war strategies of launching an offensive from the Balkans, which was eventually shelved as the United States found the Normandy route more feasible (Altunışık & Tür, 2005; p.102; Aydın, 2015, p.385). To read on the alternative war plans the United States and Britain discussed at the time, see, (Keylor,1996, p.187).

[30] Turkey didn't want to be drawn into the war, yet she also wanted to have a say regarding to political and economic postwar settlements. Harris provides a detailed account of how the US has gotten increasingly involved in international politics as the World War II ended, and how Ankara sought the US as well as British support against the Soviet Union. On their way to Turkey from the San Francisco Conference, the Turkish delegation stopped in London to warn the British government about the Soviet danger. Also, with regard to the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, Harris asserts that Ankara was not comfortable about being left out as the Big Three-the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union- debated its intimate concerns in its absence (Harris, 1972, p.12; Oran, 2002, p.385).

[31] Upon the Soviets' denouncement of the Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality, which was concluded at Paris in 1925, Ankara responded by a request to be informed about what set of conditions would be put forward by Kremlin for the revision of the treaty. In June 1945, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov received Turkey's Ambassador Selim Sarper and conveyed Soviet demands which included territory from eastern Turkey, revision of the Montreaux Protocol over the Straits (Oran, 2002).

[32] Studies on Turkish Foreign policy, and Turkey's Middle East policy in particular, from the end of the World War II and onwards, by and large, underline a break from the cautious and pro-status quo foreign policy line of the Republican People's Party with the ascendance of the Democrat Party in Turkish politics in 1950. Bağcı (2001) identifies the Menderes government's foreign policy orientation as "dynamic" and argues that Turkey has consciously undertaken the role of an active

In this context, US President Harry Truman's address to US Congress on March 12, 1947 – dubbed the Truman Doctrine – started a new era of Pax Americana in international relations. By pledging to provide political, military and economic assistance to all democratic nations under threat from external or internal authoritarian forces, President Truman, laid the foundation of the US world leadership, and political engagement to contain the spread of communism. Turkey's inclusion in the Marshall Plan in June 1948 as a result of Truman's call on the Congress to extend political and financial support to Greece and Turkey, came as a relief to Ankara in the face of the Soviet threat. In hindsight, the declaration of the Truman Doctrine underlined Turkey's importance as a bulwark state against Soviet ambitions in the region.[33]However, Ankara was seeking further institutional safeguards to secure its place in the Western security architecture. In this regard, Turkey did not only push for entry into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization but would also support pro-western regional security initiatives such as the Middle East Command MEC,[34] the Middle East Organization MEDO,[35] and the Baghdad Pact.[36]

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member of the Western bloc in the 1950s and thereby became the seismograph of the Middle East, aspiring to be a key player in containing communism in the region. Mufti (2009) also identifies two dominant paradigms in Turkish foreign policy, namely, the Republican and the Imperial. The former has emerged amid the traumas of Ottoman collapse, World War I and the War of Independence, and has persistently constrained Turkish security policy in favor of minimum activism, seeking security by turning inward. In contrast, the counter-paradigm in Turkish strategic culture which Mufti (2009) designates as "imperial," sees "Turkey's external environment as capable of yielding rewards if one is open to engaging with and trying to reshape it." The Democrat Party of the 1950s is the first embodiment of this imperial paradigm with its interventionist policies in the Middle East.

[33] The Truman Doctrine is the US foreign policy based on President Harry S. Truman's address to the Congress on March 12, 1947, in which he pledged US assistance to countries facing Soviet aggression (Spanier & Hook, 1998).

[34]After the Second World War, Britain promoted establishment of a Middle East Defence Pact that would include Britain, the Arab League states, Israel, Turkey, Iran and possibly Greece, with Egypt providing the base facilities against Soviet aggression. However, the project was stillborn, due Arab countries' particularly Egypt's refusal to participate from the onset. Britain also failed to assure Washington's blessing and participation (Yeşilbursa, 1999).

[35] In February 1952, Britain made a new proposal for the establishment of a Middle East Defense Organization. However, facing the same difficulties, the MEDO could not be realized, and remained as an idea (Yeşilbursa, 1999, p.95).

[36] Baghdad Pact is a regional security alliance founded in 1955 by Turkey, Iraq, Great Britain, Pakistan and Iran, to promote common political, economic and military interests (Almog & Sever, 2017).

Indeed, Turkey was expected to undertake a key role in the Middle East defense even before Turkey formally joined NATO, and this was almost set as a condition on the way to Turkey's NATO membership, particularly by Britain. British Foreign Secretary Herbert Stanley Morrison in his address to the House of Commons in July 1951 states that:

> The main difficulty is reconciling Turkey's demand to join NATO and her position in the defense of the Middle East… We put emphasis on Turkey's undertaking her responsibility in the Middle East defense. Turkish government, too, agrees with us. We hope that proceedings will soon be completed so that Turkey participates in the plans, ensuring security in this important region of the world. ("Ayın Tarihi,"1951, p.74)[37]

Turkey's approach to the establishment of Israel was transformed in parallel to the rise and fall of the great powers in the international system and in accordance with geostrategic considerations in the postwar context. French and British dominance over the Middle East gradually waned with the end of the World War II. In 1947, Britain openly sought support of the United States and informed the Truman administration that she was no longer capable of preserving security and order in Europe and the Middle East. Britain's plea, along with reports on the Soviet intentions prompted the United States to abandon her usual isolationist policy and engage in world politics, taking initiative.[38]

As war-weary Britain retreated from the world leadership in the post-war international context, Turkey increasingly found herself turning to the US for military and economic aid. In retrospect, Turkey's desire to become a part of the US-

[37] FM Fuat Köprülü, in his address to the Turkish Parliament on July 20, 1951 stated: "We understand that the Middle East defense is essential in terms of securing Europe's economic as well as strategic interests. When Turkey adheres to the Atlantic Pact, we will fulfill our responsibilities in the Middle East, in this regard" ("Ayın Tarihi,"1951, p.74; Kürkçüoğlu, 1972, p.45).

[38] In fact, the Zionist movement had long since shifted its headquarters to the US due to both security concerns and frustration with Britain's White Papers, which restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine. From 1941 and onwards, a Jewish lobby was set up in the US, under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion to promote Zionist goals, compensating for the support that Britain failed to offer (Shlaim, 2014).

led Western alliance in the wake of the Cold War might have softened Ankara's stance toward the Zionist cause. Gruen, for instance, refers to remarks by the Chief Press Officer of the Turkish delegation to the United Nations' (UN) 1945 Conference in San Francisco, saying: "How greatly influential and well-organized American Jewry is and of what tremendous assistance it is to us in awakening public opinion to our cause at a time when the Soviets were demanding the Straits and our eastern provinces" (Gruen, 1970, p.11)

Aktar and Özel (1999) also argue that "the recognition of the new state was a card which Turkey could use to get closer to the United states and to ingratiate itself with the increasingly influential American Jewish Community which had taken a very unfavorable note of Turkey's treatment of its minorities" during World War II. Drawing upon dispatches from the US diplomatic missions to Washington and documents in the US National Archives, Aktar and Özel (1999, p.45) highlight the pressure exerted through Washington by the American Jewish Organizations on the İnönü government to take a number of steps to improve the image o to improve the image of the country tarnished by the Capital Levy (Varlık Vergisi) of 1942.

The President of the American Jewish Committee, Joseph M. Proskauer's letter to Dean Acheson, the US Secretary of State on March 26, 1947, less than two months before the partition plan took effect, is an evidence of a functioning channel of communications and influence:

> The government of Turkey is now seeking economic and political support of the United States. This would seem a proper occasion for the US government to make its attitude clear on the treatment of minorities in Turkey. Out people would be much inclined to give support to the Turkish people if we knew that all Turkish citizens including Christians and Jews were treated on a basis of equality and justice…it should at once redress the outrages injustices of the Varlık Decree which have brought economic ruin to the Christian and Jewish citizens of Turkey. Even a partial restitution would be an indication that the Turkish government is

> altering its course in the direction of justice to all citizens without regard to race and creed, in accordance with the principles of democracy which our country is desirous of promoting all over the world (Aktar & Özel, 1999, p.45).

In his letter, Proskauer also mentioned the articles published by Sulzberger back in 1943 after a brief visit to Turkey, which shed light upon and drew the public opinion's attention to the unjust implementation of the Capital Levy. As a response, Gordon P. Meriam, the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, reassured Proskauer that there had been a liberal trend in Turkey in terms of political representation, freedom of education and the press (Aktar & Özel, 1999, p.45).

Also, on July 1947, Turkey's U.N. Delegate Selim Sarper received Eliahu Epstein, representative of the Jewish Agency in the United States. During the meeting Sarper requested the Jewish Agency's assistance in turning the US public opinion in favor of Turkey. Epstein replied that "it would be difficult to persuade either the Jews of the United States or the general public sympathetic to the Zionist cause to aid Turkey if it adopted a hostile stand on the Palestinian question" (Gruen, 1970, p.29). These exchanges an reports provide a glimpse as to how Turkey's pursuit of the Jewish Agency's support might have affected her stance towards Israel, particularly between the U.N. vote on Palestine's Partition in November 1947 and Israel's recognition in 1949, a sensitive period when Turkey sought robust assurances due to the Soviet threat.

2.3 The path to recognition of Israel

As the clashes between the Arabs and the Jews got out of control in Palestine, the U.N. Special Committee on Palestine was created on May 15, 1947, upon a British governmental request. This special session of the U.N. General Assembly required

Turkey to take an official public stand on the future of Palestine for the first time. As Gruen indicates, the moderate approach of the Turkish delegation – headed by veteran diplomat Hüseyin Ragıp Baydur, Ankara's ambassador in Washington since March 1945 – reflected Ankara's reluctance to offend either its Arab neighbors or the Jews of the world (Gruen, 1970, p.17).

The committee issued a report on Sept. 3, 1947, that supported the termination of the British mandate in Palestine at the earliest possible date. On Nov. 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution 181, which called for the partition of the country between Arabs and Jews by a vote of 33 to 13, with 10 abstentions (UNGA,1947).

Turkey sided with six Arab countries, along with Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Greece and Cuba, in opposing the partition. Turkey and Afghanistan were the only non-Arab states that provided full support for the Arab position at the UN. However, Turkish representatives also refrained from labeling the proposal "unjust, illegal, and contrary to the U.N. charter proposals" as did the Arab countries at the UN (Bishku, 2006, p.181).

The rapid recognition of Israel by the US, Britain and France after her declaration of independence has possibly influenced Turkey's perception of the new country in a positive manner. The existence of a special relationship between the US and Israel was evident alone from the fact that within the first year of Israel's independence, American Jewry donated about $200 million to Israel while the US administration provided loans worth 100 million at a low interest rate (Gruen, 1970, p.88). In contrast, Turkey would receive about $225 million of economic aid from Washington in the form of loans and grants between 1949 and 1953 as part of the Marshall Plan (Erhan, 2015, p.553). Thus for Turkey, rapprochement with Israel, as

an extension of establishing good relations with the Zionist movement came to be seen as instrumental in facilitating her entry into the newly formed NATO, as well as its acquisition of financial aid from the United States.

It is therefore not a coincidence that the decision to recognize Israel was taken at a Council of Ministers meeting that came a month before Foreign Minister Sadak's visit to the US and prior to a meeting to discuss long-delayed credits and loans granted to Turkey by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Gruen, 1970).

When the British mandate over Palestine expired on May 15, 1948, the Jewish People's Council proclaimed the establishment of a Jewish state in Israel; in response, five Arab states declared war on Israel. Turkey remained neutral during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Ankara did not permit either Turks who wanted to fight alongside the Arabs or Jews who wanted to support Israel from heading to the area, although it did dispatch a small military training cadre to Syria and gave a gift of some tents and other supplies for Palestinian refugees.[39]

On June 30, 1948, Ankara signed a postal agreement with Israel in its first step towards recognizing the Jewish state. With 10,000 Turkish Jews living in Israel at the time, the move aimed to address both practical and emotional needs by facilitating their communication with relatives and friends in Turkey.

As the war ended in 1949, the Turkish government lifted the travel ban it imposed in September 1948, allowing Aliyah (immigration to Israel) to resume (Bali, 2003). Aktar and Özel (1999) assert that "Turkey's relaxation of immigration rules for its Jewish citizens was appreciated as a means to get the new state much needed manpower both to fight the war and build the country" (p.139).

[39] The Turkish government turned down Arab demands for military support, including Jordanian and Syrian requests to purchase Turkish planes (Gruen, 1970).

In December 1948, Turkey voted in favor of UNGA Resolution 194 (III), which called for the establishment of a Palestine conciliation commission and joined the commission along with France and the United States, as the only Muslim majority state (UNGA,1948).

Turkey had been opposed to the partition of Palestine all along. Yet, with the proclamation of Israel, Turkish policymakers adapted to the new realities on the ground, and duly pursued alliances to improve security and stability in the region. Speaking in an interview on Feb. 8, 1949, Turkish Foreign Minister Necmettin Sadak said: “Israel is a reality. More than thirty countries have already recognized it. The Arab representatives are themselves holding talks with their counterparts” (Ayın tarihi, 1972, p.183).

Having underlined recent developments, Sadak however, also stated that while Turkey intended to develop economic ties with Israel, she would not change her diplomatic stance vis-a-vis Israel, since extending recognition would contradict with Turkey’s responsibilities as a member of the Palestinian Reconciliation Commission, leaving an open door for future diplomatic relations (Ayın tarihi, 1972, p.183).

In early March, Turkey’s delegate of the Palestinian Reconciliation Commission, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın submitted a report to President İnönü, advising Turkey’s recognition of Israel. On March 19, speaking to an Israeli news agency Economy and Trade Minister Cemil Sait Barlas stated that he would be gladly hosting the Israeli delegation once diplomatic relations were established between the two countries (Özcan, 2005, p.22).

In the light of these developments, on March 30, 1949, the Turkish government's decision to extend diplomatic recognition to Israel first appeared in the Turkish press. Notably, the commentaries stressed that Ankara's belated recognition of Israel was indeed an indicator of Turkey's love and respect for the Arab world (Abadan, 1949, n.d.; "İsrail devletini tanımaya,"1949, p.1).

Given that religion formed a common bond between Turkey and the Arab world, a reasonable question to ask is whether or not identity/religious solidarity might have played a role in Turkey's siding with the Arab world on the Palestinian issue. In 1948, Foreign Minister Sadak said that it was a mistake to assume Turkish support for the Arab cause stemmed from the country's Muslim identity: "Turkey had not taken any particular stance because of a fear that partition would result in regional instability. Although Turkey did not support partition, it would nevertheless abide by the UN ruling"(Gruen, 1970, p.41).

In analyzing Turkey's recognition of Israel, it is important to take into account Ankara's concerns about Israel's close relations with the Soviet Union. In the wake of the Cold War, the primary threat for Turkish policymakers was, indeed, the expansion of communist ideology along its borders and in the neighborhood. Given the socialist inclinations of the Zionist movement, i.e. communal design of Kibbutzim-collective agricultural, industrial plantations- and other semi-collective settlements like Histadrut , the presence of leftist/socialist political parties such as MAPAM and further left MAKEI, Ankara was worried that Israel, if it proclaimed independence, would become a Soviet puppet in the region.

Historically, in order to secure interests of the Jews living in the Soviet territory and Eastern Europe, the Zionist movement has maintained cordial ties with the Soviet Union, despite Moscow's sympathy for Arab independence movements.

Therefore, the Soviet's overt support for the UN's Palestine's partition plan in favor of the Jews aroused suspicions in and out of Turkey (Krammer, 1973).[40]

In May 1948, Mümtaz Faik Fenik, wrote in Vatan, that the partition of Palestine would pave the way for a never-ending power struggle and instability in the region, while also warning of Soviet attempts to surround Turkey from both the north and the south in the event that the partition plan was implemented and a pro-Soviet Israel was established (Fenik, 1948).

Esmer (1948) shared Fenik's concerns and wrote in Ulus:

> Russia has suddenly become a friend of the Zionists and the enemy of the Arabs. Russia has taken a favorable attitude towards the Zionists whom it considered as tool of English imperialism until recently… Russia has taken it upon itself to make sure that the partition would succeed, and a Jewish state would be established (p.3).

It is, thus, important to underline that Turkey de jure recognized Israel on April 1, 1949, only after Turkish policymakers were reassured that Israel was not a red state (Resmi Gazete, 1949, no.7171). A number of developments helped soothe Ankara's concerns, such as the US President Harry Truman's support for Jewish immigration to Palestine and especially his statement on the eve of Yom Kippur in 1946 in which he recognized Jewish right to statehood ("Harry Truman's Yom Kippur,"2012), as well as the poor performance of the Communist party of MAKEI and the Socialist-Zionist Party of MAPAM, which scored 3.5% and 14.7%, respectively, in Israel's first parliamentary elections in January 1949 ("Israeli Elections: Electoral History," n.d.). Israel's pro-western stance during the Korean

[40] Following the UN's partition plan, concerned about the escalation of violence between the Arabs and Jews in Palestine, the United States decided to impose an arms embargo on Palestine. At the time, the Zionists received arms from Czechoslovakia thanks to the Soviets' blessing. Preventing the Soviets getting a foothold in Palestine was part of a broader goal of securing US economic interests in the Middle East, namely the Access to oil fields. To read on how supporting the establishment of Israel has gained significance in Washington's decision making, see (Genzier, 2017).

War of 1950 would further convince the sceptics in Ankara about the young state's distance to communist ideology and thereby encourage establishment of diplomatic relations.

CHAPTER 3

TURKISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS DURING THE COLD WAR

This chapter presents an account of the Turkish-Israeli relations during the Cold War. As mentioned earlier, in the wake of the World War II, threatened by the territorial claims of the Soviet Union, Turkey had to abandon her foreign policy of neutrality and began to make overtures to the western bloc. In the backdrop of the United States' ascendancy in world politics, this chapter argues that Turkey's aspirations to become a member of the Western alliance has shaped Ankara's inclinations to establish cordial relations with Israel, for the purposes of winning Washington's ear for economic support and finding a place under the Western security umbrella.

Likewise, cooperation with Israel has lost steam as Turkey started to question her loyalty to the Atlantic alliance in the 1960s because of its political isolation over the Cyprus issue and sought to diversify its foreign policy in search of allies, including the Arab countries. In this respect, Turkey has opted to keep relations with Israel low profile whenever she concluded that the political costs of having overt ties with Israel exceeded its benefits, in the name of winning the sympathy of the Muslim world. Throughout the Cold War, this veiled cooperation which rested on minimum publicity, accompanied at times with public criticism of Israel's policies has almost set a default mode of interaction between Turkey and Israel.

Since her formal recognition of Israel in 1949, Turkey has always struggled to strike a balance in her relations with Israel and the Arab world, which in essence, caused ambivalence and often ended up disappointing both sides. As noted earlier,

Turkey formally recognized Israel in 1949, yet she abstained on a U.N. vote regarding Israel's membership to the organization that same year ("Admission of Israel to the United Nations," n.d.).

On the other hand, Turkish policymakers have always been interested in developing economic ties with the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine, a.k.a Yishuv. Thus, Turkey refused to participate in the Arab boycott of Yishuv goods, adopted by the Arab League in 1945 and this policy persisted after Israel's establishment in 1948 (" Arabs to boycott Palestinian," 1945, p.9).

Indeed, Europe's devastation of war and the Communist takeover of Eastern Europe led Turkey to diversify her trade routes and search for alternative partners in the post-war period. Between 1946 and 1949, Palestine became Turkey's third largest export market, except in 1947 when it moved down to the fourth place.[41] Since Palestinians paid their debts in sterling or other hard currency, Jewish importers provided Turkey, a much-needed source of cash that could be used to pay for goods from the United States or other Western industrial countries (Gruen, 1970). Deepening of trade relations between Turkey and Yishuv can be taken as an indication that despite historical ties and cultural sympathy toward the Arab world, pragmatism has often overweighed religious solidarity.[42]

Having recognized Israel, yet walking a fine line, it took another nine months for Turkey to exchange envoys with Israel. On 9 March 1950, Turkey opened its first diplomatic legation in Tel Aviv and appointed Seyfullah Esin as its chargé

[41] Turkey was seeking for a substitute for her primary import source, Germany. Palestine along with Spain and Yugoslavia filled in that vacuum, replacing Germany. Palestine's import volume from Turkey reached $18 thousand (Nachmani,2005, p.59).

[42] One should also bear in mind, the bitter memories of the War of Independence, particularly regarding the Arabs' cooperation with the Allied Powers against the Ottoman Empire, as well as the Republican People's Party's strict implementation of secularism-one of the six Kemalist principles-might have undermined "religious solidarity" as factor in determining Turkey's approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, in the early years of Turkish Republic.

d'affaires; whereas Israel appointed Eliahu Saason as minister (ortaelçi) to the legation in Ankara.[43] As always, the devil was in the details. The asymmetry in the diplomatic representation which stemmed from Turkey's reluctance to antagonize Arab countries, created discontent particularly on the Israeli side. However, it is noteworthy that both countries have indeed sent senior diplomats who had served as ambassador in their previous diplomatic posts.[44] On June 14, 1950, shortly after the Democratic Party came to power, Turkish Foreign Ministry would raise the level of Ankara's diplomatic representation in Israel by elevating Mr. Esin's title from chargé d'affaires to Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. Director General of the Turkish foreign Ministry, Faik Zihni Akdur, would tell Sasson that "Foreign Minister Köprülü had agreed to do so out of desire to strengthen Turkey's relations with Israel and to respond favorably to a request submitted to his predecessor " (Gruen, 1970, p.144).

The exchange of envoys between Turkey and Israel paved the way for the development of economic, cultural and security cooperation. The two countries signed their first trade agreement on July 4, 1950. The agreement established direct contact between the Turkish Central Bank and Anglo Palestine Bank (which at the time functioned as the Central Bank of Israel), for money transfers and currency swaps. In the early 1950s, Israel, has become an alternative export market for Turkey, replacing Germany.[45] Trade with Israel also enabled Turkey to indirectly

[43] The Turkish legation was not established in Jerusalem but Tel Aviv due to religious sensitivities, in line with U.N. resolutions that proposed a separate international authority for the holy city.
[44] For instance, Sasson had previously served as the head of the Arab Department of the Jewish Agency, (1933-1948), director of the Middle East Department of the Foreign Affairs Ministry (1948-1950) and head of the Special Office of the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Paris for contacts with the Arabs, while also conducting negotiations with King Abdullah of Jordan. Besides, the fact that Israel opened its fourth military attaché's residence in Ankara after Washington, Paris and London demonstrated the importance Turkey had for Israel (Nachmani, 2005, p.60).
[45] Parallel to liberalisation of trade, Germany turned to cheaper sources for the raw materials and farm products she used to purchase from Turkey (Nachmani, 2005, p.59).

import strategically important products such as iron-steel and trucks, bulldozers and construction materials from Eastern Europe-which Turkey, as a NATO member, could not engage with directly at the time (Nachmani, 2005, p.60). In the early 1950s, economies of Turkey and Israel seemed rather complementary. Turkey exported wheat, cotton, cattle, oil seed, dried fruit, meat and fish to Israel, while Israel exported pharmaceuticals, electronic house appliances, chemicals, pots, pans, cement, tires, cars and jeeps.[46] Until Israel completed her agricultural development, imports from Turkey met Israel's entire consumption of cotton and half of its requirements in wheat.

However, the trade balance, has tilted in favor of Israel from the mid 1950s and onwards, as Israel increased the export of industrial products while cutting down its imports from Turkey, having itself become an agricultural exporter. Still, trade which constituted a significant component of bilateral relations, has followed a steady flow over the years.

For instance, in 1952, Turkey became the top importer from Israel. In 1955, Time Magazine, described the close economic relations between the two countries as follows: "peasants in remote Anatolia now boil their weekly wash in Israeli-made pots fired by Israeli made stoves, turned out near Israel's Atatürk Forest and carried

[46] Güvenç (2015), in his study which analyzes the development of automobile industry and the jeep assembly in Turkey during the Cold War, draws attention to the complimentary nature of trade between Turkey and Israel. In 1952, when Turkey faced economic difficulties in purchasing motorized vehicles, jeeps in particular, due to foreign exchange shortage, the two countries have found a middle formula of barter trade. Turkey's export products were not considered as high quality and Israeli products were expensive compared to alternatives. Güvenç (2015) suggests that Turkey and Israel have secured a market for their uncompetitive products. In a brochure distributed at İzmir International Fair in 1954 of Kaiser Fraser- an American jeep company which set up a headquarter in Haifa in 1951, the company's Chairman of board reflects on trade between Turkey and Israel as such: "the geographical proximity, friendship and complementary nature of their economies render these two countries ideal trade partners."

to Istanbul in vessels of the Turkish Maritime Bank" ("Strange friendship," 1955). Israel has also been engaged in a variety of "joint ventures in manufacturing, housing, highway and airfield construction in Turkey."[47]

Parallel to burgeoning trade relations, the two countries have developed closer ties on the cultural front, as well. The Trade Agreement of 1950 was soon followed by air and sea transport agreements. Subsequently, both Turkish and Israeli airlines established regular flights between Istanbul and Tel Aviv (Gruen, 1995, p.45). Meanwhile, holding of bilateral sports competitions (soccer friendlies) ("Happoel Haifa," 1950), the Hebrew University's organization of a conference on the 500th anniversary of the Turkish conquest of Constantinople, and Israel's establishment of the Atatürk Recreation Area near the Merav Center on Mount Carmel in Haifa can be taken as positive initiatives to build a cultural bridge between the Turks and the Israelis (Gruen, 1995).

Against this backdrop, the Ankara legation, with its strategic location, has become a hub of intelligence gathering not only for Israel but also for other foreign diplomats as well (Nachmani, 2005, p.53). It enabled Israel to closely observe US military investments in Turkey and thereby study the technology and military techniques previously unknown to them, such as the technique of installing underground fuel supplies at air bases, as well as details of the manpower and vehicle components of an Egyptian motorized battalion through intelligence cooperation (Bengio, 2004, p.52).

[47] "The highway from Yeşilköy Airport to Istanbul, built by Solel Boneh, was popularly known as the Elections Road since it was dedicated to Prime Minister Adnan Menderes shortly before the elections. Israeli firms also built a housing development for members of Parliament in Ankara (also known as the Israeli houses) and took part in the construction of the NATO base of İncirlik in Adana a city in southern Turkey, along with American and Turkish firms" (Gruen, 1995, p.45).

Aside from intelligence sharing, military commerce also developed during the same period. Israel supplied Turkey with aerial photography and the provision of topographical maps, military uniforms, ammunition, explosives, optical instruments and automotive spare parts (Nachmani, 2005, p.61).

3.1. Burgeoning relations under stress-test: The Baghdad pact and the Suez crisis

In the mid-1950s, a draft of Turkish-Israeli cultural exchange agreement was reportedly prepared along with plans to upgrade the legation in Tel Aviv (Gruen, 1995, p.236). However, these plans were shelved as in February 1955, Turkey signed a mutual defense agreement with Iraq- the only country which did not sign an armistice with Israel after the war of 1948 ("Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Armistice Lines," n.d.).

The Democratic Party which rose to power in 1950, in fact shared its predecessor the İnönü government's view and perceived the Soviet political and economic danger as real. Hence, the Democratic Party under PM Adnan Menderes, promoted Turkey's engagement with the Atlantic allies, emphasizing Turkey's key role in terms of preserving peace and security in her neighborhood ("Dış politika mevzuunda," 1950, p.3). In this respect, the Democratic Party government has sponsored regional security arrangements against the spread of communism in the Middle East, in line with her commitment to regional defense in the southern flank of NATO. The main dilemma, however, was how to forge an alliance that would bring newly independent Arab countries together with Western colonial powers and Israel, in the backdrop of Arab-Israeli conflict and rising anti-colonialism. It was not surprising that the previous experiments ended in failure such as the Middle East Command in 1951 and the Middle East Defense Organization in 1952.

In the wake of the Middle East tour of the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, which included a stop in Turkey in May 1953 ("U.S. Department of State,"1953, no.53.), the Menderes government saw a window of opportunity to push for a new grouping in line with Washington's new defense concept of "Northern Tier." The concept of "Northern Tier" was based on an understanding that the line of countries forming a border between the Soviet Union and the Middle East were the most vulnerable to the Soviet infiltration. An alliance that would link the southern member of NATO, Turkey, with the western member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), Pakistan was regarded positively by the Eisenhower administration in increasing security and stability in the region ("Memorandum of discussion," 1953, no.137). In this context, following Dulles' visit, Turkey embarked on negotiating a series of agreements with regional partners which paved the way for the formation of the Baghdad Pact in 1955.[48]

Israeli efforts to join the pact were met with US resistance on the grounds that the inclusion of Israel would alienate the Arabs. Israel was worried that Turkey might sacrifice their relations for the sake of winning Arab partners' sympathy and thereby fostering their participation to the pact. These concerns were not unfounded since the mutual defense agreement concluded between Turkey and Iraq included a

[48] In 1954, Turkey and Pakistan signed "a treaty of friendship and cooperation." In 1955, Iraq and Turkey signed a "pact of mutual cooperation" in Baghdad and welcomed other countries in the region as well. In the same year, Britain, Pakistan and Iran joined the pact. Despite the Menderes government's pressures, the United States refused to formally adhere to the pact, participated as an observer instead, and contributed financial support. Regional developments in the following years eventually weakened the Pact. In 1956, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser seized the Suez Canal in 1956, to nationalize the important international waterway. Israel invaded the Sinai peninsula, and British and French forces also intervened. The outcome of the incident dealt a severe blow to British prestige and undermined the Baghdad Pact, as well. A series of events in 1958, including the establishment of Egyptian-Syrian union, the coup in Iraq, and civil unrest in Lebanon undermined regional stability. Concerned about the developments, the United States proclaimed the 1957 Eisenhower Doctrine, which expanded the US containment strategy so as to include the Middle East. Shortly after, the US intervened in Lebanon in line with the Eisenhower Doctrine. The members of the Baghdad Pact except for Iraq welcomed the U.S. intervention. As a matter of fact, in 1959, Iraq officially left the Baghdad Pact. The Baghdad Pact was then renamed as the Central Treaty Organization, or CENTO (Harris, 1972, p.62-63).

statement that the parties would defend each other in the event of an attack- which presumably comprised a potential Israeli aggression as well. Besides, it was revealed that through an exchange of letters Turkey agreed "to work for carrying out the United Nations Resolutions on Palestine of 1947."[49] The Democratic Party's efforts to calm Israel proved futile since the two countries had different threat perceptions and priorities. For Turkey, the Soviet aggression and Soviet friendly pan-Arabism constituted the primary sources of threat, whereas for Israel, it was always the Arab aggression. Ironically, the more Turkey engaged in regional defense initiatives in search of Arab allies, the more she had to put a distance between her and Israel-or at least downplay bilateral ties- in order not to antagonize the Arabs. What Turkey failed to see at the time was that her pro-western stance, secular outlook and her recognition of Israel had already alienated some of the Arab countries. As Aykan indicates, nationalistic Arab regimes such as Egypt and Syria were particularly suspicious of Turkey's efforts to form an anti-communist defense pact as part of a new imperialist conspiracy of the West(Aykan, 1993, p.93). The regional developments would soon undermine the Baghdad Pact, yet it was the first time Turkish-Israel relations was put into test. Unfolding developments in Egypt would further reveal divergent priorities between the two countries.

Since assuming power in Egypt in 1954, charismatic military officer, Gamal Abdel Nasser has been pressuring the British to end their military presence in the Suez Canal Zone.[50] His anti-imperialist agenda at the time, not only inspired the

[49] Leaders of Turkey and Iraq pledged to provide defense cooperation against a military attack and agreed to cooperate for the implementation of the U.N. resolutions over Palestine for preserving peace and security in the Middle East. To read the content of letters exchanged between Menderes and Nuri es-Said on Feb. 24, 1955 (Soysal, 1991, p.503).

[50] The Suez Canal which constituted an artificial waterway between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, has had great importance for the British, not only because it made trade more convenient between Europe and East Asia but also connected much of their empire. So, when Egypt achieved independence in 1922, Britain took measures to ensure they had control over the Canal. In

newly independent states in the Middle East and Africa, but also gained him the approval and support of the Soviet Union. Struggling to fund the construction of the Aswan Dam - a massive project to bring water to the Nile valley and electricity to develop Egypt's industry, in July 1956, Nasser announced nationalization of the Suez Canal. By doing so, Nasser was hoping to finance his dam project with the revenues to be collected from the ships passing through the Suez Canal. However, nationalization of the strategic waterway threatened economic as well as political interests of Britain and France. As a part of her deepening military cooperation with France, Israel was asked to play a pivotal role in the Anglo-French military operation to the Canal Zone, launched on Oct. 29, 1956 (Papastamkou, 2015). In invading the Suez Canal, Israel's goal was to pressure Nasser to reopen the Strait of Tiran-an important trade route Egypt had previously closed- as well as to halt cross border raids of Fedayeen militants.

Concerned about the developments, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev threatened to attack Western Europe with nuclear missiles unless Britain and France withdrew from Egypt. US President Dwight Eisenhower was also disappointed with his allies for being left in the dark about their intentions regarding the Suez Canal, therefore he threatened the three countries with economic sanctions. Ultimately, the tension deescalated as British, French and Israeli forces withdrew from the Canal Zone. However, the Suez Crisis left a profound and long-lasting impact, strained relations between the United States and her allies, and tarnished Britain and France's prestige (Papastamkou, 2015).

1936 the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty was signed, by British and Egypt, allowing British forces to remain in the Canal zone until 1958 (Keylor, 1996, p.296).

The outbreak of the Suez Crisis in 1956 exacerbated Turkey's already-strained relations with Israel and put her in a difficult situation in the eyes of her Baghdad Pact allies. Turkey, which pursued a pro-Western foreign policy in the 1950s, found herself between a rock and a hard place, since Britain and France were the two countries that supported Turkey's position on Cyprus at the time, while the former was also a member of the Baghdad Pact. Amid pressure from her Baghdad Pact allies, Turkey voted for a U.N. Resolution condemning the Israeli invasion of the Sinai,[51] consequently downgrading its diplomatic representation in Israel. Additionally, the Foreign Ministry issued a statement, saying: "The Turkish government has decided to recall its minister in Tel Aviv, who will not return to his post until a just and final solution of the Palestine question has been achieved" ("İsrail elçimizi geri çağırdık," 1956). However, Turkish Foreign Ministry also assured Israel that bilateral relations wouldn't be affected negatively, and diplomatic services would continue through the diplomatic missions and the consulates.[52]

3.2 The Trident: The secret triangular pact of 1958

Before long, common security concerns started to push Turkey and Israel closer again. The strengthening of Nasserite Arab nationalism and the expansion of Soviet influence in the Middle East alarmed both Turkey and Israel in equal measure. Indeed, only a month after the signing of the mutual defense agreement between Turkey and Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia agreed to develop a counter-alliance

[51] Over the Suez Crisis, The United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 997 (ES-I) on Nov. 2, 1956, Resolution 998 (ES-I) and Resolution 999 (ES-I) on Nov. 4, 1956, Resolution 1000 (ES-I) on Nov. 5, 1956, and the Resolution 1002 on Nov. 7, 1956, by overwhelming majorities ("The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 997,"1956; "United Nations General Assembly Resolution 998," 1956; "United Nations General Assembly Resolution 999," 1956).

[52] In December 1960, the Turkish government decided to grant the Chargé d'Affaires in Israel, Rıfat Ayandar, the personal rank of Minister. Then in January 1961, Israel announced that Moshe Saason, her Chargé d'Affaires in Turkey had been accorded the personal rank of Minister, respecting diplomatic reciprocity ("Middle East record," 1960, p.308).

on defense and economic cooperation. In September 1955, the Soviets announced to supply Egypt with $200 m worth of Soviet weaponry through Czechoslovakia-also known as the Egypt-Czech arms deal.[53] In October of the same year, Syria and Egypt signed a defense agreement that established a war council and joint command under Egypt's leadership.

The Menderes government has also been concerned about Syria's receiving arms from the Soviets (Kuneralp, 1999). In August 1957, Syria expelled three American officials accused of plotting to overthrow its government with the help of Turkey and Iraq. In response, Turkey deployed around 33,000 troops to the Syrian border, while the Soviets countered, threatening to intervene if Turkey attacked Syria. Nasser also sent approximately 2,000 troops to Latakia in a symbolic move to demonstrate his support for Syria. As Sever (1998) highlights, Turkey's deployment of troops was met with resentment from both Syria and the Soviet Union and was also disapproved of by the Western allies. The United States had previously advised Turkey not to take any military steps, unless its independence and sovereignty was at stake.[54]

In October the matter was taken to the UN by the joint efforts of the Soviets and Syrians. The crisis was only diffused by Khrushchev's surprise diplomatic maneuver as he decided to attend the 34th anniversary of the foundation of Turkish Republic on Oct. 29, 1957, held at the Turkish Embassy in Moscow. Khrushchev

[53] It was a cotton-for-arms barter deal between the Soviet Union and Egypt, which used Czechoslavskia as an intermediary. Initially, the public value of the deal was estimated to be around $86m. The US Defense Department later calculated the actual value of the deal as $200m, taking into account the Soviets' discounted prices (Yaqub, 2004, p.876).

[54] Sever (1998, p.81.) argues that the Menderes government considered the region's developments through the prism of the Cold War, therefore sought to derive political and economic profit from the United States, by consciously escalating the crisis in the Middle East. Sever (1998) also underlines the possible impact of domestic politics. In the run-up to the elections of 1957, by escalating an international crisis, the Menderes Government might have sought to distract the electorate's attention from economic difficulties and political polarization.

stated that his visit could be taken as a "gesture of peace" and continued: "Turkey and the Soviet Union are neighbors. When the temperature increases in Turkey, it meets with the cold winds from the Soviet Union and there emerges warm weather" ("Khruschev Zakov'a yeni bir,"1957, p.3). Following Khrushchev's calming comments, eventually, Turkish troops were removed from the border.[55]

In February 1958, Egypt established a political union with Syria known as the United Arab Republic. The risk of Nasser's pan-Arabism spreading further and taking root in the Middle East was sending chills to Ankara as well as to other Western capitals, including Washington. In this respect, the coup in Iraq by pro-Nasserist Colonel Abdel Karim Qassem on July 14, 1958, heightened concerns over a wave of pro-Egyptian and Soviet friendly regime change taking place all across the Arab world.[56] Thus, when Lebanese President Camille Chamoun called on the Eisenhower administration to protect the regime from facing a similar fate to that of the King in Iraq, Turkey granted permission to the United States to station troops at the NATO base in Adana to deal with the crisis in July in that same year (Aykan, 1993, p.93).

Given the close personal ties between PM Adnan Menderes and his Iraqi counterpart Nuri al Said, the coup elicited shock for the government, already bogged down in domestic problems at the time. According to Müfti (2009), Turkey did not face any direct threats from the Middle Eastern countries in the 1950s (Mufti, 2009). One can also argue that the Menderes government viewed the regional developments

[55] To read futher on the crisis with Syria, see, (Armaoğlu, 1994; Bağcı, 1998).
[56] On the day following the coup in Iraq, the US intervened Lebanon to save President Camile Chamun who was facing a rebellion by the country's Muslim population and many Christians who were sympathetic to Nasser. Britain deployed forces to Amman, Jordan in a coordinated Western intervention to support friendly governments in the region. The US troops were also dispatched to the İncirlik air base in Turkey to join the Lebanese operation. The Troop movement was carried out on notification albeit consultation of the Turkish authorities (Harris, 1972, p.66).

primarily through the Cold-War parameters and perceived the developments in Syria and Iraq as an encirclement of Turkey by communist regimes. Thus, the Menderes Government reacted to the coup in Iraq in a similar way that it did to the Syria Crisis, and urged Washington to support the Iraqi-Jordanian federation with all means, in line with the Eisenhower doctrine.

Sever (1998), on the other hand, points out that the coup in Iraq was another case that Turkey, by adopting an uncompromising attitude, had fallen out of step with her Western allies. To Sever (1998), this was mainly because of the Menderes government's desire to improve Turkey's status as an ally in order to secure more financial assistance, particularly from the United States. That's why, Menderes failed to read the shifts in US policy, especially when Washington tried to win Nasser back by financing his Aswan dam Project. Eventually, both the United States and Britain concluded that it would be in their best interest if Turkey was discouraged from taking any action against the new regime in Iraq, avoiding confrontation with the Soviet Union. Thus, the British and Americans persuaded Ankara that any Turkish interference might be counter-productive, uniting Iraqis behind the new regime. As a matter of fact, on July 31, 1958, Turkey recognized the new regime in Iraq.

The developments in Syria and Iraq in the late 1950s drove Turkey and Israel to forge closer ties amid the growing Soviet penetration and the spread of pan-Arabism in the region. Israel, frustrated for being locked outside of the regional defense pacts and lacked any concrete US reassurance as compensation, initiated cooperative and bilateral intelligence relations with both Iran and Turkey between

1956 and 1958 through a series of meetings in Europe, Ankara and Tehran, culminating in the Periphery Pact-a.k.a Trident -triangular pact in 1958 linking Mossad, Turkey's National Security Organization (MIT) and Iran's Savak.[57]

The essence of Trident was, in fact, based on a trilateral sharing of regional intelligence assessments.[58] Bengio (2004) indicates that while the alliance was initiated by two civilian leaders, in time, the military aspect gained more significance. Regular meetings were held every six months. Merkava (Israeli code name given to the military cooperation with Turkey) has developed to such a degree that Israeli and Turkish army leaders reportedly met at the highest level in Istanbul in 1959 when they planned a military campaign against Syria, although the offensive was ultimately never carried out (Alpher, 2015, p.15).

However, even when bilateral relations reached their peak, Israel's demands from the Menderes government to upgrade diplomatic relations fell on deaf ears. Moshe Sasson, the Israeli chargé d'affaires in Ankara, claimed that PM Menderes was in fact, willing to upgrade relations, however it was Foreign Minister Zorlu who advised on the contrary, and said "relations with no marriage" would work in the best interest of both parties (Bengio, 2004, p.48). According to Israeli military attaché Baruch Gilboa, who served as military attaché in Turkey (1964-1967), the reason for Turkish Foreign Ministry's cautious stance was their concern about antagonizing the Arabs (Bengio, 2004, p.49). The same trend would continue after the military junta-the so-called National Unity committee-took over control and overthrew the Menderes government On May 27, 1960. What could not be surmised

[57] Turkish PM Menderes Israeli PM Ben-Gurion's meeting on Aug. 29, 1958, was preceded by a series of secret negotiations took place between Turkish and Israeli officials in Turkey, Europe and Washington (Bengio, 2004, p.42).

[58] Alpher (2015) argues that the Israeli-Iranian aspect of the trilateral relationship was more active than the Israeli-Turkish dimension, particularly because the Israeli-Iranian relationship was fortified by their joint interest, until 1975, in promoting the Kurdish cause in northern Iraq.

at that time was the fact that bilateral relations would enter a long period of turbulence from the mid-1960s onwards, in response to international and regional developments.

3.3 The recalibration of Turkey's Israeli policy: The Cyprus question and the Arab-Israeli conflict

Turkish-Israeli relations entered a cooling-off period from the mid-1960s onwards. In parallel to a shift in Turkey's foreign policy, Ankara sought allies to overcome its international isolation caused by the Cyprus problem. While the gradual deterioration in Turkey's relations with the West prompted Turkish policymakers to revise their foreign policy orientation, geopolitical threats that encouraged Turkey and Israel to forge a strategic alliance in the late 1950s, such as the Soviet expansionism and Pan-Arabism, started to lose their significance at the onset of the decade. The gap in Turkish-Israeli relations, thus, did not stem from a bilateral conflict but Israel's waning significance as an ally for Turkey. Therefore, Turkey downplayed its relations with Israel so as to facilitate a rapprochement with the Arab world that was driven by political and economic interests.

Israel, on the other hand, has maintained a pro-Turkish stance over the Cyprus issue, prioritizing her relations with Ankara over her ties with Athens. While preserving her neutrality in the U.N. voting on Cyprus conflict, as Nachmani (2005) points out, diplomatic circles in the Israeli Foreign Ministry have deliberately sided with Turkey, after concluding that "there was nothing to be lost from adopting anti-Greek position (matters couldn't get any worse)."[59]

[59] Referring to a policy paper on Cyprus in 1952, Nachmani (2005, p.96) argues that on the other hand, Israelis acknowledged that they should be supporting self-determination of Cyprus, out of their moral dept to the island's inhabitants who helped illegal immigrants to Palestine during Mandate

Since her foundation, Israel's relations with Greece have been problematic due to the latter's concerns for the Orthodox Church in Palestine and the Greek minority in Egypt. In the early 1950s, the Greek minority which has enjoyed an advantageous socio-economic status in Egypt, amounted to some 140 thousand people (Nachmani, 2005, p.99). Protecting the interests of the Greek minority in Egypt has been Greece's official pretext for keeping a low profile in relations with Israel, in order not to antagonize Arab countries. Even though the two countries have maintained consular relations since 1949-the rank of delegations were elevated to the rank of "diplomatic representations" in 1952-recognition remained at a de facto level. While Greece has displayed no hostility towards Israel, it is noteworthy that, it has consistently voted against Israel and for the Arab states, in the U.N. voting, including the U.N. vote of 1947 on the partition of Palestine, as well as on other issues such as refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the Holy Places, and even Israel's membership of international organizations (Nachmani, 2005,p. 92).

Moreover, Turkey's military intervention in Cyprus in 1974, was likened to Israel's occupation of the West Bank in 1967. To Greeks both cases amounted to illegal acquisitions of territory. In this backdrop, "mutual attempts to barter favors-involving Israeli support of the Greek position in exchange for Athens recognizing Israel" would fail to ameliorate bilateral relations (Nachmani, 2005, p.96). Thus, as Nachmani (2005) contends, "When two sets of bilateral relations were placed in balance, the choice was hard (p.96)."

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times. Yet, the advantages of preserving cordial relations with Britain and Turkey seem to have prevailed.

The decade began with political crises such as the Cuban Missile Crisis[60] in 1962 and the Johnson Letter[61] in 1964, which not only strained relations between Ankara and Washington but also undermined trust between the two allies. As a matter of fact, Turkish policymakers started questioning how much pursuing a pro-Western (pro-American) foreign policy actually served Turkish interests (Harris, 1972). It was also during this decade that Turkey took its first steps toward normalizing its ties with the Soviet Union since the end of World War II.[62] One can say that the relative de-escalation of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union (1967-1979) – the so-called period of détente – provided a more favorable environment for such a rapprochement and enabled Turkey to pursue a more flexible foreign policy line as a NATO member.

Above all, Turkey's failure to win international support over the Cyprus issue made Ankara realize the importance of increasing its number of friends, prompting policymakers to diversify Turkey's relations with the long-ignored countries of the Middle East and the Third World. The dissolution of the United Arab Republic

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[60] To prevent a nuclear confrontation in Cuba in the fall of 1962, the United States made an agreement with the Soviet Union to remove its Jupiter missiles deployed from Çiğli, Turkey, in exchange for the Soviets' withdrawal of medium-range missiles in Cuba. Harris states that the Turkish government was not initially notified officially of the U.S. plan to remove the Jupiter missiles. When the decision became public, Ankara felt deeply humiliated at becoming a bargaining chip in the negotiations between the two superpowers (Harris, 1972).

[61] U.S. President Lyndon Johnson penned an infamous letter to discourage the İnönü government from staging a military intervention against Cyprus in June 1965. Johnson threatened İsmet İnönü that NATO would not defend Turkey against the Soviets in the event that Turkey intervened in Cyprus (Harris, 1972, p.114). There is also an alternative argument that suggests that İnönü did not actually want to intervene in Cyprus due to the shortcomings of the Turkish military and that he, therefore, consciously provoked the Johnson administration into writing the letter as an excuse to call off the military operation (Şahin, 2019; Erhan, 2015).

[62] In the wake of the 1960 coup, the new regime took a positive approach to overtures from the Soviet Union. In May 1963, Suat Hayri Ürgüplü, the chairman of the Turkish Parliament, went to the Soviet Union. This was followed by Foreign Minister Feridun Cemal Erkin's visit to Moscow in October 1964. In December 1966, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin came to Turkey, becoming the first Soviet premier to eve stage such a visit. In March 1967, Ankara and Moscow signed an industrial assistance agreement, the most comprehensive industrial cooperation agreement ever concluded in Turkish history. Under the terms of the deal, the USSR agreed to build a number of industrial plants in Turkey such as the Aliağa Oil Refinery, the Seydişehir Aluminium Smelter, the Bandırma Sulfuric Acid Factory and the İskenderun Steel and Iron Plant (Tellal, 2002, p. 769).

(UAR) in 1961, in this respect, provided an opportunity for Turkey to mend ties with its long-standing enemy, Syria. Egypt agreed to normalize relations with Turkey (1963), in exchange for Ankara's solidarity with the Arab world regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict.[63]

Turkey's rapprochement toward Muslim states obliged her to maintain a low-profile relationship with Israel in order to win back their sympathy. As a result, Turkey embraced an increasingly pro-Arab posture in international fora throughout the 1970s against a backdrop of political and economic instability at home that was exacerbated by the oil crisis of 1973 and the U.S. arms embargo against Turkey following its intervention in Cyprus in 1974. In this context, this chapter will cover the course of bilateral relations from 1960 until the end of the Cold War in 1990, analyze the systemic and domestic determinants of Turkey's pro-Arab foreign policy from the mid-1960s and reflect on the push and pull that influenced Turkish-Israeli relations in the last decade of the Cold War.

At first glance, the military coup of 1960 might seem to have started a new and relatively cold phase in Turkish-Israeli relations, given that the supporters of the coup were also critical of the Menderes government's foreign policy. However, as Bengio points out, the new military regime under Gen. Cemal Gürsel did not revoke

[63] On June 13, 1960, the Turkish Ambassador in Cairo said in press interview that the new Turkish government had instructed him to announce its readiness to open a new page of good relations and cooperation with the UAR. But after Syria pulled out of the UAR, Turkey's decision to recognize the new regime in Syria drew a strong reaction from Egypt to the degree that Cairo severed diplomatic ties with Ankara. Turkey's rapprochement with Arab countries gained impetus after the Justice Party rose to power in 1965 amid Turkey's international isolation. In March 1966, Undersecretary of Foreign Ministery Haluk Bayülken visited Egypt and signed a trade agreement. A Turkish delegation went to Saudi Arabia in April, followed by Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil's visit to Iraq the following month (Middle East Record, 1960, p.531; Akdevelioğlu & Kürkçüoğlu, 2015, p.788).

the accord reached between Turkey and Israel during the Menderes government. On the contrary, the military junta worked to strengthen bilateral relations further in various ways.[64]

Indeed, an Israeli dispatch from Ankara reveals that in the wake of the coup, Israel was assured that "cooperation would continue in all spheres" and that Turkey would intervene if Israel was attacked. For Bengio, the reason why those critical of the Menderes government's Middle East policy supported the continuity of the alliance between Turkey and Israel might have been due to the significance attributed to the military-strategic cooperation by the Turkish military (Personal Communication, February 7, 2019).

As a matter of fact, military cooperation and coordination largely continued after the coup, including exchange of intelligence, exchange of know-how in the field of military industry, permission to the Israeli Air Force to train on Turkish territory, and Israel's training of Turkish Armed Forces on various domains.[65] The exchange of high-level visits also occurred, albeit in complete secrecy, during this period. Commander of Turkish Land Forces Gen. Cemal Tural, who later became the chief of staff, visited Israel in 1964. Israeli Chief of Military Intelligence Meir Amit's visit to a closed American base in Erzurum that same year is mentioned as an event that caused embarrassment to the Americans at the time due to the strained relations between Ankara and Washington (Bengio, 2004, p.53). The fact that a visit

[64] Bengio confirmed in our interview that it was after the notorious Cyprus vote in 1965, the Turkish side decided to suspend cooperation with Israel and therefore revoked the triangular pact (Personal Communication, February 7, 2019).

[65] For instance, in August 1966, an Iraqi Mig-21 that was being flown to Israel was permitted to make a refueling stop at a joint Turkish-American base. From this perspective, Israel's sale of parachutes to the Turkish Air force and the Turkish-Israeli joint enterprise to manufacture mortars for Germany can also be counted as evidence of continuing cooperation between the two countries after the coup of 1960 (Bengio, 2004, p.53).

by Israel's commander of the Air Force, Ezer Weizmann (a subsequent president of Israel), to Turkey was canceled at the end of 1964 can be taken as an early indicator of the negative impact of the Cyprus crisis on bilateral relations.

In the 1960s, the two countries nonetheless continued to cultivate economic relations, which remained the most resilient aspect of ties, as they were relatively immune to political turbulence. On Jan. 2, 1961, the countries extended a trade agreement that they signed during the Menderes era for another year. The annual exchange was fixed at $12.5 million for Israeli exports to Turkey and $13.5 million for Turkish exports to Israel ("Middle East Record,"1961, p.308). In addition to the complementary nature of their economies, which provided a strong incentive to forge close economic ties, Israeli know-how was also deemed important, particularly for Turkish agriculture. The introduction of Israeli agricultural methods yielded successful results in Adana, for instance, to the degree that the cotton crop quadrupled within six years (Bengio, 2004, p.50).

When Israel formally recognized the new regime in Turkey on May 30, 1961 – becoming the third country to do so – a more diversified Turkish foreign policy was already in the making. Introducing the basic tenets of the new government's foreign policy during a press meeting on June 1, 1960, Turkish Foreign Minister Selim Sarper pledged to uphold Turkey's alliance ties and previously signed international agreements, but also underlined that the new government intended to develop relations with countries beyond its present allies in accordance with U.N. principles, especially in the Middle East ("Selim Sarper Anlaşmalara sadık," 1960, p.1).

Also in September 1961, Sarper stated that Turkey's efforts to improve relations with Arab countries would not influence its attitude toward Israel and that "Turkey wanted the Arab-Israeli conflicts to be justly settled by the U.N. in accordance with the principles of the U.N., so that the Middle East might enjoy peace, security and stability ("Middle East Record," 1960, p.440)." So when Turkey recognized Syria after the dissolution of the UAR in 1961, Israel expected Turkey to balance this move by normalizing bilateral relations through a diplomatic upgrade.[66]

Promises to upgrade relations with Israel were renewed during the two coalition governments in which İsmet İnönü's Republican People's Party was the majority partner between 1961 and 1965. Expectations ran high when İnönü and his Israeli counterpart, Levi Eshkol, secretly met in Paris, where İnönü pledged that Turkey would upgrade their relations within four or five weeks (Bengio, 2004). However, İnönü lost the 1965 elections to the Justice Party, and therefore forced out of office without fulfilling his promises. What's worse, on April 26, 1966, Chief of General Staff Gen.Tural conveyed Turkey's desire to suspend military cooperation with Israel to the country's military attaché, Baruch Gilboa, stating no concrete reason other than Turkey's changed foreign policy preferences (Bengio, 2004).

In order to understand what went wrong in Turkish-Israeli relations in the 1960s, it is necessary to reflect on the evolution of the Cyprus problem, which came to dominate Turkish foreign policy in the decades to come, leaving a profound impact on Turkey's relations with the Western world.

[66] During a meeting between Gen. Cemal Gürsel and Israel's chargé d'affaires, Maurice Fisher, on Aug. 16, 1960, Gürsel expressed his willingness to strengthen relations with Israel, yet he was reluctant to upgrade diplomatic relations on the grounds that "he did not want to fall into the same trap as the shah of Iran did." To Gürsel, the shah drew Egypt's animosity because it publicized its relations with Israel (Bengio, 2004, p.48).

3.3.1. Foreign policy implications of the Cyprus question

Cyprus, which was conquered by the Ottomans in 1571, became a British protectorate in 1878 following the Russo-Turkish War. In time, the island became strategically important for Britain in terms of securing the control of the Suez Canal, and thereby her overseas colonies. As a result, Britain repeatedly turned down Greek Cypriots' demands for *enosis* – unification between Cyprus and Greece – that nationalists began to express more vocally after the end of World War II. Facing political pressure, the Greek Parliament passed a resolution in February 1947 calling for *enosis*. But amid its struggle with Soviet expansionism on the one hand and the anti-colonialist wave on the other, Britain adopted a pro-status quo stand on Cyprus, opposing demands for self-determination throughout the 1950s.

Turkish policy on Cyprus also changed over the years from the point of denial to the acceptance of partition. For instance, on June 20, 1950, Foreign Minister Fuat Köprülü told parliament that Ankara denied the existence of a Cyprus issue ("Fuat Köprülü'nün Dış Siyasete,"1950, p.3). Only after Ankara realized that Britain no longer maintained the capacity nor the will to keep Cyprus did it pivot to advocating the return of Cyprus to its original protectorate, Turkey.[67] This stance continued for a short while during the Democratic Party years until 1956, when Menderes shifted his position once again during a NATO meeting held in Paris, declaring that Turkey would agree to a partition of Cyprus.[68]

Toward the mid-1950s, political tensions fueled armed hostilities between the two communities on the island. It was a major concern that the deepening rift

[67] Avcı (2014, p.41) summarizes the Democratic Party's policy over Cyprus in three points, namely, preserving the status quo; resolving the Cyprus issue on friendly terms with Greece; and, in the event of a change in the status of Cyprus, returning the island to its original owner.
[68] According to Kuneralp (1999, p.64.), Greece's foreign minister reportedly told the Turkish envoy during an informal meeting in Athens that Greece was willing to accept partition, which subsequently convinced Turkish authorities to embrace the idea.

between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus might undermine NATO. Therefore, the United States supported British efforts to convene a trilateral meeting for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

When Greece attempted to internationalize the Cyprus issue by taking Greek Cypriots' rights to self-determination to the UN in 1954 (UNGA, 1954), NATO allies including the United States, Britain and France sided with Turkey in the international arena, duly preventing the Cyprus issue's inclusion on the U.N. agenda (Sönmezoğlu, 20122, p.230).

But the Suez Crisis of 1956 dealt a severe blow to Britain's power and prestige in the region and paved the way for Washington to take over the case from the British.[69] In December 1956, Britain's colonial secretary, Alan Lennox Boyd, declared that his country accepted the inclusion of the right to self-determination, as well as partition, within the options to be offered to Cypriots (Fırat, 2008, p.601). At the same time, Britain endorsed Turkey's participation at the Zurich and London Conferences in 1959 as a party to the conflict on behalf of the Turkish Cypriots (Fırat, 2008, p.604).

The formation of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960 as a result of the London Conference brought only temporary calm. By the end of 1963, clashes between Greek and Turkish Cypriots broke out again over President Archbishop Mikhail Christodoulou Mouskos Makarios' attempt to change the government formula agreed at the London Conference and suspend Turkish Cypriots' constitutional rights (Fırat, 2008, p.604).

[69] The United States would eventually expand its containment policy to the Middle East with the proclamation for the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957, promising military or economic aid to any Middle Eastern country needing help in resisting communist aggression (Spanier & Hook,1998).

Turkey, as one of the three guarantor states along with Britain and Greece, threatened to intervene unless Makarios re-established security and stability on the island. Amid escalating clashes, the U.N. passed Resolution 186 on March 4, 1964, calling for the cessation of violence and the establishment of a peacekeeping force (UNSC,1964). Even with the arrival of the U.N. peacekeeping forces on the island, the violence showed no signs of abating. Turkey was about to intervene militarily, but had to back down following a letter from U.S. President Lyndon Johnson on June 5, 1964, in which the U.S. leader warned Turkey that NATO would not protect it in the event of a Soviet attack if it invaded Cyprus. The blunt and rude tone of the letter came as a shock to the Turks. The feeling of betrayal triggered a wave of anti-Americanism in Turkish society which would continue to poison relations in the following decades. While the Johnson letter prevented Turkey's military from intervening in Cyprus, it did not stop the Turkish Air Force from bombarding Greek Cypriot positions on Aug. 8 and 9.[70]

Turkey's efforts to draw attention to the plight of Turkish Cypriots in the international arena proved futile. Greek Cypriots succeeded in framing the clashes on the island as a struggle of independence against colonial powers. Thus, the international community, particularly Third World countries, sided with Greece and the Greek Cypriots at the U.N. In December 1965, the U.N. General Assembly Resolution on Cyprus 2077, which called on states "to respect the full sovereignty,

[70] The content of Johnson's letter was leaked to the press on Jan. 13, 1966. In the light of recently discovered evidence, based on veteran diplomat Yalim Eralp's memoirs, Şahin claims that Cüneyt Arcayürek from Hurriyet, obtained a copy of the letter from FM Çağlayangil, himself. Şahin suggests that this move was therefore politically motivated by the Demirel government so as to discredit his rival, İnönü (Şahin, 2019, p135).

unity, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus, and refrain from any intervention directed against it," came as a wake-up call to Turkey in regard to its own international isolation.

The deepening of the Cyprus question from 1963 onwards not only drove a wedge between Turkey and the United States but also pushed Ankara to seek alternative partnerships in order to overcome its political isolation at the international level. Thus, Turkey simultaneously embarked on efforts to normalize relations with the Soviet Union[71] and mend ties with Arab countries. Naturally, the latter required Ankara to limit contact with Israel to a minimum.

In December 1964, Turkey sent unofficial delegates to the sixth World Muslim Congress in Somalia to present Turkey's case for Cyprus; a decision condemning violent actions by the Greek Cypriots was consequently accepted by the congress (Bishku, 2006, p.184).

In January 1965, a Turkish goodwill delegation toured the Middle East, including Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, to mend bridges and explain Turkey's position in the hopes of winning Arab support in the forthcoming U.N. vote over Cyprus. Nilüfer Yalçın, who joined the delegation as a press representative, penned her impressions from the tour, underlining how Turkey's relations with Israel were closely followed and every small detail pertaining to bilateral cooperation was covered by the Arab press, often in a provocative way. For instance, Yalçın (1965a, 1965b, 1965c) complained about how Turkey's purchase of phosphate from Israel was mentioned in one of Beirut's newspapers in the middle of an article about Turkey's regional diplomatic initiatives to explain the Cyprus case. In this respect, the remarks from the delegation's head, Senator Sadi Koçaş, reflected

[71] To read further on Turkey-Russia rapprochement during the Cold War, see, (Ahmad, 2003).

Turkey's efforts to distance itself from Israel in the international arena in order to gain Arabs' confidence. During his talks with Arab representatives, Koçaş suggested organizing a summit for the resolution of conflicts and development of relations, underlining that Turkey had never sided with Israel in the Arab-Israeli conflicts and would never do so in the future."[72]

In the wake of the infamous U.N. vote of 1965-A/RES/2077 (XX) which exposed Turkey's failure in garnering support for her Cyprus cause (UNGA, 1965), it is possible to see almost a bipartisan support in parliamentary discussions for a redefinition of foreign policy goals and orientation. Lawmakers from different political parties expressed regret that Turkey had lost many friends and befriended the wrong ones. Some also suggested revising international agreements, as well as bilateral ties, with the countries which abstained at the UNGA during the Cyprus vote of 1965. Reflecting this popular demand, the foreign policy program of the newly elected Justice Party strongly emphasized the intention to develop friendly relations with "Turkey's neighbors, Middle Eastern nations with whom Turkey had historical ties and the newly independent peoples of Asia and North Africa" ("Adalet Partisi Seçim Beyannamesi,"1965). Thus, Turkey's overtures to the Middle East and the Third World – which had started before the ascent of the Justice Party – continued to develop during this period.

Following the end of the periphery pact between Turkey and Israel in 1966, bilateral relations continued at a low level, but Turkey's rapprochement with the Arab world did not produce an anti-Israeli stance in Ankara. On the contrary, Turkey

[72] Shortly afterwards, Ankara's perceived willingness to sacrifice relations with Israel in return for potential support over Cyprus was criticized by Abdi İpekçi, the chief editor of *Milliyet*. İpekçi regarded the visit as a futile maneuver that would not repair relations with the Arab world and would only weaken Turkey's hand as it bowed to political blackmail ("Durum: Türkiye'nin Arap-İsrail,"1965, p.1).

resisted persistent demands from Arab countries to sever its ties with Israel. In this respect, a speech by Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil during budget hearings in Parliament reflects Turkey's efforts to strike a delicate balance between Israel and the Arab countries:

> It might be right for me to say 'be friends with my friends' in international relations, but it's not particularly possible to say 'don't be friends with my enemies.' There are no [limitations] in Turkish politics. Turkey has normal relations with Israel, and these relations have never been pursued against our Arab friends. ("Dışişleri Bakanlığı bütçesi ile," 1967, p.40)

3.3.2. In search of a diversified Middle East policy

Against the backdrop of Turkey's efforts at rapprochement with the Arab world, the outbreak of the third Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967[73] provided a test for Turkey's loyalty to its new friends. During the war, Ankara did not allow the United States to use NATO military bases to support Israel. Ankara also refused to deploy military forces on the Syrian border. In November 1967, Turkey voted in favor of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, demanding Israel's withdrawal from the "territories"[74] it occupied during the war in return for granting it secure borders, although it refrained from condemning Israel as the "aggressor state." Turkey also

[73] Shlaim (2014) asserts that of all the Arab-Israeli wars, the June 1967 war was the only one that neither side wanted. The war resulted out of unintended consequences. Israel had long been wary that militants could infiltrate the country over the Syrian border and had been demanding that Damascus cut support for Palestinian guerillas who were staging attacks against Israel. During a press briefing in May 1967, Aharon Yariv, the director of military intelligence, implied that Israel was planning a major military offensive against Syria. This news snowballed into Israel's mobilization to occupy Damascus and topple the Syrian regime. Soviet diplomats sent a report to Egyptian leader Gamal Abdal Nasser, informing him of Israel's plans. Nasser, to preserve his own credibility and prestige in the Arab world, sent a large number of troops into the Sinai before closing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping – something that constituted a casus belli for Israelis. On June 4, the Israeli Cabinet took the decision to go to war. The operation started with Israel's surprise attack on enemy airfields and ended with Israel's occupation of the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights and the West Bank.

[74] It is important to mention that the ambiguity arose from the French and English versions of Resolution 242. Whereas the French version demanded Israel's withdrawal from "the occupied territories," the English version was consciously codified as "territories" without any definite article, leading to misinterpretations, as if Israel was expected to withdraw only from some of the territories. It is noteworthy that Çağlayangil addressed the U.N. in French and therefore spoke with reference to the French version of the resolution ("Dışişleri Bakanı İhsan Sabri," 1967, p.56). To read further on the contentious wording of "terrorities" in the U.N. resolution, see, (Shlaim, 2014, p.277).

criticized the Knesset's decision in 1967 to amend the Law and Administration Ordinance of 1948 as part of an attempt to legalize Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem ("Dışişleri Bakanı İhsan Sabri," 1967, p.56).

During the 22nd session of the U.N. General Assembly in October 1967, Çağlayangil reiterated his position during the fifth emergency session that a distinction should be made between the short- and long-term problems. Over the short term, Turkey expected Israel to withdraw from the territories they had occupied, while taking steps to remedy the situations which caused the June crisis. Çağlayangil saw this as the key to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, stating:

> We cannot accept acquisition of territories or political advantages through the use of force. We believe that that attitude would be prejudicial not only to the cause of peace but also to the true interests of Israel. Israel has always maintained that its desire was to live in peace with its neighbors in respect for independence and its territorial integrity. How can it now reconcile that expressed wish with its refusal to withdraw from the territories it has occupied, with the unilateral measures it has adopted in Jerusalem, with its actions in the territories it is occupying, with its intransigent attitude on the refugee question and with the territorial demands it is making?("FM Çağlayangil's address to," 1967)

Israel's decisive victory within a short period of six days solidified its image as an invincible military power in the eyes of the Arab world – a view that would last until the next episode in the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1973. Having seized the Golan Heights from Syria, the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza from Egypt and the West Bank and Jerusalem from Jordan, Israeli policymakers also faced a domestic dilemma as to how to manage the newly conquered territories (Shlaim, 2014, p.267).

After the 1967 War, Ankara adopted an increasingly pro-Arab stance in the international arena by participating in Islamic platforms and taking greater interest in the Palestinian cause. However, as Aykan points out, Turkey was nevertheless

willing to preserve a delicate balance between Israel and the Muslim world, thus avoided openly supporting Palestinian independence in the 1960s. (Aykan, 1993, p.96).

In September 1969, for instance, Turkey participated as an observer in the first Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Rabat following an arson attack on the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem by a radical Australian Christian. In order to stave off criticisms that the Islamic character of the international platform ran counter to the country's secular identity, Turkey attended the conference at the Foreign Ministry level. Ankara also underlined that its delegation's agenda was limited to a mere discussion of the arson attack and the status of Jerusalem, allowing her to avoid misinterpretations that it was joining an Islamic pact. During the Conference, Çağlayangil notably reiterated "Turkey's support of U.N. Resolution 242, called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied during the Six-Day War and reflected upon the refugee crisis;" interestingly, he did so without mentioning the "Palestinian people" by name.[75]

In hindsight, one other important ramification of the 1967 war was, perhaps, the rise of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)[76] as the primary actor in the Palestinian resistance movement. It is possible to say that the failure of Arab

[75] Turkey's performance at the Rabat summit drew criticism from Arab states like Egypt and Algeria for not supporting the Palestinian cause. Nevertheless, Turkey was not excluded from Islamic Conference meetings afterwards. According to Aykan (1993), this might be an indication that Turkey's Western orientation was not seen as an obstacle to its rapprochement with the Arabs, so long as Ankara embraced a benevolent attitude toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. See also (Köktaş, 2018, p.45).

[76] Founded in 1964 in Cairo under the leadership of Ahmed Shukheiry, the PLO has become the central force in Palestinian national movement. It has served as a broad national front, consisting of several political and social organizations of the resistance movement. After the war of 1967, the PLO proclaimed the beginning of a guerilla war of national liberation against Israel. The movement underwent an almost simultaneous process of institutionalization in response to demands from Arab countries. Over a number of years, the PLO became the main spokesman of the Palestinians, sidelining other groups. In October 1974, the Arab Summit recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. That same year, PLO leader Yasser Arafat spoke to the U.N. General Assembly, which subsequently passed a resolution affirming the right of the Palestinians to national self-determination (Yavuz,1998).

countries to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinians in the wake of the Six-Day War strengthened Palestinian nationalism by creating consciousness and pushing Palestinians to take matters into their own hands rather than delegating them to other Arab countries.[77] The political dynamics between the PLO and Arab states, in the meantime, determined the course of the Palestinian resistance, shifting between armed struggle and seeking diplomatic representation.

Turkey's relations with the PLO also developed over the years in parallel to Turkey's growing engagement with the Arab world. As a manifestation of its solidarity with Muslim countries, Ankara became a much more vocal supporter of the PLO's diplomatic efforts in the international arena.

3.4. Pro-Palestinian shift in Turkish foreign policy: The 1970s

At home, Turkish politics in the 1970s were often marked by growing political fragmentation, economic crisis and a spiral of violence. As Ahmad (2003) argues, student and working-class militancy, social and economic changes (driven by various factors including urbanization and mass migration to the cities), political polarization and international crisis proved to be an explosive mix.[78] The military's

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[77] Ajami (1992, p.174) refers to the outcome of the Six-Day War as a revolutionary situation, "with all its standard ingredients: military defeat, internal exhaustion, the disaffection of intellectuals, a generation gap that was rapidly turning into an abyss, scathing critiques of the most sacred facets of a culture's life. That, at any rate, was the view of those who pinned their hopes on the new revolution – the Palestinian Movement – and who broke with Nasserism and the Ba'ath."
Pointing at the ideological transformation the PLO has undergone over the years, Mayer (2008) highlights that the PLO's original covenant from 1964 emphasized, in fact, the Arab identity of the cause, whereas the revised charter of July 1968 stressed the movement's intrinsic Palestinian character. The covenant states: "Palestine was the homeland of Arab Palestinian people and constituted an indivisible territorial unit, which only the Palestinian people could legitimately claim as its homeland." To Mayer (2008), this shift from an Arab-centered to a Palestine-centered position implied a sense of mission, claiming an interdependence between the destiny of the Arab people and the Palestinian cause. Ironically, the PLO's resolve to break free of Arab countries proved futile, as the movement remained dependent on the support of Arab countries in which Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria provided bases, hideaways and other logistical support for the guerillas, while oil states like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya fronted the cash.
[78] The unemployment rate was 13% in a population of 37.1 million. Aside from the rapid population growth, Germany's decision to cease receiving international workers also helped aggravate

memorandum on March 12, 1971, held the Süleyman Demirel government responsible for failing to stop "anarchy, fratricidal strife and social and economic unrest," accordingly calling for a government that would "restore law and order" within the constitutional framework.

However, as Ahmad (2003) rightfully points out, priority was given to crushing the left in restoring law and order.[79] Turkish policymakers displayed greater tolerance to rightist political movements and even endorsed religious movements as an antidote to communist ideology within the limits of the secular establishment. Thus, the rise of political Islam in Turkey from the 1970s onward should be considered as a domestic factor in interpreting Turkey's pro-Arab foreign policy.

As noted earlier, even though Turkey was the first Muslim country to recognize Israel, Turks have always harbored sympathy for the Palestinian cause. In the 1970s context, both the Turkish left and the nationalist conservative right espoused their own reasons for resenting Israel. While the Turkish left regarded Israel as a tool of imperialist capitalist powers (namely, the United States), leading it to side with the Palestinians in their resistance against the colonialist powers, conservatives emphasized religious solidarity with the Muslim Palestinians and called on fellow Muslims to speak up against the suppression of Muslims by

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unemployment in Turkey. Concomitant with these developments, the economic transformation resulted in the decline of agricultural output from 38.4% in 1962 to 23.3% in 1977 (Aydın et al., 1994). To Ahmad (2003, p.132), youth unemployment especially played a crucial role in the rise of terrorism, since overcrowded schools and universities were ideal recruiting grounds for militants of the left and the right.

[79] The Turkish Workers' Party was proscribed on the day of the memorandum. All youth organizations affiliated to the Federation of the Revolutionary Youth of Turkey (Dev-Genç) were closed down. In contrast, the Idealist Hearths, the Nationalist Movement Party's youth wing, acted as vigilantes against leftists. The principal goal of this crackdown on the left was to intimidate workers and curb union organizations (Ahmad, 2003, p.135).

Western powers.[80]According to Feyzioğlu (2000), the first group of university students started to leave for Palestine in 1969 to receive military training and this recruitment increased over the years (Feyzioğlu, 2000, p.108).

In fact, Turkey's relations with the PLO have never been trouble-free. Given its anti-colonialist stance, the PLO's friendly ties with Greece and its support for the Greek Cypriot position in Cyprus often engendered unease on Turkey's side.[81] Besides, the PLO's guerilla camps in Syria and Lebanon came to serve as a training ground for other militant organizations such as the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) generating serious concern for Ankara through the 1970s. This close cooperation between the PLO and terrorist groups operating in Turkey, would, in the long run, prepare the ground for intelligence cooperation between Turkey and Israel in the 1980s.

Amid spiraling terrorism in Turkey, one of the most dramatic developments that directly affected Turkish-Israeli relations was the abduction of Israel Consul General to Istanbul Ephraim Elrom by a group of leftist militants on May 17, 1971. The abduction of a diplomat who was regarded as a guest residing in Turkey – as

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[80] For instance, Mücadele Birliği (the Union of Struggle) was one of the most prominent rightist and anti-communist movements of this period. Proponents of this movement defined communism as a product of a Jewish-Masonry conspiracy on account of Karl Marx's Jewish heritage. The group also argued that Israel would eventually claim territory from Turkey on the grounds that the Biblical promised lands comprised parts of Turkish territory as well (Selçuk, 2018).
Necip Fazıl Kısakürek was another influential thinker of the Turkish right who elaborated his anti-Semitic views in his journal, *Büyük Doğu* (The Great East) and other writings, including articles, published in *Milli Gazete*, a semi-official mouthpiece for Turkish political Islam (Kısakürek, 1992, 2003). To read further on the rise of antisemitism and extreme right in Turkey, see, (Bali, 2013; Yaşlı, 2016).

[81] In March 1975, the Turkish government sent a warning note to PLO representatives in Lebanon and Cairo, demanding that they halt publications against Turkish Cypriots and Turkey's initiatives in Cyprus. At the same time, they also declined to give a date for PLO spokesman Farouk Kaddoumi's planned visit to Turkey. In April 1975, the Turkish government reacted to Arafat's opening of a PLO Office in Greek Cyprus. In June 1975, Arafat warned that the PLO would fight in the event that Cyprus ceased to be a non-aligned country and became a base to attack the group ("Hükümet FKÖ'ye uyarıda," 1975; "Arafat'ın Lefkoşa'da büro,"1974; "Yaser Arafat Türkiye'yi tehdit," 1975).

well as someone whose security and protection was Turkey's responsibility – sparked a fierce reaction from the government. In a declaration read out by then Deputy Prime Minister Koçaş, the government threatened to submit a proposal to parliament to execute the terrorists involved in Elrom's abduction in the event that the consul general was killed.[82] Despite intense measures by the government, including the declaration of martial law and a search of all houses belonging to the suspects, Elrom was brutally killed before security forces could locate his place of captivity. Elrom's killing was harshly condemned by various political party leaders and university rectors. In the wake of the incident, İnönü stated that: "For anyone who is rational and has some dignity, it is hard to comprehend how such a disaster occurred. Throughout history, the Turkish nation has never been inflicted with the disease of anti-Semitism and will remain so" ("Öldürmeyle ilgili üç kişi, 1971).

The next stress test for Turkish-Israeli relations was the Yom Kippur War, which erupted on Oct. 6, 1973, when Egypt and Syria attacked Israel on the Jews' holy fasting day of Yom Kippur, so as to catch the Israeli Defense Forces IDF by surprise.[83] The war started with Egypt's ground offensive, but the tide turned in Israel's favor at the eleventh hour thanks to U.S. assistance.[84] Despite Israel's

[82] After Elrom's murder, the government decided to expand the scope of the legislative proposal to introduce the death penalty for ideologically committed terrorist attacks ("Hükümetin Tepkisi Sert Oldu, 1971).

[83] Reports from the warfront received less attention in the Turkish public because the war coincided with Turkey's first parliamentary elections since the military memorandum of 1971.

[84] Both the force and speed of the two-front attack caught Israeli leaders unprepared, destroying the myth of Arab military dysfunction. That momentary bewilderment turned to panic. At dawn on Oct. 9, several senior officials started discussing whether or not to resort to nuclear arms at Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan's suggestion. Prime Minister Golda Meir flew to Washington, hoping to convince U.S. President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to provide assistance. Meir reportedly told Kissinger that Israel might resort to the use of nuclear arms, but Kissinger interpreted her words as a sign of either "hysteria or blackmail." Eventually, however, the United States started a massive airlift of military supplies on Oct. 12, helping Israeli forces to advance and retrieve the land they lost. On Oct. 16, Israel reoccupied the western shore of the Suez Canal. On Oct. 21, the IDF surrounded Egypt's Third Army and moved to within 20 miles of Damascus. Infuriated by the developments on the warfront, OPEC states met in Kuwait on Oct. 17 and imposed an oil embargo upon states which assisted Israel during the war (Mayer, 2008, p.273).

eventual victory on the ground, the Yom Kippur War shattered its invincible image and arguably paved the way for peace talks between Israel and Egypt that would culminate with the Camp David Accords in 1979 (Anziska, 2018, p.10).

During the war, Turkey denied the United States the use of Turkish military facilities to supply aid to Israel ("Türkiye Arap ülkelerini meşru," 1973; "Dışişleri açıklaması: Türkiye'nin NATO," 1973), but reportedly allowed the Soviets to use Turkish air space to assist the Arabs.[85] This marked a significant shift in Turkish foreign policy, tipping the balance in favor of the Arabs in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Subsequently, Turkey's gestures to Arab countries spared it from OPEC's oil embargo of 1973, which targeted countries perceived to have supported Israel during the Yom Kippur War.

Nevertheless, the OPEC crisis dealt a heavy blow to Turkish economy. As an oil importing country, Turkey's budget deficit soared due to the global hike in oil prices.[86] Worse, the U.S. arms embargo and Europe's economic sanctions to punish Turkey's intervention in Cyprus in 1974 further deepened the economic crisis.[87]

Retrospectively, the U.S. arms embargo, which lasted for three years, paved the way for Turkey's development of its national defense industry.[88] On the other

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[85] After the war ended, Kissinger reportedly complained to his friend, Lord Home, that the Soviet Union had been freer to use NATO's airspace than the United States (Horne, 2009).

[86] OPEC increased the price of crude oil from $2.50 a barrel in 1973 to $11.60 by Dec. 24, 1974 ("Oil Shock of 1973–74, n.d).

[87] After intervening in Cyprus in 1974, Turkey had to bear the costs of maintaining its military presence on the island. Between 1977 and 1978, Turkey spent nearly $2.63 billion on its defense, up to 30% of its budget. Punished by the U.S. arms embargo, Turkey turned to other NATO allies, including Britain, France, West Germany, Italy and Norway, in order to obtain the necessary arms and spare parts. Coupled with the effects of the oil embargo of 1973, the diversion of economic resources to maintain its military placed a heavy burden on the Turkish economy (Durmaz, 2014; "United States General Accounting Office,"1974).

[88] As part of efforts to nationalize the Turkish defense industry, ASELSAN was founded in 1975 to meet the communication needs of the Turkish Armed Forces by national means. This was followed by the establishment of Havelsan in 1982 for the production of command and control and combat systems for the Turkish Air and Naval Forces, including simulators that used more Turkish content. In another milestone for Turkey's national defense industry, Roketsan was founded in 1988 for the purpose of designing, developing and manufacturing rockets and missiles (ASELSAN, nd.; Havelsan, n.d.; Roketsan, n.d.).

hand, the sanctions convinced Turkish policymakers once again of the necessity to diversify its alliance ties (Criss, 2002). By approaching the Arab world, Turkey thus expected to import oil at favorable conditions, receive economic assistance, develop trade and overcome its international isolation over Cyprus.

One can argue that Turkey's rapprochement with the Arabs converged with a favorable domestic context in the 1970s. In 1974, after long and exhausting negotiations, Bülent Ecevit's Republican People's Party (CHP) and Necmettin Erbakan's National Salvation Party (MSP) agreed to form a coalition government, marking the first time in Turkish history that a political party affiliated with Islamist ideology had become a coalition partner. Espousing an anti-Western, anti-Israeli and pro-Islamic agenda, the MSP questioned Turkey's relations with the West, promoting instead unity among Muslims and endorsing close relations with Middle Eastern countries. Erbakan frequently recommended an Islamic Common Market with the Islamic dinar as its common currency, arguing that this would serve Turkey's interests better than becoming a member of the European Common Market since Turkey as a Muslim country had no place in a "Christian-Zionist institution" ("Milli Selamet Partisi Seçim," 1973; Bayraktar, 2015).

As such, the MSP, which served as a coalition partner in both the first and second National Front governments in 1975 and 1977, found a greater area to maneuver to push for the implementation of its pro-Islamist agenda, promoting the signing of trade and cultural agreements with Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Libya (Demir, 2009; İhsanoğlu, 1995). Not surprisingly, Turkey became one of the founding members of the Islamic

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In the post-coup period of the 1980s, Prime Minister Turgut Özal promoted policies designed to bring the private sector into the defense industry. In January 1986, the government created the Defense Industry Development and Support Administration (DIDA) and established the Defense Fund to encourage private investments in the sector (Karasapan, 1987, p.27).

Development Bank, which was formed in 1974 and began active operations in 1975.[89] During an interview in August 1979, Erbakan revealed that he pressured the then Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel to join the Islamic Conference meeting as a "full member" by threatening to withdraw from the coalition in 1976 (Ergin, 1979, p.6).

But as noted earlier, Turkey's alignment with the Arab world did not translate into hostility or aggression toward Israel. At the second Islamic Conference in Lahore in February 1974, Turkish Foreign Minister Turan Güneş refused to accede to OIC demands that Turkey cut off relations with Israel (Soysal, 2000, p.736).[90] Notably, participants at the summit also recognized the PLO under Arafat as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, lending the PLO an important boost in its struggle for international legitimacy and recognition ("Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC)," 1974). In a similar vein, Turkey did not drop its reservations in May 1976 over the final communiqué at the seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, which required all participating Muslim

[89] Founded in 1974, the Islamic Development Bank formally opened in 1975. The purpose of the bank has been to foster the economic development and social progress of member countries and Muslim communities individually as well as jointly in accordance with the principles of the Shari'ah ("The Islamic Development Bank," n.d).

[90] Foreign Minister Turan Güneş who represented Turkey at a lower profile at the conference, registered his reservation with the related clause of the final communiqué which urged "all member states to cut off relations with Israel." On the other hand,Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat stated that his country had no intention of pressuring Turkey to sever its ties with Israel, since doing so would mean interfering in Turkish foreign policymaking. (Soysal, 2000, p.736; "Sedat: Türk-İsrail İlişkileri," 1974).

states to sever relations with Israel and called for the suspension of Israel's membership in international organizations.[91] Turkey has maintained its position at Islamic conferences since then.[92]

As a manifestation of good relations with the Muslim world, Turkey continued to lend diplomatic support to the PLO during this period. In November 1974, Turkey voted in favor of U.N. General Assembly Resolution 3236 (UNGA, 1974), which recognized the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty in Palestine. The resolution also permitted the PLO to participate in the U.N. General Assembly meetings as an observer.

Despite its open support for the Palestinian cause in the international arena, Turkey's relations with the PLO were problematic. Although Turkey formally announced during the seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Istanbul in May 1976 that the PLO would establish an office in Ankara, the group could not ultimately open the office until 1979 because of Ankara's discontent about the organization's logistical and moral support for terrorist organizations that aimed to undermine Turkish national security. As noted earlier, the PLO's pro-Greek standing and its failure to endorse the resolutions of the seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, which supported Turkey's position, also frustrated Ankara.[93]

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[91] "The Conference called on all states to assume their responsibilities and, especially to refrain from supplying Israel with any form of support and to sever all ties with it. It confirmed its resolution adopted at Jeddah for the expulsion of Israel from the U.N. and all other international organizations. The Conference further called for the extension of all forms of assistance to the Palestinian and Arab peoples, in their legitimate struggle, until the liberation of the occupied territories is achieved, and the Palestinian people return to their homeland and exercise their rights, especially to self-determination and the establishment of a national independent state" (Organization of Islamic Conference (OCI), 1976).

[92] Turkish reservations at subsequent Islamic conferences of foreign ministers were submitted in written form to the secretariat of the Islamic Conference Organization.

[93] The PLO spokesman, Kaddoumi, considered the Cyprus problem as another imperialist conspiracy, stating that the PLO endorsed the independence, territorial integrity and neutrality of Cyprus ("Konferans Kıbrıs Türk tezini," 1976).

Ironically, in July 1979, Prime Minister Ecevit heralded the opening of a PLO office in Ankara as a gesture in exchange for the PLO's mediation to end a raid on the Egyptian Embassy in Ankara that was conducted by a terrorist group called the "Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution" (Özcan, 2005, p.48; "Palestinians hold Egyptian Officials," 1979). Prior to the opening, the Turkish government reportedly asked for certain reassurances from the PLO regarding the organization's recruitment of militants at PLO camps. However, PLO representative Abu Firas denied that Turkey attached any conditions to the opening of an office in Ankara, adding that "our camps are open to everybody willing to fight against the enemy of the Palestinian cause" ("FKÖ'nün Ankara temsilciliği," 1979). Whatever the case, the PLO, which was granted full diplomatic status, opened the office on Oct. 5, 1979, although the mission chief, who served as the ambassador, only possessed the rank of a chargé d'affaires.

Aykan (1993) argues that apart from the PLO's assistance in the Egyptian embassy affair, the Ecevit government's decision to permit the opening of the PLO office was a maneuver to prove Turkey's commitment to the Palestinian cause, which was shaken by the Demirel coalition government's support for the Egyptian-Israeli peace process. Whereas, the Demirel coalition government welcomed Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat's groundbreaking visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 as a harbinger of peace in the Middle East – in spite of the protests of Arab countries – the Ecevit government criticized the Camp David Accords of 1978, as well as the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979, on the grounds that neither of them addressed the Palestinian problem (Aykan, 1993, p.100). Not surprisingly, Turkey voted in favor of UNGA Resolution 34/65 B on Nov. 29, 1979, which declared the Camp

David Accords and other agreements null and void on the grounds that the PLO was excluded from the negotiation process as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people (UNGA, 1979).

In the meantime, Turkey's overtures to the Arab world in the 1970s produced a few tangible benefits in terms of support her Cyprus cause. Rauf Denktaş was invited to the sixth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in July 1975 as the "leader of the Turkish Muslim Community in Cyprus," instead of the president of the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus. In this respect, Turkey's vote for U.N. Resolution 3379 in November 1975, which defined Zionism as a form of racism and racial discrimination, can be read as a Turkish move to return the favor to its Arab friends (Uzer, 2015). During the seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, the Turkish Cypriot community was granted a seat at all OIC meetings as a "guest." Three years later, this position was elevated to "observer" status at the 10th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Fez (Aykan, 1995). But by the end of the decade, Ankara had to face a bitter truth: Turkey would remain the only country which formally recognized either the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus (1975) or the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which was established on Nov. 15, 1983, after eight years of failed negotiations with the Greek side.

3.5. The break of the dawn in Turkish-Israeli cooperation (1979-1990)

Toward the end of 1970s, Turkey's relations with the United States began to show signs of improvement in the wake of Turkey's 1974 Cyprus intervention in parallel with the growing skepticism in both the United States and the Soviet Union regarding détente. In August 1978, the U.S. Congress lifted a controversial 3.5-year-old embargo on the sale of U.S. arms to Turkey on the grounds that the ban had

failed to convince Turkish forces to withdraw from Cyprus and that the security vacuum had put NATO defenses in the Mediterranean at risk ("Hill Lifts Embargo on Arms," 1978). In October 1979, after three months of negotiations, the Senate also approved President Jimmy Carter's request for a $50 million military grant to help Turkey revitalize its armed forces. The bill also authorized the Carter administration to provide $450 million in aid for Turkey: $250 million in arms sales credits, including $50 million in special long-term loans; $198 million in economic support assistance, including a $75 million grant; and a $2 million grant for military training for the fiscal year of 1980.[94]

International developments in late 1979, such as the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, not only marked the end of détente but also drew the United States' attention back to the Middle East and Asia. Former President Richard Nixon's Middle East strategy (also known as "the twin pillar policy"), which rested on an alliance with Saudi Arabia and Iran for the protection of U.S. interests in the region, collapsed with the fall of the shah in Iran. Highlighting the Soviets' expansionist aims in the region, Carter used his State of the Union address on Jan. 23, 1980, to articulate his Middle East policy-and formulated- what came to be known as the Carter Doctrine:

> The region which is now threatened by Soviet troops in Afghanistan is of great strategic importance…The Soviet Union is now attempting to consolidate a strategic position, therefore, that poses a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil…Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force ("US President Jimmy Carter's," 1980).

[94] Of the $198 million in economic aid, $100 million was earmarked for the 1979 fiscal year ("Military aid bill: Turkey," 1979).

In line with the Carter Doctrine, Washington focused on rebuilding its own defense capabilities in the Gulf instead of relying on its allies in the region. In March 1980, it accordingly established a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) that consisted of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine units that were assigned to rush to distant trouble spots in the region.[95]

This regional security perspective, which was based on increasing U.S. military commitment in the Gulf, continued during the Reagan administration. Envisaging the establishment of a security belt stretching from Afghanistan to the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean against communism, U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig pushed for the creation of a "strategic consensus" among the Gulf countries, Turkey, Israel and Pakistan. Ultimately, the coming of the "Second Cold War" highlighted Turkey's geopolitical importance as a pivotal ally in the anti-communist struggle.[96]

In this respect, the signing of a Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA)[97] in March 1980 can be taken as an indicator of Turkey's rising geopolitical significance in Washington's eyes in this period. However, Turkey refused to take part in the RDF at the beginning, because of its reluctance to commit

[95] In fact, the Middle East was geographically outside of NATO's defense area, but due to changing security priorities in the Middle East, a Florida-based Central Command was established in 1983 to coordinate the RDF. The establishment of the Central Command brought the RDF under NATO's roof, thereby assuaging concerns among NATO allies about engage in out-of-area operations (Uzgel, 2002a, p. 46; Güvenç, 2015).

[96] Haig engaged in diplomatic efforts to facilitate cooperation between Turkey and Pakistan. Within the scope of this consensus strategy, the Reagan administration also sought Ankara's support to end Egypt's political isolation at the Organization of Islamic Conference and endorsed the normalization of Turkish-Israeli relations within a broader framework of an Arab-Israeli peace initiative ("Haig Says US Seeks," 1981; Uzgel, 2002a, p.45; Altunışık & Tür, 2005, p.111).

[97] DECA was a five-year agreement which allowed the United States to participate in joint defense operations at specified Turkish Armed Forces installations. In return, the United States committed to provide security assistance to Turkey for the modernization of the Turkish army. A U.S.-Turkish Joint Commission was established to take decisions on how to use Turkey's resources for common security objectives. The agreement had been negotiated by the successive leftist and rightist governments under Bülent Ecevit and Süleyman Demirel, respectively, and implemented by the military regime headed by Gen. Kenan Evren (Uslu, 1975, p.14).

formally to the defense of the Persian Gulf. Also with the signing of a memorandum of understanding MOU in 1982, Ankara also tried to limit Washington's use of military bases in Turkey for non-NATO purposes, stipulating parliament authorization for the use of bases in out-of-area operations.[98]

Against this backdrop, Turkey maintained close relations with Arab countries in the 1980s owing to both exogenous and endogenous factors. As noted earlier, in line with its changing regional security priorities, the Reagan administration openly promoted regional cooperation between Turkey and the Gulf countries as part of a policy of establishing a security belt against communism. It is thus noteworthy that in this period Turkey concluded military cooperation agreements with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia ("Suudilerle savunma sanayinde işbirliği,"1984).

Second, in the wake of Turkey's military coup in September 1980, the new regime moved closer to the United States, seeking legitimacy. Still, the military junta's brutal crackdown on political movements, widespread torture and other human rights abuses elicited criticisms in both the United States and Europe. Washington ultimately preferred to downplay the democratic shortcomings of its ally for the sake of common geopolitical interests, but Turkey's relations with Europe went into a freeze as the European Economic Community suspended the fourth Financial Protocol – a financial assistance package worth 600 million ECU to be paid over five years ("European Commission report," 1991). Turkey-Europe

[98] It has often been an issue subject to misinterpretation. The DECA of 1980 provides base access and operation rights for the US forces in Turkey for NATO operations. Legally, there are no US bases on Turkish territory. The military bases referred in DECA belong to Turkey and are allocated to the use of NATO operations. In 1985,the Özal government requested revisions to the DECA in order to increase the amount of economic support from Washington. Özal's comments on during an interview on Sept. 28, 1985 in which he demanded an increase in trade between Turkey and the United States, reflects the prevailing view in the Turkish public that often considers NATO bases as US bases: "If I'm giving them [military bases], I can claim an increase in trade in return.-Ben ona üs veriyorsam, karşılığında ticaretin artırılmasını isterim" (Uzgel, 2002a, p.56).

relations remained turbulent and only normalized incrementally in parallel with the restoration of civilian government, as well as an improvement in civil liberties toward 1986.[99]

In this context, maintaining cordial ties with Arab countries not only helped Turkey overcome its political isolation, it also helped ease her deep financial problems.[100] The military regime inherited an economic austerity program that the last civilian government had put into force on Jan. 24, 1980, as a last resort to save the country from the brink of economic bankruptcy. What's more, the regime kept Turgut Özal – who served in dual posts as the undersecretary of the Prime Ministry and the undersecretary of the State Planning Organization by proxy – as the head of their economic team.

From a historical perspective, military interventions in Turkish politics have always been followed by restoration to civilian rule after a brief transition period (Hale, 1994; Cizre, 1997). In a similar vein, the military junta under General Evren was committed to handing over power to an elected civilian government, once a new constitution had been enacted. In this respect, a Consultative Assembly was convened in October 1981 to start working on a new constitution, as part of this normalization process. On Dec. 31, 1981, General Evren announced that the constitution would be put to a national referendum in the fall of 1982, and general elections would be held the next year ("Evren: 1983 sonbaharında seçim," 1981).

The Motherland Party's surprise victory in the 1983 elections heralded a new era in Turkish politics. As the leader of a center-right political party, Özal developed

[99]Turkey's access to Special Aid Funds resumed in 1987 ("European Commission Report," 1991).
[100] By the end of 1979, the Turkish economy was bankrupt due to a soaring budget deficit, as well as a decline in foreign currency reserves. The import substitution model failed due to a number of reasons, such as the fall in remittance payments from foreign workers, the loss of foreign credit, rising oil prices after the OPEC embargo and the negative impact of the arms embargo imposed by the United States (Oran, 2002, p.15).

a culturally conservative but politically progressive agenda that placed special focus on revamping Turkey's economy by introducing an export-led growth model. Özal's pragmatic foreign policy aimed at mending ties with Turkey's neighbors and allies near and far in order to broaden the horizons for economic development and ensure that Turkey would serve as a bridge between continents and cultures. The economic prosperity that Özal promised would eventually pave the way for political liberalization (Güner, 2003; Özal, 1991).

Amid Turkey's economic transformation, accessing the Middle East market and attracting Arab investment gained significance. In his first cabinet after the 1983 elections, Özal appointed Vahit Melih Halefoğlu, a career diplomat who was fluent in Arabic, as his foreign minister, indicating the importance placed on developing relations with the Middle East. Not surprisingly, Turkey's trade with Middle Eastern countries increased. Between 1980 and 1985, the Middle East's share in total Turkish exports increased from 21.6% to 40%.[101] The eight-year long Iran-Iraq War also played a role in the increase of the Middle East's share in Turkish exports. Thanks to its advantageous geographical position, Turkey benefited from the Iran-Iraq War in terms of trade since it offered the only secure transit route in the area. Thus, Iraq and Iran's share in Turkish exports increased from 5.5% in 1980 to 26% in 1986. In 1982, Iraq replaced West Germany as Turkey's top trade partner with a trade volume of $2 million – almost half of Turkey's total export volume of $5.7 million. However, as Özcan indicates, Turkey's trade gradually shifted towards

[101] Thanks to its advantageous geographical position, Turkey benefited from the Iran-Iraq War in terms of trade as it offered the only secure transit route in the area. Iraq and Iran's share in Turkish exports increased from 5.5% in 1980 to 26% in 1986. In 1982, Iraq replaced West Germany as Turkey's top trade partner with a trade volume of $2 million – almost half of Turkey's total export volume of $5.7 million ("Turkstat," n.d.; Aydın & Aras, 2004).

Europe by the end of 1980s, owing to a fall in oil revenues in Arab countries and Europe's recovery from economic recession (Özcan, 2005, p.50. In 1990, OECD countries' share in Turkey's exports would reach 68%) (Sönmez, 1992, p.53).

Viewed in hindsight, the 1980s can be described as a transition period in Turkish-Israel relations. While Turkey's deference to Arab countries continued, developments prompted Turkish policymakers to reassess Israel's significance as an ally, laying the ground for future cooperation between the two countries. However, the political turmoil in the Middle East throughout the 1980s delayed steps to normalize Turkish-Israeli relations.

In fact, on Jan. 1, 1980, diplomatic relations with Israel were elevated to the ambassadorial level. However, this was only short-lived. On July 30, 1980, Israel's Knesset (parliament) passed the controversial Jerusalem Law (a.k.a the Basic Law) and declared Jerusalem as Israel's indivisible and eternal capital. Protesting the Knesset's decision, Ankara downgraded her diplomatic representation in Israel to the status of chargé d'affaires to be represented by a junior diplomat – the lowest diplomatic status in the history of bilateral relations-limiting economic and cultural exchange, to a minimum. Turkey not only voted in favor of the U.N. resolutions which condemned Israel's attempt to change the status of Jerusalem (UNGA, 1980a; UNGA, 1980b; UNGA, 1980c), but also temporarily closed the Turkish Consulate General in Jerusalem.

Given the sacredness of Jerusalem to the three Abrahamic religions, it is understandable that Israel's unilateral move sparked such a reaction in Turkey. However, the decision to downgrade diplomatic relations also raised questions in political circles as to whether the policy response was proportionate and that it fully served national interests. The timing also suggests that the decision might have been

economically motivated to assure the long-delayed acquisition of loans worth $250 million from Saudi Arabia. In his memoirs, Kamuran Gürün, then the secretary general of the Foreign Ministry, asserts that the issue was brought to the agenda upon Foreign Minister İlter Türkmen's advice and that the decision was taken without consulting the cabinet following his return from Saudi Arabia.[102]

Regional crises triggered by Israel's unilateral decisions and operations, such as the attack on Iraq's nuclear power plant, Osirak (1981),[103] the annexation of the Golan Heights (1981) ("From the archive 15," 2012) and Israel's invasion of Lebanon in Operation Peace for Galilee (1982) (Akdevelioğlu & Kürkçüoğlu, 2002, p.132) all elicited Turkey's criticism. In line with its traditional stance, Turkey voted for U.N. resolutions which condemned Israel's unilateral decisions ("The UN Yearbook of 1981," 1981). But also, on Feb. 5, 1982, Turkey abstained from a U.N. vote on Resolution ES 9/1, which called on U.N. agencies and international organizations to break off their relations with Israel on punitive terms (UNGA, 1982).

On the one hand, Israel's invasion of Lebanon and, in particular, its decision to turn a blind eye to the right-wing Phalangists' massacres at the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila[104] precipitated an outburst of anger not only from Turkey but throughout the Muslim world. Turkey agreed to send doctors and medical

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[102] Gürün refers to his meeting with Ali Haydar Saltık, the secretary general of the Presidential Council, in November 1980, during which the general told Gürün: "Your foreign minister is tremendously persuasive; he almost talked us into breaking off relations with Israel. We barely prevented him" (Gürün, 1995, p.225).

[103] On June 7, 1981, Israel launched an air campaign with 16 planes (eight of them were F-16 Fighter Falcons and the other eight were F-15 Eagles) as part of Operation Babylon to destroy Iraq's nuclear reactor at Osirak, near Baghdad. Flying low and in tight formation, the planes avoided detection by radar and flew to Iraq, crossing the airspace of Jordan and Saudi Arabia (Shlaim, 2014, p.394).

[104] On Sept. 16, 1982, the Christian Phalangist militia attacked the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla in the south of Beirut, killing hundreds of men, women and children. Israeli sources estimated the death toll at 800, while the Palestinian Red Crescent put the number at over 2,000. Then-Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon was held responsible for allegedly ordering the IDF to allow the Phalangists to enter the camps in order to clean out terrorists (Shlaim, 2014, p.428; "The Sum of Beirut's," 1982).

equipment through the Red Crescent to PLO camps in Lebanon but turned down a Palestinian request for further military assistance ("FKÖ Türkiye'den askeri yardım,"1982). But even at a time when bilateral relations seemed to have hit rock bottom, the operation reinvigorated strategic cooperation, as Israel offered to provide Ankara with information and documents about PKK militants that it seized during the occupation of Beirut.[105]

In the wake of the Operation Peace in Galilee, information received from Israeli officials revealed that PKK and ASALA militants had been training in PLO camps in Lebanon all along. Developments were met with disappointment in Ankara such that FM İlter Türkmen expressed regret over the documents which proved close cooperation between the PLO and ASALA, despite the former's repeated assurances to the contrary.[106] The rise in the number of ASALA attacks in the aftermath of Lebanon's invasion, such as a bombing and machine gun attack at Esenboğa Airport in Ankara on Aug. 7, 1982, and the assassination of Turkey's military attaché to Canada, Atilla Altıkat, 21 days later, forced Turkish authorities to take stronger measures against terrorism.[107]

On the other hand, the PLO's image further deteriorated in Ankara's eye because of its intimate relations with Greece and Greek Cypriots (the Greek government had hosted PLO leaders at luxury resorts in Athens). During their

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[105] In June 1982, the Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman and chief of the Turkish desk, Elomo Benu, declared that Israel was ready to hand over all information regarding PKK and ASALA terrorists captured in Lebanon. In July 1982, Turkish Interpol asked Israel if there was a Turkish militant among the captured. On July 15, it was revealed that the Turkish government had received information from Israeli authorities with regard to 26 Turkish terrorists seized in the PLO camps. On July 15, it was revealed that the Turkish government had received information from Israeli authorities with regard to 26 Turkish terrorists seized in the PLO camps ("İsrail Teröre Karşı İşbirliği," 1982; "Türk Interpolü İsrail'e FKÖ,"1982; "Arafat: ABD FKÖ'yü Tanısın," 1982).

[106] In this respect, the PLO official, Kaddoumi's visit to Ankara in January 1983, was considered as an attempt to mend ties with the Turkish government ("ASALA'yı barındırmak Rumların hatası," 1982; "Kaddumi bugün Ankara'ya geliyor,"1983).

[107] In the wake of the ASALA attacks, President Kenan Evren stated that Turkey would take measures to counter Armenian terrorism ("ASALA Esenboğa'yı Kana Buladı,"1982; "Ermeni terörüne karşı Mukabil," 1982).

evacuation of Lebanon, the PLO militants had moved their ammunition and equipment to Tunisia via Greek Cyprus ("Arafat: Sürgünde Filistin devleti," 1982). In the meantime, attacks perpetrated by the Abu Nidal organization – a dissident faction of the PLO also known as Black September – such as an attempt to bomb the American Association in İzmir in 1983,[108] the assassination of Jordan's acting ambassador to Turkey, Ziyad Sati, in 1985,[109] and an attack on the Neve Shalom Synagogue in Istanbul in 1986[110] raised concerns that Turkey was becoming a field for foreign militants of Middle Eastern origin.[111] In light of these developments, Ankara started to review its relations with the Arab world and especially question its unconditional support for the Palestinian cause ("Kıbrıs'a sokulan FKÖ silahları,"1982).

Meanwhile, Arab countries' unwillingness to recognize the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) or their refusal to speak up for the Turkish minority suffering from Bulgarian repression at the time possibly influenced Ankara's assessments.[112]

At a time when Arab countries were losing their charm, as well as the leverage they enjoyed when the oil prices were at their height, cooperation with Israel was gaining significance. As noted earlier, the Armenian issue, particularly ASALA's attacks on Turkish diplomats, dominated the Foreign Ministry's agenda in the 1980s. In the wake of an ASALA attack in Paris on March 4 that year, a committee was established under the auspices of the National Security Secretariat to

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[108] The attack in İzmir was prevented at the last minute as the police noticed the vehicle that was about to detonate ("Patlamaya hazır otomobil son," 1983).
[109] Jordan's acting ambassador, Sati, was killed by a gunman shortly after he left home for work ("İslami Cihad Ankara'da Vurdu, 1985).
[110] The terror attack by an Arab suicide squad killed 22 people during the Shabbat Prayer at Neve Shalom Synagogue in Istanbul ("Sinagogda katliam," 1986).
[111] For a summary of Abu Nidal's terror attacks in Turkey, see, ("Türk, Kürt ve Ermeni," 1985).
[112] In December 1984, Bulgaria launched a campaign to assimilate ethnic Turks, ultimately resulting in the migration or expulsion of thousands of people from the country (Uzgel, 2002c, p.175).

work on an effective response to Armenian claims that a genocide had occurred in 1915. Accordingly, the committee agreed to publish brochures that would explain the Turkish historical thesis and embark on lobbying activities, both by setting up Turkish lobbies abroad and cooperating with Jewish lobbies to win over Western countries (Gürün, 1995).

This idea was later developed during regular meetings, paving the way for discussions between Turkish officials and representatives of Jewish organizations in the United States. During a visit to Washington in October 1985, Özal secretly met with representatives of Jewish organizations, requesting their backing ("Özal'ın gizli görüşmesi," 1985). The support of the Jewish lobbies in the United States was regarded as critical not only in terms of counterbalancing the anti-Turkey propaganda of the Armenian and Greek lobbies but also in facilitating financial assistance from Washington.

Alon Liel, a former director of Israel's Foreign Ministry and the head of the Israeli mission in Ankara between 1981 and 1983, notes that a key turning point in Turkish-Israeli relations was Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon from January to April 1985, as the end to the three-year occupation provided Turkey and Israel a less problematic context on which to rebuild their ties. Liel also argues that leaving behind the energy crisis and Özal's positive accomplishments on the economy boosted Turkey's confidence and expanded Turkey's room to maneuver in foreign policy (Liel, 2017, personal communication).

It is also noteworthy that Turkey-Syria relations -which have historically suffered from a bad blood dating back to Turkey's annexation of the Sanjak of Alexandretta (Hatay) in 1939, before Syria became independent in 1946[113]- further

[113] The two countries have never enjoyed friendly ties apart from a period of gradual normalization, followed by cooperation from 1998 to 2010. While Turkey joined the NATO in 1952, Syria became a

deteriorated in the mid-1980s over Turkey's Southeastern Anatolian Project (GAP) ("Ministry of Industry and Technology," n.d.), an infrastructure development project which envisioned the construction of 22 dams and 19 hydroelectric plants on the Euphrates and Tigris to boost agriculture, produce energy and contribute to the social welfare of the local population. But following the start of construction on the GAP's Atatürk Dam in 1983, relations with Syria became increasingly strained over Damascus' worries about a possible water shortage – particularly in the event that Ankara opted to use water as a tool of political leverage. Ankara, on the other hand, was very uncomfortable with the prospect that the PKK, which had waged an insurgency against Turkey since 1984, would benefit from the power vacuum in northern Iraq caused by the ongoing Iran-Iraq War. The government equally resented Syria's aloofness to the infiltration of terrorists over its southern border and blamed Damascus for harboring PKK and ASALA camps, located in both Syrian territory and in the Syrian controlled Bekaa valley in Lebanon.[114]

When Özal met Syrian Prime Minister Abdul Rauf al-Kasm in Ankara, he refused to sign an agreement that would certify the amount of water to be supplied to Syria even though the parties seemed to have reached an agreement on key issues, namely the water issue and the borders. In response, al-Kasm declined a security protocol prepared by the Committee on Border Security at the last minute ("Sınır ve Su Konusunda," 1986).

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member of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1964. Yet Damascus, has often sided with the Soviet Union to obtain economic as well as military support during the Cold War. To read further, see, (Hinnebush, & Tür, 2013).

[114] For instance, during the court hearings, main defendant of the "Southeast Incidents", Mustafa Çimen confessed that after the coup of 1980, he fled to a PKK cell in Qamishli, Syria and was taken to a camp in Beirut, Lebanon for recruitment. In June 1988, Mehmet Ali Birand, a well-known journalist, conducted a pathbreaking interview with the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, which shed light on the functioning of the organization, but also drew a lot of criticism at home ("PKK davasında önemli itiraflar,"1985).

With the conflicts unresolved, Özal went to Syria in July 1987, becoming the first Turkish prime minister to ever undertake the trip. Delivering President Kenan Evren's goodwill message, Özal tried to reassure Damascus' concerns over water and underlined Ankara's expectations regarding border security. Accordingly, two protocols were signed during this visit. Under the 1987 protocol on water issue, Turkey guaranteed Syria an average water flow rate of 500 m3/second from the Euphrates. In return, Damascus pledged to prevent all kind of terrorist activities targeting Turkey on Syrian territory. The deal, however, did not comprise the camps in Lebanon, controlled by the Syrian government (Birand, 1987).[115] Also during this visit, Özal introduced his "Peace Water" project, which was designed to carry water from the Seyhan and Ceyhan Rivers to the Middle East, through two different pipelines – one which would pass through Syria to Jordan and the other which would link Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (Birand, 1987, p.9). The positive air of this meeting, however, would not last long, as reciprocal accusations would soon cast a shadow on relations between the two neighbors.

Amid Turkey's growing security concerns, Turkey and Israel undertook small steps toward normalization from the mid-1980s onward. Given that Israel has always viewed the level of Turkish diplomatic attendance at functions to be a barometer of bilateral relations the Turkish Foreign Ministry sent two high-level officials – a general-director and the head of a department – to Israel's Independence Day reception in Ankara on April 28, 1985, as an ice-breaking gesture ("İsrail ile ilişkilerde yumuşama," 1985). On Oct. 2, 1985, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres requested a meeting with Özal on the sidelines of the U.N. summit in New York to

[115] To read further on the water conflict and the Protocol of 1987, see (Pamukçu, 1998; Kut,1993).

discuss the prospects for the normalization of diplomatic relations. However, the meeting was canceled after Israel bombarded the PLO headquarters in Tunisia, prompting a harsh condemnation from the Turkish government.[116] Nevertheless, Israel continued to extend requests for meeting with the Turkish Foreign Ministry in the following years during annual U.N. meetings in September.

In late 1985, Turkey and Israel decided to raise the level of diplomatic representation in Tel Aviv and Ankara, albeit quietly. The two agreed to exchange two senior diplomatic representatives without allowing them to use their ranks, merely designating them as chargés d'affaires. Moreover, the diplomatic representations also remained as legations, instead of embassies. Accordingly, Israel appointed Yehuda Milli, a diplomat of "minister counsellor" rank, as chargé d'affaires to Ankara in 1985. In response, Turkey sent Ekrem Güvendiren, a diplomat with the rank of ambassador, to replace Bülent Meriç as the new "second secretary" in Tel Aviv in September 1986. That year, Israel posted another diplomat to its legation in Ankara and, throughout their terms of service, it quietly raised their ranks (Özcan, 2005, p.64).

Güvendiren (1999) indicates that the exchange of these two senior diplomats initiated a careful process of normalization between Turkey and Israel. In time, economic and commercial relations began to develop; Turkish Airlines resumed flights to Israel in 1986 – and not just between Istanbul and Tel Aviv, as other destinations were also added, including İzmir, Antalya, Adana, Dalaman and

[116] In the wake of the attack, Özal accused Israel of killing peace. Halefoğlu left the U.N. meeting as a protest when the Israeli foreign minister took the floor to speak ("Halefoğlu'ndan sert protesto, 1985, "İsrail'e randevu tokadı, 1985).

Bodrum. In fact, Turkish Airlines soon became the biggest carrier in Israel after El Al, Israel's national airline. By 1989, Turkish military officials and Israeli diplomats had resumed regular meetings to exchange views (Güvendiren, 1999).

Toward the end of the 1980s, diplomatic contacts and the level of representation in the official meetings between Turkey and Israel increased, albeit at a glacial pace, as Ankara remained cautious about keeping relations with Israel at a low profile to avoid alienating the Arab world. Turkish policymakers, accordingly, frequently tried to reassure allies in the Middle East during this period that apparent the rapprochement with Israel did not indicate a substantial change in Turkey's policy toward Israel, even as steps to break the ice proceeded ("Halefoğlu: İsrail politikamız değişmedi,"1985). As such, bilateral relations zigzagged in parallel to the periodic tensions in the Middle East.

In September 1987, a glimpse of hope emerged, heralding a possible new phase in Turkey-Israel relations. U.S. diplomatic circles close to President Reagan had long been trying to foster cooperation between Turkey and pro-Jewish lobbies, advising Ankara that working in tandem with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) would result in favorable decisions from the U.S. Congress regarding foreign aid to Turkey (Göğüş, 1987). With the Cold War losing steam,[117] Israel's improving ties with Moscow, Eastern Europe and even Greece had not gone unnoticed by Turkish policymakers, who strived to interpret these developments and adjust Turkish foreign policy according to the changing balances of power in the region. In this context, the foreign minister, Halefoğlu, eventually met Peres for a

[117] At the time, the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in negotiations for arms control that eventually resulted in the signing of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) in December 1987.

50-minute gathering in New York in October 1987, during which the two discussed the prospects for the Jewish lobby's assistance to Turkey in return for Turkey's support for the resolution of conflicts in the Middle East ("Musevi lobisinden Türkiye'ye destek, 1987).

However, bilateral relations suffered another blow with the outbreak of the First Intifada in December 1987[118] – especially as the Israeli military's disproportional use of force against civilians provoked anti-Israeli reactions in Turkey. Özal condemned the Israeli attacks on Palestinians vehemently, noting that "it is not possible to remain silent over Israel's operations targeting Palestinians" ("İşçi ve işveren temsilcileri başbakan ," 1987). On Nov. 15, 1988, Turkey recognized Palestine's sovereignty – even before many Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria and Oman.

Despite the ongoing intifada, the seeds of political dialogue between Turkey and Israel started to yield gradual results. In February 1989, during his meeting with representatives of the American Jewish Committee, Foreign Minister Mesut Yılmaz reportedly declared that the government was considering whether to upgrade diplomatic relations with Israel (Gruen, 1995, p.51). In February 1990, the US Senate refused to put the draft resolution over the Armenian Remembrance Day (genocide) into negotiation agenda, thanks to the support of the Jewish lobby ("Senate again blocks Armenian," 1990; "Ermeni tasarısı: Kudüs'ten Ankara'ya," 1989; "Israel denies it asked," 1989).

[118] The First Intifada was a Palestinian uprising against Israel in the West Bank and Gaza that began in 1987 and lasted until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. On Dec. 9, 1987, an IDF truck hit a civilian car, killing four Palestinians. The protests quickly spiraled out of control, evolving into a mass resistance movement that included general strikes, boycotts and clashes with the IDF (Shlaim, 2014, p.465).

As Robins correctly points out, an “infrastructure of normalcy” (Robins, 2003, p.245) in Turkish-Israeli relations emerged during this transition period in the late 1980s. Accordingly, Israel respected Turkey’s cautious stance and preference to maintain bilateral relations low key, but sought to develop cooperation by emphasizing common interests while also exploring opportunities to upgrade diplomatic relations, just like she did in the late 1950s. As for Turkey, issues pertaining to security and economy encouraged her to cooperate with Israel. Ultimately, the continuation of bilateral ties through thick and thin – as evidenced by Ankara’s refusal to sever relations with Israel in spite of various regional crisis – provides us with a practical pattern to evaluate the course of Turkish-Israeli relations in the following decades.

CHAPTER 4

TURKISH-ISRAELI STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN THE 1990S: THE SO-CALLED "GOLDEN YEARS"

The 1980s provided early signs of a normalization in Turkish-Israeli relations, but a number of crises in the Middle East involving Israel hindered the initial prospects for rapprochement. Nevertheless, the foundation for better ties was laid in this period, which is why the decade has rightfully been called a "period of dawn," borrowing a phrase from Özcan (2005, p.58).

As the 1990s began, however, Turkey started to take a more positive view of developing closer relations with Israel after reassessing its foreign policy priorities and threat perceptions in line with the changing security environment of the post-Cold War world. In this respect, the Gulf War of 1991[119] provides an important reference point in terms of putting Turkish-Israeli rapprochement into perspective. The regional power dynamics that emerged in the wake of the war led Turkey to forge closer ties with Israel, at a time when both countries faced the risk of losing geopolitical significance due to the end of the superpower conflict.

The Gulf War also gave a new impetus to Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. The United States' efforts to reach a comprehensive settlement to the Arab conflict bore some fruit when the Middle East Peace Conference convened in Madrid on Oct. 30, 1991. This was the first time that the leaders of Arab countries came together with Israel at the same venue. After the Madrid Conference, negotiations between

[119] In August 1990, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. In the first international conflict of the post-Cold War period, nations from around the world sided with the United States in opposing the invasion. Due to Saddam's defiance of the U.N. resolutions to withdraw from Kuwait, a U.S.-led international coalition launched the Operation Desert Storm against Iraq in mid-January 1991. In total, the campaign lasted 42 days (Freedman & Karsh, 1993).

Israeli and Palestinian delegations began. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin's decision in December 1992 to repeal a six-year-old law prohibiting any contact between Israeli citizens and the PLO paved the way for direct negotiations between an Israeli delegation and Palestinian leaders. Also, following the Madrid Conference, a second track of diplomacy began between Israel and Arab countries, including Syria and Jordan. After several rounds of talks, Israeli and Palestinian leaders finally signed the Declaration of Principles on Sept. 13, 1993- known as the Oslo Peace Accords.[120] The Arab-Israeli peace process provided a legitimate ground for Ankara to normalize and develop relations with Israel.

Turkey's deepening security concerns also helped shape the course of its strategic partnership with Israel in the 1990s. Throughout the decade, the line that divided domestic and foreign issues became blurred, as Turkey's two major domestic issues – the PKK and the rise of Islamist politics– gained more of a regional character due to foreign interference of Syria, Iran and Greece. Needless to say, Ankara's participation in the US-led coalition against Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War, complicated relations with Iraq in the post-war period. As Turkey's relations with her neighbors deteriorated, cooperation with Israel came to serve as a counterweight.

Parallel to mounting insurgency at home in the post-Gulf War period, Turkey's need for high technology military equipment has also increased. However, Ankara encountered procurement problems as western countries (namely, the United

[120] With the signing of the agrement, Israeli and Palestian leaders for the first time, mutually recognized each other's right to exist as a state. The declaration also provided an agenda for further negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, envisioning Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho within four months and the transfer of a Palestinian police force to the areas evacuated by Israel to maintain internal security. In addition, Palestinians were expected to hold elections in the West Bank and Gaza within nine months and establish a Palestinian council to function as a government. Israel and Palestine agreed to start negotiations on the final status of the territories ahead of a final settlement that would come into effect within five years (Shlaim, 2014, p.501).

States and Germany) partially suspended arms sales, and delayed deliveries over human rights concerns.[121] Accordingly, Turkey's need for different sources of arms became another important factor that pushed Ankara to establish and further deepen defense cooperation with Israel, which was willing to sell to Turkey without any strings attached.

Throughout the decade, Israel became an important ally for Turkey, not only as a major arms supplier, but also as a facilitator of friendly ties with the United States thanks to the influence of Jewish lobbies in Washington. What's more, as an antidote to the rise of political Islam in Turkey – particularly in the second half of the 1990s – Turkey's cordial ties with Israel became a benchmark of the country's pro-Western and secular identity.

[121] In November 1991, the German Federal Parliament's Budget Commission voted to downsize military aid to Turkey within a NATO framework out of concerns about human rights violations in Southeast Anatolia. The decision affected the delivery of 150 Leopard tanks to Turkey. In October 1992, however, it was revealed that Leopard tanks were, in fact, delivered to Turkey despite the decision. Defense Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg was forced to resign when the scandal erupted. Nevertheless, throughout the 1990s, human rights concerns stood in the way of German military aid to Turkey, prompting Ankara to turn to alternative markets. Turkey, meanwhile, faced two major problems in purchasing arms from the United States in the 1990s. One was the decrease in the assistance that the United States gave Turkey for arms purchases. Ankara tried to overcome the problem by obtaining low interest credits from American banks and pursuing joint ventures with American arms companies. The second problem was the growing pressure from Armenian and Greek lobbies, which joined other human rights organizations in pressuring the U.S. Congress to prevent arms sales to Turkey. In the backdrop of fighting an insurgency at home, Turkey has become a greater target of criticism over allegations of torture and mistreatment, particularly in Southeast Anatolia. The Democratic Party's traditional sensitivity towards the human rights and democracy has put Turkish-American relations into test during Bill Clinton's presidency. In 1992, Turkey and the United States found themselves at odds after Washington refused to share the technology behind F-16 warplanes with Turkey. Amid pressure from the US Congress, Clinton had to issue a new policy on arms sales in 1995, placing limits on what third countries could do with weapons so as to prevent their usage against civilians. Subsequently, the Congress passed resolutions to suspend the delivery of 40 Cobra helicopters (1995), tried to block the sales of ATACM missiles, cluster bombs and Seahawk helicopters, and delayed the transfer of three Perry-class frigates (1996) to Turkey. Washington's stance was perceived in Ankara as a covert US embargo against Turkey, similar to the one imposed on Turkey after Ankara's intervention in Cyprus in 1974. These criticisms notwithstanding, throughout the 90s, international developments, have also increased Turkey's significance in the eyes of the United States, in terms of maintaining stability and order in the region. Therefore, despite Ankara's complaints over the US Congress' occasional foot-dragging in arms sales and deliveries, there has been a steady increase in the number of U.S. arms sales to Turkey in the 1990s (Uzgel, 2002c; "Alman Askeri yardımına insan," 1991; "Şu Alman'ın yaptığına bak," 1992; "Almanların şok ambargosu," 1993; "Silaha da insan hakları şartı," 1995; Çongar, 1996).

This chapter, accordingly, will focus on the formation of a strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel in the 1990s – in the backdrop of changes in international power balances. In doing so, it will try to identify Turkey's intertwined regional and domestic security issues, question how much Ankara's threat perceptions and interests converged with those of Israel and examine the role of the United States, which threw its weight behind this strategic cooperation in line with its own regional security goals.

In the main, this chapter argues that the so-called "golden years of partnership" between Turkey and Israel in the 1990s were ultimately an aberration in the course of bilateral relations. What makes this period distinct from others is the combination of factors that catalyzed this strategic partnership, including the favorable international context fostered by the Arab-Israeli peace process, overlapping regional security interests between Turkey and Israel and the Turkish military's role in cementing this partnership. Analyzing these factors is essential if we are to understand how and why Turkey did not change its policy toward Israel during the Welfare-True Path coalition government (the first time an Islamist party became the senior partner in a coalition government). Ultimately, such a line of inquiry will provide us with a guideline that explains some of the subsequent shifts in Turkey's Israel policy after the turn of the millennium.

4.1 Turkey and the new geopolitics

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 practically ended the Cold War, leading to the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991. With "the red scare" gone, the United States found itself as the world's sole superpower. The Soviet defeat was heralded with joy and optimism by those on the winning side of the Cold War. At the

same time, however, the disappearance of the common enemy rendered NATO, the institutional backbone of the Atlantic alliance, devoid of a mission. The collapse of the bipolar structure also triggered a debate over the basic characteristics of the new world order, particularly regarding the United States' role and leadership (Kirkpatrick, 1989; Krauthammer, 1991).

The changing political landscape of the post-Cold War world ushered in new opportunities and new geopolitical risks for Turkey. With the dissolution of two multiethnic socialist federations-the Soviet Union (1991) and Yugoslavia (1992)-Turkish policymakers found themselves surrounded by newly independent states in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia that were considering a political and economic transformation toward a liberal economy and democratic rule.[122]Having made considerable progress in its own transformation, Turkey was ready to share its own experiences, especially as the Turkish model appealed to countries that had ethnic, historical and cultural ties with Turkey. In this respect, the absence of Soviet deterrence provided more room for Ankara to pursue a policy of active engagement toward the newly emerging republics (Kut, 2000). However, potential political and economic stability in the neighborhood also posed a security risk for Turkey.

Since the end of World War II, Turkey's strategic identity had been built on its role as a bulwark against the Soviet threat. While Turkish leaders welcomed the end of the superpower conflict, they also harbored new worries that Ankara would lose its importance for the West.[123] In this regard, the steady reduction in the number

[122] The number of Turkey's neighbors increased by 50%. Formerly, Turkey had land borders with Greece, Bulgaria, the Soviet Union, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and sea connection with Romania and Cyprus. This number rose to twelve: Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russian Federation, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Cyprus (Kut, 2002, p.7).

[123] At a press conference on Aug. 11, 1990, then-President Turgut Özal mused on the end of the Cold War, noting: "Unfortunately – the reason I say unfortunately is not because I don't like this development; I do like it – the easing of East-West relations, the spread of world peace [also] entails an important point: Turkey's significance within NATO is decreasing," The leader of the Democratic Left Party (DSP), Bülent Ecevit, also argued that Turkey's geopolitical importance had diminished

of soldiers posted overseas, as well as the closure of U.S. bases in Europe, reinforced Ankara's fears that Turkey might be abandoned by NATO, which had yet to determine a new southern flank strategy (Güvenç &Özel, 2010; Hale, 2013).

The changing geopolitics triggered by the end of the Cold War had resulted in a change in Turkey's threat assessments – even before the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. In December 1990, Turkey's Chief of General Staff, Secretary General Hurşit Tolon, elaborated on the impact of the honeymoon between NATO and the Warsaw Pact on Turkey's security, noting that the northern threat to Turkey (namely, from the Soviet Union and Bulgaria) would decrease, to be replaced by a threat from the south. Highlighting Turkey's security problems in the south, Tolon warned against potential conflicts with Syria, Iraq and Iran ("Tehdit, Suriye, Irak ve İran'dan,"1989).

In a similar vein, Chief of the General Staff Secretary General, Necip Torumtay, outlined Turkey's new military priorities in 1990 with reference to the Conventional Armed Forces (CFE) talks that the United States and the Soviet Union were holding to reduce the amount of military equipment in Europe. He argued that Turkey had to equip itself to deal with threats in a variety of regions. Turkey, after all, could assume that peace had prevailed in Europe, but the Middle East was still in flames. Accordingly, Torumtay advocated that Turkey's military shift its focus to the Middle East, asserting that Turkey required a modernized army that was smaller in size but more efficient in strike capacity ("Ateş gücü yüksek ordu," 1990). It is possible to interpret the general's emphasis on shifting threat perceptions and the continuing efforts to modernize the military as a reflection of doubts about NATO's commitments to Turkey's defense in the face of regional threats.

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significantly and that policymakers had to redesign their defense policies according to the new circumstances (Mufti, 2009, p.67; "Tehdit odakları değişti, 1989; Batur, 1990).

Kut (2000) argues that in the wake of the post-Cold War period, the changing geopolitical environment forced Turkey to recalibrate its foreign policy, encouraging activism in light of new and diversified threats – as well as opportunities. Indeed, the Özal government had already been pursuing a multilateral and active foreign policy line since the 1980s. According to Kut (2000), what was new about Ankara's foreign policy in the 1990s was that the new political landscape in Turkey's environs enabled Turkish policymakers to fully implement a policy of active engagement – perhaps for the first time in the Republican era.

Amid uncertainties regarding NATO's future, the European Community's Commission report on Turkey's request for full membership in December 1989, which conveyed the message that "neither Europeans nor Turks were ready for Turkey's prospective membership process" possibly exacerbated Ankara's feelings of isolation, convincing the country of the need to diversify its foreign policy.[124] In fact, Özal's government was already making diplomatic preparations for a post-Cold War environment before the conflict even formally ended. In May 1989, for instance, Özal dispatched a delegation from the Foreign Ministry, led by the Foreign Ministry undersecretary for economic affairs, Tanşuğ Bleda, to 11 African countries, including Senegal, Gambia, Cameroon and Gabon, to cultivate relations.[125] In December 1989, during an OECD meeting in Brussels, then-Foreign Minister Mesut Yılmaz offered Turkey's support for democratization efforts in Eastern Europe

[124] The report underlined the shortcomings of Turkey's economic and political structure, particularly emphasizing Europe's inability to accept a new member before it fulfilled the requirements regarding its own domestic market. The European Community, however, left open the door for Ankara in the event that it fulfilled the necessary economic, social and political conditions ("Commission opinion on Turkey's request," 1989).

[125] The delegation was sent to Africa with the hope of exploring alternative markets at a time when the Middle East was experiencing an economic recession and Turkey was encountering difficulties accessing European and American markets ("Ortadoğu pazarı tıkandı," 1989).

("Doğu Avrupa'ya ekonomik çıkarma," 1990). In January 1990, another delegation under Bleda went to Eastern Europe with the blessing of Özal to explore investment and trade opportunities in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Amid concerns over Turkey's future position in the emerging security environment of the post-Cold War world, Özal advocated a multilateral and active foreign policy line as a tool to boost Turkey's geopolitical significance (Güner, 2003). When Özal looked at Turkey's neighborhood, he focused more on opportunities rather than threats; yet, in closed circles, he also acknowledged the risk of Turkey's possible marginalization and, therefore, promoted his country's active participation in the Gulf War alongside the United States.[126]

From this perspective, the Gulf War in 1990 provided an opportunity for Ankara to reaffirm its geopolitical significance while also reassuring its Western allies of its loyalty. By openly aligning with the U.S.-led coalition forces, Özal expected to gain greater access to U.S. markets, increased military assistance, procurement for the modernization of the Turkish Armed Forces and U.S. support for Turkey's aspirations to join the European Community (Aydın, 2002).

In terms of the long-term political and economic consequences, however, Turkey's solidarity during the Gulf War did not produce the outcome Özal desired. As the war ended, Turkey had to cope with the implications of Saddam's continued reign, as well as the reality of a truncated Iraq, particularly in regard to the growing autonomy of the mostly Kurdish north. On the economic side, Turkey suffered immensely from the war due to the closure of oil pipelines and the halting of cross-

[126] Abromovitz's interview with Ambassador Kaya Toperi, a senior member of Özal's staff at the time (Abromovitz, 2000).

border trade with Iraq. The economic donations and credits received from the Gulf and the OECD failed to compensate for Turkey's losses from the economic embargo against Iraq (Gözen, 2000).

The Gulf War also hurt Turkey's struggle against the PKK in the 1990s. Ankara, which helped initiate a no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel in Iraq so as to prevent an influx of refugees, grew increasingly critical of the Operation Provide Comfort (OPC).[127]Turkish public opinion largely perceived the OPC as an American endeavor to create a Kurdish "safe haven" that would lead to the establishment of a de facto Kurdish state. Besides, the power vacuum created by the OPC in northern Iraq provided the PKK with a free hand to step up cross-border attacks. As a result, the renewal of the OPC mandate has often led to contentious debates in Turkey's parliament and cast a shadow on Turkish-American relations by producing a legacy of distrust that has poisoned bilateral ties for decades (Kirişçi, 1998).

PKK attacks, which have threatened Turkey's internal security since the late 1980s, spiraled upward in the aftermath of the OPC, reaching a peak in the wake of Newroz celebrations in March 1992.[128] The mounting insurgency prompted the Turkish Armed Forces to develop new strategies, review their force structure and beef up their inventory. Indeed, Bila's interview (2007) with then Chief of Staff Gen.

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[127] In the face of a humanitarian crisis on the northern Iraqi border, the United Nations authorized relief efforts on April 3, 1991. The United States also organized a task force and launched Operation Provide Comfort, operating from İncirlik Airbase in Turkey. At the onset, the operation was limited to the delivery of food and similar relief supplies through airdrops. Within weeks, however, the scope of the operation was expanded, as ground forces were sent to protect refugees along the border. By mid-July, the ground forces gradually withdrew. Over time, the OPC evolved to include jet sorties to protect the safe zone. In January 1997, the OPC was replaced by Operation Northern Watch, whose main focus shifted from humanitarian relief to the enforcement of the no-fly zone. The mission continued until the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Uzgel, 2002c, p.259).

[128] The PKK declared 1992 as a year of rebellion. In March 1992, Teoman Kopan, the Deputy Undersecretary of the Turkish Intelligence Agency, MİT, shared information regarding the organization's preparations to launch attacks on a massive scale. In Fikret Bila's interview, Güreş mentioned five major events as milestones that shaped the Turkish Armed Forces' counterinsurgency strategy – concurrent terrorist attacks in Şırnak, Cizre and Adana during Newroz celebrations, a raid on the Şemdinli Alan outpost on Aug. 30 Victory Day and two other PKK attempts to take the bases of Aktütün (Sept. 13) and Derecik (Sept. 29) (Bila, 2007, p.55).

Doğan Güreş confirms that the Turkish Armed Forces conducted a restructuring between 1991 and 1992 to increase the army's military capabilities and ability to mobilize to combat terrorism. The army subsequently bought disposed AK-47 rifles from East Germany, formed the Special Forces Command, or Maroon Berets, in 1992 to replace the Special Warfare Department, imported armored combat vehicles from the Netherlands, and bought Sikorsky and Super Cobra helicopters from the United States (Bila, 2007, p.47).

As part of the comprehensive campaign of modernization, the Turkish Armed Forces also introduced a new strategic concept of "area superiority" in counterinsurgency operations. This strategy centered on the idea that air, ground and sea forces would all have round-the-clock operational capacity[129] – instead of the previous modus operandi, in which the Turkish Armed Forces usually conducted operations by day and retreated to bases at night. According to the new concept, each unit would remain on the field and control the area so as to catch the militants on the run.[130]

As noted earlier, this new strategy required the army to receive special training, change its force structure and modernize its inventory through the acquisition of night vision equipment, radars and other high-tech devices.[131] However, Ankara encountered problems in obtaining the military weapons and

[129] Referring to the discussions held among high-level commanders over the new strategic concept, Güreş recounted that Navy Cmdr. Vural Beyazıt offered to send troops to the southeast for support. Güreş mentioned Beyazıt's offer with praise, noting that it was an indicator of the military's resolve and readiness in the fight (Bila, 2007, p.49).

[130] The new concept also encouraged military units to mingle with locals to earn their trust and support in their fight against the PKK.

[131] A news report from 1994 notes how the area superiority concept was put into force for the first time. Güreş, however, said the new strategy was implemented starting in 1992 in parallel to the modernization of the army's inventory. In October 1992, Turkey conducted its first cross-border operation into northern Iraq to implement this concept of area superiority. During the attack, Special Forces units equipped with GPS receivers were sent to the region, along with M-60 tanks, Leopard tanks and Cobra and Super Cobra helicopters (Bila, 2007, p.69; "Güreş 4 Yılı Değerlendirdi, 1994).

equipment it needed because of its handling of the PKK insurgency in Southeast Anatolia. It drew criticism from the international community because of allegations of human rights violations.[132] As such, countries like the United States and Germany made military assistance and weapons deliveries in the 1990s contingent on Turkey's success in upholding democratic standards and human rights. In the face of procurement problems, Ankara had to turn to alternative markets. Indeed, in 1992, Turkey signed a deal with Russia to buy armored vehicles (BTR-80 tanks), MI-17 helicopters and long-range automatic rifles, in exchange for extending loans to Russia by Turkish Exim bank ("Türk-Rus silah anlaşması," 1992; "PKK'ya karşı Rus helikopteri," 1993; "Rusya ile büyük pazarlık," 1995). Also in 1996, Turkey bought Tiger helicopters from France and MI-24 helicopters from Russia due to delays in the delivery of Super-Cobra helicopters and CBU cluster bombs from the United States ("Ordu yeni silah pazarları arıyor," 1996).

In parallel to the mounting insurgency at home, Turkey's problematic relations with neighbors like Syria and Iran, both of which had used the PKK to weaken Ankara's hand, deteriorated further in the 1990s. Syria has historically felt resentment against Turkey due to Damascus' territorial claims over Hatay (the former Sanjak of Alexandretta) which fell under Turkish control in 1939 (Kabalan, 2013). And since Ankara began construction on the Atatürk Dam in 1983 as part of the GAP Project, Syria and Iraq have accused Turkey of interfering with the flow of

[132] Based on previous accords with the Iraqi government from the second half of the 1980s, Turkish military forces began chasing PKK militants in northern Iraq in line with the hot-pursuit principle, but this agreement naturally became void after the Gulf War. In parallel to the growing intensity of terrorist attacks, the Turkish Armed Forces gradually increased the scope of its hot-pursuit operations in northern Iraq. As early as March 1990, participants at National Security Council meetings discussed the idea of launching Israeli-style cross-border ground and air operations as an alternative in the battle against the PKK. Two major operations were conducted on the Turkey-Iraq border in 1991 – one in April and another in September. But one of the largest cross-border operations into northern Iraq took place in October 1992 (Bila, 2007, p.69; "İsrail Gibi Eylem Önerisi," 1990; "Irak Sınırındaki PKK Kamplarında," 1991; "Sınırda Büyük Harekat,"1991).

the Euphrates and Tigris rivers for political purposes (Pamukçu, 2004; Kibaroğlu, 2013). Relations with Iran have scarcely been better. After 1979, Ankara perceived Tehran's covert activities to export its Islamic revolution through radical Islamist groups as a threat to Turkey's secular identity. Bilateral relations became further strained in the mid-1990s when news emerged that an Iranian-linked radical organization Islamist movement, İslami Hareket, participated in the assassination of several Turkish journalists and intellectuals, including Çetin Emeç, Turan Dursun, Muammer Üçok, Bahriye Üçok and Uğur Mumcu-even though the link has never been proven so far ("Katiller İran yapımı," 1993).

Ironically, the Gulf War pushed Syria, Iran and Turkey closer, at the same time. Given that all three have their own sizable Kurdish populations, the countries had a shared interest in maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity, as they were equally concerned that an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq could encourage secessionist aspirations in the region. In this respect, a trilateral dialogue mechanism was established under Turkey's initiative in November 1992, resulting in regular meetings of foreign ministers' of Turkey, Syria and Iran every six months until 1996 ("Ankara'da Ortadoğu Zirvesi," 1992). However, long-standing issues and divergent interests undermined genuine cooperation, as Ankara's numerous diplomatic initiatives failed to convince Syria and Iran to heed Turkey's complaints (Akdevelioğlu & Kürkçüoğlu, 2002).

Turkish-Israeli cooperation developed against this backdrop of changing power balances in the Middle East. Uncertainties over NATO's southern strategy raised Ankara's concerns, just as Washington's hints that it would pursue a somewhat neutral policy-that would favor Arabs for the sake of reaching a

comprehensive peace settlement-in the region worried Jerusalem. The two Western-oriented countries sought ways to increase their security and boost their geopolitical significance for the West – that is, the United States – in the post-Cold War order.[133]

From a closer look, Turkey and Israel have had common – though not exactly overlapping – threat perceptions with regard to the aggressive policies of Syria, Iran and Iraq. Pursuing cordial relations with Turkey, a democratic, secular, Muslim country that is also a NATO member, had always been important for Israel in terms of breaking its regional isolation. Israel, meanwhile, also had fresh memories of the eight Scud missiles fired by the Saddam regime during Operation Desert Storm. Moreover, the Gulf War set off an increasing regional power competition between Israel and Iran given that the conflict weakened the latter's major rival, Iraq.[134] Iran's military buildup, along with its growing support for Islamist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas, elicited greater worry in Israel. Syria, on the other hand, has been one of Israel's most bitter Arab enemies. While the bad blood between the two countries dated back to the 1949 Arab-Israeli war, Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights since the Six-Day War in 1967, continued to be an issue of contention between Israel and Syria, despite the establishment of a U.N. patrolled buffer zone in

[133] American assistance had long insulated Israel from international pressures. This started to change in the 1990s with the Arab-Israeli peace process. The United States, for instance, made a set of loan guarantees contingent on a halt to Israel's construction of settlements in the occupied territories. For more about Israel's perception of the post-Cold War Middle East and U.S.-Israeli relations, see (Owen, 2004).

[134] Parsi (2007, p.96) offers a different perspective, arguing that following the collapse of the shah's regime in 1979, Tehran's Israel policy was based on "rhetorical opposition to Israel but practical collaboration with the Jewish state." According to Parsi (2007), this started to change after the end of the Cold War, as Iran and Israel found themselves in an advantageous position to shape the future of the Middle East order – something that put them at odds with each other due to their conflicting threat assessments and interests.

1974 (Ben-Meir,1995). Thus, from a geopolitical perspective, Israel could gain a strategic advantage over the hostile regimes in Syria, Iraq and Iran, all of which shared borders with Turkey, if it could normalize its relations with Ankara.[135]

From Turkey's perspective, the pressing need to diversify strategic partners in the uncertain environment of the post-Cold War era and obtain advanced military weapons encouraged Turkish policymakers to forge closer ties with Israel. Reinvigorating bilateral relations in the 1990s not only helped Turkey increase its military edge through Israeli military and intelligence assistance, but also win Washington's ear through the support of Israeli lobbies. In this regard, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process provided a good opportunity for Turkey's rapprochement with Israel.

Indeed, as noted in the previous chapter, Turkey's pro-Arab tendencies had already waned by the mid-1980s due to Ankara's unfulfilled political and economic expectations. Once the Arab-Israeli peace process began, one of the remaining obstacles hindering Turkey from normalizing relations with Israel were eliminated.

Diversifying relations with countries in the region accorded well with Turkey's active and multilateral foreign policy line of the 1990s.[136] With a new regional order in the making, Turkish policymakers tried to present Turkey as a power broker and mediator in the region. In this respect, the normalization of ties with Israel was also seen as an opportunity to engage in the reconciliation process between Israelis and Palestinians in the post-Oslo period.

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[135] For Israel, controlling the Golan Heights, a strategic zone that is rich in water resources has been strategically important in terms of monitoring Damascus as well as cutting logistic support to Hezbollah in Lebanon. The prospects of a peace deal with Syria after Oslo created an opportunity for Israel to solve a longstanding dispute but also raised the risk that the country could lose a strategic buffer zone on its northern border. Accordingly, Israel understood that it could encircle Syria from the south and the north if it secured an alliance with Turkey.

[136] For a similar view, see (Larrabee & Lesser, 2003).

4.2. Domestic political context: Turkey's tempestuous decade

Retrospectively, the 1990s represent one of the most turbulent and perhaps schizophrenic periods in Turkish politics, as it harbored both hope and despair. While the uncertainty of the international political setting placed new pressures on Turkey, policymakers also confronted challenges in the domestic sphere. It was during this decade that the term "globalization," which essentially refers to the movement and circulation of goods, people and ideas, entered the daily lexicon, precipitating a socioeconomic and intellectual transformation worldwide. As a result of technological innovations in transportation and communications, the world became a smaller place, as distances that set people apart shrank considerably. Issues pertaining to environmental degradation, identity, human rights and gender equality started to muscle their way onto the political agenda of states, while ideological concerns largely fell by the wayside with the end of the Cold War. Against this backdrop, the seeds of economic liberalization planted in the mid-1980s paved the way for a gradual liberalization of Turkey's domestic environment. In parallel to Turkey's global economic and cultural integration, the 1990s witnessed an awakening of civil society movements in the domestic sphere, along with a growing awareness of religious and ethnic differences, as well as gender equality (Göle, 1994, 1997; Arat, 1997; Keyder, 1997). As such, Turkish civil society organizations increased in number and expanded the scope of their activities in this period (Alemdar, 2005; Toprak, 1996; Özbudun, 1991). The number of private TV and radio channels multiplied, providing platforms to express the country's cultural diversity. The level of political participation in Turkey also increased between 1990

and 1997.[137] In this, the Turkish Parliament's passage of new amendments to the restrictive 1982 constitution undoubtedly played a role (Alemdar, 2005). Likewise, Turkey's EU membership perspective at the time created an incentive for democratization, thereby raising the standards of living for its citizens.

Notwithstanding this positive outlook, the 1990s were also characterized by a fragmentation in politics, short-lived coalition governments, as well as political and economic instability. Turkey's handling of the insurgency in the southeast attracted strong criticism, to the extent that the country was periodically cited with regard to alleged human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings and disappearances (US Department of State, 1996; Amnesty International Report, 1995).

In hindsight, the year 1993 constituted a watershed moment in Turkish politics, considering the course of events following the mysterious death of Gendarmerie Commander Gen. Eşref Bitlis in February, the death of President Turgut Özal in April, and a PKK attack in May that formally ended a unilateral ceasefire the terrorist organization had declared the previous year. The death of the two important figures – both of whom had come to favor a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish conflict ("Bitlis'ten dört ayaklı barış planı, 2010; Özdemir, 2010) – paved the way for hard-liners to take over the counterinsurgency campaign. As Larrabee and Lesser (2003) underline, following Özal's death, the military gradually won back the power lost during his tenure, bolstered by its success in the counterinsurgency campaign against the PKK and its continuing central role in handling the rise of political Islam (Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p.28).

[137] For instance, between 1990 and 1997, the percentage of people who signed petitions increased from 12.8 to 13.5%, the percentage of people who joined boycotts increased from 5.2 to 6.3%, the number of people who attended demonstrations rose from 5.3 to 6.1%; and the percentage of people who joined strike increased from 1.4 to 2%. See Kalaycıoğlu, E. (2000). Sivil Toplum ve Neopatrimonyal Siyaset (Civil Society and Neopatrimonial Politics). In Keyman, F. E., Sarıbay, Y. (eds.) *Global-Yerel Ekseninde Türkiye* (Turkey on the Global-Local Plane). Istanbul: Alfa. 132.

Demirel's rise to the presidency in 1993, shortly after Özal's death, ushered in a period of weak and competitive governments in Turkey. To Demirel's dismay, his plans to retain control over the True Path Party TPP– similar to that of the Özal/Yıldırım Akbulut formula in which Özal ruled his party (the Motherland Party MP) from his presidential office through a loyal and low-profile PM – ultimately failed. Ahmad (2003) indicates that Tansu Çiller was not Demirel's obvious choice at the beginning. However, Çiller had the advantage of being younger, female, attractive and well-educated in comparison to her rivals. At a time when other political parties were going through a power transition in search of younger and dynamic leaders,[138] Demirel thought that electing a woman as the TPP's leader would not only consolidate the party's position in the forthcoming election but also enhance Turkey's image in the international arena.

However, the course of events proved Demirel wrong. In 1994, Turkey was hit by a severe economic crisis in which inflation the Turkish lira depreciated against the U.S. dollar by more than half in the first quarter of the year, inflation rose to triple-digit levels and the Central Bank lost half of its reserves (Celasun, 2013).

Despite her pledges to approach the Kurdish issue with "a mother's love," Çiller failed to deliver a breakthrough on the Kurdish issue either. During her campaign, Çiller promoted the idea of a reform package including the legalization of Kurdish-language radio and television broadcasts and expressed her interest in the Spanish model of power devolution to the Basque region. Less than a year later, she backtracked in the face of strong opposition from the security establishment and nationalist circles, fully committing herself to a military solution to the Kurdish conflict (Mufti, 2009, p.95).

[138] In 1991, Mesut Yılmaz took over ANAP from Özal. In 1993, Erdal İnönü retired and the SHP elected Murat Karayalçın as party leader (Ahmad, 2003, p.162).

As an inexperienced yet ambitious leader, Çiller removed Demirel's supporters from key positions and engaged in close cooperation – a "Faustian Pact" in Robins' (2003) words – with hardline members of the security force, such as General Staff Gen. Doğan Güreş, former State of Emergency Governor Ünal Erkan and ex-police chief Mehmet Ağar – all well-known figures in the fight against the PKK. This strange partnership drew criticisms (Sazak, 1994) as to whether the country had fallen under military tutelage similar to the period following the 1980 coup.[139] In an attempt to ward off criticisms, Gen. Güreş, reflecting on their close working relationship, told the press that it was actually him who answered to Çiller: "She orders, and I deliver"[140]

But even this would not suffice to save Çiller from defeat at the polls. The TPP's votes declined rapidly, leading to the Welfare Party winning the general election of December 1995 with 21.38% of the vote. More importantly, it was the bad blood between the center-right party leaders, Çiller and Yılmaz, which prevented them from forming a stable coalition despite winning almost 40% of the vote.

It's not for nothing that the 1990s are often recalled as the "wasted decade." Between 1993 and 1999, eight coalition governments were formed. Nine foreign ministers served for an average of just six months in office; one, Çoşkun Kırca, only lasted twenty days in the position.[141] Frequent changes of government, along with a

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[139] The counterinsurgency campaign in the southeast also exposed the unofficial alliance between elements of the state and organized crime (mafia) as a result of a fatal car crash in November 1996 that became known as the Susurluk Incident. In November 1996, a Mercedes ran into a truck outside a small western town of Susurluk. The details of the accident revealed scandalous ties among a senior police official, an ultra-right assassin and a drug dealer subject to an Interpol red notice, his girlfriend, and a Kurdish tribal chief who was also a member of Çiller's TPP.The latter was the only survivor of the crash (Özel, 2003, p.169).

[140] Güreş during an interview in 1999, denied that he made such a statement, and said it was a journalist who made it up. He didn't object, because at the time it seemed like a good idea in terms of enhancing Turkey's liberal image ("Tak şak hoşuma gitti,"1999).

[141] The list of governments and the foreign ministers are follows:

high turnover in ministers, naturally undermined the proper functioning of the traditional bureaucratic institutions, such as the Foreign Ministry.[142] This power vacuum was often filled by the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), as the military became more visible in Turkish politics during the decade through senior officers' political comments, state visits and even the signing of international agreements. In fact, the TAF historically enjoyed an autonomous role in Turkish politics until at least the mid-2000s as the guardian of the regime's Kemalist principles.[143] The military's power was institutionalized through a variety of organizations, including the National Security Council (NSC). Even though the NSC was established as a consultative body, in practice, the council served as a platform in which the military coordinated policies in line with the goals and threat perceptions outlined in the National Security Policy Document (Milli Güvenlik Siyaset Belgesi), which was also known as the Red Booklet/Kırmızı Kitap).[144]

True Path Party-Social Democratic People's Party coalition (23 June 1993-15 October 1995). True Path Party government (15 October 1995-5 November 1995). True Path Party-Republican People's Party coalition (5 November 1995-12 March 1996), Motherland Party-True Path Party coalition (12 March 1996-08 July 1996), Welfare-True Path Party coalition (8 July 1996-30 June 1997), Motherland Party-Democratic Turkey's Party-Democratic Left Party coalition (30 June 1997-11 January 1999), Democratic People's Party government (11 January 1999-28 May 1999), Democratic Left Party-Nationalist Action Party-Motherland Party coalition (28 May 1999-18 November 2002). FM Hikmet Çetin (20 November 1991-27 July 1994), FM Mümtaz Soysal (27 July 1994-28 November 1994), Murat Karayalçın (12 December 1994-27 March 1995), FM Erdal İnönü (27 March 1995-5 October 1995), FM Çoşkun Kırca (5 October 1995-30 October 1995), FM Deniz Baykal (30 October 1995-6 March 1996), FM Emre Gönensay (6 March 1996-28 June 1996), FM Tansu Çiller (28 June 1996-30 June 1997), FM İsmail Cem (30 June 1997-11 July 2002) (Oran, 2002, p.203).

[142] Robins identifies three phases in Turkish foreign policy making. The first phase was the overriding personal approach associated with Turgut Özal, who ruled Turkish politics from the mid-1980s until 1991, through his protégé PM Yıldırım Akbulut. The second phase was the bureaucratic approach.Robins refers to FM Hikmet Çetin's collaboration with the staff of Foreign ministry to design a carefully crafted and well-coordinated foreign policy approach. The third phase of "weak fragmented and competitive foreign policy approach" starts with the removal of FM Hikmet Çetin in 1994 (Robins, 2003).

[143] The Turkish Armed Forces have intervened in Turkish politics five times, including the e-memorandum of 2007 and the failed coup attempt of 2016.

[144] The document comprises the list of threats to internal and external security, offers policy guidelines based on enlisted priorities and thereby provides a compherensive framework of foreign and security policies for the government (Özcan, 2002).

In the tempestuous domestic political context of the 1990s, one area where the army had a major impact on foreign policies that affected the country's security was undoubtedly Turkish-Israeli ties (Parti Beyannameleri, n.d). Despite the Welfare Party's anti-Israeli stance, they were forced to bow to military pressure and approve Turkish-Israeli cooperation. In 1996, military officials concluded both the Military Training and Cooperation Agreement and the Agreement on Cooperation in Defense Industry. As the signing of the first deal leaked to the press in early April, then-Defense Minister Oltan Sungurlu had difficulty commenting on the matter since he had yet to be informed about the contents of the agreement ("Anlaşmanın içeriği,"1996). On this front, it bears noting that apart from the Welfare Party, the party programs of the center-right and center-left parties (the TPP, ANAP and the Democratic Left Party) were largely all oriented toward the West and favored a balanced foreign policy to the Middle East. However, the fact that these agreements were ratified in Parliament during the Welfare-TPP coalition government, despite Welfare Party leader Necmettin Erbakan's strong opposition, illustrates the influence of the military in Turkish politics, which should be taken into account with regard to the role of agency in foreign policy making.

4.3 The formation of the Turkish-Israeli-American axis

Amid the positive atmosphere produced by the peace process between Israel and the Arab states,[145] diplomatic relations with Israel were upgraded to the ambassadorial level at the end of that year. An early sign of the thaw came on Dec. 16, 1991, when Turkey abstained in a U.N. vote on whether to revoke an infamous resolution from

[145] The Madrid Conference was an unprecedented event that brought together all of the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including Israeli, Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese and Jordanian-Palestinian delegations for direct negotiations (Shlaim, 2014).

1975 that had branded Zionism as racism. After the U.N. vote, Turkish Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel explained why Turkey decided to abstain despite U.S. President George H.W. Bush's request that it back the resolution:

> We had to follow a dignified and independent path. If we had supported the resolution, it would have led to discomfort inside and outside especially at a time when we have been seeking to establish new ties with leading countries in a changing international context. Previously, we had presented our view on whether or not Zionism was equal to racism, and we had said yes. However, it makes no sense today, taking into account the changing conditions, to stand in the way or stand up against the joint effort of world powers to revoke this resolution. ("Bush'un ricasını çevirdik,"1991, p.20)

At the time, the marginalization of Palestinians who supported Saddam during the Gulf War, instead of the Arab countries that sided with the U.S.-led coalition and Israel, possibly emboldened Ankara to believe that rapprochement with Israel would elicit less criticism in this context. Besides, the deep political cleavages among Arab countries, as well as the diminishing power of the oil weapon –with plummeting crude prices-, protected Turkey from Arab pressure.[146]

Elaborating on the international political setting, in which Turkey-Israel relations started to thrive in the 1990s, Hikmet Çetin -who served as Turkey's Foreign Minister between 1993 and 1994 and was the first foreign minister to ever visit Israel in 1993- affirms that the Arab-Israeli peace process had a game-changing effect on Turkey-Israel relations. According to Çetin, the two countries had never clashed on bilateral issues; it was only the Palestinian question that induced diplomatic caution and occasionally escalated tensions. "The Madrid Peace Conference, the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Jews' arrival in the Ottoman Empire, and then the Oslo Peace Process, have gradually reduced Turkey's

[146] For a similar view, see, (Altunışık, 2002, p.80).

concerns about receiving Arab contempt and relieved Ankara so that it took steps toward normalizing relations with Israel," Çetin says. "When we elevated the current status of the chargé d'affaires to ambassador … reciprocally with Israel in December 1991, we also sought a balance and therefore upgraded Palestinian diplomatic representation in Ankara to the ambassadorial level as well (Çetin, 2017, personal communication)."[147]

Altunışık (2002) divides Turkey's rapprochement with Israel in the 1990s into two periods. Between 1991 and 1994, Turkey adopted a rather cautious stance in its relations with Israel –in line with its traditional policy of maintaining balance between Israel and the Arab world. From 1994 onwards, Turkish political and military elites have become less discreet about cultivating strategic and political ties with Israel, as a result of regional and domestic security concerns (Bengio, 2004, p.178).

Similar to Altunışık (2002), Bengio (2004) also highlights 1994 as a formative year in terms of Turkish-Israeli rapprochement. However, Bengio's off-the-record interviews with high-level officials such as then-Defense Ministry Director David Ivry also suggest that the seeds of a strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel were indeed planted earlier at the signing of a military industry cooperation agreement in 1992. Ivry visited Ankara again in 1993, leading a large delegation of officials and generals.[148] The steps taken in the aftermath of these exchanges seem to have prepared the ground for a more open relationship between Turkey and Israel. In July 1994, Israel finally reappointed a military attaché to

[147] Ankara first conveyed Israel of its intention to elevate diplomatic relations through then-Foreign Minister Sefa Giray during talks on the sidelines of the U.N. annual meeting in September 1991. The policy was finally implemented by Giray's successor, Çetin, following elections. See also, (Batur, 1990; Doğan, 1991; "Filistin ve İsrail'e büyükelçilik,"1992).
[148] Neither side has yet disclosed what they discussed in these meetings (Bengio, 2019, personal communication).

Turkey when it sent Air Force Squadron Cmdr. Beni Sheffer to Ankara, two months after Turkish Air Force Cmdr. Hails Burhan's visit to Israel. Notably, when Israeli police chief Asaf Hafez came to Turkey in October 1994, Turkish Interior Minister Nahit Menteşe revealed that the two countries had signed an agreement in 1992 regarding cooperation against drug trafficking, terrorism and organized crime (Bengio, 2019, personal communication). Retrospectively, the chronology of events displays parallels between Turkey's rapprochement with Israel, its increasing willingness to publicize these ties and its rising security concerns in the face of escalating PKK terrorist attacks.

Indeed, as noted earlier, 1992 marked a turning point in Turkey's struggle against the PKK. As early as November 1991, reports had emerged that the PKK was making clandestine preparations for a large-scale military campaign in the spring – rumors that seemed to be bolstered by Turkey's seizure of several weapons after they were smuggled across the border from Iraq ("PKK ayaklanma hazırlığında," 1991).

Unsurprisingly, the PKK's terrorist attacks rose dramatically in the spring of 1992. Newroz celebrations on March 21 turned violent and clashes between Turkish security forces and PKK militants in Van, Şırnak, Cizre and Adana left more than 50 people dead and many wounded.

Given Syria's ongoing support for the PKK, tensions started to rise between Ankara and Damascus, amid the escalating violence in the southeast. Due to the rising death tolls, Demirel warned Hafez al Assad government that Turkey would resort to drastic measures-including the use of water leverage – unless Damascus complied with a security agreement the two countries signed in 1987 (Batur, 1992). On April 18, 1992, Interior Minister İsmet Sezgin went to Syria and signed a new

security agreement. For the first time, Damascus formally recognized the PKK as a terrorist organization and pledged not only to cut support for the group but also offered to destroy the group's camps in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.[149]

Subsequently, the organization shifted some of its operational units to northern Iraq, benefiting from the power vacuum that emerged in the region after the Gulf War. Thus, contrary to what many had hoped in Ankara, the number of terrorist incidents and foreign infiltrations continued to rise throughout the year. As such, the National Security Council (NSC) declared "separatism" as the main threat to Turkey's national security in June 1992 ("Gözler MGK'da," 1992).

Against this background, Turkish-Israeli relations started to inch forward in 1992, with tourism appearing to be the safest area that could bring the two countries closer. On June 2, Tourism Minister Abdülkadir Ateş went to Israel, where the two countries signed a cooperation agreement to cultivate tourism. In the subsequent years, Israeli tourism to Turkey rose substantially – as the number of tourists traveling from Israel to Turkey rose from 160,000 in 1992 to 350,000 in 1994 ("İsrail turizme nefes aldırdı," 1994).

On July 16, Israeli President Chaim Herzog came to Istanbul to attend a gala dinner at Dolmabahçe Palace to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Ottoman Empire's decision to grant refuge to Jews expelled from Spain. Even though it was not an official visit, the fact that Herzog was hosted by Özal – now president – and Demirel alongside 1,000 guests had a symbolic significance ("Herzog küskün buluşturuyor, 1992; "Dostluk için el ele,"1992). Herzog's visit to Turkey was the

[149] "The driving motivation behind Syria's acceptance of the agreement, which surprised many in Ankara, was its desire to improve its international image by distancing itself from recognized terrorist groups. Economic hardships, as well as the risk of political isolation, influenced Syria's decision to join the U.S.-led coalition forces in the Gulf War, along with Israel. Having lost Soviet economic and military assistance, it became harder for Damascus to maintain its military edge and adjust to the liberal economic order ("Sezgin: Bellerini Kırdık,"1992).

first of many reciprocal visits in the upcoming years, including trips by Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin (1993), Israeli President Ezer Weizman (1994), Prime Minister Tansu Çiller (1995) and Demirel – Özal's successor as president (1996).

While Turkey and Israel were taking initial steps to build a durable partnership, there was a tremendous rise in PKK attacks, prompting a fierce response from the Turkish Armed Forces. The ferocity of the fight against the PKK was laid bare by the fact that 1,171 militants alone were killed in the first nine months of 1992 – just about half of the total (2,431) that were killed between 1984 and 1992.[150]

In August, Çetin went to Syria to secure Syrian President Hafez al-Assad's compliance with the terms of the previous agreements, in which Damascus pledged to cease logistical support for the PKK ("Çetin'e soğuk karşılama," 1992). During his visit, Çetin tried to reassure Syria over its concerns over water resources and stated that Ankara aimed to establish "rings of peace" around Turkey in the Middle East – something that entailed mending ties with Syria and Iraq. Çetin also announced that Demirel would go on a tour of the Gulf in September 1992 at the same time that Foreign Ministry Deputy Undersecretary Bilgin Unan would visit Israel ("Türkiye, barış için Körfez'e açılıyor," 1992). It is important to note that, while Çetin was in Syria, rumors had already emerged that the PKK was re-establishing camps in the Syrian controlled Bekaa Valley in Lebanon and that PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was considering returning to Damascus, meaning that the gains achieved on the Syria front had long been lost ("Suriye'den farklı ses,"1992).

As part of diplomatic initiatives to cut off regional support for the PKK, Turkish Interior minister İsmet Sezgin went to Iran on Sept. 2 and handed over a terrorism dossier, conveying Ankara's expectations from Tehran with regard to PKK

[150] The total number of people killed between 1984 and 1992 was 5,086. In the first nine months of 1992 alone, 1,832 people were killed (Mumcu, 1992).

operations in the region ("Tahran'a terör dosyası," 1992). Sezgin's visit evoked both praise and criticism in the Turkish press. Those who regarded the visit as unsuccessful pointed at Tehran's denials when Turkey presented Iranian IDs obtained from seized PKK militants (Doğan, 1992).

As planned in advance, Unan went to Israel on Sept. 29. The parties agreed to establish a political counsel mechanism on bilateral relations in an effort to boost the Middle East peace process and facilitate an exchange of views on regional and international affairs.

In April 1993, Peres paid a friendly visit to Turkey to attend the funeral of Özal. Elaborating on Turkey-Israel relations, Peres suggested that the two cooperate against terrorism, citing Iran as the major threat in the region due to its financial support for organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas, which had reportedly established a military base in Sudan. Peres conspicuously defined Turkey as a key country in the region and suggested that the two countries should also improve their economic ties alongside their military cooperation ("İsrail'den Türkiye'ye teröre karşı," 1993). The establishment of the Turkish-Israeli Business Council in March that year was indeed a sign that both sides were willing to expand cooperation beyond the security realm. Commenting on the foundation of the Turkish-Israeli Business Council, Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) Director Çelik Kurdoğlu asserted that their expectation was not only to expand export markets but also to cooperate with Israeli business leaders so as to invest in Russia and Central Asia ("İsrail de Orta Asya'da işbirliği," 1993). As a matter of fact, the 1990s witnessed a dramatic increase in trade between Turkey and Israel, as the volume of trade grew steadily from $103 million in 1990 to $625 million in 1997 (UN comtrade database, n.d.).

But while diplomatic relations were edging forward, Ankara was still cautious about exposing and publicizing its level of cooperation with Israel. Herzog and Peres' trips, after all, both occurred on an unofficial basis. It was Çetin's visit to Israel in 1993 that marked a watershed in bilateral relations, providing a formal basis to develop closer ties. In this respect, it is possible to say that the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestinians in Oslo on Sept. 13, 1993 – an event that outlined the guidelines for the subsequent peace negotiations known as the Oslo Process – and Israel's peace treaty with Jordan in 1994 improved Israel's image in the Middle East, therefore relieving Arab pressure on Turkey.

It is important to note that Çetin had to postpone his visit to Israel twice before he finally arrived on Nov. 13. The first delay stemmed from domestic politics, while the second occurred due to Çetin's concern about Israel's operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon[151] that could have cast a shadow on his historic visit. The delay in Çetin's schedule can be taken as an indicator that Turkey's sensitivity about avoiding any sort of Arab reaction still prevailed in its relations with Israel.

During his visit to Jerusalem, Çetin tried to maintain a diplomatic balance between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. Thus, after meeting with Israeli officials, Çetin also went to see Palestinian leaders Faisal Husseini and Saeb Erakat at the Orient House in East Jerusalem, which served as the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization in the 1980s and 1990s. Çetin's meeting with the Palestinian side would set a diplomatic precedent for subsequent visits by Turkish leaders.

[151] On July 25, 1993, Israel bombarded guerilla camps in south Lebanon to retaliate for the killing of seven Israeli soldiers and halt Hezbollah's rocket attacks on northern Israel ("Israeli jets, in answer to attacks," 1993; "Israel continues to blast villages," 1993).

In hindsight, Çetin's path-breaking visit constituted an important step in building a strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel – the two countries that occupied a significant place in the Clinton administration's regional calculations, particularly in regard to the establishment of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East and the dual containment of Iraq and Iran.[152] Indeed, the Turks had long favored a sustainable peace between Israel and the Arabs, but when it came to the ongoing Israel-Syria negotiations, they had some reservations. Ankara was particularly worried that the two sides would ignore Damascus' support for the PKK and come to some sort of deal to access Turkish water in an effort to save the peace talks.[153] With Çetin's visit, the Turkish side was thus expecting to ink a comprehensive security agreement with Israel to secure support against Syria.

In this respect, a number of draft agreements on intelligence sharing against terrorism, drug smuggling and cooperation in military training and defense were presented to Israel. On closer look, however, the two countries were far from sharing overlapping threat perceptions (Sarıibrahimoğlu, 1993). While Turkey's emphasis was on the PKK, Israel's main concern was Iran's activities in the region. More

[152] In 1993, during the Washington Institute's annual Soref Symposium, Martin Indyk, who served as special assistant to President Bill Clinton and senior director for Near East and South Asian affairs at the National Security Council (1993-1995) and as assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs in the U.S. Department of State (1997-2000), provided an outline of the Clinton administration's Middle East policy in which he underlined Turkey's rising profile: "During the Cold War, Turkey was treated very much as a European power, a partner in NATO's efforts to contain the Soviet Union. Now Turkey is coming to play an important role not only in Central Asia but also in the Middle East. Bordering on Iran, Iraq and Syria, Turkey is already critical to our efforts to contain Saddam Hussein's regime and to maintain the Operation Provide Comfort arrangements for the people of northern Iraq. In short, Turkey is a secular, democratic Muslim nation, a strategically located military and economic power, and a long-time ally of the United States. One of our challenges is to find a way to put these factors to better use in the pursuit of our objectives in the Middle East." The Clinton administration's policy of "dual containment" rested on an understanding of preventing both Iran and Iraq from rebuilding their arsenals, instead of the old policy of balancing one against the other (Indyk, 1993).

[153] There were rumors that Turkey's control of water resources had become a bargaining chip in Israel-Syria peace talks. Accordingly, the two sides were reportedly entertaining the idea that Syria would receive additional water from the Euphrates and Tigris in return for giving up the water resources in the Golan Heights (Indyk, 1993; Batur, 1994).

importantly, Israel was unwilling to take an openly hostile stance against the PKK, as that might alienate the Kurds living in the region; instead, the country preferred to address Turkey's security concerns from a broader framework of cooperation against terrorism. Israel also refrained from directly challenging Syria in the post-Oslo period to avoid disrupting the prospects for reaching a peace deal with Damascus.

Israel, in the end, dragged its feet on the terrorism cooperation that Çetin proposed in Jerusalem, while Israel reportedly suspended the drafts before Israeli President Ezer Weizman's visit to Turkey in January 1994.[154] A week after Çetin's visit, however, a contradictory story appeared in the Turkish press which heralded the burgeoning intelligence cooperation between Turkey and Israel as part of a 12-point memorandum secretly signed during a meeting of foreign ministers.[155] This was a clear sign that the two countries had been busy pursuing cooperation behind the scenes.

In either case, the frequent exchange of high-level visits during this period reflected a deepening of dialogue between Turkey and Israel. In April 1994, Weizman arrived in Ankara, leading a large delegation of high-level representatives, including the heads of the Israeli Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Industry, with the intention of exchanging views over possible cooperation in defense. Reflecting on Weizman's diplomatic discussions, Israeli newspaper Yediot Ahronoth asserted that political relations between Turkey and Israel were developing into a "friendship," ("İsrail'den önemli konuk," 1994) while the Turkish press depicted the visit as "the peak of Turkish-Israeli relations." ("Türkiye-İsrail ilişkileri dorukta," 1994) After his meetings in Ankara, Weizman headed to the Atatürk Dam in

[154]At least, that was the timeline presented to the public (Sarıibrahimoğlu, 1993)
[155] Validity of this information was confirmed in a personal interview with a high-level diplomat from Turkey. See also ("MİT-Mossad işbirliği," 1993).

Şanlıurfa, a province in Southeast Turkey, and toured the GAP region. Turkey was interested in Israel's technological advances in agriculture and irrigation as much as Israel was interested in carrying Manavgat water to Israel through pipelines. In the years after Weizman's visit, the two countries continued to evaluate the feasibility of the Manavgat water project as part of their strategic partnership.

During his visit, Weizman underlined Turkey's significance as a regional actor which could play a constructive role in accelerating the Arab-Israeli peace process. Weizman also expressed his willingness to directly communicate with al-Assad. Weizman's remarks become more significant when considered in conjunction with the fact that just a month before, the PLO walked out on peace talks with Israel due to a terrorist attack at the Ibraham al-Khalil Mosque in Hebron by a far-right Israeli settler that killed 25 and wounded over 100 ("Ortadoğu barışı askıda," 1994). With the peace talks at stake, Israel sought help from Washington to bring the PLO, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon back to the negotiating table. Upon Weizman's departure, Demirel was invited to the Davos Summit to mediate between Israeli and Palestinian leaders, an important development which demonstrated that Turkey's active participation in the peace process was encouraged by both the United States and Israel.

In the course of the Turkish-Israeli dialogue, Çiller's visit to Israel in November 1994 as part of her tour encompassing Israel and Egypt constituted another significant threshold in bilateral relations. Çiller brought along a thick dossier of 11 well-detailed projects that aimed at facilitating further cooperation between Turkey and Israel in combating terrorism and narcoterrorism, encouraging energy investments, as well as upgrading telecommunications systems and postal services (Kohen, 1994). Turkey's former general director of security, Mehmet Ağar,

who was present in the delegation, considered the signing of the 12-point agreement on intelligence sharing as a major contribution to Turkey's struggle against terrorism.[156] Aside from security issues, the sides discussed the Manavgat water project and other possible investment opportunities for Israeli companies in the GAP region.

During official talks, Rabin emphasized the significance of developing relations with Turkey "as a key country and a peace broker in the region." However, Çiller's meeting with Palestinian leader Faisal Husseini at the Orient House afterwards, elicited reaction from the Israeli government since it was not stated in her official program. While expressing his regrets, Rabin later emphasized that Çiller's meeting would not damage bilateral relations.[157] Çiller then moved on to Gaza as the first foreign prime minister to meet Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, during which time she pledged Turkish investment for the development of the region. As a forward-looking vision, the delegation even introduced the idea of a Turkey-led initiative for the establishment of an international forum, a Middle East version of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that would focus solely on the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Kohen, 1994, November 5).

Turkey's efforts to contribute to the Middle East peace process was not limited to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For instance, Çiller also accepted Libya's President Moammar Gadhafi's request to mediate between the

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[156]. There was also an undergoing discussion regarding Turkey's international image at the time. Accordingly, Çiller launched an international PR campaign ("Türkiye anahtar ülke," 1994; Batur, 1994, November 3).

[157] Kohen argues that the reason for the Israelis' disappointment was not Çiller's unexpected decision to arrange a meeting at Orient House but the Palestinian side's attempt to derive political profit from it by not allowing Israeli security into the building – a move which was perceived as a challenge to Israel's sovereignty in East Jerusalem (Kohen, 1994, November 7).

United States and Libya in November 1994 so as to end Libya's international isolation. Turkey's active diplomacy for conflict resolution not only aimed at establishing stability in the region but also served to elevate Turkey's status to a "key country" that engaged in dialogue with various actors such as the United States, Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation ("Çiller's tarihi misyon," 1994).

From 1994 onwards, Turkish policymakers have become increasingly overt in their dealings with Israel. Aside from the internal dynamics of negotiations that acquired a momentum on their own, a number of developments occurred toward 1996 that encouraged Ankara to deepen security cooperation with Israel. Publicizing ties with Israel served political purposes.

As the dust of the Gulf War settled and the impact of the OPC started to weigh on Turkish policymakers toward 1994, Ankara's threat assessments acquired greater clarity. Although the Turkish Armed Forces dealt a severe blow to the PKK and caused the organization to declare a unilateral ceasefire in October 1992, clashes continued throughout the year. In particular, a PKK attack between the eastern provinces of Elazığ and Bingöl that killed 33 soldiers in May 1993 formally put an end to the ceasefire, resulting in the Turkish Armed Forces' intensification of the struggle against the PKK.

With terrorist attacks showing no signs of abating, the Çiller government shifted to a more comprehensive and hardline approach against militancy, entrusting the Turkish military with the task.[158] The government's package consisted of

[158] Robins (2003) refers to "the Faustian pact" between Çiller and Chief of General Staff Gen. Doğan Güreş. Çiller's close cooperation with hardline members of the security force, such as Güreş, the former governor of the state of emergency region, Ünal Erkan, and ex-police chief Mehmet Ağar – all well-known figures in the fight against the PKK – drew criticisms as to whether the country had fallen under military tutelage similar to that of the period following the 1980 coup. According to Sazak, the military's presence in the decision-making process could hardly be denied, but what made

military, political and economic measures to eradicate terrorism, but the priority was given to establishing security, so that political rights and economic investments could occur in a more stable environment. In this respect, Turkey's efforts to ensure other countries cut their support to the PKK gained utmost importance. However, given that diplomatic pressures on Syria and Iran had yielded few substantial results, Turkey started to harden its approach toward its neighbors.

Turkey's dominant security perspective by the end of 1994 was best encapsulated by veteran diplomat Şükrü Elekdağ. Coining the term "Two-and-a-half war strategy," Elekdağ asserted that Turkey had to be prepared to fight on 2.5 fronts, against Greece in the west, Syria in the south and the PKK on the inside – the latter the recipient of Damascus' support. Relying on robust force, this strategy envisioned an immediate increase in defense expenditures (Elekdağ, 1994).

However, Turkey had been facing procurement problems on dual fronts. Germany had recently suspended military aid to Turkey over human rights concerns. Likewise, the U.S. Congress decreased the amount of credits granted to Turkey from $452 million to $393 million and suspended 25% of the amount pending a Turkish move to improve human rights and make progress on the Cyprus issue ("Ambargo bedeli 40 milyon," 1994).

In February 1995, the press revealed a report prepared by the Turkish Air Forces, exploring areas of possible cooperation with Israel. The report, which was actually prepared in the aftermath of Turkish Air Force Cmdr. Halis Burhan's visit to Israel in 1994, envisaged military and economic cooperation between the two countries, including Israel's modernization of Turkey's F-4s and F-16S (the deal called for action to increase the flight range and update the technological systems),

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this period different from the past was that civil and military bureaucrats worked in harmony. For a similar view (Pope & Pope, 2004, p.313; Sazak, 1994, March 13).

Ankara's purchase of 20 Popeye missiles from Israel, cooperation against the PKK, progress on the Manavgat water project and Israeli agricultural investment in the GAP region.

In March 1995, the Turkish Armed Forces launched its largest-ever cross-border operation, an incursion into northern Iraq known as Operation Steel-a.k.a Çelik Harekatı (Bila, 2007, p.142), in which it dispatched 35,000 troops to wipe out PKK camps. The operation, which lasted until May, drew reaction from the international community. While the United Kingdom and Germany counseled restraint, U.S. Secretary of Defense William J. Perry called on the Turkish government to avoid harming the civilian population and to leave Iraq as soon as it finished the mission ("Turks reported likely to keep," 1995).

Determined to fight terrorism with all its resources, Turkey stepped up its efforts on the diplomatic front to cut off logistics to the PKK. During her visit to Washington in the wake of the Steel Operation, PM Çiller responded to criticisms thus:

> I must tell you that the Turkish people are deeply disappointed by the harsh criticism from some of Turkey's allies; just as we are grateful for the support of President Clinton and the United States… Government. No Western government bordering a no-man's land that is used as a terrorist base to invade it and kill its citizens would stand idly by. ("Telkin almayız, hesap vermeyiz," 1995)

Prior to Çiller's visit, former PM and opposition leader Mesut Yılmaz met CIA Director John Deutch in Washington, where he gave the United States assurances about Turkey's military operation in northern Iraq, and criticized Washington's contradictory stance toward terrorism: "On the one hand, the United States defies terrorism and, on the other, it spoils Syria, which supports terrorist groups, for the sake of peace talks" (Doğan, 1995).

In the meantime, developments of the ground proved Ankara's concerns. Just weeks after Operation Steel ended in northern Iraq, the NSC warned against Syrian-supported PKK infiltration into Hatay with an eye to taking over the contested province from Turkey ("MGK'da Hatay alarmı," 1995). On June 21, reports revealed a tacit agreement between Greece and Syria that would allow the Greeks to use Syrian air space in what appeared to be a situation that could validate Elekdağ's "2.5-front war" prophecy ("Rumlara Yunan ve Suriye bekçiliği," 1995).

On Nov. 7, 1995, it was formally declared that Israel would modernize Turkey's F-4 aircraft. When asked if the timing of the decision was related to the Syrian-Greek agreement, an official from the Defense Ministry stated that the decision was politically motivated and should be perceived as a message to Syria.

Amid escalating tension, Turkey announced the suspension of the trilateral strategic dialogue with Syria and Iran on Jan. 23, 1996, and issued a note to Damascus, threatening to use its right to retaliation unless Syria cut off support for the PKK and handed over the Damascus-based Öcalan. Just days later, Turkish officials impounded trucks at the Cilvegözü border gate after they crossed in from Syria, allegedly with weapons for the PKK ("Suriye'den PKK'ya," 1996).

Almost as a self-fulfilling prophecy, Turkey found itself in the midst of another crisis, this time on its western front on Jan. 29, 1996. Competing claims of sovereignty over Kardak/Imia, two uninhabited islets in the Aegean Sea, brought Turkey and Greece to the brink of war.[159]

In the meantime, Turkey's relations with Iran also deteriorated. Turkish authorities had been complaining that Iran was providing shelter for the PKK along

[159] Both Turkey and Greece had long claimed sovereignty over the islets. A crisis, however, erupted when Greek solders set foot and planted a flag on the islets, after which both countries deployed marines and warplanes to the area. The crisis was eventually solved thanks to diplomatic pressure from the United States (Fırat, 2008, p.464; "Askeri çek yoksa," 1996).

the border. Despite Tehran's denials, documents and confessions obtained from PKK militants proved the presence of training camps on Iranian territory. In April, Turkish military forces were deployed to the Iranian border for a possible incursion to wipe out the camps ("Sınıra yığınak," 1996). Diplomatic tension further escalated as İrfan Çağırıcı, a member of Islami Hareket, who was on trial in Turkey for the assassinations of prominent intellectuals Çetin Emeç and Turan Dursun, confessed that he received assistance from Iranian diplomats (Güven, 1996). Bilateral relations would hit a new low with the Sincan affair[160] in 1997 when Turkey accused Iran of supporting Islamic fundamentalism during the Welfare-True Path coalition government.

Against the backdrop of these developments, Turkey and Israel took a great leap forward toward enhancing security and defense cooperation in 1996, as they lifted the lid on their strategic partnership whose foundations had been laid in secret in the previous years. In this respect, the Military Training Cooperation Agreement[161] was signed on Feb. 23, 1996, which entailed the exchange of military

[160] In February 1997, Bekir Yıldız, the Welfare mayor of Sincan, Ankara, organized a "Jerusalem Day" similar to Quds Day celebrations and called for the city's liberation from Israeli rule. What made the event so scandalous at the time was that Iran's ambassador was invited to make a speech in which he called for the establishment of Shariah in Turkey. Crowds in the center of Sincan chanted in support of Hamas and Hezbollah. Turkey's military cadres, which had traditionally acted as the guardian of the state, perceived the event as a threat to secularism. In response, the army dispatched tanks to the town hall in a display of power. Immediately afterwards, Interior Minister Meral Akşener removed the mayor from office, while the Iranian ambassador was declared persona non grata. The incident paved the way for the declaration of the infamous NSC memorandum on Feb. 28, also known as the post-modern coup, in which intense pressure from the military ultimately forced Welfare Party leader Necmettin Erbakan to resign (Ahmad, 2003, p.171).

[161] Bengio contends that while the Military Training and Defense Agreement received the bulk of attention, it was merely a culmination of earlier developments over the previous few years that had facilitated cooperation in the fields of security, economy and culture. Among the significant milestones in the pair's military and defense cooperation was a secret security agreement signed on March 31,1994, and revealed in 1996. Another was an unpublished agreement, a memorandum of understanding in 1995, regarding the training for pilots from both countries in each other's airspace ((Bengio, O., personal communication, February 7, 2017).

personnel, naval vessels and aircraft, and granted each country the right to use the other's ports and airbases.[162] Notably, the Turkish side publicized signing of the deal in May (Tümer, 1996).

On Aug. 28, the two countries signed the Defense Industry Cooperation Agreement and concluded a complementary deal in December that facilitated technology transfers, as well as joint trade ventures and investment in defense sectors. The agreement also included the modernization of Turkey's 54 F-4 Phantoms, and 48 F-5s, which were regarded as useful in the fight against the PKK.[163]

As an indicator of deepening cooperation, Turkey and Israel agreed to establish a strategic dialogue forum to convene every six months for the exchange of strategic assessments ("İsrail ile işbirliği felaket," 1996). These meetings served as a venue for bilateral consultation in the beginning before gaining a regional dimension as the United States and Jordan began to actively participate in the alliance.

In retrospect, there was also a domestic political side to Turkey's rapprochement with Israel regarding the military's struggle to thwart the rise of political Islam. During the Welfare (Refah)- True Path (DYP) coalition government, the security establishment elevated "reactionary Islam" to a threat level as serious as

[162] Turkey's vast territory provided a critical opportunity for Israeli pilots in terms of training, as it enabled Israeli pilots to become familiar with the landscape of Turkey's border with Iraq, Syria and Iran – all of which were hostile to Israel. According to the agreement, training would take place eight times a year. In return, Turkish pilots were trained in Israel's Negev desert and gained experience in attacking long-range anti-aircraft missiles like the S-300 that Cyprus was planning to obtain from Russia (Bengio, 2017, personal communication).

[163] There were also reports that Israel established a military airbase in eastern Turkey. The airbase in question turned out to be an existing airbase in Konya, which was not in active use and therefore assigned for Israel's use (Tümer, 1996, p.113).

"separatism."[164] At the same time, deeper strategic ties with Israel became a symbol of the power struggle between the secular military and the religiously oriented government – a power struggle that the military won.[165]

As a party known for its Islamist inclinations and anti-Israeli stance, the Welfare Party's assumption of power as a major coalition partner in June 1996 raised concerns about the future of Turkish-Israeli military cooperation .[166]Unsurprisingly, Welfare Party leader, PM Necmettin Erbakan dragged his feet about signing the Defense Industrial Cooperation Agreement with Israel.[167] In spite of his objections, Defense Ministry Undersecretary Tuncer Kılınç and Israeli Deputy Chief of Staff David Ivry eventually concluded the deal (the press, however, was not informed). Later, party officials claimed that the delay in signing the agreement stemmed from Erbakan's desire to remove some unfavorable terms that he considered to violate Turkey's national interests.[168]

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[164] By October 1997, the National Security Strategy Document had been amended to include "reactionary Islam" as a threat to Turkey's security.

[165] Historically, the Turkish military has played a unique role in Turkish politics as the protector of republican values – that is, secularism – since the foundation of the Turkish Republic. In so doing, the military tried to influence domestic and foreign policy decisions in accordance with security needs, either directly through military interventions or indirectly through the NSC's advisory decisions. Arguably, the turbulent security context of the 1990s heightened security concerns amid tensions with Greece and Syria, on one hand, and the rise of the Kurdish insurgency and political Islam, on the other, paving the way for a security-oriented foreign policy in which domestic and foreign threats became intertwined. In addition, the instability in Turkey's domestic political scene in the 1990s due to a number of short-lived coalition governments, coupled with frequent changes at the Foreign Ministry, meant that civil servants in the ministry became responsible for drafting the country's foreign policy – albeit under the influence of the NSC and the Chief of General Staff (Özcan, 1998).

[166] During her campaign, Çiller presented TPP as the only option for the secular electorate against the rise of Islamic fundemantalism, and she vowed that she would never form an alliance with the Welfare Party. However, shortly after the Motherland-True Path coalition ended, Erbakan introduced a parliamentary bill to investigate corruption allegations against Çiller. Eventually, Çiller bowed to Erbakan's blackmail, agreed to form a coalition, providing he froze the investigation against her (Ahmad, 2003, p.169).

[167] Apparently, the military pressured Erbakan to approve the defense agreements with Israel (Yinanç, 1996, August 6;"Erbakan'dan İsrail'e ilk fren," 1996; "Dışişleri: İsrail ile anlaşma,"1996; "İsrail'le anlaşma Refah'tan geçti,"1996).

[168] There was a symbolic significance to Chief of General Staff Gen. İsmail Hakkı Karadayı's attendance at the critical NSC meeting following the Sincan affair and his return from a four-day visit to Israel. The memorandum drafted by Turkish military leaders initiated the Feb. 28 process and precipitated Erbakan's resignation, scuttling the coalition government. Interestingly, the day that Erbakan declared his resignation on June 17 of 1996), five vessels from the Turkish navy were anchored in Haifa for the Sea Wolf (Deniz Kurdu-97) naval drills ("Türk donanması İsrail'de," 1996).

It is also noteworthy that Turkish-Israeli rapprochement continued at a time when the Arab-Israeli peace process nearly ground to a halt. Following Israel's assassination of Yahya Ayyash, the so-called engineer of Hamas who masterminded several suicide attacks, on Jan. 5, 1996, Hamas promised revenge and duly stepped up terrorist attacks against Israelis. Suicide attacks in Jerusalem, Ashkelon and Tel Aviv inflicted heavy casualties and damaged the credibility of the Peres government, in the run up to the Israeli elections of 1996 (Hamas yine saldırdı," 1996; "İsrail kana bulandı," 1996). Feeling the heat ahead of elections, Peres suspended talks with the Palestinians and closed Israel's gates to Palestinian workers from the West Bank and Gaza. However, seeing his main rival, Benjamin Netanyahu taking the lead in the polls, Peres, decided to suspend talks with Syria as well, prior to the elections (Shlaim, 2014).

In a desperate attempt to save the American-sponsored peace process, an anti-terrorist summit was called for at Sharm el-Sheikh on March 13. Only a couple of days prior to the summit, President Demirel went to Israel. In fact, Demirel was expected to visit Israel in November 1995, but his trip was canceled due to Rabin's assassination. When he finally met with his counterpart in Israel, the two countries signed a free trade agreement ("Türkiye, Batı'ya İsrail kartını," 1996). The deal represented a significant step in terms of diversification of relations. More importantly, it would enable Turkish exporters to overcome the U.S. trade quota by conducting 30% of their production in Israel.

In retrospect, this visit not only brought the two countries a step closer, but also presented an important opportunity for Turkey to cultivate its position as peace broker. During the meeting, Weizman reportedly asked Demirel, who was continuing on to Gaza, to convey a message to Arafat in an effort to secure the

latter's support to restrain Hamas (Bila, 1996) Clinton also sent a letter to Demirel, personally inviting him to the Sharm el-Sheikh summit to "preserve peace and combat terrorism" (Çevikcan, 1996).

With the peace process at stake in the second half of the 1990s, the Clinton administration – which had acted as a player behind the scenes in the formation of alliance ties – started to openly encourage bilateral cooperation between Turkey and Israel, as well as the strategic dialogue meetings regularly held between the two countries. As a matter of fact, on May 4, 1996, the United States and Israel began official talks on security and cooperation, which marked a preliminary step toward a security pact that was expected to include Turkey, Egypt and other regional countries, such as Jordan and Oman, in the near future. [169]

After crossing the important threshold of publicly announcing the military cooperation agreement, Turkish-Israeli collaboration developed rapidly. The countries' mutual interests served to remove their bilateral ties from the straitjacket of the Arab-Israeli problem. When Israel launched Operation Grapes of Wrath[170] in April, Turkey's reaction was very controlled and even mild. Ankara called on Israel to avoid assaults on civilian targets, expressed concern that Israel's operation might supersede its objectives and offered humanitarian support to the Lebanese. Turkey,

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[169] According to Çongar (1996b), Rabin initially turned down the United States' idea of a regional pact on the grounds that Israel's security could not be left to other countries. Unlike Rabin, Peres seemed willing to reconsider the issue. Mufti (2009, p.108), on the other hand, claims that the idea for an expanded axis took shape in the mid-1990s, when Peres reportedly told U.S. President Clinton about a proposal that he had received from Jordanian King Hussein to establish a strategic partnership featuring Israel, Jordan, Turkey and a post-Saddam Iraq. Israeli Defense Minister Yitzak Mordechai defined this trilateral defense cooperation not as a regional pact, but a solid security mechanism. He said the parties did not pledge to engage in collective defense, which would entail that an attack against one was an attack against all others. Nevertheless, Mordechai also asserted that the trilateral cooperation among Israel, Turkey and the United States would surely deter potential aggressors (Güven, 1997; Aydıntaşbaş, 1997; Çongar, 1997).

[170] The Operation Grapes of Wrath was a two-week Israeli military campaign in southern Lebanon launched in April 1996 in response to Hezbollah missile attacks. Israel's bombardment of a U.N. base at Qana on April 18 killed more than 100 refugees, prompting strong criticism from the international community ("Türkiye, Batı'ya İsrail kartını," 1996).

however, also abstained during a U.N. vote that condemned Israel's attack on the Qana camp (United Nations, 1996). Moreover, during the course of Israel's operation in southern Lebanon, eight Israeli F-16 warplanes arrived at Ankara's Akıncı airbase for military training. It was also revealed that Israeli aircraft twice used Turkish airspace for training prior to the signing of the cooperation agreement in February ("Kimse bizden hesap soramaz,"1996; Sarıibrahimoğlu, 1996, April 18)). Facing reactions from the Arab world, Foreign Minister Emre Gönensay defended the military deal, saying: "We don't need to give an account for our decisions. The Military Training Agreement is an issue of domestic politics and a decision pertaining to increasing Turkey's defense capabilities. As such, our national interests are at stake" ("İsrail'in gazabı devam ediyor," 1996).

In a similar vein, Turkish-Israeli cooperation remained unaffected when Demirel escaped an assassination attempt in May 1996, by a gunman angry about the military deal. Still, some hesitant voices in the government- such as then-Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz and Defense Minister Mahmut Oltan Sungurlu- raised concerns about the agreement ("Yılmaz: İsrail'le anlaşma zarar,"1996).

In the post-1996 period, military cooperation became the centerpiece of Turkish-Israeli relations,[171] through joint air and naval exercises (Güven, 1996b) and large-scale modernization projects,[172] as "the powerful defense establishments of the two countries served as "bureaucratic drivers of this relationship." As a sign of the strategic alignment between the two countries, Turkey raised the number of its

[171] In fact, both Turkey and Israel intended to establish a broad-based relationship and, therefore, cultivated economic and cultural relations. However, it was the military aspect of Turkish-Israeli relations that made the most headlines. Eventually, defense cooperation came to dominate bilateral relations.

[172] In October 1997, Turkey signed a preliminary agreement with Israel that included the co-production of Israel's Delilah, Popeye I and Popeye II air-to-ground missiles. Israel's Defense Ministry also took a positive view of Turkey's purchase of Merkava tanks, as well as the modernization of F-5s, Cobra helicopters, radar systems and unmanned vehicles ("Önemli anlaşmalar,"1997).

military attachés in Tel Aviv from one to three in July 1998, adding naval and army officers to join an air force colleague in residence. Israel became just the fourth country after the United States, Germany and France which Turkey posted more than one military attaché (Robins, 2003, p.266).

The scope of defense agreements, particularly in regard to efforts to reach a deal on joint training and technology transfer, indicated that the two countries had taken the necessary steps to ensure that their armed forces could work in tandem, presumably against a common threat. The agreement on military training, for instance, enabled Turkish pilots trained in the Negev desert in southern Israel to gain experience in high-tech air combat, using Israel's antiaircraft systems. In a similar vein, Turkey's vast territory not only provided a wider space for training, but also helped Israeli pilots to become acquainted with the geography of the areas bordering Turkey. Thus, when Ivry visited Turkey in April 1997, he did not shun away from stating that the bilateral cooperation between Turkey and Israel would "deter the hostile acts of Iran and Syria and make those countries which threaten regional peace think twice before they act" (Yinanç, 1997).

The convergence of threat perceptions provided a further deepening of defense ties and even enabled the pair to expand their cooperation so as to involve the United States and Jordan as well. In mid-1997, there were reports that a trilateral strategic dialogue mechanism had been established among Turkey, Israel and the United States. In these high-level meetings, the three reportedly discussed holding joint military drills, improving rapid-threat intelligence sharing, constructing emergency storage buildings and developing common security codes (Güven, 1997; Aydıntaşbaş, 1997; Çongar, 1997). In this respect, the participation of Turkey, Israel and the United States, along with Jordan as an observer, in the Reliant Mermaid joint

naval exercise on Jan. 7, 1998, manifested an emerging regional security axis. The outbreak of a crisis between Turkey and Syria in October would provide a test case of the strategic implications of this enhanced defense cooperation.

4.4 Turkey's "Undeclared War" of 1998: A test case for Turkey's alliance with Israel

As Turkey's diplomatic efforts failed to yield substantial results in cutting Syria's support for the PKK, tension between Turkey and Syria began to escalate in the fall of 1998 as Ankara flexed its muscles. On Sept. 16, the commander of the Land Forces, Gen. Atilla Ateş, stated during a troop inspection in Hatay that Damascus had been exploiting Turkey's goodwill "by protecting terrorists" and that Turkey's patience had "reached its limits." On Sept. 30, the NSC issued a declaration reiterating Ateş's message, noting that Turkey would speak with Syria in a language that Damascus understands, and that Ankara would retaliate unless the al- Assad government curtailed hostilities. At the opening day of the Turkish Grand National Assembly on Oct. 1, Demirel stated that Turkey's patience had run out and that the country would use force in the event that Syria continued its active support for the PKK.

As a manifestation of Turkey's resolve, the military launched maneuvers along the Syrian border, bringing the two countries to the brink of war.[173] In response to the escalating crisis, Egypt and Iran channeled their diplomatic efforts

[173] Officials said the deployment was part of Turkey's commitment to NATO's "Dynamic Mix 98" drill in İskenderun on the Mediterranean Sea, although the army also drafted plans for a separate military exercise along the Syrian border the following month – war games that implied Turkey was preparing for a possible military incursion into Syria. On Oct. 4, the rate of military movements accelerated. The Diyarbakır 2nd Airbase was put on partial alarm and leave was canceled. Heavy weapons were also installed at observation posts along the Turkish-Syrian border, while reconnaissance flights also began (Bila, 1998).

into preventing a conflagration. Ankara and Damascus exchanged messages through consecutive visits by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi on Oct. 6 and 9, respectively.[174]

In the meantime, Israel declared that it did not want to become a party to the conflict between Turkey and Syria out of concerns about the long-stalled Middle East peace process that had just received a boost from the U.S. president. In order to prove that the defense agreements signed with Turkey did not stipulate any joint operation against a third party, Israel also withdrew some of its troops deployed in southern Syria as a sign of goodwill ("İsrail'den sürpriz tavır," 1998).

According to a report in the Jerusalem Post on Oct. 8, Turkey complained about Israel's non-compliance with the military agreements with regard to intelligence sharing, prompting Israel's Defense Ministry to dispatch an officer to provide intelligence details to Ankara regarding Syria's troop deployments, locations and activities. These claims were subsequently denied by the spokesman of Israel's Defense Ministry, Avi Benayahu, who reiterated that cooperation between Turkey and Israel did not threaten any third country ("Suriye elimizin altında," 1998).

The United States, on the other hand, counseled all parties to exercise restraint and pushed for a peaceful resolution to the disputes through diplomatic means. Washington also acknowledged Turkey's rightful security concerns regarding Syria's protection of the PKK. Shortly thereafter, the rhetoric started to change in Damascus. Syrian officials came to accept that some members of the PKK might be residing in Syria but would no longer be permitted to do so.[175]

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[174] At the time, both Mubarak and Kharrazi blamed Israel for fueling the tension between Turkey and Syria. Their approaches which seemed to underestimate Turkey's longstanding issue of terrorism, drew criticism from Ankara (Yetkin, 2019).

[175] Eventually, Syria pledged to remove the PKK from the country. "There might be some PKK elements on our soil. But we won't permit them to stay. We don't support the PKK. We've already

Turkey's coercive diplomacy finally paid off as Syria declared on Oct. 13 that Öcalan was no longer in Syria. Öcalan sought refuge in various countries, fleeing from Moscow to Rome and St. Petersburg to Athens, until he was finally captured in the Greek Embassy in Nairobi in 1999 "(US Helped Turkey Find," 1999). As a result of diplomatic back-and-forth, Turkish and Syrian delegations met in Adana on Feb. 19 to discuss the terms of cooperation against terrorism. The two sides signed the Adana Protocol ("Mutabakat konuları," 1998) on Feb. 20 in which Syria once more recognized the PKK as a terrorist organization and prohibited all activities by the group and its affiliates on its territory.[176]

Interviews conducted by diplomats suggest that Turkey was truly determined to launch an incursion against Syria as a last resort because of the failure of diplomatic efforts. At the time, Ankara's calculations rested upon the Turkish Armed Forces' perceived strategic superiority over Syria in that Damascus' weaponry was believed to have aged considerably since the end of the Cold War. In addition to Turkey's resolve to use military force if necessary, its alliance ties with Israel and the United States seems to have forced Syria to surrender to Turkish demands. Overall, Turkey's strategic alignment with Israel functioned effectively in countering Syria, without triggering a regional war or a counter-alliance.

On Feb. 19, 1999, Turkish intelligence captured PKK leader Öcalan in the Greek Embassy in Kenya, thanks to assistance from the United States and allegedly from Israel (Yetkin, 2019). Having strongly denied the rumors, Israeli government expressed its discontent and frustration about the leaking of reports which claimed

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banned the PKK as a terrorist organization, but we need time to finish them" ("Şam'da PKK İtirafı, 1998).

[176] A direct phone link was established between the highest-level security authorities of the two countries. As part of the anti-terrorism fight, Turkey also suggested that Syria establish a monitoring system that would enhance security measures along the border (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998).

MOSSAD's (National Intelligence Agency of Israel) involvement in the operation. Yet, it nevertheless became a target of anger for Kurdish protesters in the wake of Öcalan's arrest, as evidenced by an attack on Israel's Consulate General in Berlin.[177]

The divulging of the cooperation, however, highlighted the differences in opinion between Turkey and Israel with regard to the Kurdish issue (Bengio, 2004). Historically, Israel has pursued cordial relations with the Kurds in the Middle East as part of its periphery doctrine, a strategy that prioritized the establishment of friendly ties with non-Arab populations to enhance regional security. Indeed, the country periodically helped the Iraqi Kurds in the 1960s and 1970s against the authoritarian government in Baghdad. When defining its cooperation with Turkey against the PKK, Israel opted for a broader framework of "terrorism" in order to avoid direct confrontation with the entire Kurdish population. The discrepancy in their approaches to sovereignty demands of various Kurdish entities in the region would ultimately undermine trust between Turkey and Israel in the subsequent years.

4.5 Turkey-Israel relations after 1998: A cooling off or stabilization?

After the intensity of reciprocal high-level visits and comprehensive agreements of the mid-1990s, there came a period of stabilization in Turkish-Israeli relations toward the turn of the millennium that has often – and mistakenly – been interpreted as a cooling off-of bilateral ties. While Turkey's decreasing security concerns in the wake of the Adana Protocol somewhat reduced its need for Israel in terms of defense, the foundations of bilateral ties built during the "golden years" remained robust despite several crises in the following decade.

[177] Three people were killed and 14 were wounded when PKK supporters stormed the Consulate General in February 1999. Several demonstrations took place in various cities protesting Israel's alleged involvement in Öcalan's capture in Kenya (Cohen, 1999).

The Adana Accord in 1998 and Öcalan's capture in 1999 assisted Turkey in bringing the PKK insurgency under control, paving the way for the development of positive relations with its neighbors. This approach accorded well with then-Foreign Minister İsmail Cem's "Good Neighborhood Policy," under which Turkey pursued a multilateral and multi-dimensional foreign policy line (Cem, 2001, 2004; Tuğtan, 2016).

Cem (2001, 2004) criticized Turkish foreign policy, saying it was stuck within the narrow parameters of the Cold War. Instead, he argued that pursuing a Western-oriented foreign policy did not necessarily require Turkey to disengage from the East. On the contrary, he posited, Turkey's rich cultural heritage provided it with an advantageous position to cultivate relations with various regions, meaning Ankara's engagement in the Middle East would increase its significance as an ally of Europe.

Accordingly, Ankara pursued active engagement in the Middle East and the Trans-Caucasus during this period, while also contributing to peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans. Cem's dynamic foreign policy vision provided the impetus for Ankara to take significant steps in reducing hostilities with Syria, Iraq, and Iran and Greece, and even helped put relations back on track with the European Union after the Helsinki summit of 1999-in which Turkey was finally granted candidate status.

Amid fears that the Kurds could gain autonomy in northern Iraq after the first Gulf War, Cem offered mediation to Saddam in 1998 to de-escalate tension between Washington and Baghdad. At the same time, moderate cleric Mohammed Khatami's surprise victory in Iranian presidential elections that same year provided a suitable ground to normalize ties with Tehran. The two countries established joint

committees to improve border security against terrorism, while trade delegations also met regularly. In this respect, Cem's visit to Iran in 2001 marked an important milestone, as Tehran subsequently began to export natural gas to Turkey, inaugurating a pipeline project that began operations in 1996. At the same time, the Istanbul-Tehran railway also resumed service after a 10-year hiatus.

As for Turkey-Syria relations, the Adana Accord laid the groundwork for confidence-building measures, thus facilitating a gradual but steady normalization in ties. In this context, Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's visit to Syria in 2000 to attend the funeral of Syrian counterpart Hafez al-Assad marked a new phase between Ankara and Damascus, indicating a sea change in Turkey's Syria policy.

Shortly after Sezer's visit, then-Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam – the second highest person in Syria's political system – came to Ankara in a reciprocal visit and expressed his willingness to open a new page with Turkey, highlighting the potential in bilateral trade relations as a starting point (Çongar, 1999).

In 2001, Turkey and Syria took a step toward deepening cooperation by signing a security agreement to jointly combat terrorism. Bilateral cooperation also gained a strategic dimension with the signing of the Military Training Agreement in June 2002 during Syrian Chief of Staff Hassan Turkmani's visit to Turkey.[178]

As such, changes had already begun in Turkey's regional threat assessments –which also affected the significance of the partnership with Israel – even before the Justice and Development Party (AKP) ascended to power in November 2002. As

[178] The Military Training Agreement stipulated that the military personnel of the two countries would be able to pursue classes at educational and teaching institutions in each other's countries and participate in joint personnel training in units, as well as at army headquarters and other military institutions. The agreement also called for cooperation in the defense industry and joint exercises ("Savaşın eşiğinden, askeri işbirliğine," 2002; Hamidi, 2002).

early as August that year, there had been reports in the press about coming amendments to the National Security Document, known as the Red Book, in which Iran would replace Syria and Greece as a "primary threat" due to its nuclear ambitions (" Düşman önceliği değişiyor mu?" 2002).

It is possible to say that the relatively calm security environment at the end of the 90s has somewhat decreased the significance of the strategic cooperation between Turkey and Israel.[179] In addition, the government's pursuit of EU accession and the introduction of extensive reform packages arguably resulted in the "de-securitization" of Turkish foreign policy by endowing policymakers with a more positive agenda to focus on, while also limiting the military's role in policymaking.[180] As such, the military, which was considered to be the major facilitator of the strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel during the 1990s, gradually lost its influence in shaping the course of bilateral relations.

With the collapse of the Arab-Israeli peace talks and the subsequent outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000, Turkey's traditional sensitivity regarding the Palestinian issue resurfaced, straining relations. But despite strong criticisms from the Turkish government, the two countries succeeded in insulating their military and economic cooperation from the wider Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What's more, Turkey also tried to broker peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. For instance,

[179] Notably, Cem underlined several times that Turkey's friendly ties with Middle Eastern countries should not exclude a partnership with Israel. Following a visit to Tehran, Cem said in September 1998, "We will not sacrifice our relations with Israel in order to improve ties with the Arab world and vice versa." Instead, in line with his multilateral foreign policy perspective, Cem believed that Turkey's engagement in the Middle East would elevate its strategic importance in the eyes of Europe ("Tahran'a güvence," 1998).

[180] With reference to the Copenhagen school, Balcı and Kardaş (2012) defines the concept of desecuritization as the reverse process which results in the shifting of certain issues out of emergency mode, into the normal bargaining process of the political sphere, removed from the extra-political-security realm.

Demirel was among the five members of the Mitchell Committee[181] – a fact-finding committee founded in the wake of the Second Intifada after the Sharm el Sheikh Summit in October 2000 to inquire into the causes of the intifada. According to a former Israeli diplomat, Israel was not sympathetic at all to the establishment of an international committee, but it endorsed Turkey's participation in the committee as the only Muslim member state, which indicates the bond of trust between the two countries at the time.[182]

In the initial stages of the intifada, Cem offered his services as a mediator between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Together with Greek President Yorgo Papandreu, they went to Israel and conducted meetings with both Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the besieged Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in the West Bank.

Amid the ongoing violence in the West Bank, Israel's perceived disproportional use of force against protesters during Operation Defensive Shield in 2002[183] elicited serious reactions from the Turkish government. Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit accused Israel of "committing genocide against Palestinians" ("İsrail Soykırım Yapıyor," 2002). When his remarks sparked angry reactions from Israel and pro-Israel lobbies in the United States, Ecevit felt compelled to revise his statement and expressed his regrets for having been misunderstood. Just a few days before Ecevit's outburst, the Turkish government approved a $668 million agreement with Israel for the modernization of 170 M-60 tanks ("Ecevit Filistin'de ikna oldu," 2002).

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[181] The other members of the committee were former U.S. Senator Warren Rudman, EU Foreign and Security Affairs Chief Javier Solana and Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorbjørn Jagland.
[182] Liel, A. (2017, April 24). Personal Communication.
[183] Israel launched extensive military operations known as "The Defensive Shield Operation" throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the course of the Second Intifada between March and April 2002 (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002).

Still, Turkey voted in favor of a U.N. resolution that unilaterally condemned Israel's assaults against the Palestinians at the General Assembly in May 2002, despite U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's urge to vote against – or at least abstain from – the motion.

Intriguingly, the negative public opinion toward Israel during the Second Intifada did not cause a rupture in Turkish-Israeli relations. Bilateral trade continued to rise[184] and defense cooperation remained intact, as the two continued to conduct regular joint military exercises,[185] suggesting that the strategic partnership of the mid-1990s provided a resilient framework allowing Turkish-Israeli relations to function in all conditions. However, the change in power balances caused by the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, as well as the rise of new elites in Turkish foreign policy-making, would gradually alter the power dynamics in Turkish-Israeli relations.

[184] Turkey's exports to Israel increased from $618 million in 2000 to $888 million, while during the same period, Turkey's imports increased from $535 million to $558 million. Data from TEPAV.
[185] Bilateral relations were somewhat insulated from the clashes between Israelis and Palestinians during the Second intifada. For instance, Israel, meanwhile, also participated in the Anatolian Eagle exercises over Konya in June 2001. In 2002, Israeli Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer proposed that Turkey and Israel jointly produce Arrow missiles as a safeguard against long-range Iranian missiles. Later, in April 2002, Israeli Military Industries (IMI) received a tender to modernize Turkey's M60 tanks (Berman, 2002; Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri, n.d.).

CHAPTER 5

TURKISH ISRAELI RELATIONS DURING THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY PERIOD (2002-2010)

The Justice and Development Party's (AKP) unforeseen victory in the elections of November 2002, in which the party secured a majority of the votes (34.4%) to form a single party government (Özel, 2003), surprised many at home and abroad. As a successor to two previously banned Islamist parties,[186]the AKP's ascent to power elicited concerns over a possible shift in Turkey's western orientation, along with a deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations. However, contrary to what many anticipated, the new government declared that it had distanced itself from its Islamist roots, embraced the prospect of joining the European Union, and sought to maintain cordial relations with the West and Israel.[187] At the time, this policy suited the AKP, which, as an inexperienced party, wished to avoid harmful confrontation with the pro-western secular military.

From 2002 to 2010, Turkish-Israeli relations have continued along the mid-90s outline -albeit with a lesser momentum- within the confines of bilateral cooperation period. The institutional framework of the economic and security partnership by and large remained intact. For instance, the Turkish-Israeli Joint Economic commission, established in 2000, convened regularly throughout this period. Bilateral trade steadily increased. Turkey's exports to Israel rose from $340m in 1997(the year that the Free Trade Agreement was put into force) to $888m in

[186] Namely, the Welfare Party and the Virtue Party. To read further on the AKP's emergence in Turkish politics, see, (Dalay & Friedman, 2013; Akdoğan, 2010; Yaraşır & Aygün, 2002).
[187] Unlike Erbakan of the Welfare Party who picked Iran as his first destination to visit after coming to power in 1996, Erdogan made his first foreign trip to Greece on Nov. 18, 2002, within the scope of EU membership process, as a goodwill gesture ("Erdoğan'dan Simitis'e," 2002).

2002, and to $1.874b in 2010. Military cooperation also continued as the two countries explored opportunities to improve security cooperation against terrorism, held joint military exercises, and even signed new agreements for arms sales.

Yet, Turkish-Israeli relations were not completely problem free. Bilateral ties have become increasingly overshadowed by the reignited Palestinian question in the wake of the Second Intifada and periodic crisis between Israel and Arab countries in the 2000s. Amid the spiraling violence in the Middle East, the AKP government has adopted a harsher tone against Israel. However, after each and every crisis, the two sides have also worked together to de-escalate tension in order to keep relations afloat. The Mavi Marmara crisis in May 2010 – an Israeli raid on Gaza-bound aid flotilla, in which 10 Turkish activists were killed – was a crisis of different magnitude. Turkey and Israel found themselves in direct confrontation for the first time in the history of their relations and subsequently, diplomatic relations almost came to a halt ("Israeli attack on Gaza flotilla,"2010).

This chapter argues that between 2002 and 2010, Turkey's Israeli policy was primarily shaped by the regional repercussions of the Iraq War in 2003 and an overlapping process of Turkey's domestic political transformation under the AKP government. The geopolitical prerogatives that pushed Turkey to develop closer security ties with Israel in the mid-1990s had started to lose their significance before the AKP took office. In the changing security environment of the post-Iraq War period, Turkey's need for Israel's balancing role gradually decreased in parallel with Ankara's growing international self-confidence. Together with the rapidly changing international environment, the AKP's consolidation of power at home paved the way for shift in its foreign policy orientation, arguably away from the West, that better reflected the decision makers' ideological preferences. As a result, the divergence in

Israel and Turkey's interests as well as in their respective threat assessments became visibly more pronounced. Concurrently, their own bilateral relations were rendered vulnerable to the ups and downs of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Balta (2018), for instance, provides a practical outline of the evolution of the AKP's foreign policy framework as follows:

1- The phase of liberal internationalism characterized by a commitment to the EU and multilateralism (2002-2007).

2- 2- The phase of civilizational expansionism characterized by an overly confident, pan-Islamist and expansionist foreign policy (2008-2014).

3- The phase of ultranationalism, anti-Westernism and the reprioritization of the containment of the political aspirations of the Kurds. (2014-)

Similar to Balta, Açıkel (2016), also examines the AKP's ideological transformation under three periods. Accordingly, Açıkel (2016) claims that the AKP which has previously pursued a western oriented Islamic liberalism, has shifted towards a pan-Islamist and Pro-Muslim Brotherhood policy line from 2009 and onwards.

Based on this periodization, this study attempts to show that, especially in its first term, foreign policy has become an instrument for the AKP to consolidate its power at home and abroad. The EU membership process which has been the main engine behind Turkey's democratization efforts, was utilized as a proof of the country's continuing western orientation. As the process of the power transition was completed, the new elites in Turkey's domestic sphere, capitalizing on their foreign policy achievements as a regional peace broker, embarked on expanding their area of maneuver in the international arena. They sought power and influence regionally and globally, with a self-attained new role for Turkey as the leader of the "common

Islamic civilization" (Duran, 2013, p.91). Throughout this process, Israel -once considered an important partner by the AKP-, lost its significance and came to be seen as more of a burden.

5.1 The contours of AKP's foreign policy

As indicated in the party program of 2002, the AKP constructed its foreign policy upon the theme of "zero problems with neighbors" (Davutoğlu, 2008, 2004) – very similar to former Foreign Minister İsmail Cem's "good neighborhood policy" (Cem, 2001, 2004) [188] Both approaches aimed to redesign Turkey's foreign policy, utilizing Turkey's historical and cultural assets to improve relations with neighbors. Also, both perspectives stressed the importance of regional security in advancing economic development, and were based on a liberal understanding that increasing economic interdependence would decrease the level of conflict between countries. In this respect, the cultivation of cordial relations with neighboring countries served multiple purposes, both strengthening Turkey's economic growth and political influence, as well as contributing to regional security and stability.

Ahmet Davutoglu, the intellectual architect of the AKP's foreign policy, who served as the chief foreign policy adviser to Turkey's prime minister and president (2002-2009) before becoming foreign minister himself in 2009, is considered to have

[188]FM Cem, for instance, promoted the establishment of the Neighborhood Forum Initiative in 1998, a platform of debate among the neighboring countries to de-escalate the tension arising from Iraq.The project failed as the Saddam regime of Iraq refused to participate. Also during Cem's tenure, Turkey has been involved in peace efforts between Israel and the Palestinians. Then President Suleyman Demirel joined the Mitchell Commission- an inquiry commission set up during the US-sponsored Sharm al-Shiekh Conference, in the wake of the Second Intifada in October 2000. According to Alon Liel, Israeli officials particularly suggested Demirel's participation as a member in this commission. In addition to this, FM Cem abd his Greek counterpart George Papandreou embarked on a second track diplomacy for the resolution of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and went to Israel in April 2002. They talked to Israeli officials and visited Yasir Arafat who was under house arrest in the West Bank. (Liel, 2017, personal communication; "Cem ve Papandreu İsrail'e," 2002; "Cem ve Papandreu'dan barış," 2002).

set the contours of Ankara's new foreign policy. In his seminal book, Strategic Depth Davutoglu emphasized Turkey's historical legacy and geopolitical uniqueness as tools that could be utilized to realize its unfulfilled potential to become a "central power."[189] This policy pursued a balance between security and freedom, sought zero problems with neighbors, favored a multi-dimensional strategy, engagement in proactive measures, and also claimed to introduce a brand-new dynamic style in diplomatic conduct, dubbed "rhythmic diplomacy" (Davutoğlu, 2010). What made Davutoglu's vision different from Cem's was perhaps his overemphasis on Turkey's "Ottoman legacy." While Cem also stressed the importance of Turkish cultural heritage, in his *Strategic Depth* doctrine, as well as in his op-eds, Davutoğlu strongly advocated seeking integration with former Ottoman lands, namely parts of the Middle East and Africa, by capitalizing on Turkey's geopolitical location, cultural ties, and economic skills. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey's regional activism would increase its geopolitical significance in the eyes of western countries and thereby boost its international influence (Özpek & Demirağ, 2012).

Dalay and Friedman argue that the AKP learned from the failures of the two previous Islamist parties, and seeking ways to transcend their legacy helped the AKP officials determine their foreign policy orientation (Dalay & Friedman, 2013, p.124). In a similar vein, Balci & Mis point out that the AKP consciously chose to depart from the National Outlook Movement led by Necmettin Erbakan- leader of the Welfare Party who adopted an anti-western/European stance and championed an orthodox conception of Islam from the 1970s to the 1990s (Balcı & Miş, 2008). Especially, in the wake of the elections of 2002, party officials were aware of the

[189] Former FM Cem was also critical about the "bridge" metaphor used to define Turkey's role in the international arena-as a country connecting the west and the east- and argued that Turkey had to move beyond this metaphor to become a multicultural "world state" and a "destination country," instead.

fact that the survival of the party by and large depended on its ability not to antagonize to the Kemalist regime. This necessity forced the AKP to embrace a "non-confrontational" and "consensus seeking" policy in both domestic and international arenas.

As noted in the previous chapter, one can observe continuity in Turkish foreign policy starting from the end of the 1990s. Soft power came to replace hard power in the conduct of foreign relations in parallel to the considerable decrease in the number of threats Turkey faced at the international level. One can even say that the policy of "zero problems with neighbors" was already put into force under Cem's tenure, as Ankara embarked upon mending ties with its neighbors, including Greece, Syria, and Iran. For instance, in 1997, Turkey and Greece signed a joint Communique at the Madrid Summit of NATO, in which the two countries agreed to the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, recognizing each other's sovereignty as well as legitimate interests in the Aegean Sea (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998). The changing security environment generated by the Adana Protocol of 1998 would enable Turkey to normalize her relations with Syria and Iran, as well, and encourage political and economic engagement in the Middle East.

While the regional setting provided the AKP officials enough space to pursue a multi-dimensional, "non-confrontational" foreign policy, this stance, boosted the new government's international credibility, and helped consolidate its power at home, as well. In this respect, the AKP's commitment to an EU reform agenda, which was inherited from the previous government, and its progress in enacting several reform packages during its first term in office, spurred the European Union to launch accession negotiations in 2005. The EU harmonization process paved the

way for a political transformation at the domestic level -which culminated in the new political elites' consolidation of power over decision-making, allowing them to sideline the old elites of the establishment in the process.[190]

Institutional changes introduced by the EU harmonization packages adopted by the parliament between 2003 and 2004 contributed to the civilianization of the political sphere in Turkey, reducing the military's involvement in politics. Accordingly, the changes transformed the structure and role of the National Security Council (NSC),[191] removed NSC representatives from civilian boards, such as the Board of Education (YÖK) and the Board of Radio and Television (RTÜK), established parliamentary control over the military's budget, and restricted the jurisdiction of military courts. [192] With the constitutional reform package adopted after the referendum in September 2010, amendments were made in the constitution, regarding the composition of the Constitutional Court and the High Council of Judges and Public Prosecutors (HSYK).[193] Having survived the controversial closure

[190] For a similar view, see, (Duran, 2013, p.98).

[191] For instance, the advisory nature of the NSC was confirmed in a constitutional amendment package that altered Article 118 of the charter in 2001. In the sixth harmonization package, the number of civilian members on the NSC was increased. The seventh harmonization package redefined the functions and composition of the council in regard to Article 4, restricting its operations to advising the cabinet on national security issues. Changes in the functions of the NSC Secretariat, which used to function as an executive organ, made the NSC subject to civilian monitoring. An amendment to Article 5 also decreased the frequency of regular meetings from one to two months. At the same time, the changes also canceled the authority of the Chief of Staff to convene a meeting, permitting the prime minister to convene the council subject to presidential approval. An amendment to Article 15, meanwhile, modified the appointment procedure for the NSC's secretary-general, allowing the prime minister to make the appointment subject to the president's approval, meaning the post would no longer be reserved exclusively for a military figure.

[192] Created by the Constitution of 1961, the Constitutional Court has been considered one of the guardian institutions of the fundamental Republican values such as secularism. Through an extremely rigid interpretation of the constitution and the law on political parties, the court closed down Kurdish ethnic political parties along with Islamist parties, including the AKP's predecessors, the Welfare Party and the Virtue Party (Özbudun, 2006).

[193] The amendment package which consisted of 25 articles, was adopted by the Grand National Assembly with a more than three-fifths but less than two-thirds majority. Subsequently, it was submitted to a mandatory referendum in accordance with Article 175 of the constitution. The text was finally adopted by a 58% majority in the referendum on Sept. 12, 2010, following a bitterly contested campaign. With regard to the Constitutional Court, the number of its judges was raised from eleven (with four alternates) to seventeen, three of whom are selected by parliament from among candidates nominated by the Court of Accounts (two) and the presidents of the bar associations (one). Four members are directly elected by the president from among all judges and public prosecutors,

case brought against the party in 2008,[194] the passing of these reforms allowed the AKP to pass yet another important threshold in the process of power consolidation. In sequence the party was able to eliminate rival institutions one after another, (i.e. the military, the judiciary…) which constituted a threat to the AKP's rule. The amendments also paved the way for power concentration in the hands of the executive under the AKP, further tilting the balance in relations between the legislature, the judiciary and the executive in favor of the latter.[195]

In the meantime, the Ergenekon and "Balyoz" (Sledgehammer) trials in 2007 and 2010, respectively, severely diminished the image of the Turkish military, which had traditionally been perceived as Turkey's most trustworthy institution. Turbulence in the military ranks due to trials and mass resignations effectively expanded the civilian government's room of maneuver. As Cizre and Walker argue, the revelations in the Ergenekon and Balyoz cases galvanized popular support for reforms that would promote civilian control of the military and reduce the military's tutelage in Turkish politics (Cizre & Walker, 2010, p.92). As the civil-military

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rapporteur judges of the Constitutional Court, practicing lawyers, and high-level public administrators. The president also chooses three members from among three candidates nominated for each seat by the YÖK, three members nominated by the Court of Cassation, two nominated by the Council of State (the supreme administrative court), one nominated by the Military Court of Cassation, and one nominated by the High Military Administrative Court, again from among three nominees from each vacant seat (Özbudun, 2011).

[194]In March 2008, the Constitutional Court announced that it accepted the lawsuit against the ruling AKP demanding its closure. The indictment alleged that the party had become a "focal point of anti-secular activity". The AKP's lifting of a long-standing ban on headscarves worn in universities, changing the university exam qualifications in favor of religious school graduates, were cited as evidence to support the claims. The legal process was uncharacteristically fast, and in July of that same year, the constitutional court decided against the closure demand, but cut financial aid to the party ("Turkey's court decides not," 2008).

[195] Further strains appeared in civilian-military ties in the run-up to the presidential elections in 2007 due to the candidacy of Abdullah Gül on the grounds that his wife wore a headscarf. However, the military's tactical moves to prevent Gül's election were unsuccessful and even counterproductive. Not only did the AKP stand up to an e-memorandum that the military issued regarding Gül ahead of the elections, but it also survived a Constitutional Court attempt to close it the following year due to allegations of religious reactionarism. In the wake of presidential elections, the civil-military struggle in the wake of the presidential elections, along with the closure case filed against the AKP, rallied pious voters and liberals to the party (Özbudun, 2013).

balance in Turkish politics tipped in favor of the former, the military – the main facilitator of the strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel – gradually lost its influence in foreign policy making.

5.2 The post-9/11 international setting and the impact of the Iraq War of 2003:

While consolidating its hold on power on the domestic front, the AKP also benefited from a favorable international setting that provided a suitable opportunity for Turkish policymakers to pursue a more active foreign policy agenda that accorded with their ideological orientation. AKP's Muslim identity along with its claimed commitment to democratic values and secularism, elevated Turkey's profile in the international arena as a model country in the post-9/11 world. At a time when President George W. Bush's polarizing rhetoric divided the world along civilizational lines in the wake of the terrorist attacks, Turkey emerged as a valuable partner to the United States, not only in fighting terrorism, but also in managing the political transformation of the Middle East-(the so-called Greater Middle East Initiative.[196]Once, this ultra-idealistic project failed and Americans came to comprehend the dimensions of the political wreckage caused by the US invasion of Iraq, Turkey remained an appealing partner for the next US Washington-during the Obama administration under Barack Obama's presidency, - in mending ties with the Muslim world, particularly in his first term. Not only Obama chose Turkey for his

[196] A controversial project designed to promote democracy in the Middle East and Africa. In April 2004, the Bush administration presented a set of proposals -known as the Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI) at the G-8 summit in Sea Island, Georgia. The initiative aimed to support political rights and political participation in the Muslim world so as to combat Islamist extremism (Wittes, 2004).

first presidential visit in 2009,[197] but he also named PM Erdogan among the five leaders that he had established relations based on confidence, in an interview with Time in 2012 ("Obama names Turkish PM," 2012).

Shortly after coming to power, the AKP government has faced challenges at home and abroad. Despite huge victory at the polls, the AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was barred from running in the elections due to a past conviction for Islamist sedition. He eventually sworn in as a member of parliament, only after the new government changed the law to allow him to run in by-elections, in March, 2003. Subsequently, PM Abdullah Gül resigned and cleared the way for Erdoğan to take over the prime minister's office.

On the foreign policy front, the newly elected government found itself between a rock and hard place, as the Bush administration's plan to invade Iraq unfolded.[198] After exhausting negotiations, the failure of the motion-which would allow the US troops to invade Iraq through Turkish territory- at the Turkish Grand National Assembly, by a slim margin, on March 1, 2003, dealt a serious blow to Turkish-American relations. It was later understood that, the Bush administration cast the blame of this political decision upon the Turkish military. The infamous "Sacking Incident," that took place a few months after the parliamentary vote on July 4, 2003, was considered to be payback by the Americans for the failed resolution (Bölükbaşı, 2008). The humiliating capture of Turkish soldiers generated

[197] "There's an old Turkish proverb: "You cannot put out fire with flames." America knows this. Turkey knows this. There's some who must be met by force, they will not compromise. But force alone cannot solve our problems, and it is no alternative to extremism. The future must belong to those who create, not those who destroy. That is the future we must work for, and we must work for it together" ("President Obama's remarks in Turkey," 2009).

[198] The AKP government, was concerned about the possible repercussions of the US invasion, especially its impact on Turkey's Kurdish issue. In this respect, siding with the US was positively considered in terms of containing some of these negative effects. Yet, the public opinion was strongly against the US invasion of Iraq, and the AKP officials were unwilling to bear the burden of invading a neighbouring Muslim country. (Nasi, 2006).

a serious uproar and fueled anti-American sentiments in Turkish society.[199] Retrospectively, despite the turbulence, government to government relations remained almost unaffected and civilian relations even gained more significance in dealing with bilateral conflicts. Indeed, as part of its efforts to restore ties,[200] the AKP government did not only pass another motion on March 21, which authorized the dispatch of Turkish troops to northern Iraq and allowed US jets to use Turkish airspace,[201] but also lent full support to the Bush administration's Greater Middle East Initiative.[202] Still, the Iraq War in 2003 with its severe regional implications would generate concern in Ankara over the future of northern Iraq and strain Turkish-American relations throughout the AKP's first term.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 upended the traditional power balances in the Middle East by creating a power vacuum that especially empowered Iran. Ironically, the U.S. failure in Iraq expanded Turkey's sphere of influence in the Middle East. Shared threat perceptions regarding the territorial integrity of Iraq pushed Turkey, Syria, and Iran closer. With their own sizable Kurdish populations, the three countries were concerned that the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish

[199] The US favorability in Turkey fell from %52 in 2000, to % 15 in 2003 (Pew Research Center, 2013).
[200] In the wake of the failed resolution in parliament, an articled was published in the Wall Street Journal under the AKP leader Erdoğan's name (Erdoğan, 2003).
[201] Yet, the United States did not accept the Turkish offer to send troops into northern Iraq, concerned about a possible clash between Turkish forces and the Kurds that might hinder war plans ("Tezkere nihayet, 2003).
[202] PM Erdoğan attended the G-8 Summit at Sea Island in Georgia in 2004. Erdoğan expressed his support for democratic reform in the Middle East, yet also stated that change should not be imposed from the outside, and that the character and traditions of each country had to be taken into consideration. On June 28, NATO leaders decided to launch the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, a complementary program that aimed to foster security cooperation among states in the broader Middle East region. When the US President George W. Bush hosted PM Erdoğan at the oval office, in Washington, a year later, he praised Turkey's democracy as an important example for the people in the region and thanked Erdoğan for being a strong supporter of the broader Middle Eastern initiative ("G-8 Summit: Smiles," 2004; the White House, 2004; the White House, 2005; Yetkin, 2005).

entity in northern Iraq could ignite secessionist demands in the region. On the other hand, the presence of the U.S. military at the doorstep prompted Syria and Iran to maintain cordial relations with Turkey, a NATO ally.

In the post-Iraq War security landscape, Turkey's profile rose as a key partner not only in terms of balancing against threats, but also promoted itself as a broker of peace in the region. Pursuing a foreign policy that relied on active diplomatic engagement, increased economic cooperation and interdependence, Turkey forged political and economic ties with various countries in the Middle East and Africa. In this context, business councils were established between Turkey and Saudi Arabia (2003), Bahrain (2005), United Arab Emirates (2005), Qatar (2006), Kuwait (2006) and Oman (2006) (Yeşilyurt, 2013, p.435). The Turkish-Arab Forum was founded in 2005 under the auspices of PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Free trade agreements were signed with Morocco, Tunisia, and Palestinian Authority in 2004, Syria and Egypt in 2005, Jordan in 2009, and Lebanon in 2010 (although the latter has yet to be ratified by Parliament) (Turkey's Ministry of Trade, 2018).

Turkey's exports to Gulf countries grew tenfold between 2002 and 2008, reaching $12billion (Turkey's Ministry of Trade, 2018). According to data from the Turkish-Arab Business Group (TURAB), Turkey's total trade volume with Arab countries rose from $11 billion in 2003 to $36 billion in 2009, an increase of 23% ("Arap ülkelerine ihracat yüzde," 2010). Until the outbreak of the Arab Spring, Turkish exports to Arab countries continued to rise, going from $13 billion to $28 billion in 2011 ("Arap Ülkeleriyle İhracat Katlandı, 2011). Thus, as Kirişçi (2009) argues, Turkey had become more of a "trading state" than a "security-seeking state."

To Larrabee (2011), Turkey's involvement in the Middle East was both economically and politically driven. Turkey has become a convenient market for the Gulf countries in the post-9/11 context, at a time when Arab investment drew suspicion from the west. Turkey's western orientation combined with its Sunni Muslim identity have made the country an ideal partner for the Arab countries which sought to counterbalance Iran, amid an emerging power vacuum in the region, in the wake of the US withdrawal from Iraq. In this respect, the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council on Sept. 2, 2008, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, was a significant step in establishing an institutional basis to foster a broader political and strategic dialogue (Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d). Accordingly, the High-Level Strategic Dialogue Meetings were convened regularly between Turkey and the GCC every year at the level of senior officials and Ministers, where the member countries discussed ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine.

Arguably, setbacks in Turkey's EU membership process after 2005[203] as well as the economic crisis of 2008 might have also served to re-orient Ankara to the Middle East and Africa in search of new partners. As Europe – Turkey's major partner in trade – turned economically and politically inward due to its economic meltdown- Ankara shifted its focus toward markets in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), helping Turkey expand its political influence beyond its neighborhood and boost its international prestige. Data obtained from the Economic

[203] The EU launched accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005. However, shortly after the EU announced a date for the accession talks in 2004, European countries such as Germany and France voiced up their opposition to Turkey's full membership and proposed alternatives. Also, Greek Cyprus' accession to the EU in 2004, before the resolution of the Cyprus issue, cast a shadow onto Turkey's EU membership process. As members of the EU, Greece and Cyprus used their veto power to block the opening of critical chapters in negotiations, hindering the process. The EU's inability to overcome its political stalemate created frustration in the Turkish public towards the EU ideal (Baykal & Arat, 2017).

Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) verifies a parallel shift in trade relations. Turkish exports to EU countries increased by 23% between January 2002 and September 2008, whereas the volume of exports fell by 32% between October 2008 and January 2009. In contrast, Turkish exports to the Middle East and Africa increased by 11 and 32%, respectively, during the same period.[204]

As noted earlier, Turkey's engagement in the Middle East was promoted by Davutoglu as an essential part of his multilateral and multi-dimensional foreign policy vision, aiming to fulfill Turkey's potential by refashioning Ottoman glory. With reference to his "bow and arrow" analogy, Davutoglu argued that Turkey, capitalizing on its ideational and geographical advantages was an archer, and the more it draws back on the bow of the east, the farther the arrow flies west. In this respect, Turkey's regional activism would serve as a leverage in her relations with the west (Özpek & Demirağ, 2012).

This policy proved successful up to a certain point. Capitalizing on its geopolitical advantages, Turkey channeled her energy into facilitating dialogue and international mediation. Ankara's efforts paid off in gaining greater status and leadership in regional and international organizations. In 2003, Turkey put forward the idea of an Iraq's Neighbors Forum - a platform for neighboring countries to discuss issues pertaining to the war in Iraq ("Irak'a komşu ülkeler girişimi," 2007). The government also organized a meeting in Istanbul in 2005 to mediate between the Sunni and Shiite groups in Iraq, persuading the former group to participate in the elections (Türkiye devreye girdi, Sünniler," 2005). In 2004, Ekmeleddin İhsanoglu

[204] TEPAV surveys have also confirmed a tendency toward greater variety in Turkey's export market. Some 62.5% of the firms surveyed by the pollster declared that they would direct their focus toward new export markets. In 2009, Azerbaijan, Algeria, China, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Egypt, Uzbekistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine were identified as export markets that were poised to grow in importance (Acar, 2009)

was elected Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation OIC-the second largest intergovernmental body after the UN-, and was re-elected in 2008.[205] In 2005, together with Spain, Turkey co-sponsored the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative in the UN. [206]The Second meeting of the forum was convened in Istanbul in 2009.

In parallel to its rising popularity in the international arena, Turkey was elected to the U.N. Security Council as a non-permanent member in 2008 for a two-year term in 2009 and 2010. A year later, then-U.S. President Barack Obama chose Turkey for his first overseas presidential visit. And finally, in 2010, Mevlut Cavusoglu- a founding member of the AKP and Turkish MP- was elected to serve as president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, as the first Turkish parliamentarian ever to serve in this post. Parallel to its increasing diplomatic activism Turkey boasted the fifth largest diplomatic network in the world, with 239 diplomatic missions in 2017 ("Türkiye en çok dış," 2018).

Turkey's activism in the Middle East did not necessarily contradict pursuing cordial ties with Israel, at least during the AKP's first period. On the contrary, relations with Israel were considered an asset in mediating a solution to the region's longstanding issues. During an interview with the Turkish press, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad underlined the importance of Turkey's ties with Israel in facilitating peace negotiations, prior to the break of Turkish sponsored Israeli-Syrian peace talks in 2009 ("Beşşar Esad, Mehmet Ali," 2009) .

[205] İhsanoğlu became the first Turkish citizen elected to serve as Secretary General of the organization since its establishment in 1969. It was the first time elections were held for the post. Prior to İhsanoğlu's election, OIC secretary generals were appointed by the membership.
[206] Since then, the AOC has worked as a platform to promote international, intercultural and interreligious dialogue among its 146 members (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018).

Turkey's willingness to act as a broker between conflicting parties – particularly its efforts to reach out to isolated actors in the region such as Hamas and Iran – received as much praise as criticism from the West. However, Turkey's ability to talk to everyone in the region soon became a strategic asset for its partners as well. For instance, during the Lebanese crisis of 2006,[207] Davutoglu visited Damascus in July for the de-escalation of tension in Lebanon. This visit was reportedly conducted upon US President Bush's request for PM Erdoğan to use his personal relations with the Syrian President to pressure Hezbollah and Hamas for the release of captive soldiers (Yeşilyurt &Develioğlu, 2009; Çakır, 2006). In August, it was revealed that during his visit to Israel, FM Gül secretly met with the families of the abducted Israeli soldiers and assured them his government would facilitate their sons' freedom ("İsrail'deki gizli buluşma,"2006).

5.3 Cracks in the Turkish-Israeli partnership

Despite changes that occurred in the international political landscape by 2002, the foundations of the strategic cooperation between Turkey and Israel, which were established in the second half of the 1990s, remained strong enough to weather the storms – that is at least until the Mavi Marmara Incident in 2010. Particularly in its first few years in power, the AKP attached importance to efforts to gain the trust of the international community while consolidating power at home. In this respect, Turkish-Israeli relations under the AKP continued within the parameters set by its predecessors, even though Israel's strategic significance as a partner had already started to decrease in parallel to the diversification of Turkish foreign policy.

[207] The tension broke out as Hezbollah militants captured two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid. Israel in response, launched air strikes and land incursion into Lebanon ("Hezbollah seizes Israeli soldiers," 2006), July 12).

Given its largely conservative base at home, the AKP has acted as a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause, and did not shy away from criticizing Israel whenever tension escalated between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The party's tone of criticism against Israel increased over the years in parallel to Ankara's changing regional foreign policy objectives, reinforced by international and domestic developments. Bilateral relations continued without a total rupture, even though diplomatic relations were downgraded in 2011, a year after the Mavi Marmara crisis of 2010. However, along the way, this hostile discourse would erode mutual trust, widening the distance between the two peoples.

When Israeli PM Ariel Sharon called PM Abdullah Gül to congratulate him on the AKP's election victory in November 2002, he extended an invitation to visit Israel. In response, Gül tried to reassure his Israeli counterpart that unlike previous Islamist parties, they intended to maintain good relations with Israel, as well as the Palestinians ("Şaron Gül'ü İsrail'e davet," 2002).

In July 2003, Chief of General Staff Gen. Hilmi Özkök was the first Turkish official to visit Israel after the AKP's election victory (he was also the first army chief to visit Israel in six years). Özkök's meeting with his Israeli counterpart, Moshe Yaalon, largely aimed to reassure Israel about Turkey's security cooperation, while the two also exchanged views on regional issues ("Orgeneral Hilmi Özkök İsrail'e," 2003).

Two months after Özkök's visit, Interior Minister Abdülkadir Aksu went to Israel as the first AKP official to visit the country since the elections. According to reports, Aksu and Uzi Landau, Israel's public security minister, discussed the

possibility that Israel would train Turkey's Special Forces Team to prevent plane hijackings and to conduct hostage rescue operations (AK Parti'nin ilk İsrail ziyareti," 2003).

In October of the same year, Turkish Air Force Cmdr. İbrahim Fırtına flew to Israel himself in an F4 fighter jet that was modernized by Israel, providing both a gesture of goodwill and proof of the robust military-to-military relations between Turkey and Israel. During the visit, the two sides exchanged views on enhancing military cooperation and discussed the timetable and scope of upcoming military exercises. Indeed, the naval and air exercises took place regularly until Israel launched "Operation Cast Lead" on Gaza in 2008.

Cooperation against terrorism continued to constitute an important element of Turkish-Israeli relations, particularly in the wake of the September 11 attacks. On Nov. 15, 2003, groups affiliated with al-Qaeda attacked the synagogues in Şişli and Şişhane (districts of Istanbul) with car bombs during a Shabbat prayer, killing 25 people and wounding more than 300. Five days later, terrorists launched near-simultaneous attacks on the HSBC Bank in Levent and the British Consulate General in Beyoğlu districts. In terms of methods and weaponry used, the police investigation concluded that the attacks were linked and probably conducted by the same organization. In the wake of these tragic incidents, Erdoğan openly condemned terrorism of all sorts, regardless of religion and nationality, and vowed to track down the bombers. Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom offered assistance in carrying out the investigation, while the two countries agreed to increase intelligence sharing against terrorism ("Erdoğan: Saldırıyı lanetliyorum," 2003).

2004 kicked off with a busy diplomatic schedule for Ankara. On Jan. 5, Turkey and Israel agreed on a controversial "water for arms" deal in which Turkey

agreed to ship 50 million cubic meters of fresh water in giant tankers to Israel for the next 20 years. Israel had long dragged its feet on the matter, claiming the project was not feasible. Eventually, however, the countries agreed to a face-saving formula in which Turkey would buy Israeli tanks and air force technology in exchange for water.[208]

Considering the fact that the accord was publicized just a day before Syrian President Bashar al-Assad arrived in Ankara – becoming the first Syrian president to visit Turkey – one can argue that Turkey's relations with Syria continued to shape Turkish-Israeli relations indirectly, albeit on different terms than in the 1990s. The timing of this visit was also sensitive. Al-Assad came to Ankara shortly after the U.S. Congress passed the Syria Accountability Act (White House Archives, 2004), which sanctioned Syria for its military presence in Lebanon, pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and attempts to weaken U.S. efforts in Iraq.

Travelling with his family-(including his spouse and two kids), al-Assad's visit was conducted on friendly terms, warm messages were exchanged between the two leaders ("Perihan hanım formulü," 2004). With the signing of trade agreements, Syria officially came to recognize Turkey's southern borders, putting an end to long standing hostility between the two countries over the Hatay province ("Hatay ticaret merkezi Olacak,"2004). Notably, al-Assad stated that Syria shared Turkey's concerns over the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish entity in northern Iraq, praised Turkey's EU policies (which would pave the way for Syria's integration to the West) and asserted that Turkey's relations with Israel did not constitute an

[208] According to rumors in 2002, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon declared the desalination of sea water to be a more profitable option in comparison to the purchase of water from Turkey. As a result, Israel offered Turkey $147 million in compensation in installments for the investment it had already made in the water export project. Turkish officials refused the offer and repeated Ankara's position that the project was also a political matter ("Israel buys Turkish water ," 2002; "Israeli water for arms deal," 2004).

obstacle for Turkish-Syrian relations ("Türkiye ile ilişkilerimizde kuşkuya," 2004). During this visit, al Assad reportedly sought Turkey's assistance in brokering diplomatic talks with Israel (Benn, 2008). At the time, Israel turned down the offers and did not respond positively, at least until after the Lebanon War in 2006 – which, in a way, demonstrated the limits of hard power in terms of providing peace and security. On Jan. 29, 2004, the issue came up again during the Deputy Chief of Staff Gen. İlker Başbuğ's surprise visit to Israel ("Surprise visit of Basbug," 2004).

As noted earlier, once they rose to power, AKP officials tried to assure the Israeli side that the party's ideological proclivities would not affect bilateral relations, as some claimed. In this sense, the first stress test in bilateral relations came with Israel's assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder and spiritual leader of Hamas, on March 22, 2004, in an airstrike as he was leaving a mosque in Gaza. Given the AKP's ideological affiliation with Hamas (Gürpınar, 2015; Yorgancılar, 2012; Çakır, 1994), Yassin's assassination elicited deep frustration and contempt. Erdoğan condemned the attack as "state terror."

Israel soon assassinated Yassin's successor, Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, on April 17, 2004. Erdoğan accused Israel of "bombing peace" and postponed a long-anticipated visit to Israel ("Erdoğan: Füzeyle barış sağlanamaz," 2004).

The tension further escalated in May as Israel launched Operation Rainbow on the Rafah refugee camp in Gaza, with the resultant civilian death tolls prompting harsh statements from the Turkish government. Erdoğan called the attacks "inhuman" and challenged world leaders to take a joint stance against Israel's steps that had escalated to the level of "state terror" (Şaron darbesi," 2004; "İsrail'e sert tepki," 2004). Gül also warned that the operations in Rafah might negatively affect Turkey's relations with Israel.

During the course of Israel's military offensive in Gaza, Erdoğan drew similarities between the U.S. operations in Iraq and Israel's attacks on Palestinians – a comparison that probably did not go unnoticed in Washington ("Erdoğan'dan İsrail ve ABD'ye," 2004). In order to de-escalate the tension between Turkey and Israel, the United States intervened. Robert Wexler, a U.S. member of the House of Representatives, soon came to Ankara to advise calm. In a meeting with Gül, Wexler underlined the significance of cordial ties between Turkey and Israel and expressed concern about Erdoğan's recent statements, noting that they might disrupt the sensitive balances in the region and reduce support for Turkey in Washington among pro-Israel lobbies (Şimşek, 2004).

While the two countries sought ways to reduce tensions, a report by Seymour Hersh in the New Yorker on June 22, 2004, made headlines by claiming that Israel had been arming Kurds in northern Iraq as a bulwark against Iranian influence in the region. However, perhaps as a result of US influence, the Turkish government's reactions were worded more carefully this time. After the Israeli Foreign Ministry immediately denied the allegations, Gül said: "Israel has denied the story. We have conveyed our sensitivities. We trust Israel. We hope that such trust is not in vain" ("İsrail'e güvenmek gerek," 2004). Nevertheless, Shalom declared his government's patience was running thin regarding Erdoğan's harsh tone in criticizing Israel ("Sabrımız taşıyor," 2004).

Hersh's story triggered a wave of conspiracy theories in the press, claiming that the Israelis had been buying properties and lands in eastern Turkey as part of a long-standing ideal to control the biblical "promised lands" ("İsrail Türkiye'de arsa

Satın," 2004). Indeed, such claims have been in circulation since 2002,[209]based on the signing of the Free Trade Agreement between Turkey and Israel in 1996 during Mesut Yılmaz' Prime Ministry. The agreement was claimed to have facilitated Israel's purchase of lands from Turkey's southeastern region. The AKP's passing of the law numbered 4916 was similarly criticized for encouraging foreigners' purchase of lands from GAP region (Southeast Anatolian Project) which were deemed strategically important (TBMM, 2003).

Like a snowball effect, the conspiracy theories reached such a level that two MPs from the Republican People's Party (CHP)-Selami Yigit from Kars and Muharrem Kilic from Malatya- submitted parliamentary motions demanding an inquiry into these allegations ("Vatan toprakları satılamaz," 2004).

In the face of strong allegations, Chairman of Land Registry Zeki Adlı made a public declaration: "Israelis don't have any real-estate in [Southeast Anatolia], but some have claimed that they have acquired land through Turkish citizens. The Investigations have revealed that Israeli citizens owned 133 parcels of land in Turkey as of September, 82 of which are in Istanbul" ("Türkiye'nin sadece on binde," 2004; Akyol, 2005). In fact, the research revealed Syrians accounted for the largest number of foreign owners of land in the region. Adlı tried to soothe the public, arguing that the Syrian owners were actually Hatay Arabs who had acquired Syrian citizenship when the province joined Turkey in the late 1930s. He also

[209] Erinç, refers to the letter sent by the Chairman of Ankara's Chamber of Commerce, Sinan Aygün, claims that the Free Trade Agreement signed between Turkey and Israel in 1996, was a concession to Israel, in terms of facilitating Israel's the purchase of lands from GAP region (Erinç, 2004a, 2004b, 2002).

emphasized that the state would take the necessary steps in the event that a certain country or community began purchasing a significant amount of property in any area (“Türkiye’nin sadece on binde,” 2004).

It is notable that despite the anti-Israeli sentiments running wild in the Turkish press and some circles in Ankara, the second meeting of the Turkey-Israel Joint Economic Commission took place on July 14-15, 2004. An Israeli delegation of businessmen led by Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Ehud Olmert came to Ankara to meet Turkish counterparts led by Agriculture Minister Sami Güçlü for discussions on opportunities regarding joint trade and agriculture (“Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004). Also worth mentioning is the fact that a high-level delegation including advisers Şaban Dişli, Ömer Çelik, Egemen Bağış, and Mevlüt Cavuşoğlu went to Israel in September 2004 in an effort to restore trust, and reassure their hosts that the AKP harbored no anti-Israeli agenda (Altaylı, 2004; Özcan, 2005, p.161).

After navigating through some treacherous waters, Turkey and Israel entered 2005 in a positive mood about their relations, as Gül visited Israel on Jan. 4-5. In mid-April, Turkey signed an agreement to purchase Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAV) from Israel. Under the contract, the Israeli companies would supply the Turkish army with 10 ground stations and 30-40 UAVs (“Israeli Firms Ink Drone,” 2005).

On May 1-2, PM Erdoğan finally met Sharon in Israel, after having postponed previous visits since coming to power. As a sign of deepening strategic cooperation, the two agreed to establish a hot line upon Sharon’s request. Given that Israel only possessed direct phone lines to the United States, Russia, Britain, and the European Union, Sharon’s request highlighted Turkey’s significance for Israel. Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül, who participated in Erdoğan’s visit to Israel, noted

that the ongoing projects between Turkey and Israel amounted to $880 million and that they hoped to observe the latest arms technologies in Israel first hand so as to start negotiations on new deals ahead ("Bombalı kuşları İsrail'den alıyoruz," 2005).

While the military cooperation continued between Turkey and Israel, bilateral relations further developed on the energy front. The idea of a Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline to extend the Blue Stream natural gas pipeline to the Mediterranean was first proposed by Russian President Vladimir Putin during a visit to Israel in May 2005; Turkish, Israeli and Russian leaders subsequently discussed and developed the idea. The leaders agreed to extend Blue Stream across Turkish territory and then across the Mediterranean to Israel, which would then send the gas on to Palestine and Jordan. In the later stages, the parties agreed to extend the project so as to include the transport of oil, natural gas, electricity, water, and fiber optic cables (Yetkin, 2005). If it had materialized, the initiative would have elevated Turkey's geopolitical value as an energy hub for Europe and Israel, fostered strong trade and security ties with Israel and Russia and relieved energy traffic on the Bosphorus. However, the project was later shelved, due in part, to the deterioration of ties between Turkey and Israel, as well as the latter's discovery of its own natural gas basins at Tamar (2009) and Leviathan (2010).

By mid-2005, Turkish-Israeli relations had improved greatly over the difficulties of the year before. During his visit to Washington in June, Erdoğan received the Courage to Care Award from the Anti-Defamation League in honor of Turkish diplomats who saved Jews during the Holocaust. As he accepted the ADL award, Erdoğan stated: "Anti-Semitism is a shameful mental illness; it is a perversion. The Jewish genocide [Holocaust] is the most serious crime against humanity in history. Genocide, discrimination, Islamophobia, Christian-phobia and

ethnic cleansing are all different forms of the same illness" (Yetkin, 2014). It is important to note that the ADL's decision to award Erdoğan sparked a heated debate at the time on the grounds that he was the leader of a country in which Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was on the bestseller list ("Hitler book bestseller in," 2005).

In the fall of 2005, as if to counter claims about covert anti-Semitism in Turkey, Erdoğan defended a Jewish businessman, Sami Ofer, when the opposition criticized the government for concluding secret deals with him to offer bids on the large Tüpraş and Galataport projects. Erdoğan accused the opposition of racism and anti-Semitism, saying: "Jewish capital is coming and you're their enemy. Arab capital is coming and you're their enemy. Western capital is coming and you're their enemy. For God's sake, are you a friend to anyone? (Dünyanın yıldızı oluruz," 2005)"

In December 2005, Turkey's military ties with Israel gained further momentum with IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz's visit to Turkey. Halutz met his counterpart, Özkök, and discussed shared concerns regarding jihadist terrorism and Iran's nuclear ambitions. During the meeting, the two countries agreed to continue joint military exercises and develop intelligence sharing against the activities of Islamist groups and the PKK, which had ended its cease-fire in mid-2004 and escalated attacks. While Turkey was particularly concerned about preventing the PKK from infiltrating from Iraq, Israel's main emphasis was on Tehran's new Shahab missiles which were believed to be capable of reaching Turkish territory. The two sides also discussed defense projects such as Israel's modernization of 170 M60 tanks, 54 F-4 fighter jets, as well as technical details regarding Turkey's purchase of unmanned aerial vehicles the Harpy 2 ("İsrail'den Türkiye'ye uydudan PKK," 2005).

While overall Turkish-Israeli ties thrived throughout 2005, relations suffered another downturn in 2006 when Ankara hosted Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal in the wake of his election victory. Although the Hamas delegation only visited the foreign minister (on account of the cancelation of a meeting with Erdoğan), the visit infuriated Israel, which views Hamas as a terrorist organization. Deeply frustrated with Ankara's move, Israelis likened the visit to a PKK trip to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem ("Kan tartışması," 2006). On the other hand, Hamas' visit exposed divergent views between the military and the government over policy issues. It is claimed that Erdoğan changed his schedule at the last minute to avoid meeting Mashaal in person, heeding the warnings conveyed by Özkök and President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, after the news spread about Mashaal's arrival in Ankara. Instead, then-FM Gül met Mashaal "as an AKP member," rather than as foreign minister, and reportedly advised him to act according to the reality on the ground and adopt a more moderate policy toward Israel (Akyol, 2006).

Regardless, Hamas' visit to Ankara laid bare the divergent worldviews between the AKP and Israel. Despite all the negativity it engendered, the visit ultimately allowed Israel to realize that the AKP could one day play a mediating role between Israel and Hamas. Indeed, Turkey would act as a broker in the release of captured Israeli soldiers in 2006 and carry messages between Hamas and international actors to negotiate a ceasefire during the Gaza War in2009 and thus prove its importance both for Israel and the Palestinians.[210]

[210] It turned out that Turkey's communication channels with Hamas proved useful in negotiating a settlement. Both Erdoğan and Davutoğlu offered good offices and carried messages between Hamas and the western leaders such as the Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice, French President Nicholas Sarkozy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and British PM Tony Blair. Israeli conditions were also conveyed through the Turkish channel ("Foreign leaders push Israel," 2008, December 31).
To read further on Turkey's role as a peace broker in Arab-Israeli conflict, see (Altunışık & Çuhadar, 2010).

As part of Turkey's attempts to affect a permanent peace in the Middle East by acting as a mediator between Israel and regional countries, Ankara sought to take constructive steps towards a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem as well. In an effort to boost peace talks scheduled for Nov. 26, 2007, in Annapolis, Turkey invited Israeli and Palestinian leaders to address the Turkish Parliament on Nov. 11. As a result, Israeli President Shimon Peres became the first Israeli politician to address Turkey's legislature. In his speech, Peres emphasized that as a moderate and democratic country, Turkey served as a counterweight to the extremist Islam embodied by Iran. He also praised Turkey's "first-tier role in the peace process," and added: "If the Turkish way will win, all of us will win, Muslims and Jews, Arabs and Israelis" ("Peres to address Turkish parliament, 2007).

President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas also addressed the Turkish Parliament, as the first Palestinian leader to speak there. Abbas, thanked Turkey for its support for the Palestinian cause and said Israel would live in peace if it ended its occupation of Arab lands ("Israeli President addresses Turkish," 2007). At this historic meeting, Turkish, Israeli and Palestinian leaders signed a memorandum on the establishment of a new industrial zone in the West Bank within the framework of the Ankara Forum project, which was established in 2005 to bring together industrialists from the three entities.

During the same period, Turkey's mediation efforts between Israel and Syria also finally bore fruit. As mentioned earlier, the AKP was willing to offer mediation to the parties that had conflicts with Israel and in this regard, Turkey's ties with Israel provided Ankara with a strategic advantage to foster peace. Al-Assad first requested Turkey's mediation between Syria and Israel during a visit to Ankara on Jan. 7, 2004. At the time, Israel reportedly turned a cold shoulder to the idea of

negotiating with Syria and continued to do so at least until after the 2006 Lebanon War. The war's fallout forced Israel to revise its strategy after facing the limits of hard power in preserving peace and security. Nevertheless, a Haaretz report in January 2007 also suggests that, between 2004 and 2006, a series of secret meetings were held between Syria and Israel in Europe under Turkey's auspices in which the two sides formulated a roadmap for peace.[211]

Olmert – by now prime minister – broached the issue of mediation once again during a visit to Ankara in February 2007 (Benn, 2008). Turkey offered assistance in carrying diplomatic messages between Jerusalem and Damascus upon Olmert's request. However, the diplomatic consultations were soon suspended by Israel due to increasing concerns about a possible flare-up of violence along its northern border. Escalating tensions led Israel to launch Operation Orchard in September 2007 in which Israeli jets destroyed Syria's al-Kibar nuclear site.

Only a month after the Operation Orchard, Olmert expressed his interest in a new round of talks with Syria to be mediated by Turkey. During a meeting with Erdoğan in London, Olmert extended an apology to Turkey for a possible violation of Turkish airspace that occurred during the operation ("Olmert Şam'a saldırıyı doğruladı," 2007). Israel and Syria eventually agreed to hold proximity talks under the auspices of Turkey in May 2008 ("Syria and Israel Officially Confirm," 2008). Having invested heavily in the mediation process between Syria and Israel, Erdoğan

[211] Haaretz report in January 2007 also claims that a series of secret meetings between Syrians and Israelis occurred in Europe between September 2004 and 2006 with the aid of Turkish mediation, during which time the parties formulated the outline of a peace agreement. In February 2007, the issue of mediation was broached again, this time by Israeli PM Ehud Olmert during a visit to Ankara. Upon Olmert's request, Erdoğan and his aides began conveying messages between Jerusalem and Damascus. According to Aluff Benn, editor-in-chief of Haaretz, Israel suspended the discussions after several weeks due to growing concerns over the possible escalation of violence in northern Israel. The tensions culminated in Israel's reported bombing of a Syrian nuclear facility as part of Operation Orchard in September 2007. Israel and Syria eventually agreed to hold indirect talks under the auspices of Turkey in May 2008, but after five rounds of negotiations, Israel's decision to launch Operation Cast Lead on Gaza at the end of the year halted all contact. See, (Benn, 2008).

truly believed that a diplomatic breakthrough was within reach. Thus, when Israel launched a military campaign against Hamas in Gaza called Operation Cast Lead, just six days after his meeting with Olmert, Erdoğan perceived the move as a clear betrayal and an assault on his personal reputation. Immediately after Operation Cast Lead started, Erdoğan declared the suspension of the Israeli-Syria peace talks after just five rounds of negotiations.

Israel's Gaza offensive, which began with the IDF's massive airstrikes, drew strong criticism from the international community due to the high civilian death toll. Erdoğan condemned the operation and called on the international community not to remain silent in the face of this "serious crime against humanity" ("Erdoğan: "Ciddi insanlık suçu," 2008). In many aspects, Operation Cast Lead marked a watershed regarding Turkey's relations with Syria and Israel. From 2008 onwards, Turkey's relations with the former developed and deepened at the expense of the latter. This downturn in Turkish-Israeli relations was immediately reflected in the resignation of the Turkish MPs from the Turkey-Israel Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group in protest of the war in Gaza ("Türk-İsrail dostluk grubuna," 2009).

Erdoğan attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, at a time when the wounds of the Gaza War had yet to heal and sensitivity towards the Palestinians' plight had peaked in Turkish society. When Turkey learned that there was going to be an exclusive panel on the Middle East with Erdoğan and Peres, Ankara conveyed its concerns to the Israeli side that the timing was not appropriate for such a meeting and that the two sides would be better off if they avoided unnecessary tension, according to a senior diplomat who wished to remain

anonymous. However, the Israeli side tried to assuage the diplomat's concerns, saying they would be able to handle any possible clashes. Erdoğan's legendary outburst at the summit, however, would prove the Israelis wrong.

As Peres spoke about Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, Erdoğan erupted at moderator David Ignatius' handling of the session, arguing that he had been given less time to speak than the Israeli leader. In what became known as the "One Minute Incident," Erdoğan bashed Peres by saying "When it comes to killing, you know how to kill! I know how you hit, kill children on the beaches" before storming off the stage ("Leaders of Turkey and Israel," 2009).

According to diplomatic sources, Davos came as a train wreck in slow motion.[212] Immediately after the panel, diplomats from both sides stepped in to contain the crisis. Erdoğan reportedly contacted Peres and his close aides and explained that his words were actually aimed at the moderator. But after receiving praise from the Middle East and realizing that his defiance of Israel had made him a hero on the Arab street (N. Tan, personal communication, March 6, 2017),[213] Erdoğan appeared to change tack upon his return to Ankara, as he instead sought to capitalize on the row in Davos to galvanize support at home and abroad. Subsequently, "One Minute!" has become a signature phrase from Erdoğan's long tenure in power.

The tension that had been building between Turkey and Israel due to the latter's Operation Cast Lead also had a negative impact on military relations. While Reliant Mermaid, the annual joint trilateral naval exercise among Turkey, the United

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[212] According to Ambassador Tan, diplomats saw the storm coming and suggested cancelling the Davos session on the grounds that the timing was bad. Yet, the Israeli side gave reassurances that things would unfold smoothly (N.Tan, personal communication, March 6, 2017).
[213] For a similar view, see (Al Habtoor, 2009; January 13).
To read further on the regional implications of the Davos Summit, see (Kalın, 2009; Altunışık, 2011; "Analysis: Erdogan a rising star," 2010).

States and Israel, was conducted as normal between Aug. 17 and 21, Israel was not invited to Anatolian Eagle, a joint air force exercise in Konya from Oct. 10 to 23. Erdoğan later explained that it would not be appropriate to allow Israeli planes to train over Turkish skies just after they had bombed innocent Palestinians in Gaza ("Turkey confirms it barred," 2009). At the time, none of the parties were aware that an even bigger storm was approaching and that such joint exercises would cease after 2009.

In the intermediate aftermath of Davos, many wondered if the war of words would have a greater impact on bilateral military ties. Four years earlier, Ankara had placed an order for 10 Heron drones that were essential for the Turkish Armed Forces' operations in the southeast and over the border in Iraq, but Turkey was experiencing difficulty in securing their delivery. Turkey expected to receive the planes in March 2008, but the delivery date was first pushed back to August before being delayed twice more due to technical problems ("Casus uçaklarının teslim tarihi," 2008).

When asked how the fallout at Davos would affect the course of Turkish-Israeli relations, the head of the General Staff Communication Department, Lt. Gen. Metin Gürak responded, "I don't know why you addressed this question to me," expressing his discomfort at having to comment on foreign affairs as a representative of the military. As to whether the Turkish Armed Forces would revise its relations with Israel, Gürak contended that "Turkey has pursued military relations with other countries based on its national interests" and added that there did not appear to be any impediment to Israel's delivery of the Herons to Turkey ("Genelkurmay'dan Davos açıklaması, 2009).

Turkish-Israeli ties soured further in February when Israeli Army Commander Maj. Gen. Avi Mizrahi told an international conference that Erdoğan should "look in the mirror" before criticizing Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands given that it had stationed troops in northern Cyprus ("O sözler kabul edilemez," 2009). He also accused Turkey of repressing its Kurdish minority and massacring Armenians during World War I. As Mizrahi's remarks circulated in the media, Ankara immediately summoned Israel's ambassador, Gabby Levy, over the comments to demand an explanation. While the Turkish General Staff strongly condemned Mizrahi's remarks as completely unacceptable, the Israeli Defense Forces' spokesperson made a statement, clarifying that the major general's remarks did not represent the official position of the IDF ("O sözler kabul edilemez," 2009).

At the time, however, Israel had a different perception regarding the root causes of the escalation between the two countries. During a strategy meeting between Israel and the United Kingdom at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem in October 2009, former Israeli Consul General to Ankara Moti Amihai-Bivas argued that Turkey's dwindling chances of joining the European Union, along with the growing trend of Islamization, and deepening ties with Syria were responsible for the recent fallout between Turkey and Israel. The Israeli official also emphasized that the Turkish military no longer seemed capable of fulfilling its balancing role due to the ongoing religious infiltration of military cadres (Öztürk, 2014).

Perhaps the Israelis had a point when referring to Turkey's deepening ties with Syria, given that Ankara's rapprochement with Damascus did accelerate amid the downturn in relations between Turkey and Israel. Following a meeting between Erdoğan and al-Assad in September 2009, Turkey and Syria announced plans to lift

bilateral visa requirements and agreed to the establishment of a High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council so that delegations would convene for discussions at yearly joint cabinet meetings ("Türkiye ve Suriye artık vize," 2009; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009).

Against this backdrop, Turkish-Israeli relations continued along a tumultuous path into the last quarter of 2009. In November, the Turkey-Israel Joint Economic Committee convened for the fourth time with the participation of Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül and Israeli Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Benjamin Ben Eliezer. The parties signed a protocol to improve trade relations at a critical time – especially as rumors swirled that Turkey would call off the $200 million Heron purchase. As a result, the meeting raised hopes of a thaw between Turkey and Israel ("Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinde düzelme," 2009).

The Israeli government, however, had become too uncomfortable with the rise of anti-Israeli sentiments in Turkish society as a result of the operation in Gaza. Israeli soldiers were portrayed as torturers on one Turkish TV series, *Ayrılık* (Separation), which was broadcast on the state-owned TRT, while in another, Mossad agents were depicted as child-traffickers and organ harvesters ("Turkish TV Show Portrays," 2010).

On Jan. 11, 2010, Israeli Deputy FM Danny Ayalon invited Turkish Ambassador Ahmet Oğuz Çelikkol to discuss the rampant defamation of Israel in the Turkish media. The meeting, however, quickly turned into a political showdown, rather than a reconciliatory initiative, as Ayalon retaliated against Turkey by offering Çelikkol a lower stool while instructing the press to note the humiliating detail in

their coverage of the meeting. ("İsrail'le 'alçak koltuk' krizi," 2010). As expected, Ayalon's reckless action – which was subsequently dubbed "the lower chair dispute" – incited further anti-Israeli sentiment in the Turkish public.

5.4 The Mavi Marmara incident

Amid a seemingly inexorable decline, Turkish-Israeli relations hit their nadir on May 31, 2010, with the deadly Israeli assault on the Turkish Mavi Marmara aid flotilla that the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İHH) had organized to break the siege of the Gaza Strip. After the ship's crew refused to change its course despite warnings from the IDF, Israeli military forces staged an operation, ultimately killing 10 Turkish activists ("Mavi Marmara'da şehit sayımız," 2014).

Without doubt, the Mavi Marmara Incident left a deep scar on Turkey-Israeli relations. It was the first time in history that the two countries had ever found themselves in direct military confrontation. Until then, Turkey's disagreements with Israel had been caused by Israel's handling of its disputes with third parties in the region. In the wake of the assault, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu branded the incident as Turkey's 9/11 ("Israeli attack on Gaza," 2010) and immediately summoned Çelikkol back to Turkey. Nevertheless, Ankara did not downgrade its diplomatic relations to the level of chargé d'affaires until 2011, when the UN released the Palmer Report (United Nations, 2011). The document condemned Israel's extensive use of force but conceded that the country's blockade of Gaza did not violate international law, meaning that it had the right to stop the flotilla based

on self-defense. Erdoğan, meanwhile, presented three conditions for the normalization of relations with Israel: a formal apology, compensation for the Mavi Marmara victims and the lifting of the Gaza blockade.[214]

Diplomats from both sides have emphasized that the two countries remained in contact through back channels even in the immediate aftermath of the Mavi Marmara Incident and that they worked hard to keep the channels of dialogue until the signing of the normalization agreement in 2016 (N. Tan, personal communication, March 6, 2017). What is more interesting is that the two sides are said to have reached a reconciliation agreement and that a document was almost ready by 2013 after U.S. President Barack Obama brokered a phone call between Netanyahu and Erdoğan in which the former conveyed his apology, fulfilling one of the criteria for normalization.

Turkish diplomatic sources tend to portray the Mavi Marmara assault as an unexpected incident and even claim that there was, in fact, a tacit agreement between the two governments prior to the flotilla's departure according to which the ship would sail through Gazan territorial waters before proceeding to a port in Egypt – thereby, allowing it to symbolically break the siege on the territory. This agreement, however, collapsed with the intervention of the Israeli military forces, which believed such a move would weaken Israel's international image and power of deterrence. Nevertheless, Israel flatly denied the existence of such an agreement on several occasions.[215]

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[214] Diplomatic sources point out that Erdoğan and Davutoglu differed on the conditions for normalization. Accordingly, it was Erdoğan who decided to add the lifting of the Gaza blockade on the list as a reaction to the UN's the Palmer Report (N. Tan, personal communication, March 6, 2017).

[215] Ambassador Levy and former Director General of the Israel's foreign Ministry Dore Gold denied the existence of such an agreement-as claimed by the Turkish side- on the grounds that lifting the embargo would not only undermine security; but would also have weakened Israel's image (G. Levy, personel communication, April 25, 2017).

Israel's former ambassador to Ankara, Gaby Levy, agrees that the incident was responsible for the collapse of ties between Israel and Turkey but recounts a different story, casting light upon a number of other aspects. When asked whether or not the crisis could have been prevented, Levy asserts that "Erdoğan told Israel that it was a civil society initiative, therefore, it was not in the hands of the Turkish government to prevent the ship from sailing. At the time, we suggested to Ankara to send goods to Gaza via Ashdod port where Israeli security would be able to check suspected items, but our offer was turned down." Levy also makes a self-criticism: "We made a big mistake in handling the operation; we should not have boarded the ship with arms. Our soldiers were attacked but this is where we made a mistake. It was the first time Israel used force against Turkish citizens. The operation could have been handled differently" (G. Levy, personal communication, April 25, 2017).

As for the reconciliation efforts, Levy recalls that the day after the Mavi Marmara incident, he was summoned to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, where he was given a note with just two terms for reconciliation, a formal apology and compensation. According to Levy, it was only a couple of days later that Turkey finally issued the third condition, namely, that Israel lift the embargo on Gaza – something that the former ambassador regarded as a politically motivated decision.

The Mavi Marmara Incident is often cited as a major breaking point in the history of Turkey-Israel relations. Israeli diplomats, foreign policy and security experts that I have spoken with all agree that bilateral relations have not recovered – and never will – to the level of cooperation that existed during the 1990s. There are two problematic points regarding this proposition, however. First of all, the international political landscape, as well as Turkey's domestic political structure, had dramatically changed by 2010, meaning it was impossible to return to the golden

years regardless of the Mavi Marmara Incident. Second, while it is true that the erosion of trust damaged defense cooperation and intelligence sharing, economic relations between Turkey and Israel, remained insulated from political disputes. Burgeoning trade led many to question whether there was a genuine break between Turkey and Israel or whether the diplomatic anger was purely a political show.

A closer investigation reveals that, despite all of its harsh rhetoric against Israel, the AKP government avoided any serious action that would have completely severed relations.[216] Indeed, the fact that the countries' respective foreign ministers secretly met in Brussels in the immediate aftermath of the Mavi Marmara Incident and agreed to the formation of an international commission to investigate the event indicates that both sought to engage in damage control. On this front, Israel's decision to silently deliver four Heron drones can be viewed as a step to calm the furor.

Even though, the outline of the normalization agreement was reportedly completed within a short period of time in the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara, it took six years for the two sides to finally sign the deal. While the dialogue left the door ajar for reconciliation, the countries had begun taking steps that deepened the mistrust. In October 2010, Turkey's NSC conducted its four-year update of its top-secret National Security Political Document (Red Book), noting that Israel now presented a threat to the country. This, as well as the fact that Iran was only mentioned indirectly, provided proof that changes were occurring in Turkey's foreign policy and that perceptions of Israel had changed. Emboldened by its rising international and regional posture, Turkey seemed to embrace a more defiant tone

[216] Diplomatic contacts suggest that the two countries had been working in tandem to contain and repair the damage done by the Mavi Marmara. For instance, FM Davutoğlu reportedly met Israeli Industry and Trade Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer on June 30, 2010, to discuss cultivating economic relations ("Israel And Turkey hold," 2010).

toward Israel. The outbreak of the Arab Uprisings in late 2010 would present new opportunities for Ankara to realize its newly defined foreign policy goals. Along the way, Turkey's ambivalence towards Israel would deepen mistrust and push Israel to search for alternative partners in the region, producing even greater consequences that would change the historical dynamics of its ties with Turkey.

CHAPTER 6

TURKISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS IN THE POST-MAVI MARMARA: TOWARD A RELUCTANT RAPPROCHEMENT

This chapter examines the course of Turkish-Israeli relations from the Mavi Marmara Incident of 2010 to the signing of the countries' normalization agreement on June 30, 2016, and also covers the unfulfilled normalization process afterwards which ended up with the downgrading of diplomatic ties once again in May 2018. The section includes a general assessment of Turkish-Israeli ties in the post-Mavi Marmara period, with a focus on the divergent paths the two countries opted to follow in terms of foreign policy. Against the backdrop of the regional turmoil triggered by the Arab Spring protests of late 2010, this chapter analyzes the strategic incentives that brought the AKP government to the negotiating table with Israel, while taking into account the impact of the external and internal factors that have both facilitated and hindered rapprochement efforts between Turkey and Israel.

In the main, this chapter argues that Turkey's roller-coaster relations with Israel since the Mavi Marmara Incident have been a result of Israel's oscillating strategic significance for Ankara, which has redefined its foreign policy objectives in parallel with domestic and regional developments. From 2010 and onwards, there came a shift in Turkish foreign policy toward a pan-Islamist and pro-Muslim Brotherhood policy line, with an increasingly vociferous anti-Israeli rhetoric. This paradigm shift, which stemmed from both regional developments such as the Arab Spring and the AKP's consolidation of power at home, not only slowed down the normalization process with Israel but also led to a deterioration in Turkey's relations with several allies in the Middle East and North Africa. Ironically, Ankara's

acknowledgement of this regional isolation drove it to sign the reconciliation deal, even as diverging interests prevented a genuine normalization from flourishing between the two countries. In contrast, the post-Arab Spring geopolitical landscape seemed to have benefited Israel, in terms of weakening enemies while fostering new partnerships. Eventually, this has led to a transformation in the asymmetrical power dynamics of Turkish-Israeli relations in which Turkey has maintained the upper hand.

6.1. The impact of domestic political transformation: Towards a pan-Islamist foreign policy

As discussed in the previous chapters, structural determinants of the strategic partnership that Turkey and Israel enjoyed in the mid-1990s had considerably eroded by 2010. From the Adana agreement of 1998 on, the threat perceptions of both countries diverged greatly, as Turkey restored its relations with Syria and Iran – two of Israel's major enemies. By pursuing a multilateral and dynamic foreign policy line, Ankara also increased its political and economic engagement with countries in the Middle East and Africa, benefiting from the power vacuum caused by the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

In this respect, relations with Syria reached an unprecedented high during the first decade of AKP rule, culminating in a deal to lift visa requirements, increase trade and economic relations and engage in high-level strategic cooperation.[217]

[217] To underline the significance of the deal, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu even suggested that Oct. 13, 2009, the date he and Syrian Foreign Minister Waled Muallem signed the agreement to establish the High-Level Cooperation Council, be declared a Turkish national holiday on a par with Eid al-Fitr. At the first meeting of the High-Level Cooperation Council in December 2009, the countries concluded several memorandums of understanding that called for enhanced cooperation in various areas including security, trade, agriculture, healthcare and education (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009).

Relations between Damascus and Ankara continued to develop even further in the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara Incident, paving the way for Turkey's growing political engagement in the Middle East. As part of the third Turkish-Arab Cooperation Forum in June 2010, the foreign ministers of Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon announced the formation of the High-Level Cooperation Council Quartet with the aim of developing their strategic partnership over the long term and paving the way toward economic integration. Furthermore, the four countries also formed the Close Neighbors' Economic and Trade Association Council (CNETAC), which aimed to facilitate the free movement of peoples and goods in the signatory countries. At the time, the media portrayed the establishment of the CNETAC as a Turkish-led initiative to create a "Middle Eastern Schengen area."[218]

Another important change after 2010 in Turkish-Israeli relations occurred in one crucial facet, inter-military ties. As previous sections have noted, the government's EU harmonization reforms substantially reduced the effect of military tutelage over Turkey's civilian political sphere. Later, the Ergenekon and "Balyoz" (Sledgehammer) cases of 2008 and 2010, respectively, played a critical role in neutralizing the army politically. In those trials, large numbers of active and retired

[218] With regard to the establishment of the CNETAC, PM Erdoğan said*:* "People are rushing to visit one another. Our businessmen are coming and going as they please and pursuing opportunities for partnerships. It's not just a country but a whole region and its people that are gaining and benefiting from this new era. The EU calls it 'Schengen.' So why can't we easily do something similar among ourselves? What are these misunderstandings, this fear, these reservations? It's impossible to understand it. Let no one take offense or feel uncomfortable at what is going on. No one has the right to try and exploit this rapprochement, this embrace and the end to this longing for any other purpose. In this region, we only have one aim; we absolutely only want peace, tranquility, welfare and stability. As Turkey, [we want] zero problems with neighbors; to make this a reality, we're going through a test of sincerity. Turkey is a country whose face is turned toward the West as it conducts negotiations with the European Union to gain full membership. Turkey is a country that believes it's possible to have a synthesis between Muslim identity and European values. But this doesn't mean that we have to turn our backs on the East, the South, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Of course, we will create a High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council with Syria and Iraq; of course we'll create a Cooperation Council Quartet among Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. What could be more natural than this? (Erdoğan Schengen benzerini yapalım," 2010; "Serbest ticarette ilk adım," 2010)"

soldiers were sentenced to long prison sentences on the basis of evidence that was fabricated by members of the Fethullah Gülen organization who had infiltrated the security forces and the judiciary amid the group's then-close ties with the government. As a result of trials like Ergenekon and Balyoz, Gülenists managed to gain posts in the upper ranks of the military. While many welcomed the civilianization of politics within the framework of democratization, the changes did result in the army losing its influence over a number of foreign policy issues, including relations with Israel.

In 2010, the AKP also moved to take precautions against the Constitutional Court, which it came to view as a potential challenger after the party narrowly survived a closure trial that many viewed as a judicial coup attempt to remove Erdoğan from power and crush his party ("Reform paketi kararı dünya," 2010). On May 6, 2010, the Turkish Parliament accordingly passed a constitutional reform package that gave the legislature greater power to appoint judges and make it harder to shut down political parties. But because the bill lacked the two-thirds majority to become law, Erdoğan called a referendum for September 2010, expanding the reform package to relax restrictions on strike action and strip the leaders of the bloody coup of 1980 of their immunity from prosecution. Erdoğan emerged victorious, as 58% of the electorate voted for the reforms. The government claimed that the reforms aimed to bring the constitution into compliance with EU standards, but critics saw the amendments as a further step in the AKP's attempts to strengthen its hold over the judiciary.

The referendum win encouraged Erdoğan to begin pursuing his long-desired project, namely, to replace parliamentary governance with an executive presidential system that concentrated all political power in the presidency.[219] In this regard, the AKP's landslide victory in the 2011 elections, in which the party scored almost 50% of the votes – representing its third rise in support in a row – affirmed the legitimacy of Erdoğan's domestic and foreign policies and paved the way for a regime change in Turkey.

Against this backdrop, the AKP government found greater room to maneuver in foreign affairs thanks to its success in consolidating power by eliminating possible rivals and growing in confidence. Turkish policymakers, accordingly, were able to pursue a more independent policy line that displayed more of an ideological basis (Yetkin, 2017). According to Yetkin, power transition in Turkish politics has started even earlier. After President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's official time in office ended and Abdullah Gül left government to become president in 2007, PM Erdoğan's power as a decision-maker has incrementally multiplied. "In the subsequent years, even though the names of 'privy counsellors/sır kâtipleri'-those who held critical positions and were able to counsel Erdoğan- have changed, there has always been one person in charge of making decisions, and it was Erdoğan" (M. Yetkin, personal communication, July 29, 2020). In this context, Yetkin considers Erdoğan's return to the AKP as party chief in 2014, following a key vote on changes to the country's constitution as another significant development which increased concentration of power in Erdoğan's hands, binding/personifying both the party (AKP) and the political system in his leadership.[220]

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[219] To read further on this issue, see ("Başkanlık sistemi benim arzumdur," 2003; "Başkanlık sistemine doğru gidiyoruz," 2010; "Erdoğan: Başkanlık faydalı neticeler," 2011).

[220] Before the constitutional changes took place, Turkey's presidents had to sever ties with their political parties in order to be regarded as an impartial head of state, so as to maintain impartiality. As

Indeed, retrospectively, sidelining of the AKP's prominent political figures such as the former President Gül and PM Davutoğlu, both of which have diverged with Erdoğan on various issues, underscores Erdoğan's prevailing authority as the winner in these political struggles.[221] According to Yetkin, Erdoğan who became Turkey's first elected president in August 2014 endorsed Davutoğlu's party leadership and prime ministry that same year, in order to sideline Abdullah Gül from politics. In a similar vein, Erdoğan sidelined Davutoğlu through assigning Binali Yıldırım as the new "low profile" prime minister in mid-2016, replacing Davutoğlu. Since the 2017 referendum, the Turkish government has implemented constitutional changes that transformed Turkey's political system from a parliamentary to an executive presidential system of government. In this new political system, the president, as the head of state, is the main responsible figure for domestic and international politics, who oversees all state organs, and is no longer supposed to remain politically neutral. The position of the prime minister is removed, and the role of parliament is significantly reduced. The new political system has been subject to criticisms at home and abroad, for its unification of political power in the hands of the president, undermining democratic checks and balances.

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a matter of fact, Erdoğan left the AKP chairmanship in August 2014 after his election as president. However, constitutional amendments in the wake of the April 16 referandum of 2017, removed the requirement that presidents had to be neutral and removed from political affiliation ("Erdoğan returns as ruling," 2017).

[221] In contrast to then PM Erdoğan, President Gül was known to be in favor of normalization of ties with Armenia and has been actively involved in diplomatic efforts. On Oct. 10, 2009, the Turkish and Armenian foreign ministers signed two protocols in Zurich that would reopen borders and develop relations between the two countries. However, the Protocols were eventually suspended six months later. Gül also opposed Turkey's military involvement in Syria, and he advocated/embraced a much more conciliatory approach to the Gezi Protests of 2013. Similar to Gül, Davutoglu had falled out with Erdoğan with regard to various issues such as the Peace Process with the Kurds, transition to a presidential system and pretrial detentiopn of journalists. To many, Davutoglu resigned because he refused to play the backseat role designated by Erdoğan. Yetkin argues that Davutoglu's brokering/signing of a refugee deal with the EU in March 2016, was one of the last foreign policy decisions carried out,to a large extent independently of Erdoğan,under the initiative of Davutoğlu, which eventually ended his carrier as PM (M.Yetkin, personal communication, July 29, 2020).To read further, see also, ("Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet," 2016; "Armenia-Turkey protocols," 2010, "Turkey, Tunisia oppose non-Arab," 2012; "Democracy is not just," 2013).

Yaşar Yakış, who served as Foreign Minister between 2002-2003, offers a similar view to Yetkin, and argues that the authority of political institutions in Turkish politics has considerably eroded, whereas Erdoğan's "destiny determining-kader tayin edici" role in Turkish politics has gradually increased over the years. Yet, Yakış avoids giving specific dates as milestones, sees it an ongoing process which still continues up until today (Y. Yakış, personal communication, July 24, 2020).

In the light of international and domestic developments, Açıkel (2016), examines the AKP's ideological transformation under three periods. Accordingly, from 2009 and onwards, the AKP which has previously pursued a western oriented Islamic liberalism, has shifted towards a pan-Islamist and Pro-Muslim Brotherhood policy line.[222] Parallel to its power consolidation at home, particularly between 2007 and 2010, the "AKP has become not only the dominant party in Turkish politics, but emerged as a regime holder (rejimin ortağı) (Açıkel, 2016, p.10)." This has emboldened the government to abandon its so called conservative democratic identity in favor of an authoritarian rule in domestic politics along with a revisionist foreign policy line.

Indeed, the AKP government has taken independent and unilateral moves whenever possible, welcoming Hamas to Ankara, hosting then-Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir despite an International Criminal Court warrant for his arrest, and proposing (along with Brazil) to mediate between Iran and the United States on the

[222] From 2016 and onwards, Açıkel (2016) defines the AKP's ideology as a combination of Islamic nationalism and Eurasianism. In this context, the election outcome in June 2015 in which the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party's (HDP) increased its share of votes to 13%, pushed the AKP to build a coalition with the ultra-nationalist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). Also, the involvement of the NATO affiliated soldiers in the failed coup attempt of 2016, undermined trust towards the western allies, and strengthened an Eurosianist perspective in foreign policy.

former's nuclear program.[223] But even if Turkey drew criticism for some of these steps and led some to wonder whether it was turning away from the West, its decisions didn't precipitate a huge problem because some viewed Ankara's dialogue with various actors as a political leverage and arguably because its general Western orientation was taken for granted ("Is Turkey Turning Its," 2010). So in retrospect, what changed after 2010 was the overlap between Turkey's internal dynamics and what was happening in the region. In this, Turkey's political decision-makers found, for perhaps the first time ever, a chance to take advantage of the changes in the region to apply the ambitious and identity-based policies outlined by the AKP's intellectual architect, Ahmet Davutoğlu, in his concept of Strategic Depth. From 2010 and onwards, Turkey's leaders began speaking of the country as a "regional power" in their rhetoric. Davutoğlu, for instance, declared in April 2011 that "Turkey would become a global power within 12 years ("Davutoğlu 12 yıl sonra," 2011)" while the AKP started referring to Turkey as a "leading country-lider ülke"[224]

[223] Shortly before the Mavi Marmara Incident, emboldened by its rising international image as a mediator, Turkey, alongside Brazil, signed a nuclear swap deal with Iran. Accordingly, Tehran agreed to transfer some its enriched uranium – first to Turkey and then on to France and Russia – to be stored for peaceful purposes. At the time, however, the Obama administration insisted on maintaining its campaign of economic sanctions against Tehran. As a temporary member of the U.N. Security Council, Turkey voted against a new round of U.N. sanctions against Iran despite Obama's personal plea that Ankara support the resolution. Turkey's stance at the Security Council not only caused a rift between Ankara and Washington but also stirred a debate on whether Turkey was shifting away from the West. As Tanis discusses in detail, relations between Washington and Ankara remained chilly until NATO's Lisbon Summit in November 2010. At the summit, Turkey agreed to install an early-warning radar system in the Eastern Anatolian province of Malatya's Kürecik area as part of the alliance's missile defense project. Turkey, however, also secured a compromise under which the summit declaration refrained from directly identifying neighboring Iran as a threat. However, given the fact that Kürecik was located just 696 kilometers (435 miles) west of Iran, there was little question that the radar would keep an eye on the Islamic republic and share intelligence with Israel, even though Turkish officials tried to water the details down. To read further, see (Tanış, 2015).

[224] Çağlar and Özkır (2015) underlines that ahead of the 2011 elections, one of the AKP's banners asked voters who they wanted to vote for: "Is it those that kowtow to foreign leaders, stay silent in the face of oppression, remain deaf to cries for help, tear Turkey away from its region, wall Ankara off in its own prison and force our nation to bow its head, or is it those that stand erect without creating a confrontation, rush to aid the needy and the downtrodden, fly our flag all over the world, make planes and satellites, give our country power and dignity, and instill confidence in our nation?"

with reference to its foreign policy victories in its campaign literature. Ankara's "zero problems with neighbors" policy would soon unravel as a result of this assertive foreign policy approach.

In this context, Açıkel (2016) argues that the AKP government sought to harness the energy of the Arab Spring, become the leader of the Muslim world and take advantage of geopolitical and economic opportunities while attempting to merge moderate Islamic liberalism with pan-Islamist populism (Açıkel, 2016). To carve out new opportunities on this front, the AKP promoted a sense of shared destiny among Muslims, calling for collaboration between Turkey, Hamas and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.

From this perspective, the Davos summit of 2009 was an important milestone that led Turkey to embrace the Gaza issue even more strongly and adopt a more defiant stance against Israel. Diplomatic sources note that, Erdoğan initially, had no intention of prolonging the dispute with Peres (he even took steps to control the damage in the wake of the affair), the positive response that Erdoğan's outburst received at home and abroad alerted Ankara to the political gains that it could obtain by adopting a defiant attitude toward Israel.[225] On his way to Turkey, the Arab press hailed Erdoğan as a modern "Saladin."[226] In the eyes of many in the Middle East, the event transformed Erdoğan into the "leader" of the region and elevated Turkey's popularity and prestige to an unprecedented level in the Muslim world (Akgün et al.,

[225] A similar view was shared by Ambassador Namık Tan during our interview. See also, ("Remarks of the ministry," 2009).
[226] Saladin Ayyubi was the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty who led the campaign against the Crusaders and liberated Jerusalem in 1187. Erdoğan was praised and likened to Saladin in the international media ("Erdoğan'a bir destek de," 2009; "Arap basınından liderlere Erdoğan," 2009; "Dünya basınında Davos yankıları," 2009).

2011). Not surprisingly, the AKP made use of the connection to Saladin image in its political campaigns in the local elections of 2009 and the general elections of 2011, in a bid to polish and consolidate Erdoğan's image (Çağlar & Özkır, 2015, p.35).

In the post-Mavi Marmara period, the AKP has instrumentalized Israel's subsequent siege on Gaza to such an extent that the government almost treated the issue like a domestic matter. For instance, Erdoğan's remarks during a rally in Konya in June 2010 confirms Açıkel's point on the rhetoric of shared destinies: "It is not possible to differentiate between Gaza and Istanbul's destinies, just as it is not possible to differentiate between Ramallah and Ankara's or Bethlehem and Konya's."[227]

In a similar vein, in September 2011, Erdoğan highlighted the historical ties of kinship and friendship between Turks and Arabs during a meeting of the Arab League's Council of Foreign Ministers, declaring:

> We are two nations who have a shared past, present and future. The grief in the heart of a grandpa in Sanaa who cannot even buy a wooden toy for his grandchild brings tears to the eye in Rabat and Beirut. The happiness of Riyadh or Doha is felt in Jerusalem and Istanbul. A Palestinian child who cries in Gaza hurts a mother's heart in Ankara… We are the elements of the same body and soul, the parts of a big and deep-rooted family. ("Erdoğan'dan Kahire'de tarihi konuşma," 2011)

Özcan also asserts that calls for the lifting of the embargo against Gaza and support for Hamas helped burnish the AKP's leadership credentials following the "one minute" incident in Davos. Erdoğan's subsequent remarks during a rally in

[227] "Unfortunately, there are those that draw similarities between the PKK and Hamas," Erdoğan said. "There is no connection between the PKK and Hamas. Hamas is a political party that has come to power after winning elections. But they haven't given them any chance to remain in power. Where are the democracies? Why are you allowing this? They're punishing the Palestinian people because they voted for Hamas. You can't tar Hamas and the PKK with the same brush in your columns ("Üç dilde 'öldürmeyeceksin' tepkisi," 2010)

Kayseri on May 29, 2011, in the run-up to general elections illustrated how Erdoğan was using Gaza to promote himself as a regional leader:

> My dear brothers, before Nov. 3 (2002 elections), there was a Turkey that was oppressed, pushed around and bowed. There was a Turkey that was chasing the agenda, doing just enough to get by and consuming itself with its problems. … But now, there's no longer a Turkey that's been pushed into the corner; there's a Turkey that sets the agenda. … Today, in the Middle East, Balkans and Caucasus, there's a Turkey that is the hope of the oppressed, the downtrodden and the outcast, as well as those that cry out and those that are awaiting help. Today, on the streets of the Middle East, voices proclaim 'Shukran, Turkey!' … Today, there is no Turkey that has turned its back on Palestine like the rest of the world, but a Turkey that stands with Palestine in a brave, courageous and humane fashion. There is no Turkey that remains silent and still in the face of Israel's piracy, but a Turkey which shouts, which demands its rights, which demands justice and which puts the pirates in their place. (Subaşı94, 2011)

To Özcan (2017), by 2010, the AKP government has become confident and powerful enough to let go off the alliance ties once deemed as essential to remain in power. Deterioration of Turkey's relations with Israel can be evaluated within this framework, Turkey's relationship with Israel has become less important and steadfast than before, amid the AKP's growing popularity and self-confidence that stemmed from its Muslim identity as well as political and economic strength. Besides, the souring of ties in the wake of the Mavi Marmara crisis saved AKP officials from the difficulty of having to pursue pragmatic relations with Israel – something that would have been hard to explain to the party's traditionally conservative constituency and other Muslim countries.

In this background, the outbreak of political protests in Tunisia in late 2010 would not only present opportunities, but also reveal contradictions of Turkish foreign policy in terms of fulfilling that leadership role. In order to better understand what happened after 2010, it is necessary to take a closer look and compare Turkey and Israel's respective attitudes toward the Arab Protests, dubbed as the Arab Spring.

6.2. Turkey's claim to lead the democratization wave in the Middle East

On Dec. 17, 2010, a police officer confiscated the cart of Tunisian fruit vendor Mohammed Bouazizi. Angered at the treatment, Bouazizi immolated himself, lighting the spark for protests across the region against rampant unemployment, economic inequality and political corruption.[228] Within just a few months, political uprisings that became known as the Arab Spring put an end to the decades-long authoritarian rule of leaders such as Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, Hosni Mubarek in Egypt, Moammar Gadhafi in Libya and Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen, while threatening other wealthy monarchies like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.[229]

Ahead of the Arab Spring, Turkey enjoyed relatively good relations with the countries the uprisings eventually shook, save perhaps Egypt.[230] But because the events of the Arab Spring threatened to disrupt the political and economic ties that depended on the goodwill of strongmen, Turkey's initial response was caution and worry. For instance, the first official statement from Turkey's Foreign Ministry over the events in Tunisia came on Jan. 14, 2011 – a full month after the protests started – in response to Ben Ali's resignation.

But after recovering from the initial shock, the AKP government shifted to a policy of supporting change and democracy in the region. Indeed, the AKP's leaders came to read the developments as an opportunity to expand Turkey's sphere of influence, even claiming leadership for the wave of democratization that was

[228] In December 2010 Bouazizi was stopped by the police, reportedly for not having the necessary permit to sell his products. He was publicly humiliated by a female police officer, who reportedly slapped him in the face and confiscated his cart ("Remembering Mohamed Bouazizi," 2018).
[229] The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) -read as Saudi Arabia- even dispatched military forces as well as financial support to preserve the legitimacy of the Gulf sheikhdoms ("The Arab spring," 2011).
[230] Differences over the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and its ideological kin, Hamas in Gaza, undermined relations between the AKP government and the Mubarak regime (Barkey, 2011).

sweeping the Middle East and North Africa. Based on Turkey's own experiences as a secular, democratic and Muslim country, the government expressed its eagerness to offer guidance to the new governments regarding their political transformation.

For a certain period of time, the course of the Arab Spring gave the AKP government reasons for optimism regarding Turkey's leadership role in the region. For instance, the remarkably warm reception Erdoğan received during a tour of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya in September 2011 showed that Ankara's claims to regional leadership resonated on the Arab Street to some extent. The tour was scheduled at a sensitive time, just after Turkey downgraded its diplomatic ties with Israel, and in the wake of a U.N. vote regarding Palestine's bid for full recognition at the Security Council. Turkey was hoping to cultivate closer political and economic ties with post-revolutionary Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. In this regard, Ankara signed a framework agreement to establish a High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council with Cairo and a Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with Tunis.

On the first leg of Erdoğan's visit, thousands turned out at Cairo's airport to greet him, while billboard-sized portraits of the Turkish leader adorned streets in the Egyptian capital. Erdoğan's powerful address to the Arab League, during which he underlined the significance of Turkish-Arab unity and the Palestinian cause, attracted praise in the international media. [231]

[231] A columnist in al Wafd, an Egyptian newspaper wrote: "Lend us Erdogan for a month!" Khaled Diab. Yet, Erdoğan also received criticism from Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Particularly, Erdoğan's suggestions with regard to the Egyptian constitution in the post-Mubarek period, were percived as an attempt to interfere domestic politics by an "old boss.". Erdoğan's request to cross into Gaza was also turned down by the Armed Forces which felt uncomfortable by Erdoğan's bossy attitude as much as his popularity on the Arab Street at a time when the army faced a popular dissent over its weak response to Israel's cross border operation. A month before, five Egyptian border guards were killed as Israeli security forces pursued gunmen, that were allegedly responsible for deadly attacks in southern Israel ("Turkey predicts partnership with," 2011; "Recep Tayyip Erdogan: Arab," 2011; " Turkey PM hails sacrifice," 2011; " Erdogan slams Israel on," 2011; "Why Turkey's Erdogan is," 2011).

Emboldened by the positive vibes from Erdoğan's Cairo visit, Davutoğlu set an even higher goal in a New York Times interview the following week, stating that a partnership between Turkey and Egypt – two militarily strong, populous and influential countries in the region – could create a new axis of power at a time when American influence in the Middle East was perceived to be diminishing:

> This will not be an axis against any other country – not Israel, not Iran, not any other country, but this will be an axis of democracy, real democracy. [It] will be an axis of democracy of the two biggest nations in our region, from the north to the south, from the Black Sea down to the Nile Valley in Sudan ("Davutoğlu: 12 yıl sonra," 2011).

As Ankara shifted gears in foreign policy, claiming not only to be a regional power but also a "global power," the AKP government received a boost to its confidence and credibility at home and abroad as political parties ideologically linked to the Muslim Brotherhood won parliamentary elections in Tunisia in October 2011 and Egypt in January 2012. At the time, the leaders of both the Ennahda movement in Tunisia (Rached Ghannouchi) and the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt (Mohammed Morsi) harbored sympathy for Erdoğan, openly stating that the AKP's model was the one they wished to emulate ("Gannuşi Tunus için AKP," 2011). In this regard, Davutoğlu's remarks in April 2012 at the Turkish Parliament can be taken as evidence of the government's growing confidence: "There is a new Middle East emerging. We will continue to be this new Middle East's owner, leader and servant … With this new Middle East, a sphere of peace, a new sphere of stability and affluence, will surround Turkey (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012)." In light of Davutoğlu's remarks, Morsi's attendance at the AKP's Regular Congress on Sept. 30, 2012, was presented as a foreign policy gain for the party.

It is worth noting that Ankara's open support for the reform movements made its "zero problems with neighbors" policy unsustainable, as the abandonment of its neutral stance led to a deterioration in Turkey's relations with the countries whose governments rejected popular demands for democratization, such as Libya and Syria. Unlike Tunisia and Egypt, Libya had been a major destination for Turkish goods. By 2010, trade volume with Libya had reached $2.36 billion, and there were expectations that that figure would reach $10 billion in the next five years. What's more, Libya was the second biggest destination for Turkish contractors after Russia.[232] Given such economic cooperation and investments, Turkey and Libya unsurprisingly enjoyed close relations at the leadership level. Not long before the eruption of protests in Libya, Erdoğan visited Gadhafi to receive what would turn out to be the Libyan leader's final Al-Gaddafi Humanitarian Prize.

When Libya's protests turned violent in spring 2011, the AKP government offered its mediation and good offices to help settle the conflict in its initial stages, yet it failed to save bilateral ties. Eventually, Ankara bowed to international pressure, offering half-hearted support for a NATO operation that ultimately removed Gadhafi from office.[233] In the post-Gadhafi era, Turkey has largely focused on protecting its economic interests. But following Libyan elections in 2014, two rival governments emerged – one in Tripoli and the other in Tobruk. Turkey's support for the UN-backed government in Tripoli resulted in criticisms that Ankara was interfering in Libya's domestic affairs and supplying weapons to Tripoli (Shanzer, 2015). Since

[232] When the clashes broke out in Libya, there were about 25.000 Turkish workers at the time, trapped in the country ("Turkey's largest evacuation in," 2011).

[233] Indeed, a combination of economic and purely security interests lay behind Ankara's initial prudence when the first clashes erupted in Libya and Syria. Such interests also underpinned Turkey's diplomatic attempts to find political compromises to both situations. In the case of Libya, the huge lucrative construction contracts but, above all, the need to repatriate 25,000 Turkish workers living in Libya were Ankara's top priorities. Alongside these interests, Turkey also questioned how a NATO intervention would be perceived in Muslim countries ("NATO'nun Libya'da ne işi," 2011).

the end of 2019, Turkey has stepped up its military assistance to Libya, after having concluded two agreements- one on maritime boundaries[234] and the other on security and military cooperation ("Turkey's parliament ratifies security," 2019) - with Fayez al-Serraj, head of the Tripoli based government (who announced his resignation in September 2020), in an attempt to break her isolation and perceived encirclement in the Mediterranean.

Syria turned out to be even a harder test for Turkey due to the extensive economic and political cooperation between the two countries and the close relations between the nations' leaders. At the outset of the protests, Ankara pursued a dual strategy of trying to persuade al-Assad to halt his crackdown on protesters and respond to democratization demands while providing support for various opposition groups that were ideologically close to the Muslim Brotherhood. In this respect, the Istanbul Meeting for Syria on April 26, 2011, and the Antalya Conference for Change in Syria on June 1-2, 2011, represented Turkey's early attempts to provide overt support to Syria's opposition ("Suriye için İstanbul buluşması," 2011; "Antalya'da değişim için Suriye," 2011).

Meanwhile, the rapid spread of protests in Syria mistakenly strengthened Ankara's conviction that the al-Assad regime was on its last legs and that Turkey could play a role in shaping a post-Baath political landscape in Syria. After a six-hour meeting in August 2011 in which al-Assad rejected a reform plan from Davutoğlu, diplomatic dialogue between Turkey and Syria collapsed. Following a meeting with Obama in New York one month later, Erdoğan openly declared that Turkey was severing its ties with Syria and would soon impose sanctions ("Erdoğan

[234] The deal established an exclusive economic zone from Turkey's southern Mediterranean shore to Libya's northeastern coast. Thus, it enables Ankara to drill for oil and gas in this area which partly overlaps with the disputed maritime waters of Greece and Cyprus ("Turkey signs maritime boundaries," 2019).

ve Obama ortak zemini," 2011; "Esed'le görüşmeler kesildi," 2011). Soon after, Turkey closed its airspace to Syrian military supplies. In November 2011, Ankara did indeed impose sanctions on Syria, while also suspending the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council mechanism, halting financial dealings with Syria and freezing the Baath government's assets ("Turkey Imposes Sanctions On," 2011). From 2011 on, Turkey actively advocated regime change in Syria and became increasingly involved in the Syrian conflict. And unsurprisingly, given the 900-kilometer Turkish-Syrian border, Syria's war disrupted Turkey's trade to the Middle East. But perhaps even more importantly, given the war's security challenges, such as the refugee influx and the terrorism threat, the Syria dossier effectively consumed all of Turkey's foreign policy agenda in the following years.

Morsi's overthrow in summer 2013 dealt a blow to Turkey's foreign policy goal of establishing a regional axis. Libya's drift into political chaos after Gadhafi, al-Assad's success in holding onto power in spite of initial expectations and Saudi Arabia's financial support to suppress the uprisings in neighboring Gulf countries all exposed the limits of Turkey's power and influence in shaping Middle Eastern affairs. What's more, by abandoning its neutral position, Turkey had become a party to regional conflicts. In particular, the AKP government's refusal to revise its foreign policy stance in line with changing circumstances isolated Turkey in the region. In the meantime, the government's heavy crackdown on demonstrators in the Gezi protests of late May 2013[235] not only undermined Turkey's democratic image in the international arena, but also soured relations with Western powers like the United States and the European Union. İbrahim Kalın, the prime minister's chief adviser at

[235] The protests started as an environmental movement to prevent the government from constructing an Ottoman-themed mall that would destroy Taksim's Gezi Park, one of the last remaining green areas in central İstanbul.To read further, see (Özbank, 2013).

the time, acknowledged Turkey's isolation in the region on Aug. 20, 2013, praising Turkey's solitary position in the international arena as "precious loneliness": "The claim that Turkey is alone in the Middle East is not correct. But if this is a criticism, then we must say, this is precious loneliness" ("Dış politikada değerli yalnızlık," 2013).

The AKP justified its international isolation by proclaiming the moral superiority of its decisions, adding that it was the one "standing on the right side of history ("Türkiye'nin Şam politikası değişti," 2012)." Despite the obvious collapse of its assumptions regarding al-Assad's rule, Ankara remained committed to the goal of regime change in Syria. However, developments on the battlefield forced Turkish policy makers to redefine their threat perceptions several times throughout the Syrian Civil War, which indirectly affected Turkey's relations with Israel as well.

In this respect, the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which made large, lightning-quick territorial gains in Iraq and in Syria in 2014, led to a considerable change in Western countries' threat priorities. With ISIL's emergence, Washington's main objective in Syria shifted to "degrading and destroying" the organization. For Ankara, on the other hand, the Syrian Kurds' possible establishment of an autonomous political entity along Turkey's southern border represented a bigger threat. Accordingly, the AKP government focused its Syrian policy on rolling back the territorial gains of the Democratic Union Party of Syria (PYD) and its armed wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG) – both affiliates of the outlawed PKK – in "Western Kurdistan" or Rojava.[236]

[236] Syrian Kurds reached a tacit consent with the Assad regime in the early stages of the civil war and therefore did not join the armed opposition. From Turkey's perspective, the PYD is an affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is designated as a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union and has been fighting the Turkish state since 1984. Therefore, the PYD's control of the provinces of Haseke, Kobane and Afrin along the Turkish border was perceived as a serious security risk by Ankara.

The failure of the United States' train-and-equip program highlighted the role of the YPG as the single significant military force in combating ISIL. In this context, the Syrian Kurds' victory against ISIL – thanks in part to U.S. air support – during the siege of Kobane in September 2014 constituted a turning point in Turkish-American relations (Nasi, 2015; "Turkish inaction on ISIS," 2014). Ankara's reluctance to help the Syrian Kurds as ISIL advanced along its borders created tension between Turkey and the United States. Facing pressure from Washington, Turkey eventually allowed Iraqi Kurdish fighters to join the fight in Kobane, while the United States air-dropped arms to help the Syrian Kurds face the ISIL onslaught. In spite of Ankara's complaints, the Americans' reliance on the PYD/YPG as a partner in Syria after Kobane continued to undermine the alliance ties between Turkey and the United States, eroding mutual trust.

In fact, Ankara long favored the establishment of an ISIL-free zone that would not only provide a safe haven for refugees but also prevent the Syrian Kurds from crossing west of the Euphrates, enabling them to connect the three cantons of Afrin, Jazeera and Kobane. In this respect, Turkey called a NATO meeting in Brussels on July 28 in an effort to obtain support for its efforts to combat both ISIL and the PKK. Washington, however, ultimately rejected the plans for a safe zone, while Russia's direct engagement in the Syrian war subsequently complicated Turkey's plans.[237]

[237] In the meantime, as Washington had gotten cold feet over a regime change in Syria and continued its support for the YPG despite Ankara's complaint, Turkey sought alternative partners to support rebels on the ground. In this respect, King Salman bin Abdulaziz's accession to the throne in January 2015 after the death of King Abdullah presented an opportunity for Turkey to restore relations with Saudi Arabia, after having supported opposite sides during the Arab Spring. In March, the two countries concluded an agreement to boost aid to the Syrian opposition and broaden overall cooperation on defense and security matters (Nasi & Özel, 2019; "Saudi Arabia,Turkey discussing," 2015).

Moscow's active involvement drastically changed the balance of power among the forces in Syria – as well as Ankara's calculations – as Turkey's northern neighbor effectively became its southern neighbor as well. When the Russian air force violated Turkey's airspace twice on Oct. 3 and 4, 2015, Turkey called upon NATO for help. Against this backdrop, Turkey's downing of a Russian SU-24 jet in November 2015 dealt a serious blow to Turkish-Russian relations, which the countries had previously succeeded in compartmentalizing by isolating trade and tourism from political differences over Syria. In the wake of the jet crisis, Turkey not only suffered from the Kremlin's economic sanctions, but also lost room to maneuver in Syria. Concerned about the expansion of economic sanctions as much as the possible unification of PYD/YPG-controlled cantons along its southern border, Turkey offered an apology to Russia in June 2016.

Shortly thereafter, the failed coup-attempt of July 15 brought Turkey and Russia closer, as the Kremlin offered staunch support for Erdoğan, including intelligence sharing regarding an assignation attempt, in marked contrast to the ambivalence of Western countries ("Russia Warned Erdogan About," 2016). Thus, the threat perceptions changed dramatically as Ankara suspected an international plot orchestrated by its putative Western allies (pro-AKP media especially pointed the finger at the United States) to bring down Erdoğan.[238] Restoring ties with Russia,

[238] One result of the budding ties between Ankara and the Kremlin was Turkey's move in July 2017 to purchase Russia's S-400 missile defense system. Turkey is thought to have made the decision, which precipitated questions about its commitment to the NATO alliance – and, accordingly, its Western orientation – in part because of the alleged involvement of NATO affiliated Turkish military officials in the putsch, as the US made F-16s flew low over Ankara on the night of the failed coup of July 15, 2016. And despite Turkey's efforts to reassure the West that it would not seek to integrate the S-400s into NATO's systems, the U.S. Congress vowed to slap sanctions on Ankara if it activated the Russian system, in part because of worries that Moscow would soon obtain technical information about NATO's new F-35 fighter jets that Turkey was also due to receive. As a result, Turkey, one of the F-35's production partners, was expelled from the program while imminent deliveries of the jet to the country were also suspended. Intriguingly, Israel reportedly lobbied Washington to expel Ankara from the F-35 program ("Erdoğan: Rusya ile S-400," 2017; "Turkey can't have both," 2019; "Pentagon: Türkiye F35 programından," 2019; "Israel reportedly lobbied Washington," 2019).

on the other hand, enabled Ankara to launch Operation Euphrates Shield in August. Ostensibly, the operation targeted ISIL, but Turkey's military campaign initially targeted the YPG's attempts to cross the Euphrates and link up the three Kurdish-controlled cantons it held in northern Syria.

The shift in Ankara's threat perceptions, along with its dependence on Russia for military operations in Syria, pushed Turkey to enter into a deeper engagement with Russia and Iran as part of the so-called Astana process to mediate a solution to the Syrian crisis. In order to keep this diplomatic mechanism afloat, the Turkish government downplayed the conflicting interests of its Astana partners and even abandoned – if only for a while – the goal of a regime change in Syria. For Israel, however, Ankara's rapprochement with Tehran, coupled with the souring of Turkish-Israeli ties, was understandably met with concern and suspicion.

6.3 Israel's approach to the Arab protests: A fake spring

Unlike Turkey, Israel largely approached the wave of democratization in the Arab world with skepticism, expressing doubt that the protests would bring peace and stability to the region. While Israeli officials such as President Shimon Peres welcomed the crumbling of authoritarian regimes as an opportunity for democratic change,[239] the rise of political Islam, particularly the anti-Zionist Muslim Brotherhood, became a major concern for Israel's political and security establishment.

[239] During his visit to the nuclear research centre CERN in Geneva, Peres stated: "Poverty and oppression in the region have fed resentment against Israel and the better our negihbors will have it, we shall have better neighbours ("Mideast revolutions could be," 2011).
Lehrs (2013) categorizes Israeli reactions into three types. The first type of reaction to thge Arab Spring is visible neagitve, as demonstrated by PM Netanyahu and other right-wing politicians such as Moshe Yasalon and Danny Ayalon. The second approach seem to accept the negative framing of developments, yet try to see the glass as half full. For instance, Lehr (2013) refers to Former head of Military Intelligence, Amos Yadlin and former Mossad Chief Meir Dagan who viewed the protests more of an opportunity than a risk. And lastly, the third category frames the course of events from an

The Israeli government initially backed the status quo in the face of the protests, yet reactions differed in tone in places where the stakes for Israel were higher; Tunisia's protests, for instance, received less attention, but that was not the case for Egypt (Berti, 2013). When anti-government demonstrations broke out in Cairo, Israel, concerned about the future of 1979 peace treaty as well as a potential increase in Iranian influence over Egypt, expressed support for Mubarak, lobbied on his behalf to American and European allies and allowed Egyptian troops to deploy to the Sinai – something that required Israel's authorization according to the 1979 Peace Treaty (Black, 2011). Israel was also worried that the political unrest could spread to its neighbor Jordan, the second Arab country to sign an official peace treaty with Israel. In February 2011, Israel's former chief of General Staff, Shaul Mofaz, stated that the regime's success in overcoming the protests would be the best scenario for Israel (Stoil, 2011). Likewise, former Israeli Defense Forces Chief of General Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi declared that the unrest in Egypt could undermine Israel's security, putting the peace treaty at risk (Katz, 2011).

As the protests erupted, the common perspective among the Israeli political establishment turned increasingly pessimistic. In April 2011, Netanyahu said, "What we hope to see is the European Spring of 1989. But we may be encountering an Iranian Winter ("Netanyahu: Arab Spring Could," 2011)," referring to the rise of Islamist group in the Middle East. In November 2011, Netanyahu reiterated his concerns about an Islamist wave: "The chances are that an Islamist wave will wash over the Arab countries; an anti-West, anti-liberal, anti-Israel and, ultimately, an anti-democratic wave (Berti, 2013)."

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optimistic lense, based on a democratic peace thesis-that democratic transtion would enforce accountability of governments to their people and reduce the likeleness of war decisions.

Israel's reactions to the protests in Syria were more complicated. On the one hand, Syria, a staunch ally of Iran which geopolitically controlled the access to Hezbollah in Lebanon, had always harbored a hostile stance toward Israel. At the same time, the al-Assad regime had also avoided direct confrontations with Israel, maintaining calm along the border. For Israel, accordingly, the al-Assad regime's restraint and predictability were preferable to a power vacuum or another potential Islamist regime on its own border. Ultimately, a "better the devil you know" approach essentially shaped Israel's policy toward Syria, as the Israeli government kept a low profile and refrained from becoming involved in the conflict, particularly in the initial stages of the civil war. However, as Berti (2013) argues, Israel increasingly embraced the idea of a possible regime change in parallel with the developments on the ground and the apparent inevitability of al-Assad's overthrow ("Israel Expecting For Syrian," 2012). In a Brookings Institution report, Rabinovich (2012) makes a similar point, describing the changing Israeli approach as such:

> After Israel had found itself frustrated by developments beneficial to Iran and its 'Resistance Axis' throughout the Arab Spring – most notably the fall of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak – the increasing pressure on the Syrian regime has represented a blow to Iran and its allies. Thus, while recognizing that Israel has little to no influence on the course of events in Syria, Israel's leaders have largely reached a consensus that Assad's departure from power is preferable. (Rabinovich, 2012, p.1)

In retrospect, the Syrian war provided room for cooperation between Turkey and Israel based on their shared concern over Iran's growing influence over Syria. Thus, even though there seemed to be no concrete coordination between them, Turkey and Israel independently supported Syrian opposition groups. But in contrast to Turkey, which openly pushed for regime change in cooperation with the Gulf countries and the Obama administration – to the extent that it provided logistical support to rebel forces, including the use of its soil – Israel avoided entanglement,

limiting its involvement in the war to preventing Hezbollah and Iranian Revolutionary Guards from operating in Syria and acquiring a stronghold on the country's northern border.

In 2013, reports appeared that Israeli hospitals were providing medical treatment to Syrians ("In enemy care: Syrians, 2013). A U.N. report from 2014 stated that U.N. observers had witnessed the transfer of patients to Israel and "IDF soldiers on the Israeli side handing over boxes to armed Syrian opposition members on the Syrian side ("UN reveals Israel's links," 2014)." In 2017, the Israeli army revealed that it had begun a humanitarian relief operation in 2016 dubbed Operation Good Neighbor to provide basic medical treatment and food to those who could not access it in Syria because of the war ("Operation good neighbor," 2017). In 2018, researcher Elizabeth Tsurkov detailed Israel's assistance to Syrian rebels in an extensive study, stating that at least seven factions within the Syrian opposition received weaponry, munitions and cash from Israel. According to Tsurkov (2018), Israel's support was "intended to protect the border area from encroachment by Iranian proxies" and "enable the rebels to more effectively fight the local ISIL affiliate, Jaysh Khalid ibn al-Walid."[240] Following his resignation in 2019, Israeli Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot also acknowledged that Israel had been supplying weapons to Syrian rebels in the bordering Golan Heights region ("Outgoing chief of staff," 2019).

Perceiving Iran as the biggest threat in the region, Israel pursued priorities in Syria that can be summarized as follows: controlling the spillover from southern Syria, preventing Iran and its proxies from entrenching themselves in Syria and

[240] Israel's support comprised not just materiel and cash, but also drone strikes and shelling with high-precision missiles on ISIL targets during defensive and offensive rebel operations in the Yarmouk basin (Tsurkov, 2018).

preventing the transfer of arms to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Unlike Turkey, Israel did not consider either the Syrian Kurds or ISIL as an existential threat. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Israel has historically maintained friendly ties with the Kurds, noting that it is a stateless minority in an unfriendly region. Israel's support for Kurdish nationalist movements has also served strategic interests in line with the country's Periphery Doctrine, a strategy that rested on building alliances with non-Arab states and ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East to break the country's regional isolation. While Israel has generally remained silent on the Syrian Kurds' demands for autonomy, at least until 2019,[241] its open support for Iraqi Kurds' push for independence in a referendum in northern Iraq in September 2017 again resulted in a souring of relations between Turkey and Israel. Nevertheless, Turkey's reaction failed to conceal the controversy caused by the oil sales that had been continuing between the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and Ankara, shipped to Israel via the Turkish port of Ceyhan since 2014 – two years before the Turkey-Israel reconciliation deal. The oil trade which provided the Kurds with access to the Red Sea and, potentially, Asian markets via the Trans-Israel pipeline between Ashkelon and Eilat rested on a "secretive" deal that Ankara and Arbil signed in April 2013.[242] According to the agreement, revenues were reportedly

[241]Israeli PM Netanyahu, for the first time, openly supported Syrian Kurds and critized the Turkish led Operation Peace Spring in Syria in October 2019. In a twitter post he said: "Israel strongly condemns the Turkish invasion of the Kurdish areas in Syria and warns against the ethnic cleansing of the Kurds by Turkey and its proxies. Israel is prepared to extend humanitarian assistance to the gallant Kurdish people." In a similar vein, former Justice Minister Ayalet Shakid stated that "It is in the interest of both Israel and the United States, for the security and stability of the region, that a Kurdish state be established (Netanyahu, 2019; "As Turkey launches ground," 2019).

[242] The deal entailed Ankara to establish a new state entity, the Turkish Energy Company, which would take stakes in the Kurdish fields and Erbil, building a pipeline from fields in its territory directly to the Turkish border ("Turkey bats Kurdish oil," 2013).

transferred to KRG accounts in a state-owned bank, Halkbank. Understandably, the deal not only created a bitter dispute over oil sale rights between Baghdad and Arbil, but overtly undermined the central government's authority.

To Israel, the sudden rise and spread of ISIL in Iraq and Syria never genuinely posed a serious threat, either. On the contrary, the fact that ISIL had never targeted Israeli territory spawned conspiracy theories that the group was actually an Israeli formation. ISIL, however, has indeed carried out a number of attacks in Gaza through Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, which later renamed itself as Sinai Province, but was prevented by Hamas from infiltrating Gaza further ("IŞİD Gazze'ye girmeye hazırlanıyor," 2014; "IŞİD'den Hamas 'a tehdit," 2015; "Hamas claims to arrest Senior," 2017). Also in 2017, ISIL claimed responsibility for a deadly attack in Jerusalem that killed three Palestinians and an Israeli police officer (" Jerusalem stabbing," 2017).

As the security landscape underwent a fundamental change over the course of the Arab Spring, Israel's main concern was to maintain its security. Even before the eruption of the Arab protests, Israel's worries about Iran's nuclear ambitions and its concern at the loss of its Turkish ally following the Mavi Marmara Incident, drove Israeli leaders to diversify the country's alliance ties to expand its periphery. In this respect, Israel forged closer diplomatic and security relations with various countries in the Balkans.[243]

[243]"We are finding new partnerships, new alliances in places where we had once invested little time, energy and resources,"said Israeli PM Netanyahu at the start of a visit to Romania and Bulgaria in July 2011, and added: "We have a strategy, and while there is all this talk of Israel being isolated, these countries are deeply eager to develop ties. Their opinion of us is very favorable. They are taking a hard look at their interests and understand that Israel can help advance them ("For Israel, a Balkan," 2011)."

Among these initiatives, the Israeli-Greek rapprochement that developed in the post-Mavi Marmara period which expanded into a trilateral strategic framework with the inclusion of Cyprus, especially posed geopolitical implications for Turkey.

It is possible to say that the downturn in Turkish-Israeli relations from 2008 provided an opportunity for Greece, which has traditionally maintained a pro-Palestinian stance in the Arab-Israeli conflict, to replace Turkey in building closer ties with Israel. In his extensive study on the emergence of Israeli-Greek cooperation, Tziampris argues that Israeli-Greek relations transformed into a close partnership under the joint efforts of the Netanyahu and Papandreou governments amid the rapidly deteriorating ties between Turkey and Israel. While the Iranian threat precipitated Greece's early steps toward cooperation (as evidenced by the joint air force exercise Glorious Spartan in 2008), it was only after the Mavi Marmara Incident that Israeli-Greek rapprochement gained momentum and evolved into a strategic partnership. In this respect, Tziampiris identifies an Oct. 15, 2009, meeting in Athens initiated by a group of influential actors he calls the Electra Group as the start date for détente between Greece and Israel. This was followed by a coincidental encounter between Netanyahu and Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou at Moscow's Cafe Pushkin in December 2009 that laid the ground for future cooperation (Tziampiris, 2015, p.83).

Indeed, after the meeting in Moscow, there was an increase in diplomatic exchanges between Israel and Greece. In May 2010, the countries conducted Minoas, a joint air exercise that provided the Israeli air force with a training opportunity in Greek skies. In July, just over a month after the Mavi Marmara, Papandreou went to Israel, becoming the first Greek leader to make a visit since Athens formally recognized the country in 1990. A month later, Netanyahu became

the first Israeli prime minister to visit Greece. The two sides sketched a road map for future partnership during the visit and agreed to establish a Joint Israel-Greece Committee to encourage joint ventures in telecommunications, information technology, water technologies, energy, agriculture and, above all, security. During his two-day visit to Athens, Netanyahu emphasized Greece and Israel complemented each other, reportedly telling his delegation, "We've hit a gold mine (Tziampiris, 2015, p.86)."

During the visit, the two countries also agreed on a Military Cooperation Program that comprised "joint military exercises and co-training" for the army, navy and air force, as well as technology transfer and the joint production of weapons systems of various types (Tziampiris, 2015, p.88).

In such an environment, Greece and Cyprus filled in from the vacuum left by Turkey in terms of both the economy and security. Between 2009 and 2011, Israeli exports to Greece increased from $213 million to $ 330 million, while Israeli exports to Cyprus almost doubled, rising from 23million to 40 million. Cyprus' exports to Israel also increased from $542million to $888 million during the same period (World Bank, 2009; World Bank 2011). In the tourism sector, too, Turkey's loss became Greece's gain, as Israelis who shunned travel to Turkey amid the diplomatic tension flocked to Greece as an alternative destination. According to data from the Greek Tourism Ministry, the number of Israeli tourists rose from 82,400 in 2009 to 226,100 in 2011 (Tziampiris, 2015, p.116). As a result, Israel and Greece signed an aviation agreement in October 2010 amid calls for an increase in the number of air carriers ("Israel, Greece sign aviation," 2010).

As for defense ties, Greece provided the Israeli air force with vital airspace for training exercises, while the Noble Dina, a trilateral military drill that involved the naval and air forces of Israel, the United States and Greece, replaced Reliant Mermaid after 2010. In September 2011, Panos Beglitis became the first Greek defense minister to visit Israel and sign a memorandum on security cooperation with his counterpart, Ehud Barak. The agreement reportedly allowed the Israeli air force and navy to be hosted at Greek navy bases (Nastos, 2013). Notably, the countries signed the agreement just a week after the release of the UN's contentious Palmer Report over the Mavi Marmara Incident ("Greece, Israel Sign Pact," 2011). In 2012, Israel also signed a military and defense cooperation with Cyprus. The two countries agreed to share intelligence, while Nicosia also granted permission to the Israeli air force to utilize airspace and territorial waters around the island to safeguard energy resources. As a sign of deepening security relations, Israel opened its first military attaché office in Athens in 2014.

Hydrocarbon discoveries like Tamar (2008) and Leviathan (2010) in Israeli waters and Aphrodite (2011) in the contested territorial waters of Cyprus also provided a catalyst for all sides to develop closer cooperation.[244] In particular, the discovery of Leviathan – the largest natural gas reservoir in Israel, with approximately 623 billion cubic meters in natural gas reserves – transformed Israel into a significant player in the energy sector and encouraged it to seek partners to

[244] The dramatic improvement of Greek-Israel relations that culminated in the signing of the September 2011 defence agreement coincided with some unprecedented initiatives taken by the IAF at the same approximate time period in response to Turkey's reactions against the drilling of Noble Energy in Block 12 of Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone. When in the end of September 2011 Turkey's Piri Reis oceanographic vessel and the accompanying naval ships approached the Noble Homer Ferrington drilling platform that operated on Aphrodite in a distance of 20 miles, namely 25 miles from Israel's EEZ borderline, the Cypriot daily Fileleftheros reported that an Israeli army attack helicopter remained over the platform for an extended period of time. the defence of Israel's own maritime borders with Cyprus which were defined on 17 December 2010 through the demarcation of each country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) ("Israel woos Greece after," 2010).

develop and market its energy resources. In this context, the signing of a maritime demarcation treaty between Israel and Cyprus in December 2010 marked a significant milestone in deepening the energy cooperation between the two countries. With the demarcation of exclusive economic zones (EEZ), energy companies began to explore for potential hydrocarbon resources in the area in defiance of Turkey's traditional arguments regarding Cyprus, namely, that resources and revenues should be divided equally between Turkish and Greek Cyprus as two sovereign nations. For Cyprus, collaboration with Israel offered the prospect of joining the league of energy exporters, even if Aphrodite's capacity was poor and its reservoir crossed partially into Israel's EEZ. As Tziampiris also asserts, Greece was the shadow partner all along in precipitating the rapprochement between Israel and Cyprus. Amid the deepening economic and security ties between Jerusalem and Athens, cooperation between Israel and Cyprus expanded to involve Greece, culminating in the signing of a memorandum of mutual understanding to cooperate in energy and water resources in August 2013 ("Israel, Greece, Cyprus sign," 2013.

In time, the trilateral group added another member, Egypt, a large potential market for natural gas and a potential way station for re-export to Asian markets. In fact, Egypt had been a gas importer since 2012, but the discovery of the Zohr gas reserves in 2015, the largest in Egyptian and Mediterranean history thanks to its 850 bcm capacity, suddenly transformed Egypt into an energy exporter.

Shared economic interests regarding exploration and the marketing of energy resources reinforced dialogue among countries in the Mediterranean, gradually paving the way for an institutional framework through regular meetings and multilateral agreements. In December 2017, Greece, Cyprus, Israel and Italy agreed to construct a gas pipeline from the newly discovered fields in the eastern

Mediterranean to Europe. Despite feasibility concerns owing to high construction cost estimates and low gas prices (Baconi, 2017), European countries welcomed the initiative, as they had been searching for ways to diversify energy resources so as to reduce Europe's energy dependence on Russia. In January 2019, eastern Mediterranean countries, including Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan and Palestine, met in Cairo and declared the establishment of the East Med Gas Forum. As a further step toward institutionalization, the forum aimed to serve as a platform to "optimize resource development, offer competitive prices and improve trade relations."

Turkey, naturally, opposed gas drilling activities in Cyprus' contested maritime EEZ, namely Block 12, as well as the East Med pipeline project to carry eastern Mediterranean gas to Europe through Cyprus, Crete and Greece on the grounds that it violated the rights of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, as well as Turkey's own EEZ. Given the problematic state of Ankara's ties with the majority of the countries involved in the East Med Forum, Turkey viewed the emerging rapprochement as a hostile front aiming to contain and circumvent it. In this respect, Turkey perceived U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's attendance at the sixth trilateral East Med Summit Meeting of Israel, Greece and Cyprus in March 2019 as tantamount to American backing for the regional alliance and a move to undermine Ankara's interests.[245] In particular, the Turkish press interpreted the

[245] Unlike Turkey's Middle East policy, which is imbued with Islamic connotations, a strong emphasis on Muslim identity and yearnings to lead the "Ummah," the country's Mediterranean policy relies more on hard power, reflecting Realpolitik calculations. In this respect, Turkey and Libya's December 2019 deal, which established exclusive economic zones through the demarcation of their mutual maritime boundary right in the center of the Mediterranean, can be interpreted both as an attempt to dismantle the emerging anti-Turkish regional power bloc and as part of Ankara's attempts to project power in the area. In pursuing its political goals in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey has notably followed the Blue Homeland doctrine first envisaged by Rear Adm. Cem Gürdeniz in 2006. The thesis, which rests on the idea that maritime supremacy is critical in determining a country's strength, calls for Turkey to maintain areas of maritime authority in the Black, Aegean and Mediterranean seas. At the same time, the doctrine casts a suspicious eye at Turkey's Atlantic

mention of "malign forces" in the joint summit declaration as a warning to Turkey (Turgut, 2019; Doğan, 2019; İdiz, 2019). The declaration initially said: "The leaders agreed to increase regional cooperation; to support energy independence and security; and to defend against external malign influences in the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader Middle East (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019)."

Amid the emerging partnerships in the eastern Mediterranean, the geopolitics of the Arab protests fostered an unforeseen rapprochement between Israel and the Gulf countries, considerably easing the former's regional isolation. Iran's growing influence in the Middle East – one of the unintended consequences of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 – in the so-called Shia Crescent in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon created a major concern not only for Israel but also Sunni Arab countries. What's more, Gulf monarchies that espoused Wahhabi teachings viewed the rise of pro-Muslim Brotherhood governments as an existential threat given the organization's grassroots activism and nationalist perspective.

From this respect, the Obama administration's decision to launch negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program in October 2013 – ultimately culminating in the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in July 2015 – put Israel and the Gulf countries on the same side, as both fretted that Iran's return to the international system would give it a free hand to sponsor terrorism. The election of Donald Trump as U.S. president in November 2016

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alliance, calling for the country to follow a more independent foreign policy. In this respect, Turkey's decision to name its March 2019 naval exercises "Blue Homeland" warrants special mention. Interestingly, the Navy's erstwhile Chief of Staff and the architect of the Turkey-Libya deal, Rear Adm. Cihat Yaycı, has long championed the strategies promoted by Gürdeniz. His demotion by presidential decree in May 2020 has been interpreted as the result of a power struggle within the Armed Forces and might have been an attempt to allay U.S. and European concerns about Turkey's maritime policy (Gingeras, 2020; "Turkey signs maritime boundaries," 2019).

accelerated this détente as, unlike his predecessor, the new American leader embraced an aggressive strategy in rolling back Iran's power and encouraged America's allies in the Middle East to join forces at a time when Washington had signaled its intention to retreat from the Middle East and pivot to the Asia-Pacific.

Meanwhile, the regional turmoil generated by the Arab protests, the civil wars in Libya, Syria and Yemen, and the rise of ISIL reduced the salience of the Israel-Palestinian issue. In the wake of the regional uprisings, security concerns also drove Gulf countries to acquire sophisticated security and surveillance platforms – something that brought Israel to the fore with its technological edge and expertise. Rising to the occasion, Israel built backdoors into its systems and discreetly supplied necessary components to available sellers.[246]

This marriage of convenience between Israel and Gulf Arab countries finally led to a formal normalization of ties with the signing of the Abraham Accords in August 2020. Under this agreement, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain agreed to establish formal relations with Israel (with a possible nod from Saudi Arabia which could also sign formal accords at a later date) in return for Israel's suspension of the annexation of the West Bank in line with the controversial peace plan that U.S. President Donald Trump introduced in January 2020 ("Trump unveils Middle East," 2020).

In October of that year, Sudan also joined the UAE and Bahrain, announcing plans to normalize relations with Israel, to be followed by Morocco in December. It is too soon to say whether this normalization process will be long-lasting, establish trust or foster deeper cooperation between Israel and other Arab countries. In

[246] For instance, an Israeli businessman Matanya Kochavi allegedly supplied advanced surveillance aircraft to the United Arab Emirates, based on Paradise Paper leaks (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019, March 20)

retrospect, the cautious rapprochement between Israel and the Gulf countries prior to the Abraham Accords[247] have effectively reduced Israel's regional isolation – so much so that the Trump administration's decision to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2018 ("U.S. to recognize Jerusalem," 2017; "US Embassy move to," 2018), recognize Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights in 2019 ("Trump officially recognized Israel's," 2019) and unveil a controversial Peace Plan in 2020 drew only a tepid response from the Arab world.

Fixated upon the Iranian threat and concerned about antagonizing the Trump administration, the Gulf countries seemed to turn their backs on the Palestinian issue. Given their silence, Turkey was left as the strongest supporter of Palestinian rights in the region, along with Qatar and to an extent, Iran. But unable to force Israel to backtrack, Ankara could do little but watch as Israel crossed Turkey's red lines regarding the status of Jerusalem. It stands as a contradiction in itself that, Turkey

[247] Some Gulf countries have softened their rhetoric on Israel and shown a newfound willingness to publicize their informal exchanges of contact. In November 2017, Israel co-sponsored a resolution with Saudi Arabia for the first time at the U.N. Human Rights Committee condemning the Syrian government for the mass killings of civilians. In 2018, Gulf countries also made a number of gestures that indicated their changing attitude toward Israel. In March 2018, for instance, an Israel-bound plane flew over Saudi Arabia for the first time. One month later, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman stated that Israelis had a right to their own land. In May 2018, Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed al-Khalifa supported Israel's attack on an Iranian position in Syria with a tweet that said: "Israel is entitled to defend itself." But one of the most significant developments regarding this cautious rapprochement was undoubtedly Netanyahu's visit to Oman in November 2018, the first time an Israeli prime minister had made an open visit to an Arab country with whom Israel does not have formal ties in more than two decades. Not long after the visit, news emerged that dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi had been murdered at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Netanyahu, however, issued a response that took great care to avoid upsetting Saudi Arabia: "What happened at the Istanbul Consulate was horrendous and it should be duly dealt with … but at the same time, it is very important for the stability of the region and the world that Saudi Arabia remain stable." Shortly after Netanyahu's visit to Oman, Abu Dhabi welcomed Israeli Culture and Sports Minister Miri Regev for the Grand Slam Judo Tournament, in which Israel's team won two gold medals. During the ceremony, organizers played the Israeli national anthem and flew the Israeli flag – in contrast to when Israeli athletes competed under the generic flag of the Judo Federation the previous year. At the same time, Israeli Communications Minister Ayoub Kara attended a telecommunications conference in Dubai. And that same week, Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz, who also doubled as Israel's intelligence minister, participated in the World Road Transport Union World Congress in Oman, where he presented proposals for an American-backed regional rail project titled "Tracks for Middle East Peace ("Israel co-sponsors Saudi resolution," 2017; "Israel-bound plane flies," 2018; "Saudi Crown Prince says," 2018; "Israelis have right To," 2018; "Bahrain: Israel has right," 2018; "Netanuyahu: Khashoggi killing was," 2018; "Israel to begin promoting," 2018).

recalled its envoy from Israel in 2018 in response to the Trump administration's decision to move the U.S. embassy, even as it continued to cooperate with the same White House in other fields. Ultimately, however, Turkey's inability to mobilize the Muslim world to stand up for the Palestinians while Israel gained the support of the Gulf countries laid bare the limits of Ankara's identity-based politics.

In the long run, the political fragility of the Gulf regimes and the post-Trump U.S. administration under President Biden that could alter Washington's policies on Tehran render the future of the anti-Iran axis in the Middle East unclear. Even so, Israel's cultivation of new friends in the region has changed the basic parameters of Turkish-Israeli relations, which had previously always favored Turkey. Since Israel began its search for friends in the Gulf, in fact, it has not been as eager to compromise to keep bilateral relations afloat. It's certainly something useful to keep in mind when evaluating the future of Turkish-Israeli relations.

6.4. Anatomy of Turkish-Israeli relations after the flotilla crisis

From May 2010 until the signing of the normalization agreement in the summer of 2016, relations between Turkey and Israel remained strained – although they did continue in a compartmentalized manner. Interviews with diplomats suggest that behind the scenes, initiatives on both sides continued in an effort to contain and repair the damage. Leaders in both countries refrained from taking steps that would further hurt bilateral relations. For instance, then-Deputy Foreign Minister Bülent Arınç ruled out calls to sever relations with Israel and send another aid flotilla to Gaza, describing it as "easier said than done." Arınç further said taking such extreme steps would not be in Turkey's interest given the geopolitical reality: "Like it or not, only by maintaining dialogue with Israel, which is a state recognized around the

world, will Turkey be able to influence its policies ("Arınç: İsrail Davos tokadını," 2010) ?" Indeed, this pragmatic attitude, which also existed on the Israeli side, facilitated continued bilateral cooperation on certain issues – provided it was unpublicized and low-profile. In the following years, a steady increase in trade volume and the number of Israeli tourists visited Turkey led many to question whether the public spat was indeed a political theater and that bilateral relations were continuing business-as-usual.

Viewed more closely, however, Turkish-Israeli relations after the Mavi Marmara were neither black nor white. At first glance, the pair seemed to have succeeded in insulating their economic relations from their political disputes. Between 2010 and 2016, the total volume of bilateral trade increased from $3.4 billion to about $4.3 billion (Turkstat, n.d).

Between 2010 and 2016, Turkey's exports to Israel rose from $2 billion to $2.9 billion. Turkey's imports from Israel jumped from $1.3 billion in 2010 to $28.6 billion in 2014 before falling to $1.3billion in 2016 (Turkstat). The downturn in Israeli exports to Turkey stemmed mainly from a fall in the price of mineral oils and petroleum products, which accounted for 76% of Israeli exports to Turkey in 2014, 54% in 2015 and 43% in 2016 (Rivlin, 2019, p.180).

Historically, the complementary nature of the two economies has always encouraged entrepreneurs on both sides to explore trade opportunities. Thanks to the positive political environment generated by the Oslo Peace Process in the 1990s, a mutual interest in defense industry cooperation also contributed to a steady growth in bilateral trade. While the political crisis triggered by the Mavi Marmara in 2010 did not directly scuttle bilateral trade, it did have a negative impact on long-term economic activities, such as joint investments and ventures.

According to the chairman of the Israeli-Turkish Business Council, Menache Carmon, joint ventures are more meaningful indicators than bilateral trade figures in terms of assessing the strength and stability of economic cooperation between two countries. "While trade in the private sector soared between 2009 and 2015, there was no new investment," said Carmon (Nasi, 2017), adding:

> The Mavi Marmara Flotilla Incident had an unprecedented negative effect and transformed the crisis from a third-party level to a bilateral one. This erected psychological barriers that have had a significant, chilling effect on the willingness of private enterprise in both countries to do business with one another. It has also put an end to trade at the governmental level. This lack of cooperation between the two governments has created a serious obstacle for reaching the expected level of potential trade volume between Turkey and Israel. (Carmon, 2018)

Assuming that investors seek political stability and security in addition to profit, one could argue that few joint ventures occurred after the Mavi Marmara since Turkish and Israeli investors lost their appetite for such projects due to the political uncertainty that stemmed from the ongoing political tensions between their countries.

Interestingly, however, private companies that began operating individually prior to the crisis of 2010 continued their operations even after the raid, avoiding most of the prolonged political rift. For instance, despite the "low chair crisis" of January 2010 (Çelikkol, 2014), Israeli drip irrigation giant Netafim opened a new factory in Turkey that same month. Similarly, Zorlu Holding, a Turkish energy giant, opened a second energy plant in Israel – and the largest by any private investor in the country – in Ashdod in 2015, 12 years after it purchased a 25% share in the Dorad power station in Ashkelon. And as a result of the completion of a third power plant in Ramat Negev, Zorlu -as of this writing- supplies 7% of all of Israel's energy.[248]

[248] Both Zorlu Enerji and a consortium of Turcas and Enerjisa had engaged in talks with Israel over gas prices and potential pipeline routes ("Offshore gas seen as," 2016).

In 2013, Turkey's industry minister, Nihat Ergun, awarded Israeli company Adam Elktronik with a prize for innovation ("Turkey's Industry Minister Honors," 2013). Adam Elktronik is an Israeli company based in the Gebze Organized Industry Zone (GOSB) Teknopark – an industrial park built by Israeli businessman and philanthropist Stef Wertheimer in 2000. Today, the GOSB Teknopark consists of over 80 companies and 680 research and development personnel in six buildings covering a total of 12 hectares. In November 2011, the Israel-Turkey Business Council presented Wertheimer with a lifetime achievement award for his successful joint venture in Turkey and named Israel's Tefen Industries as the Israel-Turkey Company of the Year 2011 (Israel Turkey Business Council, 2011).

But one of the most exceptional cases was perhaps that of Bank Hapoalim, one of Israel's largest banks, which acquired a 79% stake in Turkey's Bank Positive in 2006. Bank Hapoalim did decide to sell a 70% stake in the partnership in 2019 but only because of poor profits, rather than political tensions. Another case is Yılmazlar, a Turkish construction company that has been operating in Israel for over 20 years. In 2010, a court decision in Israel suspended payments to Yılmazlar while the company was working out a financial dispute with the Mashab construction company. One year later, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman threatened to revoke work permits for the company's 800 construction workers, who received their permits as part of an agreement between Turkey and Israel in 2005. Under the original agreement, Israel Military Industries received a contract to upgrade Turkish tanks, while Israel granted visas to 350 Turkish workers employed by Yılmazlar. But amid the ongoing court battle, Yılmazlar owner Ahmet Yılmaz claimed that his company had become the victim of the political dispute between the two

governments. [249]The conflict was eventually resolved in late November 2011 when, according to reports, Israeli PM Netanyahu pressured the Israeli Economic and Social Committee to approve the workers' visas. Yılmazlar resumed business and by 2012, it employed 1,200 construction workers in Israel ("The Turks are back," 2016). The Netanyahu government might have intervened on behalf of Yılmazlar in an effort to avoid further disrupting relations with Turkey, although failure to do so might have also hurt Israel on an economic level, as it could have discouraged foreign investment in Israel.

Another area which pundits claimed to remain relatively immune to the political crisis was tourism. Yet, a closer look reveals that the political tensions have made Turkey a less-enticing destination for Jewish Israelis and that Arab Israelis have filled their place. [250]A poll conducted following Netanyahu's apology to Erdoğan in 2013 indicates that half of the respondents changed their plans to vacation in Turkey because of the tense atmosphere between the two countries (Lindenstrauss, 2017). Israeli tourism to Turkey peaked in 2008 with 558,000 tourists, only to fall in parallel with the countries' worsening relations, as just 87,000 Israelis visited Turkey in 2012.[251] Turkey's tourism revenues also suffered from terror attacks in 2016. In March 2016, five people were killed (including three Israeli citizens) and 36 were wounded in a suicide bombing in Beyoğlu (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). In June that same year, gunmen armed with automatic

[249] Yılmazlar has built residential projects and numerous public buildings, including the Defense Ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv's Kirya neighborhood, parts of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and new wings at the Hadassah University Hospital in Jerusalem ("In Turkey they call," 2011).
[250] Israel's Arab community have started to fly more, while Turkey has become a more attractive destination due to the weakening lira, travel agents note. Still, despite the upward trend of overall Israeli tourism to Turkey, Israeli nationals account for just 1.1% of the 39.5 million tourists who come to Turkey ("Israelis are flocking to," 2019).
[251] By 2018, however, this number had picked up, as 396,000 Israeli tourists visited the country that year (Turkstat, n.d).

weapons and explosive belts stormed Atatürk International Airport, killing 41 and injuring more than 230 (̈Istanbul Ataturk airport attack," 2016). Data provided by the Tourism Ministry suggests that the number of visitors to Turkey plummeted nearly a third in 2016 to about 25 million – the lowest in nine years (Turkstat, n.d.; "Tourists return to Turkey," 2017).

Despite the fallout between the two countries, Turkish Airlines remained one of the most popular foreign airlines for Israelis, carrying more passengers to and from Israel than any other foreign airline in 2013 and 2014, according to the Israel Airport Authority's annual report. The airline currently operates as many as 10 flights from Tel Aviv, including direct flights to İzmir and Antalya. Likewise, Pegasus Airlines, which launched direct flights to Tel Aviv in 2012, increased its flight schedule to the Israeli city up to three times a day in 2014. In 2018, Pegasus also introduced new flights from Dalaman to Tel Aviv three times a week ("Israelis are flocking to," 2019).

The positive performance of Turkey's airlines undoubtedly presents Turkey as a transit hub for Israeli tourists. Nevertheless, the numbers also reveal the fact that it is Israeli Arabs, rather than Jewish Israelis, who have been flocking to Turkey since 2010 ("Even Before Terror Attacks," 2016). It is, in fact, a trend that has only recently begun to reverse course as Ronen Carasso, the vice president of marketing at Israeli tourism company Issta, asserts that in 2019, 65% of the Israelis who came to Antalya for vacation were Israeli Arabs, but a considerable number of Jews were also returning to the Turkish Mediterranean.[252]

[252] Amsalem Tours' Vacation Packages Manager Hadar Carmel echoes Carasso says "Since the Mavi Marmara Incident, Antalya has returned to the market in a big way. The reason is that it is such a good tourism product that gives thebest value for the money. Time has had an effect. Like word of mouth from Israeli tourists visiting Aqaba or Taba, and also in Northern Cyprus, people return and talk enthusiastically, which encourages others to go there, and thesame thing is happening with

In contrast to the relatively positive outlook regarding bilateral trade and tourism, however, the Mavi Marmara Incident dealt a considerable blow to military relations. As noted earlier, Turkey froze all defense industry projects and military cooperation with Jerusalem in the wake of the raid. Ankara's decision has inevitably put the future of existing modernization agreements, joint military exercises and intelligence sharing at stake. As it is, the escalating political tension prior to the Mavi Marmara had already disrupted scheduled joint military drills. In October 2009, for instance, Ankara removed Israel from the Anatolian Eagle,[253] a Turkish-led air force drill, due to concerns about the possible domestic backlash of permitting Israeli jets to fly in Turkish skies just nine months after the conclusion of Israel's Operation Cast Lead[254]in Gaza – even though the countries jointly conducted the Reliant Mermaid/Güvenilir Denizkızı naval search and rescue exercise in August of that year.

But two weeks after the flotilla incident, the Turkish Defense Ministry informed the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) that they would not participate in Reliant Mermaid, planned for August 2010 ("Turkey Pulls Out Of," 2010). Turkey's decision might indicate the extent of the damage caused by the unprecedented military confrontation between the two countries.

Turkey. Only someone who has been there can understand the luxury of the hotels, the all-included packages with crazy abundance, with no star rating ("Israelis flock to Turkey," 2019)."

[253] Since 2001, the Anatolian Eagle exercises have been organized four times a year, with two of the drills featuring participation from countries other than Turkey (Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri, n.d.).

[254] Israel conducted Operation Cast Lead from Dec. 27, 2008, to Jan. 18, 2009, in response to rocket fire from Gaza. The operation resulted in the deaths of more than a 1,100 Gazans, provoking anger in the Muslim world (Amnesty International, 2009; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d).

In 2012, Turkey took another step and declared that it would restrict the use of its airspace to Israeli cargo flights to the extent that Ankara demanded that Israel provide 10 days' advance notice about flights that would carry hazardous materials; the designation included not only explosives but also any flight carrying batteries and other inflammable products ("Turkey restricts use of," 2010).

As retired Gen. Haldun Solmaztürk underlines, joint military exercises have always been important for military cooperation, not just because they facilitate inter-operationality among armies but also because they allow a country's military staff to see and test the latest technological equipment and improve their nation's defense. Solmaztürk's view is similar to that of Amos Yadlin, a retired deputy commander of the Israeli air force, who argued that what made the strategic, Israeli-Turkish partnership in the 1990s so special was the inter-operationality of the military forces, especially in terms of their combat readiness and threat convergence.[255]

As the rift between the militaries widened, Ankara also embarked on efforts to isolate Jerusalem from military cooperation with NATO. Pressing for Israel's removal from joint military drills, Davutoğlu vetoed Israel's participation at a NATO summit of heads of state and government that was scheduled to take place in Chicago in May 2012, undermining the alliance's Mediterranean partnership program in the process ("We weren't going anyway," 2012). Turkey only withdrew its veto against Israel in the run-up to the reconciliation agreement of 2016.

Data from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute SIPRI suggests that from 2010 and onwards, arms sales between Turkey and Israel gradually declined to almost zero. Not surprisingly, there seems to have been no new,

[255] Interview notes (H. Solmaztürk, personal communication, January 31, 2019; A. Yadlin, personal communication, April 25, 2017).

registered weapons deals between the two countries during the period. Still, it is noteworthy that weapon orders/transactions filed prior to 2010 proceeded despite the fallout between the countries. In September 2010, for instance, Israel delivered 10 Heron unmanned air vehicles that Turkey had ordered in 2005 and paid for in advance – all without attracting much attention (Aydıntaşbaş, 2010). Also, between 2010 and 2015, Israel sent Turkey 468 Navigator model armored personal carriers, which provided the prototype for the Turkish firm BMC to develop its 350-16 Kirpi tanks (SIPRI, 2019).

In the main, however, it is clear that the distrust generated by the Mavi Marmara assault negatively impacted bilateral defense ties. Israel's arms producers and military service companies that have regularly participated in the defense fairs in Turkey, were no longer welcome in the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara. Reports from Turkey's biannual International Defense Industry Fair (IDEF) confirms this changing stance.[256]Also, in April 2011, the chief of the Undersecretariat for Defense Industries, Murat Bayar, asserted:

> We are no longer buying arms from Israel, nor are we concluding new arms deals. There are only deliveries of a number of ammunitions purchased previously and other things pertaining to modernization. We also said 'one minute' to Israel on arms sales. It is true that our relations with Israel are problematic and that Israelis are willing to keep in touch with us. But we have developed our ties with other countries. ("İsrail'den tank mühimmat parçası," 2013)

However, in September 2013, the Turkish press revealed a tender by Turkey's Machinery and Chemical Industry Institution (MKE) for the shipment of 31,500 tank rounds from Haifa. What is more interesting, the head of the International Defense Cooperation Agency of the Israeli Ministry of Defense

[256] This trend would change in 2019. For the first time since the Mavi Marmara, Israeli arms companies participated in the Defense Fair, yet their participation was kept at a low profile. While Israel was not listed among the participant countries in the search motor of the fair's web page, Israeli firms were mentioned inside the report of IDEF 2019 ("IDEF Fuar Sonuç Raporu," 2019).

(SIBAT), Maj. Gen. Ret. Shmaya Avieli, commented in the news report that arms exports to Turkey had indeed never stopped ("İsrail'den tank mühimmat parçası," 2013).

6.5. The short-lived thaw in Turkish-Israeli Relations: Netanyahu's apology to Erdoğan

Indeed, in late 2012 and early 2013, the two countries did enjoy a short-lived thaw in relations. Against the backdrop of the ongoing civil war in Syria, NATO approved the deployment of surface-to-air missiles on Turkey's Syrian border in December 2012 after a request from Ankara to help Turkish troops repel potential attacks from Syrian missiles or aircraft. The United States, Germany and the Netherlands agreed to deploy two batteries of Patriot missiles each under the command of NATO along the Turkish-Syria border. At around the same time, Israel received approval to participate in NATO activities in 2013 despite Turkey's stated opposition to Israeli involvement. Speaking on condition of anonymity, Israeli officials told the Jerusalem Post that since the approval had come as NATO granted Turkey's request for the Patriot missile batteries, the alliance – that is, the United States – might have used the deployment as leverage to force Ankara to thaw its relations with Israel ("Israel to join NATO," 2012). One month after NATO deployed the Patriots to Turkey's border with Syria, Turkey and Israel exchanged military equipment for the first time since the Mavi Marmara Incident as a result of pressure from Washington. Turkey's arms purchase from Israel was, in fact, part of a deal concluded between Ankara and Boeing in 2002. Accordingly, Israel's Elta (a subsidiary of Israel Aerospace Industries) was entitled to supply electronic warfare system for installation in Turkey's Airborne Warning and Control system aircrafts

(AWACS).[257] However, the political rift between Israel and Turkey caused delays on Elta's side and therefore put Boeing in a difficult position; according to reports, Boeing and senior American officials pressured the Israeli government to deliver the parts.

On March 22, 2013, a more surprising development took place. From an airport hangar at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport just prior to his departure from Israel, U.S. President Barack Obama managed to broker a 30-minute phone call between Netanyahu and Erdoğan, in which the Israeli prime minister apologized to Turkey's leader for the IDF's tactical mistakes during the Mavi Marmara raid and agreed to pay compensation to the families of the victims ("Israel-Turkey reconciliation," 2013). In return, Turkey was expected to restore full diplomatic ties and drop the war crimes charges it had filed against Israeli authorities in a Turkish court.

As Oren indicates in his memoir, Obama greeted Erdoğan as "my friend, Recep," during the conversation, then passed the phone to Netanyahu, who read from a script of which everyone had copies. Erdoğan reportedly said recent comments of his regarding Zionism had been taken out of context[258] and that he bore no animosity toward Israel. The Turkish leader further accepted Netanyahu's apology.

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[257] According to the $200 million deal, Boeing was to supply Turkey with four new AWACS, which were Boeing 737 airlines modified to carry large radar and other military electronic systems. These planes were delivered to Turkey in 2010. However, Boeing ordered electronic warfare systems from Elta. The rapid deterioration of relations between Turkey and Israel led to the cancellation of a joint Elta-Elbit project to develop aerial reconnaissance pods for Turkish F-16 jets and halted the supply of the electronic warfare systems for the Boeing AWACS (Israel supplying advanced weaponry," 2013).
[258] During the opening session of the fifth U.N. Alliance of Civilizations in Vienna on Feb. 27, 2013, Erdoğan argued that "just like Zionism, anti-Semitism and fascism, it becomes unavoidable that Islamophobia must be regarded as a crime against humanity ("Netanyahu blasts Erdogan's 'dark," 2013)."

In fact, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and other countries had been striving for months to mediate the diplomatic crisis between Israel and Turkey. The Obama administration, in particular, had deemed the normalization of Turkish-Israeli ties as essential with regard to its Middle Eastern objectives, one of which was to broker a long-lasting peace between Israel and Palestinians. Likewise, on the Israeli front, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and National Security Adviser Yaakov Amidror reportedly pressured Netanyahu to apologize to Turkey and end the crisis. Israel's leader, however, was reluctant to do so because of the political ramifications of such a step.[259]

Ultimately, according to Oren, Netanyahu made a tough decision and placed Israel's bonds with America above all other considerations. In Oren's words, the apology was extended to honor Obama, not Erdoğan. As one of the interviewees of this research, Philip Gordon, a former White House coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf who helped plan the apology and who participated in the U.S. delegation to Israel, asserts that Obama deemed the restoration of ties between Turkey and Israel vital for regional stability, as well as for the Arab-Israeli peace process. As such, Obama personally invested a lot of energy and personal capital in the apology initiative. When asked how the Obama administration convinced the Netanyahu government to extend the apology given the domestic opposition in Israel

[259] As expected, there were mixed reactions to the apology. Lieberman, who was the chair of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee at the time, declared the apology a "serious mistake": "It hurts the motivation of IDF soldiers, strengthens extremists in the area and hurts Israel's struggle along the righteous path…It was a big mistake. ("Lieberman says apology to," 2013)." In contrast, Justice Minister Tzipi Livni welcomed the attempt at mending ties and said: "Reconciliation is a very important step and correct at this time, especially with what is happening in Syria..Israel, Turkey and the United States have shared security interests ("Lieberman calls Turkey apology," 2013)." The defense establishment also welcomed the prospect of reconciliation, though military sources likened Israel's apology to "a half-sincere one given to an aunt when apologizing for not attending the Passover Seder ("Lieberman calls Turkey apology," 2013)."

at the time, Gordon states that Obama's visit to Israel provided Netanyahu with an opportunity to demonstrate how strong the U.S.-Israeli partnership was despite the ups and downs in the previous years (P. Gordon, personal communication, August 2, 2019).

In this context, ongoing negotiations for an arms sale worth $6.5 billion might have fostered Netanyahu's more reconciliatory stance. During a visit by U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to Israel in April that year, the countries finalized the arms deal worth $10billion, which consisted of sales of anti-radiation missiles designed to destroy enemy air defenses, advanced radars for fighter jets, KC135 refuel aircraft and Osprey V22 transport aircraft ("Hagel's trip was the," 2013; "No bunker-buster bomb," 2013). In a separate agreement, the United States also pledged to continue investing in Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile defense system and granted Israel $3.1 billion in military financial assistance for 2013 (its highest allocation ever) – all in addition to the $460 million the Obama administration had already given to Israel to use in its missile defense systems and the $220 million allocated to Israeli defense for the following fiscal year (Oren, 2016, p.326).

The timeline of events from late 2012 to early 2013 suggests that developments pertaining to NATO's deployment of the Patriots, Israel's participation in NATO exercises and arms sales between Turkey and Israel might be all outcomes of the Obama administration's mediation efforts. While Gordon states that there was no formal link between these developments and Obama's efforts, he also asserts that Turkey's decision to drop its opposition to Israel's partnership with NATO might have created a positive climate for the deployment of the Patriots.

Obama's sincere efforts notwithstanding, the apology brokered by the American president failed to foster a true normalization in Turkish-Israel ties. At the

time, the Obama administration had been reformulating foreign policy priorities to decrease the U.S. military's presence in the Middle East and pivot to the Pacific to counter China – a shift that pushed Obama to channel his energy into accomplishing two main objectives in the Middle East: resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict and prevent Iran from developing atomic weapons. Given its geopolitical location and its identity, Turkey constituted a significant partner for Washington in achieving those goals. From this perspective, it is likely that the Obama administration noticed the early signals of a shift in Turkish foreign policy – as evidenced by Turkey's deteriorating ties with Israel, along with rapprochement to Iran – but chose to overlook it.

Ultimately, with the conclusion of the Kürecik radar deal, Turkey's anchoring to the West was partly secured. Concerns about a possible shift of axis faded as Turkey's strategic significance as a "model country" further increased in the wake of the Arab Spring.

6.6. The push and pull factors toward the reconciliation deal of 2016

As noted earlier in this chapter, geopolitical imperatives started to push Turkey toward normalizing its ties with Israel in the wake of the Arab Spring. Indeed, based on interview notes with senior diplomats from both sides, Turkey and Israel had almost finalized all the details of a reconciliation deal by early 2014, yet it took another two years to ink the agreement.

There are a number of reasons why the two sides failed to reach a settlement earlier. To begin with, the Mavi Marmara Incident represented the first direct military confrontation between the two countries in their history. The undeniable bad blood between Erdoğan and Netanhayu, aggravated by their hostile rhetoric toward

each other, only deepened the mutual distrust, thus obstructing normalization efforts. From this perspective, Turkey's continual elections from 2014 to 2016, during which time the AKP pursued anti-Israeli rhetoric to rally its conservative base, hindered the reconciliation efforts. Netanyahu, too, reportedly dragged his feet about signing a deal with Erdoğan before Turkey's March 30, 2014, local elections, not only because he was concerned about a domestic backlash, but also because he was expecting Erdoğan to lose much of his popular support in the elections, which were occurring not long after the corruption probes of December 2013 ("Turkey's corruption probe deepens," 2014) and thus wanted to negotiate from a stronger position (İdiz, 2014). Anti-Israeli rhetoric also characterized the run-up to Turkey's presidential elections in August 2014, as many in the country expressed fury at Israel's June 2014 Operation Protective Edge, which also drew harsh criticism from the international community due to the heavy civilian casualties that Israeli airstrikes inflicted on Gaza.[260] Erdoğan, subsequently, accused Israel of perpetrating genocide in Gaza, likening Netanyahu to Adolf Hitler ("Turkish PM Erdoğan says," 2014).

For the Israeli government, Erdoğan's tongue-lashing engendered huge discontent. It is often claimed that Netanyahu sought guarantees that Ankara's verbal attacks against him or Israel would cease following a reconciliation deal (Nir, 2014). Above all, however, the AKP government's continuing ties with Hamas represented the biggest impasse to negotiations as far as Israel was concerned. Israel reportedly requested U.S. assistance in securing the extradition of Turkey-based Hamas official Salah al-Arouri, who masterminded the kidnapping and killing of three teenagers in Hebron in summer 2014, triggering a spiral of violence that led to Operation

[260] Israeli airstrikes which inflicted heavy civilian causalties, drew harsh criticism from the international community. Amid the rising anti-Israeli sentiments, the Jewish Community living in Turkey was threatened by a pogrom unless Israeli government changed its course *vis-a-vis* the Palestinians ("IHH başkanından Türk Yahudileri'ne," 2014; "Israeli push deeper into," 2014).

Protective Edge. Amid Israeli complaints that al-Arouri had turned Turkey into a base for planning, funding and launching terror attacks in Gaza and the West Bank, the Turkish government sent him to Qatar in 2015.[261] However, his alleged return to Turkey in September 2015 (Turkish officials denied he had come back) reignited tensions between Israel and Turkey (Nir, 2015).

But amid its growing regional isolation, Turkey needed a foreign policy opening after the Arab Spring. Accordingly, it has taken a number of small steps since the start of 2015 to mend ties with various countries. For instance, Erdoğan's meeting with new Saudi King Salman in Riyadh in March 2015 was interpreted as an effort to regain some of the regional clout Turkey had lost in recent years (İdiz, 2015). Turkey's relations with the Western world also improved to an extent, as Turkey joined the U.S.-led anti-ISIL coalition in August 2015 and agreed on a refugee deal with the European Union in October that same year.[262] In this respect, the secret meeting in Rome between Turkish Foreign Minister Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioğlu and Israeli Foreign Ministry Director-General Dore Gold can be considered as part of a broader foreign policy reset.

Retrospectively – and ironically – it was developments in Syria, particularly Turkey's downing of a Russian SU-24 fighter jet,[263] that provided the real momentum for Turkish-Israeli reconciliation. The incident not only exposed Turkey's vulnerability in the face of Russian sanctions, given the asymmetrical relations between Ankara and Moscow,[264] but also considerably reduced Turkey's

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[261] Israel's Channel 10 claimed that bowing to the pressure by the United States, Turkish government deported al Arouri from the country, so as to join the US led anti-ISIL coalition in Syria (Erkuş, 2015).

[262] EU leaders at refugee crisis summit agreed to give political support to a draft deal which included visa-free travel to Europe for Turks from 2016 and onwards (EU-Turkey joint action," 2015).

[263] Turkey's downing of Russian warplane - what we know (2015, December 1). BBC News. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-34912581

[264] In the wake of the war jet crisis, Russia imposed a number of economic sanctions, including a ban on the import of furit and vegetables, poultry and salt, the sale of charter holidays to Turkey. Kremlin

room to maneuver on the Syrian battlefield. In the meantime, the ongoing military advance of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, of which Kurdish YPG fighters form the backbone, toward the western bank of Euphrates, exacerbated Ankara's concerns over the establishment of a Kurdish zone along its southern border given that Washington failed to keep its promise to remove the YPG from the town of Manbij.[265] Against this backdrop, Turkish and Israeli delegates announced a preliminary deal in Switzerland to normalize relations on Dec. 15, 2015 ("Israel And Turkey Reach," 2015). The two countries also agreed that they would begin to lay down a natural gas pipeline that would carry Israeli gas to Turkey under the Mediterranean. On Dec. 22, meanwhile, the Israeli press reported that al-Arouri had been extradited from Turkey ("Türkiye Hamas liderini sınır," 2015).

The relative thaw in Turkish-Israeli relations continued in 2016 as well. On his way back from his Riyadh visit on Jan. 2, Erdoğan told the press that

> Israel is in a need of a country like Turkey in the region. We have to acknowledge that we, too, need Israel. This is a reality of the region. If we can take steps in the spirit of mutual sincerity, normalization will follow." ("Erdoğan: Bizim İsrail'e ihtiyacımız," 2016)

The two countries exchanged warm messages in the wake of a terrorist attack in Istanbul that killed five people, including three Israelis. While Erdoğan sent his condolences to Israeli President Reuven Rivlin over the deaths of the Israelis, stressing the significance of cooperation against terrorism, Gold flew to Istanbul

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also suspended construction projects with turkish firms in Russia as well as work on TurkStream-a natural gas pipeline project that would carry Russian gas to Turkey under the Black Sea. Dependent on Russia for more than half of its natural gas and a third of its oil, Turkey was worried about sharing a similar fate as Ukraine in 2014. The risk of Kremlin's extending sanctions to energy exports prompted the AKP government to diversify energy resources. Normalization of relations with ISrael gained significance in this respect, since it held the prospects for energy cooperation in the Mediterranean ("Turkey faces big losses," 2016).

[265] On Dec. 26, the Syrian Democratic Forces eventually took over the dam from ISIL, and thereby crossed west of the Euphrates which Turkey set as a red line (US, Turkey agree to," 2015; "Davutoğlu: Cerablus kırmızı çizgimiz," 2015; "Syrian Kurds take strategic," 2015).

immediately after the attack and thanked Turkish officials for their assistance ("Erdoğan sends condolences to," 2016). On May 4, 2016, news broke that Turkey had lifted its veto and thereby allowed Israel to open its office at NATO headquarters in Brussels ("Israel confirms upgraded NATO," 2016).

6.7. The unfulfilled reconciliation

On June 27, 2016, Turkey and Israel finally announced that they had reached an agreement to end their six-year political standoff. The deal envisioned the restoration of diplomatic relations and Israel's deposit of $20 million in a bank account specified by the Turkish government as compensation for the victims of the Mavi Marmara. Under the agreement, Turkey also agreed to drop proceedings in domestic and international courts against members of the Israeli Defense Forces and prevent the filing of future claims.

While both sides presented the deal as a "diplomatic victory," the agreement featured mutual concessions. As the outline of the deal was made public, it emerged that Turkey had shelved one of its three conditions for normalization, namely, an end to Israel's blockade on Gaza. Still, the normalization deal enabled Turkey to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza ("Turkish Ship Carrying Humanitarian," 2016; "Turkey Sends Second Aid," 2016) and launch investment projects in the area that addressed the territory's energy needs and water scarcity. In line with the deal, a first aid ship from Turkey reached the Israeli port of Ashdod during the holy month of Ramadan.

The reconciliation agreement, nevertheless, sparked some protests among the AKP's conservative base. One ardent opponent of the deal, Bülent Yıldırım, the head of the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İHH) – the NGO that sponsored the Mavi Marmara flotilla – accused Erdoğan of weakening Turkey's hand against Israel by

legalizing the Gaza blockade in return for material compensation for the victims of the Mavi Marmara. In response, Erdoğan who had been a staunch advocate of ending the siege of Gaza, this time bashed critics like Yıldırım and said: “Did [İHH supporters]they ask me before they set sail to Gaza (“Erdoğan-IHH kavgası,2016)?”

On the other hand, Israelis were not entirely pleased with the deal either. Hamas was allowed to retain an office in Turkey, but the Turkish government reportedly gave assurances to Israel that the Hamas outpost would not be used for armed operations against Israel (“Israel and Turkey ends,” 2016).

In retrospect, the fact that Turkey’s relations with Israel and Russia improved almost simultaneously suggests that Ankara could be trying to find a balance, especially when considering the preparations to lay the groundwork. In this, Turkey’s decision to mend ties with Israel likely calmed anxieties among allies over its rapprochement with Russia. And given that Turkey launched Operation Euphrates Shield with Russia’s blessing, Turkish authorities may have sought to soothe Washington’s fears by rebuilding bridges with Jerusalem, thereby preserving balance in the international arena.

Still, the reconciliation deal of 2016 did not lead to a genuine normalization between Turkey and Israel, even though the countries exchanged ambassadors in November. For one, bilateral relations hit a nadir due to the Mavi Marmara, while the subsequent delay in normalization only deepened the wounds. Thus, in the wake of the reconciliation deal, both sides accepted that it would take some time to restore relations to where they were before the Mavi Marmara.

However, changes in the regional balances as well as power dynamics pertaining to Turkish-Israel relations arguably undermined the healing process. As noted earlier, Turkey’s threat perceptions shifted in parallel to developments in the

Syrian war. Ankara has long complained that its Western partners have ignored its security concerns regarding Syria. In this respect, the July 2016 coup attempt further fueled Turkey's skepticism toward the West because of the NATO affiliation of some of the putschist soldiers and Brussels and Washington's ambiguous response, which pushed Turkey closer to Russia and Iran in Syria. Moreover, Turkey's rapprochement with one of its arch enemies, Iran, understandably raised eyebrows in Israel.

What's more, Israel's move to diversify its allies reduced its regional isolation, decreased Turkey's importance as a partner. Accordingly, Israel became less eager to comprise in normalizing relations with Turkey, given Ankara's cooperation with Tehran (in Syria) and continuing support for Hamas.

Recognizing the sensitivities of their respective publics, Turkey and Israel moved to develop their cooperation on the least problematic aspect of their ties: energy. Yet, the lack of a solution to the Cyprus question[266] as well as low natural gas prices rendered the Turkish-Israeli pipeline project infeasible. Thus, the two sides had to shelf an agenda of common interest.

With normalization proceeding at a snail's pace, the Trump administration's decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital once again generated tensions between Turkey and Israel. In an escalating dispute over Israel's harsh response to Palestinian protests at the Gaza border, the two countries expelled each other's envoys in May 2018. As such, not only did the efforts to restore bilateral relations after the 2016 reconciliation deal go to waste, but the lack of normalization further undermined mutual trust and deepened both countries' wounds, making the prospects of any future normalization even dimmer.

[266] The latest round of Cyprus negotiations failed to bring a solution to the decades long dispute ("Crans-Montana Cyprus talks," 2017).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Perhaps because they best capture the spectrum of relations, the metaphors of courtship, marriage and divorce are often used when describing relations between nations. As mentioned previously, one of the most famous examples related to Turkish-Israeli relations belongs to Israel's founding father and first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, who expressed his frustration at Turkey's hesitant partnership in the 1950s, complaining that Turkey had treated Israel as a mistress, rather than a partner in an openly avowed marriage. Picking up the metaphor from where Ben-Gurion left off, if Turkey and Israel pursued an on-and-off secret love affair throughout the Cold War, they finally tied the knot in the mid-1990s. Marital bliss, however, did not last long. What happened afterwards, instead, resembles more of a troublesome breakup in which the couple filed for a divorce, only to keep bumping into each other in the same neighborhood with their new partners.

From a neoclassical perspective, Turkey's Israel policy can be characterized as a continuous struggle between Realpolitik and identity, in which the former has often prevailed – at least until recent times. Turkey's deep sympathy for the Palestinians did not prevent Ankara from becoming the first Muslim-majority state in the region to recognize Israel in 1949. Even so, Turkish policymakers have always faced difficulty in striking a balance in their relations with Israel and the Muslim world. Thus, Ankara has often preferred to keep cooperation with Israel at a low profile so as to avoid antagonizing Arab countries.

The findings of this research confirm the main hypothesis that Turkey's relations with Israel developed as a factor of its relations with the West, particularly

the United States. Just as Turkey's aspiration to become a member of Western security structures catalyzed its recognition of Israel after World War II, bilateral ties entered a period of estrangement after 1965, as Turkey sought diversification in foreign policy, primarily because of tension over Cyprus. Ankara traded cooperation with Israel in order to win Arab support for Turkey's position on Cyprus in the international arena. In the following years, the economic problems aggravated by the 1973 oil crisis also pushed Turkey to embrace a more pro-Palestinian stance with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict in the hopes of attracting Arab capital and financial support. But throughout the Cold War, Turkey and Israel avoided direct confrontation; more importantly, bilateral cooperation flourished again toward the end of 1980s, as Arab pressure on Turkey diminished and Ankara sought rapprochement with Washington.

Turkey and Israel's strategic partnership of the mid-1990s has often been described as the "golden years," almost with a sense of nostalgia. In retrospect, the period stands out as an aberration in the history of bilateral relations, as a number of overlapping factors, including the Oslo Peace Process, common security interests and the Turkish Armed Forces' promotion of close defense ties with Israel, fostered a favorable climate for Turkish-Israeli cooperation. Turkey's relations with Israel facilitated closer ties with Washington at a time when Ankara's security concerns over the PKK did not resonate with U.S. Congress, which prioritized human rights issues over security. Still, reports indicate, the United States has promoted strategic cooperation between Turkey and Israel as a shadow partner since day one.

The bonds of trust were so strong in the mid-1990s that the time since has been perceived as a cooling-off. Indeed, the regional security structure, as well as the strategic incentives that made such a partnership possible, had already changed by

2000, even before the JDP came to power. In this context, the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000 effectively buried the Oslo Peace Process, while Turkey's normalization of relations with its neighbors decreased Israel's significance as a defense partner. Still, despite the rise of the JDP, the institutional framework of bilateral relations remained more or less intact, at least until late 2008.

Throughout this period, two other important developments took place. First, as the JDP was implementing EU reforms, the Turkish Armed Forces, the backbone of Turkish-Israeli relations, were sidelined from politics. Second, the party's consolidation of power at home paved the way for the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of the executive – namely, Erdoğan and his advisers. As such, the JDP elites have gradually replaced the old political establishment, which had previously maintained a bulwark against any drastic shifts in foreign policy orientation. With the erosion of traditional checks and balances in Turkish politics, foreign policy decisions have become susceptible to ideological preferences and the values of the new political elites – a fact which should be taken into consideration when evaluating the underlying reasons for the shift in Turkey's Israel policy, along with changing geopolitical interests.

At this point, the neoclassical realist paradigm makes a significant contribution to this research by providing insight into the changes in the international and regional system, as well as the structural transformation in Turkish politics. As the theory posits, systemic pressures do not always mechanically condition state behavior, but are filtered through domestic intervening variables. In the Turkish case, the two intervening variables of state-society relations and domestic institutions highlight the changes in the institutional setting in which JDP elites operate. In this regard, neoclassical realism completes the neorealist approach to Turkish foreign

policy, which focus solely on the impact of international and regional power balances. Moreover, by bringing domestic politics back to the analysis, neoclassical realism also gives us a better understanding of the contradictory forces at play at the systemic and unit levels.

Retrospectively, Turkey has benefited from the regional power vacuum since the Iraq war. In parallel with its rising international image, Ankara felt emboldened to pursue a foreign policy line more independent of the West. What's more, the JDP's consolidation of power by eliminating possible rivals also granted the government a greater room to maneuver in foreign affairs. As such, Turkish policymakers were able to pursue policies that displayed more ideological perspectives and domestic political calculations.

The Arab Spring, accordingly, provided the perfect opportunity for Ankara to fully implement then-Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's "Strategic Depth Doctrine." Aspiring to become a regional leader and even a global power, Turkey tried to establish a power axis in the Middle East as an alternative to Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi ideology and Iran's Shia Crescent. Turkey's Ottoman heritage and its religious identity were, in a way, instrumentalized to promote this goal. In this respect, the emphasis on leading the Ummah, embracing the Palestinian issue and ramping up anti-Israeli rhetoric were all manifestations of this new policy line.

This political thinking has continued to guide Turkish decision-makers in the post-Mavi Marmara period. Indeed, it is one of the factors that delayed the signing of the normalization deal between Turkey and Israel, even though the framework agreement was ready long before 2016.

Turkey's overly ambitious foreign policy during the Arab Spring also provides a suitable study case to test the neoclassical realist assumption, which states decision-makers do not always perceive systemic imperatives correctly, and/or respond rationally even when they perceive these imperatives correctly. The receding wave of democratization in the Middle East since 2013 demonstrated the limits of Turkey's power and influence in the region. As discussed at length in the previous chapter, strategic imperatives eventually drove Ankara to sign the reconciliation deal with Israel in 2016 – an example of a course correction in which Realpolitik superseded identity. To put it differently, strategic interests outweighed the domestic political gains to be earned from maintaining an anti-Israeli stance.

Yet, contrary to expectations, the reconciliation deal didn't foster normalization in part because of Turkey's changing threat perceptions in the wake of the failed coup attempt of 2016. Concerns over a Western (U.S.) plot to topple the government initiated an unprecedented rapprochement between Ankara and the Kremlin, leading to Turkey's acquisition of the S-400 air defense system from Russia in 2017 while driving a wedge into the NATO alliance. Ankara, meanwhile, has long perceived U.S.-backed, Kurdish-administered areas in the Middle East as an attempt to encircle Turkey; unsurprisingly, its fears deepened with the emergence of areas controlled by the Syrian Kurds during the Syrian Civil War. In this context, thus, Turkey and Israel's divergent approaches to Kurdish sovereignty in the region have undermined mutual trust.

In the meantime, however, the basic parameters of the relationship have also changed. In the post-Mavi Marmara period, Israel has made new friends in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The power asymmetry that had always favored Turkey has changed. Israel, accordingly, has not been as keen as before to

compromise to keep bilateral relations afloat – representing yet another factor that has delayed normalization. After having spent years, downplaying cooperation with Israel in order not to provoke dissent among the Arabs, it is ironic for Turkey that at a time when Israel and the Gulf monarchs have become frenemies, Ankara's relations with them are not particularly bright.

One of the difficulties in conducting a long-term study, especially in the field of international relations, is the necessity of updating data and including recent developments as much as possible in order to keep research relevant. Frankly, evaluating the last 15 years of Turkish-Israeli relations has been particularly challenging, primarily because the period has coincided with the transformation of the international and regional orders. Even today, this transformation is continuing.

At the time of this writing, the world had been hit by a deadly coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic that had killed over 1.4 million people as of December 2020, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). In several countries, governments introduced various lockdown measures to control the spread of the virus, albeit at the cost of bringing the economy to a halt, disrupting education and restricting travel. While it is too soon to say whether the post-coronavirus world will change for the better, the pandemic has already exposed the fault lines in the existing liberal democratic order, and its severe economic and socio-political repercussions will be felt even more deeply in the long run.

Interestingly, however, the pandemic appears to have given a positive impetus to Turkish-Israeli ties, which have been stuck at the level of chargé d'affaires since 2018. A number of developments, including Israel's positive

response to Turkey's shipment of medical equipment to the country at the beginning of May 2020, raised expectations that both sides could restore their diplomatic ties by again exchanging ambassadors.

So, what might have changed since 2018, and what are the prospects of reconciliation based on the findings of this research?

As discussed in the previous chapter, since 2016, Ankara has been pursuing an assertive foreign policy that relies more on hard power than diplomacy. Turkey's military presence in Syria and its military support for Libya's Government of National Accord seem to have strengthened its hand strategically and rendered Turkey an actor which cannot be dismissed in future post-war negotiations. In this context, Turkey and Israel might have come to the conclusion that outflanking each other in the region is not entirely possible. In other words, both might have realized that they might be better off engaging, rather than confronting, each other.

For one thing, Turkey and Israel have convergent interests in Syria in terms of rolling back Iran's power and influence. Collaboration between the region's two biggest military powers is likely to provide opportunities to shape strategic balances in the post-war Syria.

By restoring relations with Israel, Ankara might also be hoping to divide the nascent power bloc in the Mediterranean. In this way, Turkey could substantially weaken what it perceives to be an axis to constrain it in the Eastern Mediterranean and even, in the long run, use it as a stepping-stone to mend its ties with its neighbors in the region. On the other hand, the recent fall in energy prices triggered by the pandemic has made the East-Med Pipeline Project truly unfeasible, likely reducing the project's strategic significance in the eyes of Israel.

Again, Turkey's overtures to Israel can be evaluated in line with its rapprochement with the West, especially the United States. In this respect, Turkey's military campaign in Idlib in February 2020, during which an alleged Syrian air raid killed 33 of its soldiers laid bare the limits of cooperation with Russia, since the country's skies were under the protection of Russian air defense ("Syria War: Alarm After," 2020).

What's more, the pandemic caught Turkey in the middle of an economic crisis and aggravated economic challenges. Given Ankara's huge external debt and the ongoing currency crisis (Soydan, 2020), recalibrating relations with the West could be helpful in terms of attracting foreign investment. Turkey's ambiguous stance with regard to the activation of its Russian S-400 air defense system, along with Erdoğan's reiteration of his country's commitment to EU membership, have therefore raised speculation of a strategic reorientation toward the West.

Also, considering Joe Biden's victory in the U.S. presidential elections in November 2020, Turkey might be getting prepared for a Democratic administration in the Capitol Hill. With Biden taking office, it is not expected that Erdoğan will continue to enjoy the privileges of the leader-to-leader relations established under President Trump. Turkish-American relations are expected to enter a tough period, at least in the short run, considering the Biden administration's sensitivity toward issues of democracy and human rights. And given the anti-Turkish opinion prevalent in the U.S. Congress, Turkey might be hoping that Israel can neutralize the opposition and help Turkey win Washington's ear again.

But even if strategic interests drive the two countries closer, identity-based issues continue to pull them apart. For Turkey, Israel's continuation of the Gaza embargo is a sore point, while Israel's discontent persists with regard to Turkey's

patronization of Hamas, a group it views as a terrorist organization. And then there's the bad blood between the two leaders. In this, the expectation that a new government in Israel could turn over a new leaf in bilateral relations appears to be in vain, as Netanyahu was reelected in March 2020 to serve as prime minister for another 18 months. In early December, unable to break the impasse over a budget bill, the Knesset decided to dissolve itself. Given the political fragmentation in Israeli politics, the country could be set for its fourth elections in less than two years – during which there is every likelihood that Netanyahu could again be reelected and become a coalition partner.

Against this backdrop, steady growth in bilateral trade between Turkey and Israel, which seems to enjoy an autonomy that goes beyond geopolitics and identity, continue to leave many in bewilderment. It is a clear indication that governments on both sides, see a shared interest in insulating economic relations from political tensions. Therefore, today, bilateral trade remains as the only realm that keeps Turkish-Israeli relations afloat. Yet, as discussed earlier, trade itself is not very meaningful in interpreting the nature of bilateral relations. Economic investment will surely gain a positive momentum with the normalization of bilateral relations, parallel to rebuilding of mutual trust.

In any case, a long-lasting normalization between Turkey and Israel requires the redefinition of bilateral ties on the basis of common geopolitical interests. As long as bilateral relations remain hostage to the Palestinian issue, normalization will only muddle along until the next crisis, leaving many to rue the unexploited potential of collaboration. As such, Turkish-Israeli relations will remain vulnerable to the continuing struggle between realpolitik and identity.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE OF OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your general overview of Turkish-Israeli relations from a historical perspective?
2. What are the significant milestones that you think have shaped the course of bilateral relations? (follow-up question)
3. To what extent do you think cultural factors have played a role in escalating tension between Turkey and Israel?
4. In terms of continuity and change, how do you evaluate Turkish-Israel relations today, under the AKP rule?
5. What lies ahead in terms of fostering cooperation between the two countries? Opportunities as well as impediments…

APPENDIX B

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Alpher, Yossi. (2017, April 25). Former Mossad official and director of the Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University (1981-1995). [Face-to-face interview, Ramat Hasharon].

Babüroğlu, Naim. (2019, January 16). Retired Brigadier General. [Face-to-face interview, Istanbul].

Bengio, Ofra. (2019, February 7). Senior Research Fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. Professor, Department of Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University. [Face-to-face interview, Tel Aviv].

Cindoruk, Hüsamettin. (2017, May 12). Former Speaker of Parliament (1991-1995), founding member of the True Path Party. [Face-to-face interview, Istanbul].

Cohen, Shai. (2017, March). Diplomatic Advisor to Knesset, former Israeli Council General to Istanbul (2014-2017). [Face-to-face interview, Istanbul].

Çetin, Hikmet. (2017, March 2). Former Minister of Foreign Affairs (1991-1994). [Face-to-face interview, Istanbul].

Gold, Dore. (2019, June 29). Former Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2015-2016), foreign policy advisor to Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu (1996-1997). [Face to face interview, Jerusalem].

Gordon, Philip H. (2019, August 2). Served as the Special Assistant to the President and the White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf Region (2013 - 2015). [Interview by phone].

Lapidot-Firilla, Anat. (2017, April 24).Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission in Israel. [Face-to-face interview, Tel Aviv].

Levy, Gabby. (2017, April 25). Served as Israel’s Ambassador to Turkey (2007-2011). [Face-to-face interview, Tel Aviv].

Liel, Alon. (2017, April 4). Served as the Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2000-2001), Chargé d'Affaires of Israel in Ankara (1981-1983). [Face-to-face interview, Mevaseret Zion].

Sanberk, Özdem. (2017, March 21). Served as Turkey’s representative on the U.N. Inquiry Committee on the Gaza Flotilla Crisis (2011), former Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1991-1995), political advisor to former PM Turgut Özal (1985-1987). [Face-to-face interview, Istanbul].

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Solmaztürk, Haldun. (2019, January 31). Retired Brigadier General. [Face-to-face interview, Istanbul].

Tan, Namık. (2017, March 6). Turkey's former ambassador to Israel (2007-2009). [Face-to-face interview, Istanbul].

Yadlin, Amos. (2017, April 25). Retired Major General. Former Chief of the Military Intelligence of the Israel Defense Forces (2006-2010). [Face-to-face interview, Tel Aviv].

Yakış, Yaşar. (2020, July 29). Former Turkish Foreign Minister (2002-2003), founding member of the Justice and Development Party. [Interview by phone].

Yetkin, Murat. (2020, July 29). Journalist. [Interview by phone].

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