

TRANSFORMATION OF THE
TURKISH-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP
FROM THE END OF THE COLD WAR TO THE FUTURE
AND
U.S. PERCEPTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP

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Transformation of the Turkish-Israeli Relationship from the End of the Cold War to the Future and U.S. Perception of the Relationship

Soğuk Savaş'ın Bitiminden Günümüze Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerindeki Dönüşüm ve Amerika'nın Bakış Açısı

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ABSTRACT

This thesis tries to examine the transformation of the relationship between Turkey and Israel since the end of the Cold War. Regional and domestic developments in the 1990s motivated Turkey and Israel's attitudes to deepen their relationship that was seen as a strategic asset by the United States for its strategic interests.

The thesis consists of an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. Chapter One analyzes the strategic environment of the 1990s that necessitated the modification of the Turkish foreign policy, which resulted with the establishment of closer ties with Israel. Chapter Two analyzes the determinants of the Turkish-Israeli alignment from each country's perspective. Chapter Three analyzes the scope of co-operation between Turkey and Israel in the spheres of diplomatic, economic, military and intelligence. The low-level diplomatic relations were upgraded to ambassadorial level, economic relations has increased enormously—see Table 1—military co-operation has become close and institutionalized, and intelligence sharing was expanded. Chapter Four analyzes the United States' perception of this alignment, and its benefits for the United States' strategic interests in the Middle East and the Caucasus and Central Asia. Chapter Five analyzes the recent strains on the Turkish-Israeli relationship that has raised questions about the stability of the alignment in the 21st century.

In conclusion, this thesis shows that the Turkish-Israeli relationship, contrary to recent strains that created diplomatic tensions, has continued to evolve and will do so as long as bilateral relations provide strategic benefits to both countries.

ÖZET

Bu tez Soğuk Savaş'ın bitiminden itibaren Türkiye İsrail arasındaki ilişkinin değişimini incelemektedir. 1990'lardaki bölgesel ve yurtiçi gelişmeler Türkiye ve İsrail'in ilişkilerini daha derinleştirmesine sebep oldu ki bu durum da Amerika'nın stratejik çıkarları ile doğru orantıda gidiyordu.

Bu tez giriş, beş tane bölüm ve sonuçtan oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölüm Türkiye'nin dış politikasını değiştirmesini gerektiren 1990'lardaki stratejik ortamı analiz etmektedir. Bu durum İsrail ile bağların daha da güçlenmesine sebep olmuştur. İkinci bölüm Türkiye-İsrail iş birliğindeki belirleyici faktörleri iki ülkenin bakış açısından analiz etmektedir. Üçüncü bölüm Türkiye-İsrail iş birliğini diplomatik, ekonomik, askeri ve istihbarat kapsamında incelemektedir. Düşük düzeydeki diplomatik ilişkiler elçilik seviyesine yükseltilmiştir, ekonomik ilişkiler giderek büyümektedir—bkz. Tablo 1—askeri iş birliğinde giderek yakınlaşmış ve kurumsallaşmıştır ve istihbarat paylaşımı genişlemiştir. Dördüncü bölüm Amerikan'nın bu ilişkiye bakış açısını ve Amerika'nın Orta Doğu, Kafkaslar ve Orta Asya'daki stratejik çıkarlarına sağladığı faydayı incelemektedir. Beşinci bölüm 21. yy.da Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinin istikrarlılığını uygulayan en son gerilimleri analiz etmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, bu tez en son gerilimlerden oluşan diplomatik gerginliklere rağmen, Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinin gelişmeye devam ettiğini ve iki ülke için de stratejik faydalar sağlamaya devam ettiği sürece gelişmeye devam edeceğini göstermektedir.

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Introduction

The 1990s witnessed one of the most significant developments that had great repercussions in the Middle Eastern politics. In the year of 1991, Turkey decided to upgrade its relations with Israel, which symbolized the initial step for the deepened strategic alignment of the decade. The international and regional developments freed Turkey from the Cold War realities as Amikam Nachmani states, “ two characteristics formerly featuring prominently in Israeli-Turkish relations have vanished from the scene of late: the complaint of Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, of a “mistress syndrome” (meaning that Turkey refused to acknowledge its ties with Israel) and the zero-sum-game policy that obliged Turkey to refrain from fostering relations with Israel, for fear of harming its ties with the Arab and Communist worlds.”¹ In this manner the military and intelligence oriented secret Peripheral Alliance of the 1950s transformed into an open and broader partnership with growing political, economic and cultural links that had important regional implications not just for Turkey and Israel but to the United States since it attached great importance to this partnership in terms of its strategic interests in the greater Middle East. Furthermore, the Turkish-Israeli relationship, contrary to the external and internal factors that has affected the relationship, has continued to evolve and will do so as long as bilateral relations provide advantages to both countries in the 21st century. In this sense, this paper analyzes how the strategic environment of the 1990s motivated Turkey and Israel’s attitudes to deepen their partnership in the military and non-military spheres that was seen as a strategic asset by the United States for its interests, and how the diversification of relations has preserved the strategic benefits of

¹ Amikam Nachmani quotes from Amikam Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), p.75 in Amikam Nachmani, “The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie,” *Middle East Quarterly* 5, no.2 (June 1998): 3.

the relationship in the 21st century.

Chapter One analyzes the strategic environment of the 1990s that necessitated the modification of the Turkish foreign policy to meet the challenges of the post-Cold War era. Within this context, the works of Philip Robins' *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War*, William Hale's *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000*, Amikam Nachmani's *Turkey--Facing a New Millennium: Coping with Intertwined Conflicts* and Sabri Sayari's "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: The Challenges of Multi-Regionalism" published in *Journal of International Affairs* are among the most principal ones. The end of the Cold War changed the strategic environment of Turkey. For this reason, because of internal and external developments Turkey modified its foreign policy principles and became a more active country in the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus and Central Asia. As Robins emphasizes Turkey has gone from being a peripheral player in global bipolar conflict to being a central actor in a raft of actual or potential regional conflicts.² From all these regions the Middle East witnessed one of the most significant changes in Turkish foreign policy behavior, which was the establishment of closer ties with Israel.

Chapter Two analyzes the determinants of the Turkish-Israeli strategic alignment. Within this context, the works of William Hale's *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000*, Ofra Bengio's *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship: Changing Ties of Middle Eastern Outsiders*, Gencer Özcan *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm: Güvenliğin Ötesi*, Efraim Inbar "Israel's Strategic Environment in the 1990s" in *the Journal of Strategic Studies* and *The Strategic Glue in the Israeli-Turkish Alignment in Turkey in World Politics: An*

² Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (London: Hurst & Company, 2003), 12.

Emerging Multiregional Power ed. by Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirişci are the crucial ones to understand the reasons behind Turkey's and Israel's attitudes to transform their partnership into an open one that reached beyond military and intelligence co-operation.

The Gulf Crisis followed by the Oslo peace process increased the strategic importance of Turkey and Israel, and strengthened their position vis-à-vis the Arab states that lost the backing of a superpower, being fragmented with the Gulf Crisis, and no longer held political and economic weapons to pressure Turkey in its relations with Israel. Additionally, the new opportunities in Central Asia, energy resources, weakened the value of oil producing Arab countries that attracted both Turkey and Israel. However, the Middle East with the outbreak of the Gulf crisis, in contrast to other world regions where the USSR's demise drastically improved the international situation, remained a "zone of turmoil" characterized by continuous security challenges.³ It is important to note that all these changes occurred during a time when the Turkish military increased its influence in foreign policy making because of the belief that at that time Turkey's internal and external problems became intertwined and touched on the military-security sphere that an alignment with a strong democratic, Western-oriented regional power as Israel would increase Turkey's security and meet the modernization requirements of Turkish army. When it comes to Israel, there has been no fundamental change in its motives. Israel has always sought closer partnership with Turkey for the reasons of: first of all, alignment with Turkey would put an end to Israel's isolation in an environment of hostile Arab states; second, alignment with an important country as Turkey with a majority of Muslim population would diminish the Islamic dimension of the Arab-Israeli

³ Efraim Inbar, "Israel Strategy," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* (MERIA) 2, no.4 (November 1998): 1.

conflict;⁴ third, because of the significance of the Turkey's geographic location that it has borders with Syria, Iraq and Iran, Israel would gain strategic and military advantage, finally, the cultural and historical ties of Turkey with newly independent Caucasian and Central Asian republics would benefit Israel by joint ventures in this strategically important region.

Chapter Three analyzes the scope of co-operation between Turkey and Israel. There are two major areas of co-operation that are military and non-military links. The military link includes the co-operation of air, sea and land forces of the Turkish and Israeli military establishments. The works of Ofra Bengio's *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship: Changing Ties of Middle Eastern Outsiders*, Gencer Özcan's *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm: Güvenliğin Ötesi* and Amikam Nachmani's *Turkey--Facing a New Millennium: Coping with Intertwined Conflicts* and "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie" emphasize that military co-operation between Turkey and Israel is close, institutionalized and structured, involving steering committees, regular meetings and strategic dialogues.⁵ The non-military links include the political/diplomatic, economic and cultural co-operation. The low-level diplomatic relations started to improve with Turkey's decision to upgrade its relations with Israel to ambassadorial level in 1991. From this time on significant high-level visits occurred between the two countries in which many important accords and agreements were signed. This development in diplomatic relations led to a significant improvement in economic co-operation. Especially the Free Trade Agreement that was signed in March 1996 opened up a new phase in Turkish-Israeli trade relations that resulted in increased volume of trade. The

⁴ Efraim Inbar, "Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership," *Turkish Studies* 3, no.2 (Autumn 2002): 35.

⁵ Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," 5.

economic co-operation between Turkey and Israel includes the sectors of trade, tourism, investment, joint ventures, and co-operation on water and energy issues.

Chapter Four analyzes how the United States, close ally of Turkey and Israel, perceived the Turkish-Israeli alignment, and how the regional implications of this alignment was for the benefit of the United States' strategic interests in the Middle East and the Caucasus and Central Asia. Although the threat emanating from the Soviet Union had gone and the United States emerged as the sole power, the United States increased its presence in the post-Cold War era. The new threats emanating from the Middle East, and the occurrence of power vacuum in the Caucasus and Central Asia, which has rich energy resources, with the collapse of the Soviet Union necessitated the United States to adopt active policies towards these two regions for the sake of not just protecting its allies but also protecting its geo-political and economic interests. In this sense, the Turkish-Israeli alignment emerges as the most valuable option for the effective U.S. policies in the Middle East and the Caucasus and Central Asia. The works of Efraim Inbar "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership" in *Turkish Studies*, and Alan Makovsky in *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, ed. Morton Abramowitz emphasize that these two pro-US and status quo oriented powers with their military might, Turkey with the largest military force in the area and Israel with advanced weapons and technological know-how, changed the balance of power in the region. The United States proved the significance of this alignment to its strategic interests by participating in the joint naval exercises, Reliant Mermaid, joint aerial training exercises, Anatolian Eagle, and into the strategic dialogues that were held between Turkish and Israeli high-ranking officers.

Chapter Five analyzes the relations between Turkey and Israel in the first years of the 21st century and Turkey's regional role in the aftermath of Iraq War. The Turkish-Israeli alignment has recently been challenged by internal and external factors that has raised questions about the stability of the alignment in this new century. In this sense, the works of Gencer Özcan *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm: Güvenliğin Ötesi*, Joshua Walker "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East" in *Mediterranean Quarterly* and Mustafa Kibaroglu "Clash of Interest over Northern Iraq Drives Turkish-Israeli alliance to a Crossroads" in *The Middle East Journal* emphasize that although a second Palestinian intifada in 2000, the election of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002 that has Islamic roots, the United States' war in Iraq in 2003 and the situation of Northern Iraq and Kurds, and Hamas visit to Ankara in 2006 have increased strains on the relationship, the relationship has not been severely challenged like the Cold War years, and has continued to evolve . Through increased military, economic, and cultural interactions the political dimension of the Turkish-Israeli alliance has been played down.⁶ The recent efforts that has been demonstrated by Turkish and Israeli governments to repair the damage done to the relationship stress that the relationship continues to provide strategic benefits to both countries that neither of the two would disrupt in the near future.

⁶ Joshua Walker, "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 17, no.4 (2006): 87.

Chapter One

The Post-Cold War Era and Turkish Foreign Policy

The end of the Cold War together with the dissolution of the Soviet Union has changed the international system. As Vassilis K. Fouskas states, “With the end of the Cold War, the system of power, Cold War organisational structures and modes of political and strategic thinking, collapsed too”.⁷ The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the communist ideology has removed the greatest threat to the West. While the Western Europeans and the Americans, who claimed that the end of the Cold War marked a decisive victory for the liberal values of democracy, co-operative institution-building, and the free markets, celebrated the historic victory of the Western value system, Turkey was left, as ever, at the margins.⁸ In addition, the end of the Cold War has weakened the status of NATO. As Kibaroglu states the eastward expansion of the European Union, and the German- and French-led efforts to establish a “European army” have raised questions about the NATO’s future role.⁹ This has brought concerns in Turkey that the strategic importance of Turkey in the post-Cold War era would decline since Turkey was not a part of the European Union.

However, the new era has brought its own challenges. The states surrounding Turkey in the post-Cold War era has increased in numbers. Although the new emerged states were smaller and weaker than Turkey in terms of economics and military power, the instable nature of them brought some crises, Gulf crisis, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Nagorno-Karabakh crises, around Turkey’s borders that forced Turkey to take more

⁷ Vassilis K. Fouskas, *Zones of Conflict: US Foreign Policy in the Balkans and the Greater Middle East* (London: Pluto, 2003), 11.

⁸ Philip Robins, *Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (London: Hurst & Company, 2003), 13.

⁹ Mustafa Kibaroglu, “Turkey and Israel Strategize,” *Middle East Quarterly* 9, no.1 (Winter 2002): 63.

active policies with the fear that they would endanger Turkish territorial unity and security. Because even in the 1990s, Turkey's view of security was still determined by traditional, hard security issues like external military threats.¹⁰

William Hale states that the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the communist rule in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union during 1989-91, altered Turkey's international environment as profoundly as either of the two previous transformations of 1918-23 and 1945.¹¹ Moreover, becoming a multiregional country in the post-Cold War era affected Turkey than any other country. Turkey has gone from being a peripheral player in global bipolar conflict to being a central actor in a raft of actual or potential regional conflicts.¹² Within this context, Turkey has altered its foreign policy and has become a more active country in the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Why Turkey suddenly became so active in its foreign policies in comparison with previous eras? Since the foundation of the Republic, Turkey had preferred not to engage in involvements outside its borders. Barry Rubin states that Ataturk's priority was rapid, systematic socioeconomic development, which required avoiding war, just as nation-state development required avoiding imperial expansion.¹³ In spite of this, Turkey did not become totally isolated from the world. For example, Turkey joined NATO and became an ally of the United States against the expansionist Soviet threat throughout the Cold War era. Turkey's alignment with the United States and membership in NATO can be considered as not just to form a shield against the Soviet threat but most importantly a

¹⁰ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms*, 165.

¹¹ William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 191.

¹² Robins, *Suits and Uniforms*, 12.

¹³ Barry Rubin, *Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multiregional Power*, ed. Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci (Istanbul: Bogazici University Press, 2002), 2.

step toward the West. Because as Rubin states, “the country’s main goals were oriented toward gaining acceptance in the West, and especially to be seen as part of Europe”.¹⁴

Although relations with the West stayed as the main component of the Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s, the expansion of the foreign policy into new areas has basically occurred because of internal and external reasons. External reasons by William Hale named as global changes are: instabilities, ethnic conflicts, contested borders, and economic hardship, resulting in weapons proliferation, the rise of extremist ideologies and inter-state disputes, outside the then NATO area in the central Europe and in the Middle East and southern Mediterranean; new opportunities in Central Asian and elsewhere.¹⁵ Since the future of the Cold War oriented NATO became unpredictable and Turkey was left outside the European Union, the new threats coming mostly from the Middle East, outside NATO area, which Turkey could no longer ignore, has raised concerns in Turkey about its security. Thus, this new world order with new threats necessitated a revision in Turkish politics.

Vassilis Fouskas stresses the strategic importance of two strategic resources, oil and gas, that have shaped the geo-politics of the 1990s. Fouskas states that the new realist game that has been unfolding since 1990 has to do with the new type of economic and political competition over security and energy matters that have grown out of traditional conflicting geo-political interests and strategic rivalries.¹⁶ He further stresses that the United States, by any means available to it, wanted to establish its political hegemony over Eurasia not just in the interest of maintaining the unhindered flow of oil from these rich regions to world markets at stable prices but the United States also wanted to control,

¹⁴ Rubin, *Turkey in World Politics*, 1.

¹⁵ Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*, 193-194.

¹⁶ Fouskas, *Zones of Conflict*, 12.

as much as possible, their production and safe transportation to the Western markets by eliminating possible competitors.¹⁷ In this manner, Turkey because of its geographical position became an asset for the West, especially the United States, and implemented more active policies toward these global changes in the 1990s.

Internal reasons are domestic political environment and economic factors. In terms of domestic politics Sabri Sayari states that these changes have occurred during a period when the growing visibility of political Islam and the intensification of the Kurdish problem increased strains on the country's political and social order, and as a result Turkey modified some of its established republican foreign policy principles and undertook new initiatives to meet the challenges of the post-Cold War era.¹⁸ The National Security Documents of the years of 1992 and 1997 emphasized that the threat emanating from the Soviet Union has been exchanged with Kurdish separatism and political Islam that has received foreign support, especially by states that have been hostile to Turkey, has become the priority issue in Turkish national security. The connection of internal threats with external threats has made domestic and foreign politics become intertwined, which resulted in the military gaining the upper hand in the foreign policy-making process since these problems for them were related to the military/security sphere, and necessitated effective and active policies. There are also the effects of interests groups, ethnic lobbies, Islamist organizations, business leaders, and political parties, on foreign policy decision-making process to some extent.

Economic needs also had important effects on Turkey to implement more active foreign policies in the 1990s. The end of the Cold War has brought an increase in the

¹⁷ Fouskas, *Zones of Conflict*, 12-19.

¹⁸ Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: The Challenges of Multi-Regionalism," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no.1 (Fall 2000): 169-170.

globalization of economic affairs, which pushed Turkey to become more active in order to have access to international markets. Rubin states that due partly to the development and international competitiveness of the Turkish economy, Turkey now seeking export markets and certain raw materials.¹⁹ Also the two strategic resources of oil and gas had tremendous effect on Turkish foreign policy. The economic growth in Turkey boosted its energy needs. The new opportunities in the Central Asia encouraged Turkey to take a more active part in the region. Heinz Kramer states that the Turkey's main regional interest was to participate in developing and marketing the large oil and gas resources locates in the Caspian Sea region to deal with the country's rising energy demands, gain considerable economic advantages from pipelines and downstream installations, and strengthen the strategic importance of the country for the Central Asian states as well as for traditional allies in the West.²⁰ Over all, with the end of the Cold War the external and internal forces changed the foreign policy environment of Turkey, which resulted in policy modifications to meet the requirements of the post-Cold War era.

In this respect, the Middle East has been the main region where Turkish foreign policy has been very active in the 1990s. Sayari states that with the exception of a brief period in the mid-1950s, Turkey has assiduously pursued a cautious and low-profile policy toward its southern neighbors, which arose from several worries: Turkey was concerned about the possibility of being drawn into regional conflicts; its main focus was on the perceived Soviet threat from the north; and the former Soviet Union's close ties with countries such as Syria limited the scope of Turkey's actions.²¹ Also as mentioned

¹⁹ Rubin, *Turkey in World Politics*, 5.

²⁰ Heinz Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2000), 101.

²¹ Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era," 170.

relations with the West was the priority of Turkey since the foundation of the Republic. However, Turkey's approach to the Middle East has remarkably changed with the Gulf crisis.

The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq on 2 August 1990 demonstrated that, even if the superpower conflict has ended, the Middle East is still a prime source of global instability.²² United Nations Security Council passed a resolution when Saddam Hussein refused to withdraw his forces from Kuwait. The resolution agreed on a full economic embargo on Iraq. However, the resolution was problematic for Turkey in terms of political and economic reasons. The resolution required the closure of the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline, and stopping all the trade relations with Iraq, which would create serious problems in Turkish economy. On the other hand, Turkish government was divided in the idea of an involvement in the crisis with the fear of a possible attack from Iraq to Turkish territory. Hale states that Turkey secured a pledge from NATO that, if Iraq attacked Turkey, then the other allies would come to its assistance under the NATO treaty at a NATO summit held in Brussels on 11 August.²³

As a result, thanks to President Özal, who saw the opportunity of regaining the strategic importance in the eyes of the West, Turkey decided to close the pipeline and joined the allied forces in the leadership of the United States by permitting the use of its NATO bases. Hale states that Özal was anxious to draw Turkey out of the wings, onto centre stage; in effect, he was trying to endow Turkey with a regional role commensurate with its political and economic strength.²⁴

Overall, Turkey broke its tradition of non-involvement in regional conflicts that

²² William Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis," *International Affairs* 68, no.4 (1992): 679.

²³ Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis," 685.

²⁴ Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis," 691.

enhanced its status in the region and in the West. However, following the Gulf crisis the potential threats emanating from the Middle East have grown. The acquisition of non-conventional weapons by hostile states, and the chances of terrorist organizations, which have been receiving support from these hostile states, acquiring non-conventional weapons have increased the level of threat Turkey facing in the post-Cold War era, since Turkish army had no defence against these threats in comparison to the sophisticated techniques of the allies as it witnessed during the Gulf War. Moreover, in addition to the growing regional threats the situation of internal threats, Kurdish separatism and political Islam, receiving support from Turkey's hostile neighbors has connected Turkey's internal and external threats. Within this environment, the establishment of closer ties with Israel has been the most remarkable progress in Turkish foreign policy.

However, relations with Israel go back to 1949, when Turkey recognized Israel. In the following year, diplomatic relations began at the level of legation, meaning that ministers, not ambassadors, were exchanged.²⁵ The situation of the Middle East in the 1950s, increased influence of the Soviet Union, the establishment of United Arab Republic between Egypt and Syria and the fall of monarchy in Iraq, has brought Turkey and Israel under the Peripheral Alliance. Bengio states that Ben-Gurion had three main motives for initiating the peripheral alliance are: breaking the isolation that Arab states had imposed on Israel; stabilizing the region and forming a new balance of power; strengthening relations with the West, especially the United States.²⁶

Although both countries had common interests, the alliance had ups and downs because of the Turkey's specific nature of duality. The political, cultural and geographic

²⁵ Raphael Israeli, "The Turkish-Israeli Odd Couple," *Orbis* 45, no.1 (Winter 2001): par. 3.

²⁶ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 40.

duality of Turkey, and the changing international-systemic and domestic-unit level forces, in addition to this duality, have given direction and scope to Turkish foreign relations.²⁷ Being located at an unique geographical location and having both Western and Islamic characteristics in its nature, at different times, Cuban missile crisis, Cyprus issue, the 1973 war, and oil crisis, Turkey distanced itself from Israel and became closer to the Arabs for political and economic support. Furthermore, the interests of the United States during the Cold War made this alignment impossible since it would antagonize the Arabs that the United States established good relations for blocking Soviet influence. Despite this condition Turkey and Israel cooperated secretly in the military and intelligence spheres. However, in November 1980, when the Knesset's passed the Jerusalem Law, Turkey recalled its minister and downgraded relations to the level of second secretary, one step short of breaking off diplomatic relations completely.²⁸ Thus until the 1990s, relations were symbolic more than substantive.²⁹ However, the relationship became substantial when Turkey upgraded its relations with Israel to ambassadorial level in 1991.

Soon afterward, the relationship has made a progress in the spheres of diplomatic/political, economic, and most importantly military/security. In the diplomatic/political sphere, high-level contacts have occurred, such as visits by the Turkish presidents and Israeli presidents, in which many important accords and agreements were signed. This development in diplomatic relations led to a significant improvement in economic co-operation that includes the sectors of trade, tourism,

²⁷ Hakan M. Yavuz and Mujeeb R. Khan, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Duality and the Development (1950-1991)," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 14, no.4 (Fall 1992): 70.

²⁸ Israeli, "The Turkish-Israeli Odd Couple," par. 3.

²⁹ Cevik Bir and Martin Sherman, "Formula for Stability: Turkey Plus Israel," *Middle East Quarterly* 9, no.4 (Fall 2002): 23.

investment, joint ventures, and co-operation on water and energy issues, which manifested itself through agreements. The military/security co-operation includes weaponry upgrade, hardware purchase, joint production, training, and intelligence sharing, also manifested itself through agreements, which are the focal point of the relationship. This budding alliance has altered the strategic power balance in the oil rich Mideast.³⁰

What were the reasons for the deepened and publicized Turkish-Israeli relations? First of all, both for Israel and Turkey the end of the Cold War brought concerns about their strategic importance in the new game of the 1990s. When it comes to Israel, there has been no fundamental change in its attitude towards Turkey. Israel has always sought closer partnership with Turkey because of the reasons that Bengio states above for the initiation of the Peripheral alliance. It was Turkey and its political environment that necessitated Turkey to be more eager to deepen the relations with Israel. Daniel Pipes offers the concepts of general disposition and practical needs that brought Turkey and Israel together as:

in the first category, Turks remember past ties to Jews, many Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 found refuge in Ottoman lands, than those to Arabs; Turkey and Israel also share a common sense of otherness from the non-democratic and Arab regimes that dominate their region; the Turkish military and the state of Israel share a unique political premise, being the region's most powerful, anti-fundamentalist institutions; in the second category, Turkey has unresolved territorial problems with its two Arab neighbors, both of them long-standing

³⁰ Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente," *National Interest* issue 50 (Winter 1997/98): par. 29.

enemies of Israel; while Greek Cyprus represents a standing problem for Ankara, its welcome for various Palestinian groups has made it also a concern for Jerusalem; as for Iran, since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 its regime has sought simultaneously to destroy Israel and to create an Islamic Republic of Turkey.³¹

The historical ties, common identities, common political principles and common threats are surely important motivators to establish a closer relationship. However, it was the Gulf War, the Oslo peace process and the new generation threats that opened up the way for Turkey and Israel to align not just secretly in the military and intelligence spheres but also in the diplomatic and economic spheres. The Gulf War by joining the US-led coalition in the crisis has awarded Turkey with enhanced security since the Iraq was weakened and the Arab states were fragmented in their approach to the war. The Oslo peace process has removed the greatest obstacle for Turkey in its relations with Israel. The initiation of an Arab-Israeli Peace process removed complications due to Turkish policy of uneasy balancing between the Arab countries and Israel especially since the 1960s.³² If the Arabs sat at the same table with Israelis, there was no reason for Turkey to hesitate in doing the same.

This diversified alignment had regional implications, such as enhanced deterrence, energy security, strengthening the peace process, etc., that not just benefited the two countries but also the United States, an ally of both Turkey and Israel for decades, in terms of strategic interests. Although it was stressed many times by Turkish and Israeli officials that this alignment was not a formal military alliance against any third party, the significance of it could not be underestimated. As Gencer Özcan and Ofra

³¹ Pipes, "A New Axis," par.21-23-24.

³² Meliha Altunisik, "The Turkish-Israeli Rapprochement in the Post-Cold War Era," *Middle Eastern Studies* 36, no.2 (April 2000): 174.

Bengio emphasize:

On the face of it, there was really nothing unique or exceptional about the agreement with Israel, since Turkey had signed agreements more than 30 countries; however, closer analysis would show that it was unique on many accounts, in terms of depth, variety and intensity.³³

Additionally, this alignment with the United States' blessing, improved each country's position in the United States. The Middle East has always been an important region for the United States. United States involvement in the Middle East started with the period between two World Wars, when its main interest was economic--the quest for oil--and continued in the period from the end of the World War II to the end of the Cold War, when it diversified its to include political and ideological fields.³⁴

However, the end of the Cold War and the bipolar system has altered the United States' policies toward the Middle East. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and its withdrawal from the Middle East has given the chance of becoming more active to the United States. The Gulf War added yet another dimension, military strategic interests.³⁵ The interests of the United States in the Middle East are: oil, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, security of Israel, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and democratization. These interests led to a regional strategy, which based on three policy pillars: dual containment of Iraq and Iran; encouraging and Arab-Israeli Peace Process; promoting a vision of a more democratic and prosperous regime--instead of trying to introduce democracy to countries ruled by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, the

³³ Ofra Bengio and Gencer Özcan, "Changing Relations: Turkish-Israeli-Arab Triangle," *Perceptions, Journal of International Affairs* 5, no.1 (March-May 2000): par.15, <http://www.sam.gov.tr/perceptions/Volume5/March-May2000/VolumeVGencerOzcan.pdf>.

³⁴ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 8.

³⁵ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 8.

United States shifted its policy toward promoting alignment between two self-styled democracies in the region, Turkey and Israel.³⁶

In this sense, the Turkish-Israeli alignment emerges as the most valuable option for the effective U.S. policies. These two pro-US and status quo oriented powers with their military might, Turkey with the largest military force in the area and Israel with advanced weapons and technological know-how, changed the balance of power in the region. The United States proved the significance of this alignment to its strategic interests by participating in the joint naval exercises and joint aerial exercises between the Turkish and Israeli navies and air forces, and into the strategic dialogues that were held between Turkish and Israeli high-ranking officers.

Overall, the Turkish-Israeli alignment became the most crucial event of the Middle Eastern politics in the post-Cold War era that has been transformed into an open and broader partnership with growing political, economic and cultural links that had important regional implications not just for Turkey and Israel but to the United States since it attached great importance to this partnership in terms of its strategic interests in the greater Middle East.

³⁶ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 11-12.

Chapter Two

The Determinants of the Turkish-Israeli Relationship

The military and intelligence oriented secret Peripheral Alliance of the 1950s has transformed into an open and deepened alignment that has evolved not just in the military and intelligence sphere but also in the political, economic and cultural spheres in the Post-Cold War era. What were the reasons behind Turkey's and Israel's attitudes to transform their partnership into an open one that reached beyond military and intelligence co-operation in the 1990s? Although the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have eliminated the expansionist Soviet Union and the communist ideology, the new era has brought its own challenges. In a way, the collapse of the East heralded an almost simultaneous 'collapse' of the West in terms of new power arrangements and institutional restructuring.³⁷ The new realist game of the 1990s in the greater Middle East, which includes Middle East, Caspian and the Caucasus, and Central Asia, has increased concerns in Turkey and Israel about their place in this new era. However, with the outbreak of the Gulf crisis in the Middle East, in contrast to other world regions where the USSR's demise drastically improved the international situation, remains a "zone of turmoil" characterized by continuous security challenges³⁸ that changed the security environment of Turkey and Israel, which created the appropriate conditions for them to develop their relationship into a strategic alignment. In this context, there should be an evaluation of the motivators of Turkey and Israel separately.

Turkey's Motives

In addition to regional developments, there are some specific developments

³⁷ Fouskas, *Zones of Conflict*, 13.

³⁸ Efraim Inbar, "Israel Strategy," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* (MERIA) 2, no.4 (November 1998): 1.

belonging to Turkey that have affected the Turkish foreign policy behavior and attitude towards Israel in the 1990s. As stated in the previous chapter the historical memories, Jews took refuge in Ottoman Empire, common identities such as being non-Arab, democratic and Western-oriented, and common political principles, to become powerful in all aspects to prevent the status quo has been one of the motivators in Turkish attitudes towards Israel. This sense of otherness deepened in the 1990's when the Arab Middle East failed to undergo the democratizing transition experienced by the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.³⁹

The historical memories and common identities are surely important reasons for bringing Turkey and Israel together but there are two developments that need the most attention to fully understand the reasons behind this rapprochement. The first is the Gulf War that strengthened the position of Turkey vis-à-vis the hostile Arab states by joining the US-led coalition forces. As a result of the Gulf War and the weakening of the Iraqi army, Turkey felt secure, especially since the war left in Turkish hands vast amounts of American weapons, including armored vehicles, fighter aircraft, and missiles.⁴⁰ Secondly, the Oslo peace process that was signed in 1993 between the Israelis and Palestinians has removed an important obstacle for Turkey in its relations with Israel. Turkey has always tried to be neutral towards the Arab-Israeli conflict but for reasons more emotional than rational, the Palestinian cause enjoyed almost universal support among the Turkish citizenry.⁴¹ Turkey's foreign minister Mümtaz Soysal insisted in late 1994 that what Israel calls terrorism is nothing but the Palestinians "trying to defend their rights."⁴² Zvi

³⁹ Walker, "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East," p.80.

⁴⁰ Israeli, "The Turkish-Israeli Odd Couple," par.19.

⁴¹ Israeli, "The Turkish-Israeli Odd Couple," par.20.

⁴² Nachmani quotes from Cumhuriyet, Nov. 5, 1994 in "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," par. 15.

Elpeleg, Israel's ambassador to Ankara (1995-97), stressed that a crisis in Israeli-Arab relations would not entail deterioration in Israeli-Turkish ties, but a downturn in relation to the Palestinians would.⁴³ Thus, the Oslo peace process opened up the way for Turkey to develop its relations with Israel. If the Arabs sat at the same table with Israelis, there was no reason for Turkey to hesitate in doing the same.

Turkey strengthened its position vis-à-vis the Arab states, since following the Gulf War and the Oslo accords the Arabs have lost their political and economic powers that they had used on Turkey to force it to downgrade its relations with Israel. However, with the end of the Cold War the potential threats emanating from the Middle East have grown enormously. The Middle East has always been a problematic region for Turkey with its potential threats to its territorial unity and security. Turkey has been surrounded by hostile neighbors that have threatened Turkish security with territorial disputes, water issues, and hosting and supporting the terrorist organizations on their lands, which eased the way for the organizations' militants to infiltrate into Turkey for their attacks because these states share a border with Turkey.

Following the Gulf crisis the level of threat has increased with the concept of non-conventional weapons. Countries on Turkey's Middle Eastern borders have stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons and growing arsenals of ballistic missiles.⁴⁴ The post-Cold War environment has also made the acquisition of these weapons easier. Russia has become one of the main suppliers of material and technology to aggressive Middle Eastern states to fulfill its need economic needs. This overall has raised another concern about the possibility of usage of these weapons by terrorist organizations. Some Turks

⁴³ Amikam Nachmani, *Turkey: Facing a New Millennium: Coping with Intertwined Conflicts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 209.

⁴⁴ Kibaroglu, "Turkey and Israel Strategize," p.63.

argue that Israel's nuclear capabilities were the driving force behind the efforts of Syria, Iraq, and Iran to develop non-conventional capabilities.⁴⁵ It may be true that these states have developed these weapons against Israel but no one can ensure that they would not use against Turkey during a crisis, since there is historical record that they have used against one another.

Another factor is the Turkish military's influence in the foreign policy-making process in the 1990s. The most striking feature of Turkey's foreign and security policy making in the 1990s, especially in the latter half of the decade, was the military's establishment's enlargement of its de facto and de jure authority vis-à-vis the political-civil authorities in these domains.⁴⁶ Although civil authorities had gained control over the governance, the military through the National Security Council has continued to control the decision-making process on two important internal problems, Kurdish separatism and political Islam, that have been receiving support from hostile neighbors.

The Turkish military believed that Turkey's internal and external problems had become so intertwined, and developments touched on the military-security sphere that only military involvement could find solutions.⁴⁷ The National Security Document, 1992, stated that Kurdish separatism that receives its sources from Turkey's southern neighbors, Syria, Iran, Greece etc... has taken the place of Soviet expansionism as the primary threat.⁴⁸ The 1997 document stated that political reaction together with the PKK terrorism has become a primary threat that also receives support from neighbors.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁵ Kibaroglu, "Turkey and Israel Strategize," p.63.

⁴⁶ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 81.

⁴⁷ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 82.

⁴⁸ Sernur S. O. Yassıkaya, *Türkiye-İsrail İşbirliğinin Sınırları—Siyasi ve Ekonomik Sonuçları Bakımından*, İstanbul, Yıldız Technical Universty, Published master thesis, 2003: p.9.

⁴⁹ Yassıkaya, *Türkiye-İsrail İşbirliğinin Sınırları*, p.14.

deep-seated connection between internal and external threats has motivated the military to become more active in the policy-making process because all these problems have occurred during a period of political instability. There was the problem of governmental instability, from 1991 to 1999 many coalition governments were formed, which for the military lacked effective leadership or were dangerous governments to the secular system that would not be able to perform efficient policies to secure Turkish national security. Thus, military increased its influence in foreign policy making, and supported the development of close ties with a strong state like Israel that shares common threats with Turkey.

An additional factor that motivated the Turkish military is the modernization requirements of the army. The Gulf War first highlighted the short-comings of the Turkish army compared to sophisticated techniques of the allies in the fields of electronic warfare, mid-air refueling, and night air combat, and secondly, the war enlarged the spectrum of threats emanating from the Middle East, most importantly, the sudden emergence of non-conventional weapons—in particular the long-range ballistic missiles—against which the Turkish army had no defense.⁵⁰ Turkey has been subjected to criticisms from the United States and the European Union in its policies towards the Kurds that resulted as delays in the delivery of military equipment and even embargos. In reaction to Ankara's authoritarianism, many European countries imposed a strict embargo on sales of military equipment to Turkey.⁵¹ Also Congress in Washington was intermittently placing a condition of the sale of arms to Turkey on the improvement of

⁵⁰ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 83.

⁵¹ Ömer Taşpınar, "What next for Turkish-Israeli relations?" *Daily Times*, January 13, 2003, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_13-1-2003_pg3_3

human rights there.⁵² In this respect, Turkey, especially the Turkish military, favored an alignment with Israel because of the reputation of Israel with its advanced weapons and technological know-how. Israel's own defense industry offered Turkey an opportunity to diversify its military dependence beyond the United States without having to worry about political strings being attached by Congress.⁵³ Turkey also realized that establishing closer relations with Israel would strengthen its position in the United States through American Jewish lobby as a counterbalance to Greek and Armenian lobbies. There are, of course, limits to what American Jews can do for Turkey; however, the Turks are now more likely to receive a favorable hearing in Congress.⁵⁴

Finally, the new opportunities in Central Asia have brought Turkey closer to Israel since both share common strategic interests in the region. Turkey has wanted to enhance its regional influence in this energy-rich region because of political, economic and strategic interests. Israel has established good diplomatic and economic relations with the new republics. There is hope that activism of both countries separately and by joint ventures in the region would pull the republics to the pro-US side, which would prevent Islamic movements backed by Iran, and Russian influence in the region. Thus, it would secure the energy routes that Turkey has been among the main players with its project of Baku-Ceyhan pipeline.

With the impact of all the circumstances that have been explained above changed the security environment of Turkey, and enabled Turkey to regain its strategic importance and modify its foreign policies, especially toward Israel because of common threats and

⁵² Nachmani, *Turkey: Facing a New Millennium*, 50.

⁵³ Walker, "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East," p.74.

⁵⁴ Dov Waxman, "Turkey and Israel: A New Balance of Power in the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly* 22, no.1 (Winter 1999): p. 31.

strategic interests and Israel's capacity of sophisticated weapons and technological know-how.

Israel's Motives

The developments in the international system and in the Middle East with the end of the Cold War and superpower conflict in the Middle East changed the security environment of Israel. Regarding Israel's national security, while the chances for a large-scale conventional war were lower than in the past, Israel still faced existential threats.⁵⁵ I

Some commentators have suggested that it was Turkey that approached Israel seeking rapprochement, but even if so, there was no doubt that Israel responded promptly because of its own motives.⁵⁶ Moreover, Israel has always sought closer relations with Turkey, but the United States' interests during the Cold War and Turkey's internal situation as stated in the previous chapter has disabled the chances for an open and developed alignment that includes co-operation not just in the military and intelligence sphere but also in the political, economic and cultural spheres.

However, the international system and regional developments in the post-Cold War era has enabled Israel to regain its strategic importance, and develop an open and deepened alignment with Turkey. The most significant change in the international system was with the end of bipolar system the United States has become the hegemonic power. This has benefited Israel with being on the winning side of the Cold War, and strengthened its position vis-à-vis the Arab countries. The Arab countries were weakened by the collapse of the Soviet Union that the Arabs no longer had the backing of a superpower, which thus limited their military and diplomatic options versus Israel;

⁵⁵ Efraim Inbar, "Israel's Strategic Environment in the 1990s," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no.1 (March 2002): 21.

⁵⁶ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 95.

moreover, the most viciously anti-Israel countries in the Middle East, Iraq and Iran, became the enemies of the US and subject to American sanctions.⁵⁷ In addition, the new opportunities in Central Asia, energy resources, weakened the value of oil producing Arab countries that resulted in lower oil prices. Gulf War also affected the political mood in the region that emphasized the American dominance and allowed for the evolving peace process between Israel and its neighbors, which significantly ameliorated the international circumstances in which Israel operated.⁵⁸

Contrary to these positive developments, the Gulf War has brought new concerns for Israel about its strategic importance to the United States. The United States requested from Israel not to take pre-emptive or retaliatory actions against Iraq following the Iraqi missile attacks on Israel. Thus, Israel did not join the US-led coalition forces and let the United States to protect its own national security during the war. The American motive was also clear: to prevent the collapse of the anti-Iraq coalition and the drifting away of its Arab partners to the Iraqi camp should the war spill over into an Iraq-Israel conflict.⁵⁹ However, this situation led to the perceptions that the strategic importance of Israel for the United States declined. The Gulf War “proved” that the United States could form a wide coalition, wage a war and protect its interests much better without Israel’s participation than with it.⁶⁰ In this context, Israel was eager to develop closer relations with Turkey because it believed that closer relations with Turkey would enhance its importance to the United States, since Turkey joined the US-led coalition forces during the Gulf War, and has become a reliable ally in the post-Cold War era. Moreover, Israel

⁵⁷ Inbar, “Israel’s Strategic Environment in the 1990s,” 24.

⁵⁸ Inbar, “Israel’s Strategic Environment in the 1990s,” 27.

⁵⁹ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 29.

⁶⁰ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 29.

believed that a closer relation with a country like Turkey that has the largest military, Western-oriented, and has a majority of Muslim population, would enhance the United States' position in the region and strategic interests.

The Gulf War has also brought its own challenges that enforced Israel to reconsider its national security. The end of the bipolar system and the Gulf War has changed the nature of threat. The Gulf conflict established the missile threat as a key concern for the Israeli public.⁶¹ The expansion of arsenals of ballistic missiles, and the acquisition of Scud missiles, which costs little to produce, has increased Israel's concerns over its national security.⁶² The new international system makes it easy for Arab countries to acquire advanced weapons and technologies for weapons of mass destruction. Moscow's desperate need for hard currency led it to aggressive marketing of its latest arms and its new, and the Middle East was the largest arms import market.⁶³

In this sense, Inbar uses the concepts of inner and outer ring to explain the regional environment of Israel, and how its security is challenged by non-conventional weapons. The outer ring consists of Middle Eastern countries that do not have a border with Israel. These countries are especially Iraq and Iran that has threatened Israel's security with similar or differing ways such as supporting anti-Israel terrorist groups, long-range missiles, chemical weapons and nuclear programs. The inner ring consists of the Middle Eastern states that have a border with Israel. In this area Syria emerges as the most problematic country to Israel's security with its: territorial claims, support to anti-Israeli terrorist organizations and missiles. The threat of being hit by non-conventional

⁶¹ Jonathan Marcus, "Israel's Defense Policy at a Strategic Crossroads," *The Washington Quarterly* 22, no.1 (Winter 1999): 37.

⁶² Gencer Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm: Güvenliğin Ötesi* (İstanbul: TESEV, 2005), 110.

⁶³ Inbar, "Israel Strategy," 4.

weapons, which named as “threat beyond the horizon,” during a crisis has become the top priority for the Israeli Defence Forces. Israel also realized that the methods that it had used before against these threats would not be functional anymore because since Israel’s attack on Iraq’s Osirek nuclear reactor in July 1981, and the Gulf War experience has forced these aggressive states to take measures to prevent their missile systems.⁶⁴ Thus, this regional development has necessitated Israel develop closer relations with Turkey. The report titled as “A New Israeli Strategy Toward 2000” was published by the American Enterprise Institute in 1996 states that Israel should adopt policies of traditional ‘balance of power’ rather than ‘comprehensive peace’, and work closely with Turkey and Jordan to contain the possible threats.⁶⁵

Under these circumstances, Israel has started to build missile defence systems with the United States. The early warning system is one of the effective defence projects to prevent missile attacks. However, the early warning systems must be stationed as close as possible to the missile launching sites to get effective results. From this point of view, Israel lacks the capacity because of its geographical location. This situation would even become more urgent because if the peace process would succeed, Israel would be expected to return the occupied territories of Golan Heights to Syria, a divestment that would have seriously restricted its strategic and military maneuverability.⁶⁶

Thus, Turkey’s geographic location that has a border with Iraq, Iran and Syria, could provide Israel with strategic and military maneuverability. Israel could use Turkish space to station early warning systems. Israel could also take advantage of Turkish space during a crisis for the purposes of: Israel might come to Turkey with a request to fly

⁶⁴ Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 116-117.

⁶⁵ Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 118.

⁶⁶ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 95.

through Turkish air space to deliver preemptive or preventive strikes against ballistic missile launching sites, moreover, because Israel is so small, it needs offshore strategic depth to sustain a credible and secure second strike capability.⁶⁷

The last factor that motivated Israel for closer relations with Turkey is the common interests in Central Asia Turkey took advantage of common ethnic and cultural ties to expand its relations with the new republics of Central Asia. In addition, Turkey has also become an active player in the construction of pipelines—Baku-Ceyhan pipeline—that would transport Caspian oil and gas to Western markets. Therefore, Israel hoped that through closer ties with Turkey, it would enhance its activities in this strategically important region. By joint ventures it was hoped that the region's new republics would be pulled to the pro-US side, which would prevent Islamic movements backed by Iran.

Overall, regional developments and internal developments that are peculiar to Turkey and Israel have changed the security environments of both countries that necessitated them to form an alignment based on common threats and interests.

Strategic Concerns

The strategic concerns of Turkey and Israel are: Syria, Iran, Iraq, radical Islam, weapons of mass destruction and Central Asia.

Syria and WMD

Turkey and Israel shared similar quarrels with Syria that are: territorial and water issues, Syria's support of terrorist organizations, and weapons of mass destruction. In the context of territorial quarrel, from Turkey, the Syrians claim that Hatay district, handed to Turkey in 1939 by mandatory power France, and from Israel, they claim the Golan Heights, lost to Israel in the 1967 war--a territory to which it ascribes great strategic

⁶⁷ Kibaroglu, "Turkey and Israel Strategize," p.64.

importance.⁶⁸ The rising of populations and economic plans in the 1990s increased the demand for water. Syria and Turkey had no agreement on a common water policy. Turkey controls the upper part of the Euphrates. Syria was dissatisfied with the amount of water it received that it argued that waters should be shared according to a mathematical formula, based on the total flow of the river and each country's demands.⁶⁹ Syria's concern was even increased more with Turkey's Southeastern Anatolia Project, GAP. Heinz Kramer states that GAP with its twenty-two dams, nineteen hydropower plants, and 1,000 kilometers of irrigation channels, it is intended to change the economic and the social fabric of nine underdeveloped provinces in the region, which in its final stage will reduce the Euphrates flow by 30 to 50 percent.⁷⁰ On the other hand, the territory that Syria demanded from Israel is strategically important because Syria could gain access to important water areas, Jordan River, Galilee Lake and Israel's water reservoir.

Syria also supported and hosted the terrorist organizations that have been causing problems to the Turkey's and Israel's national securities. In terms of Turkey, Syria supported the PKK with aid, permitted the terrorist organization camps on its lands, and hosted the leader of the terrorist group Abdullah Öcalan. Syria also supported and hosted some Palestinian organizations, Hamas, the Palestinian Popular Fronts, and Islamic Jihad. Syria also controlled the flow of military equipment to Lebanese group, Hizbollah, and to a great extent calibrates its operations in Lebanon.⁷¹

Another problem facing Turkey and Israel is Syria's weapons of mass destruction. Although in the first parts of the decade Turkey had no concern about WMD because of

⁶⁸ Efraim Inbar, *Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multiregional Power*, ed. Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirisci (Istanbul: Bogazici University Press, 2002), 153.

⁶⁹ Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*, 303.

⁷⁰ Kramer, *A Changing Turkey*, 137.

⁷¹ Inbar, *Turkey in World Politics*, 154.

the support it was getting from NATO against any strikes, a dramatic increase in the numbers of WMD changed Turkey's attitude. On the other hand, Israel had been hit by missiles before. Syria estimated to have around one hundred Scud-C missiles, which had a range of over 500 kilometers and could reach targets in Israel as far as south as Dimona, as well as some two hundreds Scud-Bs with a 280 kilometers range, which could strike Tel Aviv and Israel's main population center along the coastal strip.⁷²

Iran, Radical Islam and WMD

The common concerns regarding Iran are: the challenges of radical Islam and WMD. Turkey was very fearful of radical Islam that might put secularism in danger by the Islamist groups' activities in Turkey with the backing of Iran. Turkish security authorities have repeatedly stated that they could prove Iranian attempts to undermine the secular order of Turkey via furthering Islamist propaganda and even training and support of Islamist terrorist organizations in Turkey such as the Hizbollah.⁷³ Israel also share the fear of radical Islam as, "on the theological grounds, Muslim extremists oppose the very existence of a Jewish state, and act, often violently, against the peace process between Arabs and Israelis."⁷⁴

Another threat is the support of Iran to PKK, Hamas and Hizbollah. Turkey accused Iran not taking essential steps toward the PKK that had bases on the Turkish-Iranian border. In terms of Israel, Iran, partly through its own military units in Lebanon, supports Islamic groups waging low-intensity conflicts against Israel's northern border.

The most crucial threat regarding Iran is WMD. Both Turkey and Israel raised concerns about Iran's developments of missiles and WMD. Iran had successfully tested a

⁷² Marcus, "Israel's Defense Policy at a Strategic Crossroads," 36.

⁷³ Kramer, *A Changing Turkey*, 141-142.

⁷⁴ Inbar, *Turkey in World Politics*, 155.

medium-range missile, Chehab 3, that could hit targets up to 1,300 kilometers away, bringing all Israel and Turkey within range.⁷⁵ Israel also accused Iran of continuing its attempt to acquire nuclear weapons.

Lastly, as stated before, both Turkey and Israel have been interested in exploiting the new opportunities in Central Asia. However, they faced the competition of Iran in Central Asia through sponsoring Islamic revolution and establishing closer ties.

Iraq and WMD

The main threat from Iraq to Turkey was from Northern Iraq where the Kurdish majority had the control, and the PKK deployed its camps. The problem has raised more with the beginning of the Gulf War. The establishment of the safe haven south of the Turkish-Iraqi border and the larger no fly zone north of the 36th parallel under the aegis of the allied Operation Provide Comfort⁷⁶, and the clash between the two Kurdish groups, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani's the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), for the control of power and territory created a power vacuum, which strengthened the PKK. At the same time prospects of disintegration and establishment of a Kurdish state in Iraq were regarded unacceptable for Turkey since this would give a new momentum to the PKK.⁷⁷

For Israel the decade started with an Iraqi threat to burn half of Israel with chemical weapons (April 1990), followed by an attempt of Saddam Hussein to gain regional hegemony by conquering Kuwait and its riches in August 1990.⁷⁸ Also Israel had been the target of the Iraqi missile attacks during the Gulf War, which furthered the

⁷⁵ Marcus, "Israel's Defense Policy at a Strategic Crossroads," 37.

⁷⁶ Kramer, *A Changing Turkey*, 120.

⁷⁷ Altunisik, "The Turkish-Israeli Rapprochement in the Post-Cold War Era," 178.

⁷⁸ Inbar, "Israel's Strategic Environment in the 1990s," 26.

threat of a possible Iraqi missile attack in the future to Israeli lands. Inbar also states that Iraq was successful in defying the United Nations Special Commission on Disarmament (UNSCOM) regime and still had a formidable stockpile of weapons, which included long-range missiles, chemical weapons, biological agents and components for nuclear weapons.⁷⁹

Central Asia

The concept of the greater Middle East has started to dominate the geo-politics of the post-Cold War era, which started to include the Central Asia. The new opportunities in Central Asia attracted both Turkey and Israel as other states.

Turkey took advantage of common ethnic and cultural ties to expand its relations with the new republics of Central Asia, and enhance its regional influence in this strategic region. Political, economic and strategic factors have come to play a part in Turkey's policies toward the region. Turkey believed that closer ties with the new republics would offer Turkey new economic and business opportunities that could benefit the country's export-oriented strategy.⁸⁰ Additionally, Turkey's growing economy increased the energy demands that Central Asia with its enormous energy resources would be able to fulfill its demands, and lower its dependence on Russia. Politically, Russia, Iran and Turkey were competing for regional influence. Turkey with the support of the West, especially the United States, who represented Turkey as a model for the new republics, established good diplomatic relations to prevent the Islamic movements backed by Iran to make an influence, and to weaken Russian influence in the region. Strategically, Turkish officials believed that Turkey's emergence as the central link in the proposed East-West energy

⁷⁹ Inbar, "Israel's Strategic Environment in the 1990s," 27.

⁸⁰ Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era," 173.

corridor for the export of Caspian gas and oil to Western markets would enhance its strategic importance.⁸¹

In this regard, in 1994, the Turkish Petroleum Company (TPC) joined a consortium of oil companies and the government of Azerbaijan (AIOC) that was formed to extract oil from the Caspian field in which TPC did hold 6.75 percent equity in the AIOC.⁸² Turkey also tried to become an active player in the construction of pipelines that would transport Caspian oil and gas to Western markets. In this context, Turkey projected the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline to transport the Azeri oil to West from Turkey.

Israel shared similar strategic interests with Turkey. The role Israel had assumed in the Middle vis-à-vis the Soviet Union was no longer valid; thus, Israel has been prompted to attempt to carve out a new security niche.⁸³ Israel established good diplomatic and economic relations with the new republics. Israel and Israeli companies signed some very important agreements with the republics, which are: In February 1992, an Israeli delegate traveled to Tajikistan and signed an agreement for the transferal of Israeli expertise in agriculture and the exploitation of Tajik crude oil; in September 1992, Israel's Beta Shita company signed an agreement for the construction of a high technology irrigation scheme in the Andezhan region in Uzbekistan; Israel is also involved in a \$100 million irrigation project and a scheme to build a gas pipeline to Turkey from Turkmenistan.⁸⁴ Israel also tried to establish good diplomatic relations with the new republics to prevent Iranian influence in the region, which might enabled Iran to have access to nuclear weapons and technology of the Central Asian republics. Lastly,

⁸¹ Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era," 174.

⁸² Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era," 174.

⁸³ Bulent Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 55.

⁸⁴ Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position*, 61-62.

Israel was a supporter of Baku-Cehyan project. Netanyahu said: “We are involved in this project... It will enable us to buy oil at a much lower price.”⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position*, 60.

Chapter Three

Expanding Ties between Turkey and Israel

The end of the Cold War and dissolution of the Soviet Union has changed the power system that has brought some domestic and regional developments in Turkish and Israeli security environment, which necessitated them to develop their relations in the post-Cold War era. The Turkish-Israeli alignment had evolved based on common threat perceptions and strategic interests. However, the relations were not limited to the military-strategic sphere, but came to encompass various political, economic, and cultural fields, probably influenced their nature, durability and strength.⁸⁶ The Turkish-Israeli alignment will be evaluated under diplomatic/political, economic, military/security and intelligence/secret services spheres to appreciate how it has expanded in the course of time.

Diplomatic/Political Sphere

During the Peripheral Alliance Turkey and Israel had co-operated just in the spheres of military and intelligence. The Cold War system had discouraged Turkey and Israel to engage in diplomatic relations that have been explained in *Chapter One*. However, following the Gulf War the diplomatic relations has started to improve with Turkey's decision to upgrade its relations with Israel to ambassadorial level in 1991. The special visit by Israeli President Chaim Herzog to attend the 'Celebrations of the 500th Anniversary of Jewish Immigration from Spain to Turkey' in Istanbul acquired an official characteristic with Herzog's high-level contacts.⁸⁷ In June 1992 Abdülkadir Ateş, Turkey's minister of tourism, became the first minister to visit Israel in 27 years that led

⁸⁶ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 104.

⁸⁷ Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 66.

to an average of more than 300,000 Israelis traveling annually to Turkey during the 1990s.⁸⁸ However, the real break occurred right after the Oslo peace agreement in September 1993 when Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin paid a visit to Israel. Çetin's visit was regarded as turning point in the rapprochement process because it was appreciated as an end to Arab diplomatic hypothec on Turkey.⁸⁹ During this visit both parties signed a memorandum on mutual understanding and guidelines on cooperation.⁹⁰ This was followed by significant high-level visits, which can be listed as: President Ezer Weizman visited Turkey in January 1994, the first official visit by an Israel head of state; Shimon Peres visited Turkey in April 1994 as foreign minister; Premier Tansu Çiller visited Israel in November 1994, the first official trip to Israel by a serving Turkish prime minister (accompanied by the ministers of foreign affairs, public works and housing, energy and natural resources, agriculture and village affairs, and transport, together with one state minister, in effect nearly a quarter of the cabinet); Yossi Beilin, Israeli deputy foreign minister and close confidant of Peres, visited Turkey in May 1995; Çiller together with state ministers Coskun Kırca and Ali Dinçer, attended Rabin's funeral in November 1995; and President Demirel went to Israel in March 1996, the first ever trip to Israel by a serving Turkish president.⁹¹

The high-level contacts continued in the latter half of the 1990s as: from Turkey to Israel the visits included Defense Minister Turhan Tayan in April-May 1997, Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz in September 1998, and President Süleyman Demirel again in July 1999; from Israel to Turkey the visits included President Ezer Weizman in June

⁸⁸ Michael B. Bishku, "How Has Turkey Viewed Israel?" *Israel Affairs* 12, no.1 (January 2006): 188.

⁸⁹ Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 67.

⁹⁰ Özcan quotes from "Arap İpoteği Kalktı," *Cumhuriyet*, 17 Kasım 1993 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 67.

⁹¹ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms*, 251-252.

1996, October 1998, and September 1999, Foreign Minister David Levy in April 1997, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai in December 1997, Prime Minister Ehud Barak in October and November 1999.⁹²

There was also an attempt rapidly to deepen the relationship, with, for example, opposition politicians being invited to Israel, and a rash of bilateral round table meetings and academic exchanges.⁹³ Several agreements and memorandums were signed during these visits. During Weizman's visits he achieved concrete results, in the form of mutual agreements "in principle" in the fields of trade, defense, industry, tourism, security and agriculture.⁹⁴ Also in response to Turkey's interest to cooperate in fighting terrorism Weizman stated that Israel would cooperate and help Turkey on this matter. Reportedly, cooperation has centered around annual meetings between senior officials from the intelligence communities of both countries and guidance from Israeli counterterrorism experts to improve Turkey's handling of the conflict with the PKK.⁹⁵ However, interestingly, Çevik Bir, one of Turkish architects of the rapprochement, later denied knowledge of any such cooperation.⁹⁶ In addition, Israel perceived the issue of PKK as an internal problem of Turkey, and displayed a cautious attitude not to get involved in Turkey's internal problem and antagonize the Kurds.

Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin agreed to cooperate further in matters of terrorism and drug smuggling as well as to

⁹² Perma Hazbay, "Political Troubles between Turkey and Israel? Implications Booming Bilateral Trade for the Two Countries and the Middle East," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, May 26, 2004, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2150>.

⁹³ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms*, 252.

⁹⁴ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 105.

⁹⁵ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli relationship*, 106.

⁹⁶ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 106.

continue discussing the possibility of Turkey selling water to Israel.⁹⁷ During Turkey's President Süleyman Demirel's visit Turkey and Israel signed several economic agreements. The most significant one is the free trade agreement that appreciated as a turning point in economic relations. Other agreements and memorandums are: an environmental protection agreement during Peres visit in 1994; in 1995 leaders of both countries sign a memorandum of understanding for the training of pilots of both countries in each other's airspace; also in early 1995 an accord against drug trafficking, terrorism, and organized crime.⁹⁸

The 1990s witnessed the evolving diplomatic relations with significant high-level contacts. These significant high-level contacts indicate how both parties considered their relationship importantly, and their intentness to develop it beyond military and intelligence co-operation.

Economic Sphere

Since the Gulf War and Oslo peace process removed the obstacles for open and free diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel, the economic co-operation between both parties has increased enormously in the 1990s. The advantages of short-distance trade and complementarity soon emerged.⁹⁹ The complementarities of the two economies were expressed as: Israel had advanced technological know-how and Turkey had cheap labor; moreover, Turkey was also the largest economy in the eastern Mediterranean, and

⁹⁷ Bishku quotes from Jerusalem Post, international edition, 12 November 1994 in "How Has Turkey Viewed Israel?" 189.

⁹⁸ "A Window on Turkish-Israeli Relations," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/documents/42cec7d328673.pdf>.

⁹⁹ Efraim Inbar, *The Turkish-Israeli Entente* (London: King's College London Mediterranean Studies, 2001), 18.

offered huge potential as a market and a source of supply.¹⁰⁰ The economic co-operation between two countries includes the sectors of trade, tourism, investment, joint ventures, and co-operation on water and energy issues that manifested itself through agreements. Trade relations between the two countries can be defined as the spine of the economic co-operation. In this respect, in 1996 Turkey and Israel signed several agreements that constituted the opportune conditions to develop trade relations, which are:

- Free Trade Area Agreement in March 14, 1996
- Economic, Commercial, Technological and Scientific Cooperation Agreement in January 24, 1996
- Agreement for the prevention of double taxation in January 24, 1996
- Agreement for Mutual Encouragement and Protection of Investments in January 24, 1996
- Agreement for Mutual Assistance between the Customs Authorities in December 23, 1996.¹⁰¹

Especially the Free Trade Agreement has opened up a new phase in Turkish-Israeli economic co-operation. Since the ratification of the FTA in May 1997, the customs that had been applied to approximately 200 products were lifted, and in both imports and exports an increase was recorded.¹⁰² The trade between the two countries that just totaled \$54 million in 1987 rose to \$100 million in 1991, and over \$450 million in 1995.¹⁰³ The volume of trade has continued to increase in the latter part of the 1990s and

¹⁰⁰ Bengio quotes from Paul Rivlin, "Economic Relations between Turkey and Israel" (unpublished essay), 4 in *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 120.

¹⁰¹ Ekrem Güvendiren, *A Concise Report on Turkish-Israeli Relations*, (İstanbul: Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEIK), 1999), 11.

¹⁰² "İsrail Ükle Bülteni (Mart 2007)," *DEIK*, 7, <http://www.deik.org.tr/bultenler/2007319161242bulten-mart07.doc>.

¹⁰³ Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," par. 35.

became outstanding in the Middle East, since most of the countries in the region were hostile to each other, which prevented them to establish economic relations (see Table 1). The diversity of trade relations between Turkey and Israel is a proof of how much these two countries cared about their evolving alignment. Turkish exports to Israel include, textiles, industrial products, food products, cement, cast iron, building material, electronics, glass, stone items, car tyres, raw materials, grains; whereas Israel's exports to Turkey are chemicals, plastics, computers, air conditioners, medical equipment, telecommunications, drilling and seismic mapping, irrigation equipment, etc.¹⁰⁴

TABLE 1
TURKISH-ISRAELI BILATERAL TRADE (\$ 1,000)

Year	Export	Import	Balance	Volume
1995	239.769	166.635	73.134	406.404
1996	254.569	192.038	61.928	446.004
1997	391.457	229.282	162.175	620.739
1998	478.637	282.754	195.883	761.391
1999	585.045	298.268	286.777	883.313

Source: Israil Ülke Bülteni Mart 2007 (Israel Country Bulletin March 2007), DEIK

Tourism is another important sector of Turkish-Israeli economic co-operation. The Turkish holiday sites with their low prices and with their casinos attracted Israeli tourists. Israeli tourism to Turkey has increased enormously: from 7,000 Israeli visitors in 1986, to 160,000 in 1992 and some 350,000 since 1994, cc. 18% of Israeli tourism abroad.¹⁰⁵ These tourists each spend an average of \$1000; their casino losses alone came to \$1.5 billion annually (which equaled to total amount bet in Israel).¹⁰⁶ When the casinos

¹⁰⁴ Nachmani, *Turkey: Facing A New Millenium*, 227.

¹⁰⁵ Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Entente*, 18.

¹⁰⁶ Nachmani quotes from *Ha'aretz* that quoted Israel's Lottery Authority, June 23, 1997 in "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," par. 38.

were banned in Turkey in 1997, it raised concerns that the Israeli tourism would decline. However, this was not the case because the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey in 1997, 263.423, grew 3.53% compared to the previous year, 254.445.¹⁰⁷

Israeli government and Israeli companies has been very interested in Turkey's GAP project. This huge project attracted Israel for investments, and Turkey accepted Israel's willingness to invest because of its expertise in agriculture, agro-industries and water resource management in similar climatic conditions.¹⁰⁸ The Southeastern Anatolia Project Regional Development Administration (GAP RDA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the States of Israel-The Centre for International Cooperation (MASHAV) initiated cooperation in 1997, and the general frame work of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was defined, which covers the topics:

- Organizing and conducting joint training programmes for: multidisciplinary courses for enhancement of institutional capacity; irrigation and fertilization courses; agricultural training and extension courses; international courses on Integrated Regional Development Management; participation from GAP Administration and other related institutions to the courses conducted by MASHAV in Israel.
- Establishment of demonstration farms for fishing and for diary farming.¹⁰⁹

In the summer of 1999, Turkey's state Hydraulic Work concluded an agreement with MASHAV to develop jointly on 18,000 hectare demonstration project in Bozovan near Urfa to apply drip irrigation and other environmentally friendly technologies in the

¹⁰⁷ Altunisik, "The Turkish-Israeli Rapprochement in the Post-Cold War Era," 176.

¹⁰⁸ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms*, 236.

¹⁰⁹ "The Relations With Foreign Countries Under The Economic Commission Meetings," <http://www.gap.gov.tr/English/Frames/fr4.html>

GAP region.¹¹⁰ Finally, there is the issue of Israel buying water from Turkey. Water is a very important asset in the Middle East because of this region's climatic condition. The idea of buying water was mooted as early as January 1994, when Israeli President Weizman discussed it with his counterpart, Süleyman Demirel, during his visit that month.¹¹¹ The project was to export water from the Turkish Manavgat River. In this respect, Turkey started to build a terminal at the Manavgat river mouth not just to supply the water demands of cities of Mediterranean coast but also the demands of countries, which was completed in December 8, 1998.¹¹² However, Turkey and Israel could not complete the water agreement in the 1990s.

Military/Security Sphere

The Turkish-Israeli alignment has focused primarily on the military co-operation in the first half of the 1990s. The potential threats emanating from the Middle East has increased enormously with the acquisition of non-conventional weapons by hostile states easily. This has totally changed the concept of war in the post-Cold War era, thus the issue of security has become more complex. In addition, the military gained the upper hand in the foreign policy-making process, since the threats for them were related to the military/security sphere, and more importantly, the modernization requirement of the Turkish army activated the military to deepen the relations with Israel, since it shared similar concerns, and acquired advanced weapons and know-how that would be delivered without being subjected to political sanctions. The significant event in military co-operation was the military agreement that was signed in February 23, 1996, which was

¹¹⁰ George E. Gruen, "Turkey's Regional Role in the Aftermath of September 11, 2001," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 24, no.3 (2002), 24.

¹¹¹ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 117.

¹¹² Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 147.

the main event that put the Turkish-Israeli relations on the map.¹¹³ The agreement signed under complete secrecy by the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Çevik Bir and the leading staff of the Israeli Ministry of Defense.¹¹⁴

However, 1996 was not the start beginning of military co-operation between the two countries. The military co-operation before 1996 was kept secret, which are: a secret security agreement was signed on 13 March 1994 dealing with the diversion of military technology to third countries; unpublished accord on training exercises in 1995; and a strategic dialogue between Ministries of Defense, but with senior diplomats also involved, on political and military affairs then followed, with the first meeting taking place in September 1995.¹¹⁵

Turkey and Israel signed three military agreements in 1996. The first one was the Military Training Co-operation that was signed on February 23, 1996 which aimed to achieve cooperation between the two countries as:

- Achieving cooperation on various levels on the basis of the exchange of personnel and their expertise.
- Exchanging visits between military academies, units and camps.
- Applications of training and exercises.
- Sending observers to follow up military exercises in the two countries.
- Exchanging officials to collect and share information, especially in social and cultural fields that included military history, military museums, and military archives.

¹¹³ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 108.

¹¹⁴ Sergey Minasian, "The Turkish-Israeli Military and Political Co-operation and Regional Security Issues," *Iran and the Caucasus* 7, no.1/2 (2003), 311.

¹¹⁵ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms*, 258.

- Exchange of visits by military naval vessels.¹¹⁶

The Turkish military made the agreement public because of internal and external reasons. The military wanted to deter domestic threats, the PKK and the Islamist Welfare Party, and external threats, Syria, Iran and Iraq. The training Turkish and Israeli air forces in each others' air space is very significant. The training exercises were held eight times annually, a week each time, four deployments in each country.¹¹⁷ The joint exercises in Turkey (art first joint exercises were excluded, hence the Israelis trained without the participation of Turkish planes, without armament, and without electronic surveillance equipment), were held at the Konya firing range.¹¹⁸ Israel benefited more from these trainings since its size is very small compared to Turkey. Israeli pilots would become acquainted with areas or countries bordering Turkey, especially those hostile to Israel— Iran, Iraq and Syria.¹¹⁹ Turkish pilots trained at Israel's computerized firing range and at the Nevatim airfield.¹²⁰

The second agreement was the Defense Industry Co-operation was signed on August 28, 1996. However, the agreement that was planned to be signed in the beginning of August was postponed by the Islamist Welfare party that held the office at that time with the desire to deepen the relations with the Islamic world. However, the military was able to reassert its domination over the strategic contours of foreign policy and the agreement was signed before the end of the month.¹²¹ The agreement's provisions extended from reciprocal visits to defense industries, through the exchange of technical

¹¹⁶ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 108.

¹¹⁷ Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," par.24.

¹¹⁸ Nachmani, *Turkey: Facing A New Millennium*, 223.

¹¹⁹ Bengio quotes from *Ha'aretz*, October 24, 1999 in *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 112.

¹²⁰ Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," par.24.

¹²¹ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms*, 262-263.

expertise and technology transfer, to active encouragement of each other's defense firms to trade with and invest in one another's activities.¹²²

These two agreements then followed by a weaponry and hardware development co-operation. Israel would upgrade fifty-four Turkish F-4 jet fighters worth U.S. \$632 million and later forty-eight Turkish F-5's in a U.S. \$80 million project, which included increased firepower and maneuverability as well as improvement of vision and electronic that started in Israel and would be finished in the Turkish air forces repair center at Eskişehir, which meant that considerable technology transfer to the Turkish military industry involved.¹²³ Turkey also purchased Israel's Popeye I missiles, and agreed with Israel on the production of Popeye II missiles.

Additionally, Turkey had expressed interest in Israel's Phalcon early warning aircraft, unmanned air vehicles, special fences, and radar control systems to seal off its borders with Iraq and Syria, and the Galil infantry rifle to replace the G-3's Turkey was using at that time.¹²⁴ The sale of Israeli weapons systems to Turkey frequently has included Turkish manufacturers: the Tadiran Corporation produces systems for locating and rescuing pilots that are manufactured in Israel and assembled in Turkey by a local munitions concern, Aselsan.¹²⁵ Yet the military co-operation of both parties has not just been about sales from Israel to Turkey. Israel has paid for use of sophisticated Turkish military installations and installs Turkish-made components in its weaponry.¹²⁶ The ties between the two countries' armies have even more strengthened with the visits of high-ranking officers such as Ismail Hakki Karadayi's, the Chief of General Staff, visit to

¹²² Robins, *Suits and Uniforms*, 263.

¹²³ Kramer, *A Changing Turkey*, 132.

¹²⁴ Kramer, *A Changing Turkey*, 133.

¹²⁵ Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," par.29.

¹²⁶ Nachmani, *Turkey: Facing A New Millennium*, 221.

Israel in February 1997 and Amnon Lipkin-Shahak's, the Chief of Staff, visit to Turkey in October 1997, that were supplemented by strategic dialogues in which both discussed their common threats and operational plans to forestall them.¹²⁷ Moreover, Turkey appointed naval and army attachés to Israel in addition to air force in 1998.

The navies of the two countries have also developed close relations by joint exercises that were described as humanitarian search-and-rescue trainings. On 7 January 1998 Israeli, Turkish and US vessels took part in Reliant Mermaid, a controversial airsea rescue maneuver in the eastern Mediterranean.¹²⁸ In addition, the Israeli navy trains at Turkish diving facilities, where it benefited from lower prices than the equivalent cost of such special training in Germany or Britain.¹²⁹

Overall, the military co-operation between the two countries is close, institutionalized and structured, involving steering committees, regular meetings and strategic dialogues.¹³⁰ However, the Turkish-Israeli military co-operation is not a formal alliance because there was no document or commitment from both countries that they would fight each others wars. But a careful interpretation of the provision of the document they did sign in 1996 suggest that it opens the door to a much enhanced cooperation between the two countries—a co-operation that could reach levels usually only reached by allies.¹³¹

Intelligence/Secret Services Sphere

Intelligence sharing has always been a vital part of Turkish-Israeli alignment since the Peripheral Alliance. Although the end of the Cold War had eliminated the

¹²⁷ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 112.

¹²⁸ Robins, *Suits and Uniforms*, 265.

¹²⁹ Nachmani quotes from *Yediot Ahronot*, 18 October 1996 in *Turkey: Facing A New Millennium*, 221.

¹³⁰ Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," par.22.

¹³¹ Kibaroglu, "Turkey and Israel Strategize," 61.

Soviet threat, the Middle East has continued to be a problematic region for both parties, and additionally, the nature of threat has changed with the acquisition of non-conventional weapons more easily. The post-Cold War era has necessitated more co-operation in intelligence sharing between the two countries to deter their enemies. Turkey and Israel complement each other in this sense because Turkey's geographic location and the significant Israeli electronic eavesdropping capabilities create an impressive synergy in data collection.¹³² Intelligence co-operation comprises the exchange of information, routine briefings, analysis of data (including that collected by Israeli satellites) and tripartite deliberations involving the United States' agencies¹³³ in which primarily the threats from weapons of mass destruction, radical Islam and terrorism, have been discussed. In this sense, Turkey's geographic location next to Syria, Iran and Iraq benefits Israel enormously with the opportunity of using Turkish space to gather information on Syria, Iran and Iraq. The International Institute for Strategic Studies concurred, reporting that *Israel* is "almost certainly" flying reconnaissance missions aimed at Syria, Iraq, and possibly Iran from *Turkish* air bases.¹³⁴ Additionally, on April 7, 1996, *Israeli* Army Radio quoted Bir as saying that Ankara will allow *Israel* to conduct electronic surveillance flights along the borders of Syria, Iran, and Iraq.¹³⁵ There were also news that Turkey assigned bases for Israel as *Christian Science Monitor* published in July 1998; however assigning bases in East Anatolia was immediately denied by Turkey.¹³⁶

¹³² Inbar, *The Turkish-Israeli Entente*, 50.

¹³³ Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," par.31.

¹³⁴ Gil Dibner, "My Enemy's Enemy," *Harvard International Review* 21, no.1 (Winter 98/99), par. 22.

¹³⁵ Dibner, "My Enemy's Enemy," par.22.

¹³⁶ Özcan quotes from Sema Emiroğlu, "Doğu'ya İsrail Üssü," *Milliyet*, 13 Temmuz 1998, Dışişleri Bakanlığı haberi, "İsrail'in Doğu Anadolu'daki askeri üslerden faydalandığı ve bunları kullanarak komşu ülkelere karşı casusluk faaliyetlerinde bulunduğu yolundaki haberler tamamen asılsız ve kasıtlı olup, bazı çevrelerce ısrarla yayılmaya çalışılmaktadır.", "Ankara: İsrail'e Üs Vermedik," *Milliyet*, 14 Temmuz 1998 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 98.

Since Israel has electronic eavesdropping capabilities, Turkey might co-operate with Israel to gather information on especially Syria and PKK activities in Northern Iraq. One example of Israel's contribution to Turkey was that it provided information on the Russian-made Mig 29, the type used by Syria's air force.¹³⁷ Also, there were news that Israel provided or sold Turkey information about PKK activities in Syria and Northern Iraq transmitted by the *Ofeq* satellite.¹³⁸ Regarding the issue of Abdullah Öcalan, there were reports to the effect that Israel had assisted Turkey in the capture, such as Israeli agencies used electronic means to intercept messages and to track the aircraft in which he flew seeking asylum after he had been expelled from Syria; however, Israel denied its involvement in the capture.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 115.

¹³⁸ Özcan quotes from Tolga Şardan, "MOSSAD'a Örtülüden Para," *Milliyet*, 22 Ocak 1998 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 99.

¹³⁹ Bengio quotes from *Ha'aretz*, February 17, 1999 and February 18, 1999 in *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 124-200.

Chapter Four

U.S. Perception of the Turkish-Israeli Relationship

The end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union has eliminated the risk of a nuclear war between the two superpowers. Although the threat emanating from the Soviet Union had gone and the United States emerged as the sole power in the world, the United States increased its presence in the post-Cold War era. Fouskas states that strategic objectives of the United States in this new era as: the military bracketing of Russia and China in order to subordinate their co-operation; the continuation of the strategic partnership with key EU states, while preventing the emergence of a federal Europe; the prevention of the formation of an alternative powerful coalition in Eurasia, that would be capable of challenging the supremacy of the United States.¹⁴⁰

The increased presence of the United States in the post-Cold War era can be explained by four fundamental components of the United States' foreign policy, economic, military, ideological and juridical/legal, that have expanded in the post-Cold War era. These expansions are: in economic term, the United States has championed free trade policies, and globalization, relaunching GATT as the WTO; in military terms, the United States has advanced the reform and expansion of NATO in Eurasia; in legal/ideological terms, the United States has elaborated and experimented further the ethical/legal/democratic elements of its Cold War foreign policy, although the real motive has been to camouflage the national and class elements of its military actions.¹⁴¹

Why the United States increased its presence this much cannot be just analyzed in terms of preventing its allies from the new threats of this new era, but one must take into

¹⁴⁰ Fouskas, *Zones of Conflict*, 118.

¹⁴¹ Fouskas, *Zones of Conflict*, 117.

consideration of the United States' strategic interest in the greater Middle East. The end of the Cold War set loose forces that has previously been kept in check and loosened constraints on the transfer of sensitive technologies that had previously been carefully controlled.¹⁴² Moreover, the nature of threat has changed in the post-Cold War era that definitely created a security environment that was more complex and unpredictable than during the Cold War.¹⁴³ The acquisition of non-conventional weapons by hostile states has increased enormously. In addition, Russia has become one of the main suppliers of material and technology to those hostile states for the sake of recovering its economic condition, moreover, its status in the world politics. Overall, the concept of non-conventional weapons has totally changed the concept of war compared to the previous era. This new security environment certainly endangered the securities of close allies of the United States in the strategically important regions. However, behind this idealism, strong realism was at play: the need to protect America's traditional strategic interest in the greater Middle East--the flow of oil.¹⁴⁴ The new great game of the 1990s has been about two strategic resources, oil and gas, which was a continuation of the United States' policy with new means. In this manner, the United States using the advantage of being the sole power had to eliminate these threats to protect its allies in order to protect its geo-political, economic and strategic interests in the post-Cold War era.

How were the security environments in the Middle East and Central Asia in the 1990s and the United States' position? In the Middle East the United States' position has undergone a sweeping change, not only in comparison to its relative aloofness during the

¹⁴²Michael Eisenstadt, *US Allies in a Changing World*, ed. Barry Rubin and Thomas A. Keaney (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 54.

¹⁴³ Eisenstadt, *US Allies in a Changing World*, 54.

¹⁴⁴ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 7.

first part of the twentieth century, but also with its much more activist stance of the 1950s and beyond.¹⁴⁵ The United States has always involved in the Middle East. This had started with the period between the two World Wars, when its main interest was economic--the quest for oil--and continued in the period from the end of the World War II to the end of the Cold war, when it diversified its interests to include political and ideological fields.¹⁴⁶ However, the Gulf War was a real turning point in the United States' policies toward the region. It was significant that the United States first time waged a war to a Middle Eastern country, which added yet another dimension--military strategic interests.¹⁴⁷

After the Gulf War the United States increased its military capabilities because although the Iraqi forces were overthrown from Kuwait, Iraq's leader Saddam Hussein remained in power, and continued to be a potential danger to the region. Although the United Nations' resolution that agreed on economic sanctions against Iraq have greatly degraded Iraq's conventional military capabilities,¹⁴⁸ Iraq's existing WMD capability raised more concern for the United States and its allies in the region that they might be used in a future conflict. Moreover, the United States' ability to prevent the smuggling of equipment and technology into Iraq to rebuild its conventional military and its WMD infrastructure was limited and would become more so as the amount of Iraqi imports grew under the oil-for-food program.¹⁴⁹ However, Iraq was not the only state that acquired WMD. Iran and Syria, as potential threats to the region, also acquired WMD capabilities too. Especially Russia started to transfer material and technology to

¹⁴⁵ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 6.

¹⁴⁶ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 8.

¹⁴⁷ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 8.

¹⁴⁸ Eisenstadt, *US Allies in a Changing World*, 57.

¹⁴⁹ Eisenstadt, *US Allies in a Changing World*, 58.

aggressive Middle Eastern states to fulfill its need for hard currency. This has raised great concerns about the possibility that the proliferation of WMD in the Middle East means that a future Arab-Israeli war could involve the use of these weapons on the battlefield or against civilian population centers.¹⁵⁰

There was also the issue of rising Islamic terrorism in the Middle East. Both Iran and Syria have supported and even hosted Islamist terrorist organizations such as Hizbollah. There was no guarantee that those hostile states would not also supply the terrorist organizations with WMD for the ambitions. In this matter, the United States has extended its presence in the Middle East against these threats in the post-Cold War era to protect its interests, which are: free flow of oil at reasonable prices; reciprocating the friendship of Arab countries that sought good relations with the United States; the survival, well-being, and security of Israel; and settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁵¹ As a result, the United States adopted three policies toward the region, which are: dual containment of Iraq and Iran in the east; encouraging an Arab-Israeli peace-process in the west; and promoting a vision of a more democratic and prosperous region for all peoples of the Middle East.¹⁵²

The other region where the United States wanted to be a dominant power in terms of geo-political and economic interests is the Caspian region and Central Asia. The collapse of the Soviet Union had created a power vacuum in the region that many actors, Russia, Iran, Turkey, China and the United States, has tried to exploit the region's vast energy resources for strategic interests. The international journals talked about the revival of the nineteenth century "great game" in the Caucasus and Central Asia with different

¹⁵⁰ Eisenstadt, *US Allies in a Changing World*, 55.

¹⁵¹ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 11.

¹⁵² Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 11.

players.¹⁵³ The region has large oil deposits and rich natural gas resources. However, the rich energy fields are landlocked and relatively inaccessible, meaning that export routes and pipelines had to be built to export Caspian oil to the world market and a large amount of Caspian oil was intended for export, since the oil consumption in the producing countries is relatively low.¹⁵⁴

In this sense, the United States to secure its strategic interests, to ensure access to oil and resources, in the greater Middle East adopted an active policy toward the region. The strategic importance was stressed by Energy Secretary Bill Richardson when he declared: “This is about America’s energy security, which depends on diversifying our sources oil and gas worldwide, and it is also about preventing strategic inroads by those who don’t share our values.”¹⁵⁵ The United States immediately recognized the new republics, and started to establish good relations in order to promote its influence over the region to prevent the regional threats that would undermine its interests.

First of all, the United States feared that the instability stemmed from regional conflicts might affect some allies of the United States in the Middle East such as Turkey. Second, the other concern of the United States was that the region possessed nuclear weapons, which might be transferred to hostile states or terrorist organizations. Finally, Russia, Iran and China’s competition over the region created a danger for the United States. Russia wanted to regain the control that it had lost with the collapse of the Soviet Union over the region. In this sense, Russia had restructured the Commonwealth of

¹⁵³ Kamer Kasim, *Turkish-American Relations: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Mustafa Aydin and Cagri Erhan (London: Routledge, 2004), 131.

¹⁵⁴ Kasim, *The Turkish-American Relations*, 130.

¹⁵⁵ Kramer, *A Changing Turkey*, 104.

Independent States (CIS) to tighten cooperation.¹⁵⁶ Russia also developed economic and political relations with China, and deepened its relations with Middle Eastern states, especially Iraq and Iran, that were hostile to the United States. Iran might take advantage of the power vacuum in the region to spread its influence and Islamic fundamentalism to the region. In this context, the objectives of the United States in the region are:

- Strengthen the viability of these new states as market-based democracies by steadfastly supporting their independence, territorial integrity, and prosperity.
- Enhance business opportunities for U.S. and other companies.
- Mitigate regional conflicts and foster co-operation in order to encourage the integration of the NIS into the global community of democracies.
- Ensure that Caspian energy resources bolster the energy security of the United States and its allies, as well as, the energy independence of the Caspian NIS, by guaranteeing the free flow of Caspian oil and gas to world markets.¹⁵⁷

Kamer Kasim also stresses the importance and effectiveness of regional powers in the post-Cold War period. The United States should co-operate with regional powers in order to implement policies effectively that would fulfill the strategic interests of the United States. In this sense, the Turkish-Israeli alignment emerges as the most valuable option for the effective U.S. policies. Both parties with their pro-American and democratic identities, and effective military capabilities— Turkey with the largest military force in the area and Israel with advanced weapons and technological know-how—became reliable regional powers that their strategic partnership benefited the United States' interests in the greater Middle East. The United States considered the

¹⁵⁶ Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position*, 71.

¹⁵⁷ Kramer, *A Changing Turkey*, 104.

Turkish-Israeli alignment as a strategic asset. Although there were some differences in their priorities, the United States, Turkey and Israel had common set of threats and interests in the greater Middle East. Before getting down to the details of how the United States perceived the Turkish-Israeli alignment, and how the strategic benefits of the alignment has been effective on the United States' interests, one should briefly analyze the Turkish-American and Israeli-American relations to have a better understanding.

Turkish-American Relations

Turkey because of its geographical position became an asset for the United States during the Cold War years. Turkey provided critical base facilities for the US military, while in turn, the United States provided extensive economic and military aid to Turkey.¹⁵⁸ The end of the Cold War and disintegration of the Soviet Union has altered the international system. The removal of the greatest threat for West, the expansionist Soviet Union and communist ideology has left Turkey with concerns that it has lost its strategic importance to the United States. However, the new threats of the new era with different nature have brought new challenges to Turkey and to the United States, which enabled Turkey and the United States to develop their relations. The other reason was Turkey's decision to modify its foreign policy character with a more active one toward the Middle East and the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The Gulf War was a significant event in the evolution of the Turkish-American relations in the post-Cold War era. Turkey departed from its traditional policy of non-involvement in regional conflicts, took a strong stand against Saddam Hussein's regime, and participated in the US-led coalition that repelled the invading Iraqi forces from

¹⁵⁸ Kemal Kirisci, *US Allies in a Changing World*, ed. Barry Rubin and Thomas A. Keaney (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 118.

Kuwait.¹⁵⁹ After the Gulf War despite some ups and downs, and some divergent views on some issues and problems, the relationship between Turkey and the United States remained strong because of shared similar views on several security issues in the Middle East, the Caucasus, and on energy issues.

In the Middle East, the most important event was the United States' blessing of the development of a strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel. The United States has viewed the Israeli-Turkish alignment favorably since it brought two of Washington's closest allies with the strongest military capabilities.¹⁶⁰ The United States and Turkey also believed that for regional stability the Arab-Israeli conflict should be solved in peaceful terms. In this sense, the United States believed that Turkey could play an active role as a mediator since it established relations with the two sides. The United States and Turkey have both raised their concerns over the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which would endanger regional security and stability. The United States' strategy in this regard focused mostly on preventing proliferation by pressuring exporters--Russia, China and North Korea--not to supply the Middle Eastern countries.¹⁶¹

However, the United States and Turkey had divergent views regarding Iraq and Iran. In terms of Iraq issue, the United States tried to overthrow Saddam Hussein from power by containment policy, economic and trade sanctions. The United States also supported the opposition groups, especially the Kurds by being a mediator to unify them in the north of Iraq. This has raised main concerns in Turkey. Turkey did not just wanted

¹⁵⁹ Sabri Sayari, *Turkish-American Relations: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Mustafa Aydin and Cagri Erhan (London: Routledge, 2004), 95.

¹⁶⁰ Sayari, *Turkish-American Relations*, 96.

¹⁶¹ Kirisci, *US Allies in a Changing World*, 124.

to normalize its economic relations with Iraq, but also favored the territorial integrity of Iraq, especially the integration of the Kurds because the opposite situation would endanger Turkey's security regarding its own Kurdish problem. In terms of Iran, both the United States and Turkey viewed Iran as a danger to the regional stability of the Middle East. Over years, Turkish officials accused Iran of interfering in Turkey's internal affairs, hosting and supporting PKK, and training fundamentalist terrorists to carry out attacks on Turkish secularists.¹⁶² However, Turkey did not favor containing Iran like the United States because Turkey wanted good economic relations with Iran.

In the Caucasus, the United States and Turkey both shared similar views on some issues and divergent views on others. Both countries' common interests was the emergence of democratic, secular and pro-Western regimes in the area that in the early 1990s many U.S. decision makers even promoted Turkey's market-oriented economy, democracy and secularism as a model for Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, and their desire to prevent the rebuilding of a Soviet/Russian empire.¹⁶³ Turkey raised concerns regarding Russian violation of the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty in the northern Caucasus and the restationing of Russian forces along Turkey's borders in Georgia and Azerbaijan, and did not receive a sympathetic hearing in Washington.¹⁶⁴ However, the United States with the eruption of the conflict in Chechnya changed its policy toward Russia. The major area that the United States and Turkey differed was the Armenian issue. In the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict Turkey was

¹⁶² Alan Makovsky, *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, ed. Morton Abramowitz (New York: The Century Foundation, 2000), 233.

¹⁶³ Kemal Kirişci, "U.S-Turkish Relations: New Uncertainties in a Renewed Partnership," in *Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multiregional Power*, ed. Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirişci (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2002), 174.

¹⁶⁴ Sayari, *Turkish-American Relations*, 98.

concerned with the United States' backing of Armenia. After Israel the Armenia has been the second highest recipient of US foreign aid on a per capita basis despite its occupation of more than one-fifth of Azeri territory.¹⁶⁵

The principal matter that United States and Turkey's views have converged is on energy politics. The vast energy resources, oil and gas, of the Caspian region has both attracted Turkey and the United States. Both countries have supported the development of alternative routes that would emancipate the new republics from Russian pressure and integrate them to the globalization process. In addition, Turkey wanted to diversify its sources to meet its economic demands in the 1990s. In this sense, Turkey has wanted to become an active player in the pipelines competition that would transport Caspian oil and gas to Western markets. Turkey proposed the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project. The pipeline would carry natural gas and oil from Azerbaijan port of Baku via Georgia to the Turkish port Ceyhan on the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁶⁶ Turkey has maintained that the Baku-Ceyhan route offers an environmentally safer alternative to the northern route that has been strongly promoted by Russia and that would lead to increased tanker traffic through the Bosphorus; however, geopolitical concerns have also played an important role in Ankara's effort to secure the construction of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline.¹⁶⁷ Turkey believed that with the Baku-Ceyhan route, Turkey would become a regional power that would increase its strategic importance.

The United States has supported the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project because it would serve at least three aims: enhancing Turkey's regional importance, isolating Iran (by preventing it from being the outlet for Caspian Sea energy), and strengthening the

¹⁶⁵ Sayari, *Turkish-American Relations*, 98.

¹⁶⁶ Kirişçi, *Turkey in World Politics*, 175.

¹⁶⁷ Sayari, *Turkish-American Relations*, 99.

independence of former Soviet states Azerbaijan and Georgia.¹⁶⁸ Although, both parties had common views on Caspian energy route, there were some issues that the United States' and Turkey's views diverged. First of all, the United States was concerned with the agreement between Turkey and Iran. In an effort to meet its growing demand for natural gas and diversify the sources of its gas imports, Turkey signed a \$20 billion agreement with Iran in 1996 that also involved the construction of a new pipeline between the two neighboring countries.¹⁶⁹ This agreement would be against the containment policy of the United States. Moreover, the US administration was concerned that the agreement between Iran and Turkey would lead to growing acceptance of Iran as a partner in energy by other countries.¹⁷⁰ Second, the United States was also concerned with the joint project of Turkey and Russia, Blue Stream, to construct a pipeline beneath the Black Sea to transport Russian gas to Turkey. This project conflicted with a U.S. backed project Ankara was simultaneously pursuing, the Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP), which would carry Turkmenistan gas to Turkey via the Caspian, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.¹⁷¹

Israeli-American Relations

Until 1967 War the United States tended to perceive Israel as a strategic and political burden to its interests in the Middle East.¹⁷² After the 1967 War and especially after the end of the Cold War, the relationship between Israel and the United States became a strategic relationship. The Gulf War was a turning point in Israeli-American

¹⁶⁸ Makovsky, *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, 241.

¹⁶⁹ Sayari, *Turkish-American Relations*, 100.

¹⁷⁰ Sayari, *Turkish-American Relations*, 100.

¹⁷¹ Makovsky, *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, 242.

¹⁷² Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel Since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?", *Diplomatic History* 22, no.2 (Spring 1998): 259.

relations. When Israel accepted (after intensive debate) American requests not to launch pre-emptive or retaliatory operations in the wake of the chemical warfare threats from Saddam Hussein and following Iraqi missile attacks, the uncharacteristic Israeli restraint was realized as a major contribution to the coherence of the alliance.¹⁷³ The signing of the Oslo agreement in 1993 then followed by the Israeli-Jordan agreement in 1994 deepened the relationship in 1990s. The 1990s changed the nature of threat in the Middle East. The United States and Israel shared similar views regarding threats and security interests in the Middle East, which are: to prevent future war; Islamic fundamentalism; terrorism; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; Arab-Israeli peace process; and the security and existence of Israel. On the other hand, while the United States and Israel shared common threat perceptions, they had divergent views about some issues and the ways to deal with them.

The United States and Israel shared the same view that Iraq was posing great danger to the region. Also Israel had been the target of the Iraqi missile attacks during the Gulf War. However, Israel criticized the way the United States ended the war. Israel criticized the United States for not using low-level air attacks and ground-based forces (both of which involved increased vulnerability) against the launchers; in addition, the sudden US decision to end the ground war, before destroying the Iraqi Republican Guard, and overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime.¹⁷⁴ Thus, Saddam has remained in power and has continued to pose danger to the region with his WMD capabilities.

The United States and Israel were concerned with Iran's support of terrorist organizations and capabilities of long-range missiles and WMD. The Shihab-3 missile,

¹⁷³ Gerald M. Steinberg, *US Allies in a Changing World*, ed. Barry Rubin and Thomas A. Keaney (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 149.

¹⁷⁴ Steinberg, *US Allies in a Changing World*, 166.

which was tested in July 1998, will have a range of 1,300 kilometers, placing Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and US bases within range.¹⁷⁵ However, Israel gave higher priority to this issue than the United States. Steinberg states that the United States was weak in its responses to Israel when Israeli intelligence presented the evidence about Iranian missile program, which was based on extensive technical assistance from Russia, and even the Russian Atomic Energy Ministry was also active in Iran, agreeing to supply reactors and other equipment that could become the basis for a nuclear weapons programs.¹⁷⁶ The differences over Iran even grew when the United States supported the idea of a dialogue with the new moderate President of Iran, Khatami, with the hope of change in future Iranian policies. This has raised concerns in Israel that a US-Iranian rapprochement without a change in Iranian policies that threaten Israel would leave Israel isolated in dealing with Iranian threats.¹⁷⁷

Despite some divergences, the Israeli-American relationship evolved into a strategic partnership in 1990s. The United States' military aid to Israel and the numbers of joint projects have increased in the post-Cold War era. In 1993-94 Clinton created a U.S.-Israeli Science and Technology Commission, pledged to grant Israel a status equal to that NATO members with respect to:

- Defense technology transfers, considered upgrading Israel's access to data from U.S. early-warning satellites, authorized the transfer of advanced computers and surplus U.S. military equipment, renewed the U.S. commitment to pre-position in Israel military supply stocks for use in wartime, continued Arrow missile project, secured funding for the Boost

¹⁷⁵ Steinberg, *US Allies in a Changing World*, 154.

¹⁷⁶ Steinberg, *US Allies in a Changing World*, 154.

¹⁷⁷ Steinberg, *US Allies in a Changing World*, 155.

Phase Intercept (BPI) missile defense program, authorized joint development programs and pilot training programs, allowed Israel to compete for participation in U.S. commercial space launches, provided military hardware including an MLRS system, F-16 fighters and F-15 I long-range bombers, and AMRAAM missiles.¹⁷⁸

Strategic Benefits of the Turkish-Israeli Alignment

As both Turkey and Israel's relations with the United States analyzed briefly above, it is possible to see that Turkey and Israel has become the indispensable allies of the United States in the post-Cold War era, thus the Turkish-Israeli alignment. The Turkish-Israeli alignment in the 1990s was not the first time that these two countries came together to form an alliance. As stated before Turkey and Israel had forged the Peripheral Alliance in 1958 that could not receive the support of the United States as the alignment in the 1990s did. The United States did not favored Turkey and Israel to openly forge an alliance during the Cold War because Washington had nothing to gain from antagonizing friendly Arab regimes by encouraging such a provocative alliance at that time, moreover, an overt alliance between Turkey and Israel would have certainly provoked a pro-Soviet counter-alliance, which would have brought a greater degree of Soviet influence into the region.¹⁷⁹

What has changed in the 1990s that the United States did not hesitate to support Turkish-Israeli alignment openly? The end of superpower conflict in the Middle East has ended with U.S. becoming the hegemon power, which encouraged it to act more freely in its policies toward the Middle East that has endangered strategic interests of the United

¹⁷⁸ Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948," 258-259.

¹⁷⁹ Walker, "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East," 72.

States with its increased threats. In this sense, the Turkish-Israeli alignment emerged as the most valuable option for the effective U.S. policies. These two pro-American and status quo oriented powers with their military might—Turkey with the largest military force in the area and Israel with advanced weapons and technological know-how—changed the balance of power in the region that has served U.S. strategic interests. In addition, the convergence of interests between the three countries—Israel, Turkey and the United States—was much more evident in the 1990s that the United States was ready to play a part, albeit minor, in the new alignment, thus, it was not shy of publicizing this admittedly at a later date.¹⁸⁰

A spokesman for the State Department, Nicholas Burns, summed up the U.S position in May 1997:

It has been a strategic objective of the United States that Turkey and Israel ought to enhance their military cooperation and their political relations. Israel is a very close friend of the United States, a close ally of the United States. Turkey is a close friend and ally and it seems to us natural and positive that Israel and Turkey would walk together militarily. The United States is very pleased to *participate* [author emphasis] in that co-operation.¹⁸¹

These words frankly stressed how the United States appreciated the Turkish-Israeli alignment. Before analyzing how Turkish-Israeli alignment has served the strategic interests of the United States, the regional implications of the alignment should be analyzed in order to understand how this alignment has benefited the United States. Although the Turkish-Israeli relationship was not a traditional military alliance, the

¹⁸⁰ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 98.

¹⁸¹ Bengio quotes from USIS, *Wireless File*, May 9, 1997 in *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 98.

multidimensional character of the relationship enhanced the two countries position, which further benefited Turkey and Israel with strategic benefits. The strategic benefits of the Turkish-Israeli relationship are:

Enhanced Deterrence

The new challenges of the post-Cold War era has created a more insecure environment in which the two countries needed to enhance their deterrence. The entente fills this need since states that entrained the use of force against Turkey and Israel must take into consideration their combined might.¹⁸² The military training co-operation that was signed in 1996 between Turkey and Israel greatly enhanced their deterrence. In the area of joint air exercises, Israeli air force had access to Turkish territory where the pilots got the chance to fly in vast Turkish airspace and near Iranian and Iraqi borders since Israel is small in size and does not share borders with Iraq and Iran as Turkey does.

This could enhance Israeli deterrence against missile attacks from these countries because the chances of the Israeli air force dealing effectively with such weapons are better when the distances involved in the air strikes are smaller.¹⁸³ When any of those countries preparing to launch missiles against Israel, Israel might come to Turkey with a request to fly through Turkish airspace to deliver pre-emptive or preventive strikes against ballistic missile launching sites.¹⁸⁴ Also during crisis having access to Turkish territory would benefit Israeli air force with the chance of refueling in Turkey or using Turkish bases for second-strikes, which would save Israeli forces from time, and in return enhance Turkey's deterrence against possible missile attacks.

The joint naval exercises enhanced Israel's deterrence. The sea could become

¹⁸² Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Entente*, 49-50.

¹⁸³ Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership," 25.

¹⁸⁴ Kibaroglu, "Turkey and Israel Strategize," 64.

Israel's launching arena for longer range strategic strikes; moreover, Turkish ports and waters could become a safe heaven for Israel's putative submarine-based second-strike capability, which might have deterrent value against a nuclear attack on Israel.¹⁸⁵ The intelligence co-operation also enhanced the two countries deterrence. Turkey having geographical advantage and Israel technological that heightened intelligence co-operation between the two countries, which increased early warning capacities of both countries helping in the fight against the international terror directed against both.¹⁸⁶ In this sense, both Turkey and Israel would enhance their deterrence against surprise attacks and terrorist attacks. For example, Iran must be distressed about the fact that Turkish-Israeli military co-operation has brought Israel to its borders in the form of intelligence listening posts on Turkish soil.¹⁸⁷

Enhanced Coercive Diplomacy

Coercive diplomacy draws on many of the same elements as deterrence, but instead of dissuading an adversary from undertaking an undesired action, it compels an adversary to undertake a desired action.¹⁸⁸ In this context, Turkey benefited from this alignment in 1998. Syria that was trapped between the two—Turkey and Israel—newly aligned nations, was pressured into co-operating with Turkey in its fight against the PKK, eventually leading to the expulsion of Öcalan from Syria in October 1998, and promoting a return to peace and stability for most of Turkey's Kurdish regions.¹⁸⁹ There was no evidence about how Israel played a part in this crisis. Although Israeli officials have

¹⁸⁵ Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership," 25.

¹⁸⁶ "Israel and Turkey: Current Relations and Strategic Interests," *Britain Israel Communications & Research Centre (BICOM)*, May 10, 2005, http://www.bicom.org.uk/publications/israel_foreign_relations/s/266/israel-and-turkey-curent-relations-and-strategic-interests/

¹⁸⁷ Waxman, "Turkey and Israel: A New Balance of Power in the Middle East," 27.

¹⁸⁸ Bir and Sherman, "Formula for Stability," 30.

¹⁸⁹ Walker, "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East," 82.

expressed that they did not take a part in Turkish-Syrian dispute, Turkey has benefited from the advantages of the co-operation with Israel.

Strengthening the Peace Process

The economic and military co-operation of Turkey and Israel enhanced their positions in the region. The regions two most powerful countries' alliance highlighted their military capabilities, especially Israel. In this sense, Turkish-Israeli relationship had a positive effect on the Arab-Israeli peace process, which amounts to a reluctant acceptance of Israel as a regional actor by most states.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, by allying itself with a Muslim state, albeit a secular one, Israel can send the much-needed message that its conflict is not with the Muslims and that Muslims and Jews can indeed be friends.¹⁹¹

Energy Security

Turkey is at the edge of the Persian Gulf and Caspian Basin areas where 70 percent of world's proven oil and over 40 percent of its natural gas reserves are concentrated.¹⁹² In the Middle East the partnership of two powerful countries, Turkey and Israel, would have a deterrent effect on Iran and Iraq in terms of protecting the Gulf area to secure the flow of oil. Turkey has become an active player in the pipelines competition for economic and geo-political reasons. In this context, Turkey proposed the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project that would bypass Russian territory and Iranian territory, which overall would decrease Russian and Iranian influence in the region. Israel and its lobby have been convinced of the strategic logic of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline and have supported Ankara's positions in Washington.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Entente*, 59.

¹⁹¹ Waxman, "Turkey and Israel: A New Balance of Power in the Middle East," 29.

¹⁹² Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership," 36.

¹⁹³ Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership," 36.

The strategic benefits of this relationship also had significant effects on the United States' interests in the greater Middle East. The significance of the relationship for the United States in terms of its interests is:

- A more effective containment policy toward Iran and Iraq;
- A potential nucleus for pulling other pro-US states, such as Jordan, into a wider Middle Eastern regional security regime;¹⁹⁴
- A potential means for the executive branch to bypass Congress in supporting Turkey (through presidential waivers an Israeli sales of arms that include U.S. origin technology),¹⁹⁵ which would make the American support for Israel easier in regional terms,¹⁹⁶
- The military capabilities of Turkey and Israel would be used to pressure Iran, Iraq and Syria;
- Promoting democracy by instead of trying to introduce democracy to countries ruled by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, the United States shifted its policy toward promoting alignment between two self-styled democracies, Turkey and Israel.¹⁹⁷

A strong pro-American alliance serves all the interests of the United States. Turkey with the largest military force in the region and Israel with advanced weapons and technological know-how changed the balance of power in favor of the United States' strategic interests. Moreover, the Turkish-Israeli alignment has enhanced the United States' presence in the region. Although the military co-operation between Turkey and

¹⁹⁴ Makovsky, *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, 236.

¹⁹⁵ Makovsky, *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, 236.

¹⁹⁶ Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership," 39.

¹⁹⁷ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 12.

Israel was not a formal alliance, closer analysis would show that it was unique on many accounts, in terms of depth, variety and intensity.¹⁹⁸ Israeli Foreign Minister's, David Levy, definition of the co-operation between both parties in his visit to Turkey in May 1997 were confirming that although it was not a formal alliance formed against a third party, it could not be underestimated:

The co-operation between the two countries would deter Syria and Iran from displaying unfriendly behaviors; moreover, it would evoke the countries in the region to think twice before doing anything that would endanger peace in the region.¹⁹⁹

Thus, the Turkish-Israeli alignment would be useful to deter (as stated in regional implications) hostile states that would endanger the United States' strategic interests. The new alignment also opens up possibilities for wider regional co-operation in establishing a shield against long-range missiles.²⁰⁰ Also Jordan's co-operation with Turkey and Israel and its attendance to joint exercises is very beneficial for the United States in terms of forming a pro-US Middle Eastern regional security regime. Jordan sent an observer to the US-Turkish-Israeli naval exercises in January 1998 and in December 1999, and also participated in the biannual strategic discussions held in Israel.²⁰¹ The United States was pleased by the extension of bilateral co-operation to Jordan that the U.S. Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, said he would 'continue to stress the need for greater co-operation between Israel, Turkey and Jordan, and basically talk about enhancing the level

¹⁹⁸ Bengio and Özcan, "Changing Relations: Turkish-Israeli-Arab Triangle," par.15.

¹⁹⁹ Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 78.

²⁰⁰ Inbar quotes from Ian O. Lesser, "Western Interests in a Changing Turkey," in Kalilzad, Lesser, Larabee, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations in The Israeli-Turkish Entente*, 63.

²⁰¹ Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Entente*, 59.

of security arrangements in the region.²⁰² The United States proved the significance of the Turkish-Israeli alignment to its strategic interests by approving Israel to sell weapons and transfer technology to Turkey, and participating in the joint naval exercises and joint aerial training exercises. The United States probably participated in strategic dialogues with the other two, although this was not publicized.²⁰³ However, the United States put on the brakes whenever it sensed that a project or activity might hurt other U.S. interests or commercial ventures, such as: the prospect that the Turkish army might turn increasingly to Israel for its military hardware, instead of buying from American firms; the U.S. did not wish the secrets of certain military equipment that it had sold to Israel to find their way to a third part, even though this party might also be its ally.²⁰⁴

Overall, the United States appreciated the Turkish-Israeli alignment as a strategic benefit to its interests but did not want the alignment to become so strong that they would take a course independent of its interests.²⁰⁵ Although the United States has always encouraged the co-operation between its two reliable allies, the interests of it during the Cold War had discouraged Turkey and Israel to co-operate openly that they co-operated secretly in the military and intelligence spheres. However, the United States' interests in the post-Cold War era, and even its approach to this alignment has made it a reality that the Turkish-Israeli alignment has transformed into an open and broader partnership with growing military, political, and economic links.

²⁰² Inbar quotes from *Jerusalem Post*, 3 April 2000, p.4 in *The Israeli-Turkish Entente*, 63.

²⁰³ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 100.

²⁰⁴ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 101.

²⁰⁵ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 101.

Chapter Five

Future of the Turkish-Israeli Relationship

The 1990s witnessed the growing strategic co-operation between Turkey and Israel. The external and internal factors (as stated above) have removed the greatest obstacles for closer relations with Israel. Eventually, the military and intelligence oriented secret Peripheral Alliance of the 1950s transformed into an open and broader partnership that has evolved beyond military co-operation including co-operation in the economic and political spheres. However, the Turkish-Israeli alignment has recently been challenged by internal and external factors that have raised questions about the stability of the alignment in the 21st century. Although a second Palestinian intifada in 2000, the election of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002 that has Islamic roots, the United States' war in Iraq in 2003 and the situation of Northern Iraq and Kurds, and Hamas visit to Ankara in 2006 have increased strains on the relationship, the relationship has not been severely challenged like the Cold War years, and has continued to evolve. Through increased military, economic, and cultural interactions the political dimension of the Turkish-Israeli alliance has been played down.²⁰⁶ The recent efforts that has been demonstrated by Turkish and Israeli governments to repair the damage done to the relationship stress that the relationship continues to provide strategic benefits to both countries that neither of the two would disrupt in the near future.

Al Aksa Intifada

Turkey has always tried to stay at equal distances to both parties, and tried to perpetuate its relations with Israel independent from the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, when it comes to the Palestinians, the Turkish public's reaction became more severe. For

²⁰⁶ Walker, "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East," 87.

reasons more emotional than rational, the Palestinian cause enjoyed almost universal support among the Turkish citizenry.²⁰⁷ The collapse of the Camp David II followed by the election of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon resulted with the eruption of Al-Aksa intifada that spread to all occupied territories. In response Israel started a military campaign that had been subjected to criticism from Turkish officials. In October 2000, Turkey voted in favor of a U.N. resolution condemning Israel for using excessive force against the Palestinians, and later that month, President Ahmet Sezer harshly criticized Israel at an Islamic economic conference in Istanbul.²⁰⁸ It is important to note that although Turkey criticized Israelis actions towards the Palestinians, the relationship between the two countries has continued to evolve. For example, in September 2001, Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem stated that his country ‘is determined to improve its ties with Israel’ and offered ‘to expand the massive efforts to reach a solution between Israel and the Palestinians’.²⁰⁹

After the summit that was held in Sharm el Sheik when Israel and Palestinians did not come to an agreement a commission, Mitchell Commission, was formed to make research on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Turkey’s former President Süleyman Demirel attendance to this commission was evaluated as both parties having confidence in Turkey.²¹⁰ However, when Prime Minister Ariel Sharon paid a visit to Turkey in 2001 where he met with Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, the meeting was held in a tense tone. Ecevit criticized Sharon to sit at the negotiation table without proposing any

²⁰⁷ Israeli, “The Turkish-Israeli Odd Couple,” par.20.

²⁰⁸ Gregory A. Burris quotes from Middle East News Agency (Cairo), Oct.26, 2000 in “Turkey and Israel: Speed Bumps,” *Middle East Quarterly* 10, no.4 (Fall 2003): 72.

²⁰⁹ Efraim Inbar quotes from *Jerusalem Post*, 11 September 2001 in “The Resilience of Israeli- Turkish Relations,” *Israel Affairs* 11, no.4 (October 2005): 602.

²¹⁰ Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 126.

preconditions.²¹¹ Furthermore, when Ecevit warned Sharon that under those circumstances the relationship between the two countries would be overshadowed, Sharon responded by stressing that if Turkey would adopt a manner toward Israel, this would not be left without a reaction.²¹²

Another diplomatic crisis occurred after Israel's Operation Defensive Shield and Israel using excessive power towards the Palestinians, and Israel besieging Yasser Arafat in Ramallah. Israel usually ignored harsh statements from Turkish officials but as the tone of the criticisms got harsher when Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit described in April 2002 the Israeli military hunt for Palestinian terrorists as 'genocide', Israeli diplomacy, backed by Jewish organizations in the U.S., forced the Turkish premier to retract his remark, delineating a clear 'red line' regarding what Israel is willing to accept as criticism from a friendly country.²¹³ Turkey realized that it could lose American Jewish lobby groups' support for Turkey in the United States since they have been a counterbalance to Greek and Armenian lobbies. Thus to lessen the tension between the two countries Ecevit apologized shortly after stating:

"My intention was not to offend Jewish society. The extremely worrisome violence staged on innocent people from both sides made me use that word in order to underline the importance of the situation. I am very sorry for the misunderstanding that it caused Turkey has always been a friend to both Israel and Palestine. Turkey's balanced approach has remained unchanged for years.

²¹¹ Özcan quotes from "Şaron'a Fırça," *Hürriyet*, 10 Ağustos 2001 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 127.

²¹² Özcan quotes from Barçın Yinanç, "Gezgin Zirve," *Milliyet*, 9 Ağustos 2001 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 127.

²¹³ Inbar quotes from *Turkish Daily News*, 11 April 2002 and *Washington Times*, 16 April 2002 in "The Resilience of Israeli-Turkish Relations," 602.

This approach also reflects the Turkish nation's will and expectation for peace in the Middle East at the same time."²¹⁴

After Al Aksa intifada Turkey has been in a diplomatic activity described as "concerted action" that has the intention of creating international synergy by first bringing influential regional powers and organizations, primarily OIC, together to become a part of an activity to stop the war in the occupied territories.²¹⁵ Overall, the second intifada created a mini crisis in the bilateral relations that did not seriously influence the Turkish-Israeli alignment. Although Turkey criticized Israel for its actions against the Palestinians, it maintained its co-operation with Israel.

Despite the diplomatic crisis, the military co-operation and economic relations between the two countries has continued to evolve. On January 17, Turkish, Israeli and American navies held the third annual joint search-and-rescue naval exercises, Reliant Mermaid III.²¹⁶ Then, in April 2001, Israel and Turkey conducted joint maneuvers, without the United States, from the base at Marmaris Aksaz Deniz naval base, which were reportedly not humanitarian but military in purpose.²¹⁷ Also in June 2001, Turkish, Israeli and American air forces engaged in joint aerial training exercises, Anatolian Eagle. The participants in the exercises focused on joint operations and command procedures, taking advantage of the similar American-made planes in their respective air force to prepare for the possibility of combined missions during future regional crises.²¹⁸ The intimacy between the Turkish and Israeli air forces could be inferred from the

²¹⁴ Bishku quotes from *Turkish Daily News*, 17 April 2002 in "How Has Turkey Viewed Israel?" 190-191.

²¹⁵ Özcan quotes from Sami Kohen, "Türkiye Ne Yapabilir," *Milliyet*, 9 Nisan 2002 and Fikret Bila, "Ankara Yaklaşımı," *Milliyet*, 9 Nisan 2002 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 128.

²¹⁶ Gruen, "Recent Developments in Turkish-Israeli Relations," 313.

²¹⁷ Bengio quotes from *Milliyet*, April 30, 2001 in *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 113.

²¹⁸ Gruen, "Recent Development in Turkish-Israeli Relations," 313.

participation of Israeli F-15 planes in the ninetieth anniversary celebrations of Turkey's air force.²¹⁹ Besides joint trainings, the two countries' militaries have continued to cooperate on weaponry and hardware development. On March 29, 2002, Turkey signed a secret agreement with Israel Military Industries (IMI) for the modernization of 170 M-60A1 Turkish tanks, at a cost of \$668m.²²⁰ This agreement was signed after intense debates because of the rising tension with Israel's Operation Defensive Shield in the occupied territories. However, a statement made by Defense Ministry stressed that the decision for the agreement was made regardless of daily development.²²¹ The tank agreement is significant not only had it indicated the Turkish military's willingness and influence on relations with Israel, but with this agreement Israel would share its technology secrets with Turkey. This clearly coincides with Ankara's declared policy of becoming more self-sufficient in meeting its own military requirements.²²² Also in July 2002, Turkey signed an agreement with IMI for the modernization of 300 helicopters²²³ worth \$110 million that included putting electronic warfare systems on helicopters.²²⁴

Turkey has been interested in Israel's Arrow ballistic missile defense system. Yet, Turkey could not be successful to reach an agreement with Israel since it was a joint project with the United States; moreover, the United States was not willing to sell the system to Turkey. However, in addition to Israel's effort to persuade the United States after September 11 attacks it was understood that the United States approved Turkey's

²¹⁹ Bengio quotes from *Ha'aretz*, June 3, 2001; AFP, June 18, 2001 in *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 113.

²²⁰ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 115.

²²¹ Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 83.

²²² Amikam, *Turkey: Facing A New Millennium*, 225.

²²³ Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 141.

²²⁴ "A Window on Turkish-Israeli Relations," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/documents/42cec7d328673.pdf>.

participation in Arrow project.²²⁵ Thus, in Israeli Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon's visit to Turkey in December 2002, both parties discussed the issue of selling Arrow II to Turkey.²²⁶

In addition, the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 11, 2001 have reinforced the strategic co-operation between Turkey and Israel. For Israel and Turkey, the new threats posed by Osama bin Laden and his international network of Al Qaeda terrorist—with their possible connections to militant Islamic elements in Iran, northern Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere in the region—constituted one additional cause of concern.²²⁷ In this sense, Iran raised concerns in the region because Iran has been a supporter of Islamic terrorist organizations. Israel and the United States stated that Iran was transporting military equipment to terrorist organizations in Syria by Iranian flights. For its part, Turkey has actively thwarted terrorist organizations working against Israel, and in 2000, Turkey reportedly prevented Iran from supplying arms to Hezbollah through Turkish airspace.²²⁸

The economic relations between Turkey and Israel have continued to evolve despite diplomatic tensions. Trade relations have increased significantly compared to the 1990s. As a part of the Free Trade Agreement on January 1, 2000 the tax amount, 13.3%, applied to some textile products, which had been subjected to customs, was lifted.²²⁹ Also in February 2000, Turkey and Israel's Joint Commission signed a memorandum of understanding on free trade zones that had the intention to enable the two countries to

²²⁵ Özcan quotes from Metehan Demir, "Arrow İçin Yeşil Işık," *Hürriyet*, 2 Ocak 2002 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 88.

²²⁶ Özcan quotes from "İsrail'in derdi İşbirliği Yapmak," *Radikal*, 25 Aralık 2002 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 88.

²²⁷ Gruen, "Recent Development in Turkish-Israeli Relations," 301.

²²⁸ Inbar, "The Resilience of Israeli-Turkish Relations," 592.

²²⁹ "İsrail Ükle Bülteni (Mart 2007)," *DEİK*, 7, <http://www.deik.org.tr/bultenler/2007319161242bulten-mart07.doc>.

export goods to the United States without customs duties and quotas, and to increase the annual volume of trade between Turkey and Israel from \$900 million to \$2 billion.²³⁰ Therefore, the trade volume has increased enormously from \$883.313 million in 1999 to \$1.155.624 million in 2000, \$1.334.707 million in 2001, and \$1.325.994 million in 2002.²³¹ Especially with having the taxes lifted on some textile products Turkish exporters to Israel with a 23.8% increase totaled to \$805.218 million in 2001 compared to \$650.142 million in 2000.

Although the ban on casinos in Turkey had raised concerns that Israeli tourism would decline, the number of Israeli tourists coming to Turkey in the first three years of the 21st century indicates that tourism still maintains its significant share in the bilateral economic relations. The number of Israeli tourist coming to Turkey are: 312.301 in 2000, 310.714 in 2001, and 270.262 in 2002.²³²

Israel and Israeli companies' investments have continued in the GAP project. In February 2000, six agriculture irrigation projects totaling 600 million dollar were allocated to Israeli companies.²³³ Also on October 11, 2000, a joint sample demonstration farm by Koç Group and ATA Construction Industry and Trading Inc. would be put into service that was constructed on 2500 square meters land; furthermore Israel would supply the know-how required for the farm.²³⁴

Turkey and Israel also discussed the issue of exporting water to Israel from

²³⁰ Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 122.

²³¹ "İsrail Ülke Bülteni (Mart 2007)," *DEİK*, 7, <http://www.deik.org.tr/bultenler/2007319161242bulten-mart07.doc>.

²³² "Tourism Statistic 2001-2003," 26-27,

<http://www.kultur.gov.tr/TR/BelgeGoster.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFF7EFAE9849F61D80E5DC9FD9D89694F3B>.

²³³ Nachmani, *Turkey: Facing A New Millennium*, 227.

²³⁴ Özcan quotes from Mehmet Faraç, *Suyu Arayan Toprak: Haran ve Fırat'ın Bin Yıllık Dramı*, İstanbul, Ozan, 2001, s.81 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 145.

Turkey's Manavgat River. During Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' visit to Turkey in 2001 both parties held discussions regarding this issue but did not end up with an agreement. Also on August 6, 2002, Prime Minister Sharon assured visiting Turkish Energy Minister Zeki Çakan that Israel will purchase 50 million cubic meters (MCM) of water annually over 20 years.²³⁵

AKP Victory and Relations with Israel

The victory of the new Justice and Development party (AKP), whose leaders had been associated with previously banned Islamic-rooted parties (including the Refah party), in the Turkish national elections on November 3, 2002, has been termed a "political earthquake" by many observers.²³⁶ The AKP victory raised concerns in Israel in terms of the future of the strategic relationship, since its predecessor, Refah party, had tried to diminish the relations with Israel and deepen Turkey's relations with the Islamic world. Why an Islamic-rooted party won the elections? Although the AKP undoubtedly drew some of its support from traditional Islamic elements in the Turkish population, the consensus of political observers is that the party's victory had little to do with its Islamic roots.²³⁷ The victory of the AKP was described as a protest of the Turkish population since they remonstrated that former parties had failed to govern the country adequately.

Would the AKP government like its predecessor, Refah party, try to break off relations with Israel? Shortly before the victory some senior political leaders harshly criticized Israel's policies towards the Palestinians that raised questions about the future of the relations with Israel. For example, Bülent Arinç, encouraged the United States to

²³⁵ Gruen, "Recent Developments in Turkish-Israeli Relations," 315.

²³⁶ George E. Gruen, "Turkey's "Political Earthquake": Significance for the United States and the Region," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 25 (2003): 87.

²³⁷ Gruen, "Turkey's Political Earthquake," 88.

use its influence to stop Israel's 'massacre' of the Palestinians.²³⁸ However, the AKP government promised to maintain the strategic co-operation with Israel. Erdoğan made it clear to Jewish organizations in America, which he met immediately after his electoral victory, that he favored continuing the bond with Israel and even expanding it further.²³⁹ In an article in *New Republic* in December 2002, when Erdoğan was in Washington, the well-known commentator Robert D. Kaplan wrote:

Like Gül, Erdoğan is not an opportunist whose ideas have recently changed for the sake of short-term political gains. He too has slowly come around to a reformist philosophy that welcomes the traditional religious practices of Turkey's working class while supporting the secular nature of the political establishment.²⁴⁰

What is more important from Erdoğan's philosophy is that he realized that breaking off relations with Israel would cost too much for Turkey. Not only Turkey would lose the benefits of relations with Israel—economic ties and military co-operation—but also it would harm its position in Washington. Although Israel's actions towards the Palestinians and harsh criticisms of Turkish officials have put strain on relations with Israel, the AKP government has continued to develop its relations with Israel. Through increased military, economic, and cultural interactions the political dimension of the Turkish-Israeli alliance has been played down.²⁴¹

During the first couple months of the AKP government a lot of ministerial level visits to Israel had been carried out and in return from Israel many high-level visits had

²³⁸ Burris quotes from Anadolu News Agency (Turkey), April 9, 2002 in "Turkey and Israel: Speed Bumps," 69-70.

²³⁹ Inbar quotes from *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 11 December 2002 in "The Resilience of Israeli-Turkish Relations," 602.

²⁴⁰ Bishku quotes from Robert D. Kaplan, 'Reform Party,' *New Republic*, 16 December 2002, p.13 in "How Has Turkey Viewed Israel?" 180.

²⁴¹ Walker, "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East," 87.

been paid to Turkey, such as President Moshe Katsav and Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom.²⁴² For example, in April 2003 Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom paid a visit to Turkey to discuss firstly the developments in Iraq and in the region, and bilateral problems.²⁴³ Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom paid another visit to Turkey after devastating attacks to Neve Shalom and Beth Israel synagogues where he met with Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül, and made joint a press statement in which both ministers stressed that ‘there is a need to confront terrorism cooperatively in the international arena.’²⁴⁴ The threat of terrorism has increased the co-operation between the two countries. Indeed, Prime Minister Erdoğan urged strengthened intelligence co-operation between the two states in their counter-terrorist activities.²⁴⁵

Following the bomb attacks in Istanbul Israeli Public Security Minister Tsahi Hanegbi paid a visit to Turkey in December 2003. During Hanegbi’s visit both parties signed an agreement that stressed co-operation in fighting ‘drug smuggling, illegal immigration, organized crime and women slave trade’;²⁴⁶ moreover, both parties reached an accord under which Turkish police will for the first time train with Israeli police.²⁴⁷

However, diplomatic relations entered into a crisis period with Israel’s operations in the West Bank and Gaza that resulted with civilian deaths, and assassination of Hamas’ religious leaders of Sheik Ahmet Yasin and his successor Abdülaziz Rantisi in March and May 2004, and with reports, which claimed that Israel was secretly training

²⁴² Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 154.

²⁴³ Özcan quotes from “Israeli FM Due in Ankara for High-level Talks,” *Turkish Daily News*, 14 Nisan 2003 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 155.

²⁴⁴ “Ortak Mücadele Arayışı,” *Cumhuriyet*, 17 Kasım 2003.

²⁴⁵ Inbar quotes from *Aksam*, 2 January 2004 and Uri Dalan, ‘Israel and Turkey Join Forces vs. Al Qaeda’, *New York Post*, 10 January 2004 in “The Resilience of Israeli-Turkish Relations,” 595.

²⁴⁶ Özcan quotes from Ayhan Şimşek, “İsrail ile Güvenlik Anlaşması,” *Cumhuriyet*, 22 Aralık 2003 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 155.

²⁴⁷ Inbar quotes from *Turkish Daily News*, 25 December 2003 and *Reuters* (Jerusalem), 25 December 2003 in “The Resilience of Israeli-Turkish Relations,” 603.

Kurdish commandos. The AKP government has also been very sensitive to the Palestinian issue and made harsh critics toward Israel. When Hamas' religious leader Sheik Ahmet Yasin was killed during Israel's operation in Gaza on March 22, 2004, Prime Minister Erdoğan described Israel's actions as 'terrorism', and criticized Israel by taking the decision to assassinate Sheik Yasin who was released from Israeli prison because of health problems; and continued his criticism by stating that a state should not nurture grudges and suspend law.²⁴⁸ Also a condemnation came from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressing that this kind of actions would deteriorate the conflict even more in the region.²⁴⁹ One again, when Sheik Yasin's successor Abdülaziz Rantisi was killed on March 17, 2004, a harsh criticism made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressing that this kind of illegal assassination actions would not serve for peace but would even worsen the conflict.²⁵⁰

Israel would raise its concerns about the future of the relations, and would stress its discomfort with the continuous delay of Foreign Minister Gül's visit to Israel.²⁵¹ Hence, to lessen the tension during EU summit in Dublin on May 6, 2004, Foreign Minister Gül would promise Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalon that he would make his visit to Israel.²⁵²

However, relations between Turkey and Israel would again become tense in May 2004 with Israel's actions against Palestinians in Rafah refugee camp. Prime Minister Erdoğan criticized Israel for using excessive power against Palestinians in Rafah on May

²⁴⁸ Hasan Tüfekçi, "Erdoğan: İsrail'in Yaptığı Terördür," *Hürriyet*, 14 Mart 2004.

²⁴⁹ "Hamas'ın Dini Lideri Seyh Ahmet Yasin'in Öldürülmesi Hakkında," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 22 Mart 2004, no.49, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr>.

²⁵⁰ "Hamas Lideri Rantisi'nin Öldürülmesi Hakkında," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 18 Nisan 2004, no.62, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr>.

²⁵¹ Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 133.

²⁵² Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 133.

19, 2004, and defined Israel's actions as 'state terrorism'; in addition, Erdoğan called all states into action rather than just condemning.²⁵³ Foreign Minister Gül also condemned Israeli actions; and replied to the question if the relations between the countries would be effected under these circumstances as "these actions were affecting the whole region negatively thus undoubtedly would affect the relations."²⁵⁴

It is important to emphasize that despite these harsh criticisms, Turkey did not take any serious actions toward Israel. Even it tried to find a balance between Israelis and Palestinians. For example, Foreign Minister stressed that also Palestinians' suicide attacks were incorrect; whereas Prime Minister Erdoğan despite his calls for co-operative actions did not define the concrete steps Turkey would take, and stressed that he made the critics as a father.²⁵⁵

Turkey decided to take a step against Israel by taking side with Palestine when Foreign Minister Gül stressed that Turkey might appoint an ambassador to Palestine's Consulate in Jerusalem, and Feridun Siniroğlu, Ambassador to Tel Aviv, might be called for consultations.²⁵⁶ When Feridun Siniroğlu was called to Ankara for consultations on June 8, 2004, it was reported by the presses, which were close to the AKP government, that Siniroğlu was called to Ankara as a reaction to Israel.²⁵⁷ In response to this, from Ministry of Foreign Affairs circles it was emphasized that Siniroğlu was called for routine purposes.²⁵⁸ Also when Israel's Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert paid a visit to Turkey in July 2004, he did not get the chance to meet with Prime Minister Erdoğan.

²⁵³ "Erdoğan Devlet Terörü Dedi," *Cumhuriyet*, 21 Mayıs 2004.

²⁵⁴ "Erdoğan Devlet Terörü Dedi," *Cumhuriyet*, 21 Mayıs 2004.

²⁵⁵ Serkan Demirtaş, "İsrail'le Yeni Sogukluk Dönemi," *Cumhuriyet*, 22 Mayıs 2004.

²⁵⁶ Hilal Köylü, "İsrail'le Kriz Tohumları," *Radikal*, 27 Mayıs 2004; "Filistin'e Jest, İsrail'e Tavır," *Cumhuriyet*, 27 Mayıs 2004.

²⁵⁷ Özcan, *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 136.

²⁵⁸ Özcan quotes from "İsrail ve Araplara Mesaj," *Cumhuriyet*, 9 Haziran 2004.

During his visit, Olmert was accepted by President Sezer and Foreign Minister Gül but did not get an appointment from Erdoğan. Although Erdoğan's busy schedule was shown as the reason, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sources emphasized that Erdoğan was not partisan of the meeting.²⁵⁹ Later in an interview with CNN Turk, Olmert stated that he could not meet with Erdoğan because of a technical problem; in addition, he added that he did not think that he was punished for his governments' actions, and relations between two countries were strong enough to overcome the problems it was facing.²⁶⁰ Despite Olmert's optimistic statements, it was obvious that Turkey's attitude to Israel did not change.

However, the diplomatic relations started to warm up after the NATO Summit that was held in Istanbul at the end of June, where the United States' President, George W. Bush, told Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan not to strain the relations with Israel, thus, Prime Minister Erdoğan sent his four staff, Ömer Çelik, Egemen Bağış, Şaban Dişli and Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, to Israel.²⁶¹ Addition to U.S. administration's role, the meeting of Robert Wexler, member of the United States House of Representatives, with Foreign Minister Gül was very significant that Wexler paid attention to American Jewish lobby's support to Turkey would decline because of the harsh criticisms of the AKP government against Israel.²⁶² This was followed by high-level visits. The most important ones are Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül's that was postponed for a long time, in January 2005, and Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan's visit in May 2005. Also Justice Minister Cemil Çiçek paid an important symbolic visit to Israel in March 2005 when he attended the

²⁵⁹ "İsrail Randevu Bekliyor," *Milliyet*, 13 Temmuz 2004.

²⁶⁰ Ayhan Şimşek, "Olmert: Cezalandırılmadım," *Cumhuriyet*, 15 Temmuz 2004.

²⁶¹ Uğur Erkan, "Bush uyardı AKP heyeti İsrail'e gitti," *Hürriyet*, 31 Ağustos 2004.

²⁶² Ayhan Şimşek, "Erdoğan'a İsrail'e Karşı 'Yumuşak Ol' Çağrısı," *Cumhuriyet*, 11 Haziran 2004.

opening of the new Holocaust museum in Jerusalem.²⁶³ Foreign Minister Gül's visit defined by observers as a move to repair the damage done to the relationship.²⁶⁴ However, Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit was the most significant one because Turkey and Israel appeared to have put relations back on track.²⁶⁵ The most visible accomplishment of the talks in Israel, Prime Minister Erdoğan and his Israeli counterpart Ariel Sharon agreed to set up a hotline for instant communications.²⁶⁶ Erdoğan's visit to Israel was evaluated as a part of a plan to improve Turkey's relations with the United States, which have been entered into a crisis period with the Turkish Parliament's rejection of the proposal that would allow the US-led coalition forces use Turkish bases, because of Israel's relations with the United States, and the Jewish lobby's power in the U.S. Prime Minister Erdoğan responded to these claims by stressing that his visit to Israel was not done for the request of others but was done in accordance with historical, national, humanitarian and regional necessities.²⁶⁷

To some extent Erdoğan's statement may be true. Turkey has been enjoying great benefits from its relations with Israel, such as economic relations that have grown enormously. However, the United States factor should not be underestimated. It was reported that during his visit to Israel, Erdoğan firstly made secret contacts with two foremost names from the American Jewish lobby, and later he held a meeting with U.S. Senator Bill Fritz, which was done upon the request of the Senator, in which the Senator told Erdoğan that he was happy for Erdoğan's visit to Israel; and added that Turkey could

²⁶³ Inbar, "The Resilience of Israeli-Turkish Relations," 603.

²⁶⁴ Özcan quotes from Utku Çakırözer, "İki Onarım Hamlesi," *Milliyet*, 29 Aralık 2004 and "Onarma Ziyareti," *Cumhuriyet*, 3 Ocak 2005 in *Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm*, 162.

²⁶⁵ "Turkey, Israel go back to business after tension," *Turkish Daily News*, May 3, 2005.

²⁶⁶ "Turkey, Israel go back to business after tension," *Turkish Daily News*, May 3, 2005.

²⁶⁷ "İsrail Ziyareti Meclis'ten," *Milliyet*, 4 Mayıs 2005.

contribute to peace.²⁶⁸ Diplomatic sources emphasized that since Fritz was very close to the U.S. President George Bush, he might be effective for delivering Erdoğan's messages.²⁶⁹ If Turkey wants to take a more active role in the Middle Eastern politics, as Erdoğan stated during his visit to the U.S. at the end of January 2004 that Turkey with its predominantly Muslim population and democratic and secular ideology, remained ready and competent to serve an active role in its region and do its share to help establish a harmony of civilizations,²⁷⁰ it should establish good ties with the United States, since the U.S has been shaping the region with its democratization project.

Kurds in Northern Iraq: Israel Choosing Kurds over Turkey?

The strategy of the United States in the post-9/11 era has been to prevent rouge or failed states, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. This strategy promoted the concept of pre-emptive strikes. Bush administration wanted to mobilize power to thwart threats, foster peace and build freedom.²⁷¹ Therefore, Iraq was the first step of this wide strategy. In an article in *The Washington Post* on November 27, 2001, James Woolsey made the case that “of the Mideast’s predator governments—Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Sudan—Iraq presents the most urgent problem” because Iraq has been free of UN inspections of its weapons-making facilities for the past three years, and there were plenty of evidence of Iraq’s support of terrorist, such as its training of other Arabs at Salman Pak in how to hijack aircraft with knives.²⁷² Iraq has been a great threat to both

²⁶⁸ Utku Çakırözer and Burçun İmir, “Filistinliler Kızdı,” *Milliyet*, 3 Mayıs 2005.

²⁶⁹ Utku Çakırözer and Burçun İmir, “Filistinliler Kızı,” *Milliyet*, 3 Mayıs 2005.

²⁷⁰ Yakup Beris and Asli Gurkan, “Broader Middle East Initiative: Perceptions from Turkey,” *TUSIAD*, issue.7, <http://www.tusiad.us/content/uploaded/TURKEY-AND-BROADER-MIDDLE-EAST-TURKEY-IN-FOCUS-ISSUE7-FINAL.pdf>.

²⁷¹ Melvyn P. Leffler, “9/11 and the Past and Future of American Foreign Policy,” *International Affairs* 79, no.5 (2003): 1049.

²⁷² George E. Gruen, “Turkey’s Regional Role in the Aftermath of September 11, 2001,” *American Foreign Policy Interests* 24, no.3 (2002): 9.

Turkey and Israel. However, Turkey and Israel stood on the opposite sides over the war on Iraq. The reasons why the Turkish parliament rejected the proposal was: Turkey repeatedly pointed out its economic loss from the first Gulf War, for which it had never been compensated fully by the US; Turkey feared that a military strike on Iraq could lead the Kurds to establish an independent state next door; the opposition to the war also stemmed from the stance of the newly formed government of the AKP that was facing great trouble over the possible operation against Iraq because of pressure from its grass roots.²⁷³

Although the war on Iraq did not create tensions between Turkey and Israel, the future of the Iraq and Kurds in Northern Iraq has created tensions in the Turkish-Israeli alignment. Ironically, the same fears of Kurdish separatism that motivated the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement in the 1990s contributed to the greatest threat to bilateral relations that the countries have experienced yet.²⁷⁴ Seymour Hersh's claims that Israel was secretly training Kurds in Northern Iraq and news that Jewish Kurds who are living in Israel, were buying real-estate in Northern Iraq have raised great concerns in Turkey, since the greatest problem Turkey has faced for many years as both an internal and external problem was the establishment of a Kurdish state in Northern Iraq that would have triggered separatist movements in Turkey too.

Seymour Hersh in his article, Plan B, published in *The New Yorker* magazine in June 2004 claims that:

²⁷³ Aylin Guney, "An Anatomy of the Transformation of the US-Turkish Alliance: From "Cold War" to "War on Iraq"," *Turkish Studies* 6, no.3 (September 2005): 348.

²⁷⁴ Rachel Brandenburg, "No Longer NewlyWeds: The Evolution of Turkish Foreign Policy Toward Israel," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 4, no.4 (Winter 2005): par.41

Israeli intelligence and military operatives are now quietly at work in Kurdistan, providing training for Kurdish commando units and, most important in Israel's view, running covert operations inside Kurdish areas of Iran and Syria. The former Israeli intelligence officer acknowledged that since late last year Israel has been training Kurdish commando units to operate in the same manner and with the same effectiveness as Israel's most secretive commando units, the Mistaravim.²⁷⁵

Also some of the Kurdish Jews were buying land and other intangibles and investing in Northern Iraq.²⁷⁶ Foreign Minister Gül stressed that the news regarding the training of Kurdish commando units and buying of land in Northern Iraq were denied by Israel, and Turkey had to believe what had been told by Israelis.²⁷⁷ Many observers have raised the question whether Israel choosing Kurds over Turkey? First of all, it is important to evaluate the strategic value of Kurds to Israel. Israel had also assisted Iraq's Kurds to advance its own interests; for example, in the late 1960s, Israel, with Iranian co-operation, provided them with substantial assistance in their campaign against Baghdad.²⁷⁸

Now in the 21st century, Israel could use Kurds: the Kurds would be as an indispensable ally particularly against the Shi'a militias in the south with their Iranian support; Israel could employ Kurdish commando to infiltrate Iran and provide important intelligence by monitoring nuclear facilities; the Kurds could also make trouble for

²⁷⁵ Seymour Hersh, "Plan B: As June 30th Approaches, Israel looks to the Kurds," *The New Yorker*, June 21, 2004, http://www.newyorker.com/printable/?fact/040628fa_fact.

²⁷⁶ Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Clash of Interest Over Northern Iraq drives Turkish-Israeli Alliance to a Crossroads," *The Middle East Journal*, 59, no.2 (Spring 2005): par.4

²⁷⁷ "Duyumlar Var Ama Isral'e Güvenmemiz Gerekir," *Hürriyet*, 23 Haziran 2004.

²⁷⁸ Brian Maher, "Israel's Shifting Geopolitical Security Concerns Threaten its Relationship with Turkey," *PINR-Power and Interest News Report*, September 3, 2004, http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report_id=204&language_id=1.

Syria.²⁷⁹ A former Israeli intelligence officer says “we love Turkey but have got to keep the pressure on Iran... the Kurds were the last surviving group close to the United States with any say in Iraq. The only question was how to square it with Turkey.”²⁸⁰ However, it can be argued whether Israel would be willing to sacrifice its strategic alignment with Turkey. Israel would favor an independent Kurdish state. However, the situation of a Kurdish state would be risky problematic since none of its neighbors—Syria, Turkey and Iran—would be willing to accept an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq. Thus, the stability of such an ally would be questionable. Moreover, favoring a Kurdish independent entity does not fulfill Israel’s strategic interests because strategically, the break-up of Iraq does not serve Israel’s interests; a relatively strong Iraq that would counterbalance Iran’s strategic preponderance in the Gulf area does.²⁸¹ Finally, besides strong economic and military co-operations with Turkey, in the last years, Turkey has been trying to establish good relations with its all neighbors, and trying its best effort to mediate between Arabs and Israelis that Israel should not risk losing.

Hamas Visit to Ankara

Hamas visit to Turkey in February 2006 has created tensions between Turkey and Israel. Erdoğan has articulated Turkey’s desire to bring the principal actors of the region together to transform the Middle East in the same way that the U.S. involvement helped transform Europe from ‘a hotbed of continental and world wars into a geography of

²⁷⁹ Maher, “Israel’s Shifting Geopolitical Security Concerns Threatens its Relationship with Turkey.”

²⁸⁰ Kibaroglu quotes from Seymour Hersh, Chain of Command: the Road from 9/11 to Abu Gharib, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 2004, pp.351-360 in “Clash of Interest Over Northern Iraq drives Turkish-Israeli Alliance to a Crossroads,” par.24.

²⁸¹ Inbar, “The Resilience of Israeli-Turkish Relations,” 604.

peace'.²⁸² Thus, Hamas visit to Turkey can be evaluated within this context. As mentioned above, Turkey has been willing to take a more active part in the Middle Eastern politics in the 21st century and, in this sense, it has been trying to establish good relations with all of its neighbors. Moreover, the Palestinian elections, which resulted in a radical Hamas-led government have been seen in Turkish policy circles as a unique opportunity for Turkey.²⁸³ On February 15, 2006, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni called Foreign Minister Gül upon the news that newly elected Hamas government would pay a visit to Turkey, and requested official explanation from Ankara, which was responded by Foreign Minister Gül that there was no invitation made to Hamas, and furthermore Gül assured not to hold a meeting.²⁸⁴

However, Hamas paid a visit to Turkey that raised criticisms from Israel to Turkey. For example, Senior Advisor to Israeli Prime Minister Ra'anan Gissin made an explanation to NTV stated that by accepting Hamas Ankara has harmed its relations with Tel Aviv, moreover, Gissin stressed his reaction by asking how would Turkish prime minister feel if Israel would invite Abdullah Öcalan to Israel.²⁸⁵ Prime Minister Erdoğan has subsequently said that Hamas leaders were given the "right message at the right time" in Ankara to renounce violence and recognize Israel's rights to exist and dismissed criticism for meeting with a group that is labeled as a terrorist organization by both Israel and the United States, saying Turkey, a country with a historic responsibility in the

²⁸² Walker quotes from Alwin Powell, "Erdoğan Calls for Co-operation," *Harvard Gazette*, 5 February 2004, www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2004/02.05/03-turkey.html in "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East," 88.

²⁸³ Walker, "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East," 88.

²⁸⁴ Utku Çakırözer, "İsrail Hamas'la Görüşmeyin Dedi," *Milliyet* 15 Şubat 2006, <http://www.milliyet.com/2006/02/15/siyaset/asiy.html>.

²⁸⁵ "İsrail, Öcalan'ı Kabul Etse Ne Olur?" *Milliyet*, 17 Şubat 2006.

Middle East, could not remain a by stander to the conflict.²⁸⁶ After Erdoğan's statements, Deputy Prime Minister Olmert called Erdoğan and emphasized that "Israel cares about its relations with Turkey, and looks forward to even develop their relations".²⁸⁷ Turkey and Israel overcame this crisis soonest. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni paid a visit to Turkey in May 2006, which was the first time that Turkish and Israeli ministers meet since a brief rift between Israel and Turkey sparked by Ankara's hosting of Khaled Meshaal, the exiled leader of Hamas, where she met with Presiden Sezer, Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Gül.²⁸⁸ Livni's visit was followed by Turkish President Sezer's visit to Israel in June 2006 and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's visit to Turkey in February 2007.

Although significant developments in the 21st century have put strain on diplomatic relations, the Turkish-Israeli alignment has shown that the relationship between the two countries is so strong that they did not let diplomatic tensions to harm it. Both parties successfully have overcome their bilateral problems. The military co-operation and economic relations have continued to evolve since the victory of the AKP government.

First of all it is important to note that right after its victory the AKP government did not cancel the tank deal that was signed in March 8 2002 when Turkey had chosen Israel's state-owned Israeli Military Industries (IMI) to modernize 170 U.S.-made M-60 tanks.²⁸⁹ Moreover, in April 2005 Turkey selected an Israeli consortium to provide Heron UAVs, a project estimated to be worth US \$200 million, and negotiations have

²⁸⁶ Walker quotes from "Erdoğan: No Retreat," *Turkish Daily News*, 22 February 2006 in "Turkey and Israel's Relationship in the Middle East," 89.

²⁸⁷ "Olmert: Size İtimadımız Tam," *Milliyet*, 24 Şubat 2006.

²⁸⁸ Aluf Benn, quotes from *Ha'a retz Daily*, May 29, 2006 in "Livni Arrives in Turkey for first talks since Hamas Leader's," *Turkish-Israeli*, May 29, 2006,

<http://turkishisraeli.com/en/modules/news/article.php?storyid=66>.

²⁸⁹ Gruen, "Recent Developments in Turkish-Israeli Relations," 314.

taken place over the retrofitting of an additional 30 F-4 Phantoms--a deal worth US \$500 million.²⁹⁰ Israeli Chief of Staff Dan Halutz paid a visit to Ankara in December 2005 and IDF agreed to supply Turkey with high-tech surveillance equipment to help protect Turkey's Iraqi border.²⁹¹ Additionally, the militaries of the two countries continued to practice their joint exercises. For example, in 2003 Turkey, Israel, and the United States participated in the fifth annual search-and-rescue exercises, Reliant Mermaid V, in the eastern Mediterranean. However, this exercised differed from the earlier ones because of its greater emphasis on security against potential terrorist threats.²⁹²

The military co-operation between the two countries has even more strengthened with the visits of high-ranking officers. In 2003 the Turkish military's Chief of Staff, General Hilmi Özkök, visited Israel, the first senior Turkish official visit since the November elections and the first by a Turkish chief of staff since 1996 that was resulted in several agreements: two nation's militaries would augment their annual air and sea exercises.²⁹³ The high-ranking visits continued as: Turkish Air Force commander Faruk Comert visited Israel in an 'unpublicized' three-day trip in December 2005; Commander of the Turkish Naval Forces, Adm. Yener Karahanoglu, traveled to Israel in December-January 2005; Israeli Chief of Staff Dan Halutz visited Ankara where he met with the Turkish Chief of Staff Gen. Hilmi Özkök that resulted with an agreement: to continue joint military exercises and share intelligence satellites.²⁹⁴

Economic relations between Turkey and Israel have also continued to evolve

²⁹⁰ Inbar, "The Resilience of Israeli-Turkish Relations," 602-603.

²⁹¹ "Israeli PM Olmert to Travel to Turkey on Wednesday: Bilateral Economic and Security Ties, and Mideast Peace Process to be Discussed by Leaders of the Region's Top Moderate Democratic Nations," *The Israeli Project*, February 13, 2007, <http://www.theisraeliproject.org>.

²⁹² Gruen, "Turkey's Political Earthquake," 95.

²⁹³ Keith Weissman, "Expanding Relations," *AIPAC*, September 9, 2003, www.aipac.org.

²⁹⁴ "Israeli PM Olmert to Travel to Turkey on Wednesday," <http://www.theisraeliproject.org>.

since the victory of the AKP government. The volume of trade has increased enormously with the end of 2006 (see Table 1). As of 2005, Israel became Turkey's largest trade partner in the Middle East.²⁹⁵ The AKP government also successfully concluded a water deal in January 2004, according to which 50 million cubic meters water a year for 20 years are to be shipped in giant tankers across the eastern Mediterranean and into Israeli port.²⁹⁶

TABLE 1
TURKISH-ISRAELI BILATERAL TRADE (\$ 1,000)

Years	Import	Export	Balance	Volume
2003	978.708	414.672	564.036	1.393.380
2004	1.283.240	712.836	570.404	1.996.076
2005	1.466.913	804.691	662.222	2.271.603
2006	1.527.329	772.310	755.019	2.299.639

Source: İsrail Ülke Bülteni Mart 2007 (Israel Country Bulletin March 2007), DEİK

However, the deal was suspended in 2006 that the deal was not feasible but hoped to revive it in the near future.²⁹⁷ But, Turkey and Israel discussed the construction of a multi-pipeline project. With reference to the results of the Turkey-Israel energy working group which were held on 10th October, 2005 in Ankara and on 12th March, 2006 in Jerusalem, the parties reiterated their joint determination to build an energy corridor between Turkey and Israel which would be composed of pipelines for crude oil, natural gas, fresh water as well as electricity lines.²⁹⁸ Turkey and Israel also co-operated in energy sector too. On May 24, the Zorlu Group, a Turkish Company, signed an \$800

²⁹⁵ Lale Sariibrahimoğlu, "Despite Ups and Downs, Turkish-Israeli Ties Still Strengthening," *Today's Zaman*, February 15, 2007, <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/yazarDetay.do?haberno=102936>.

²⁹⁶ Inbar, "The Resilience of Israeli-Turkish Relations," 603.

²⁹⁷ "Israel, Turkey put Landmark Water Agreement into Deep Freeze," *Turkish Daily News*, April 6, 2006, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=40038>.

²⁹⁸ "Turkish-Israeli Multi-Pipeline Agreement to be Drafted," *IMRA*, December 16, 2006, <http://www.imra.org.il/story.php3?id=32046>.

million contract with Israel to build and manage three energy plants.²⁹⁹ Turkey, Israel and Palestine also co-operates under Ankara Forum that has the intention to gather Palestinians and Israelis together that economic co-operation between the two parties would hopefully bring peace to the region. The first forum was held in 2005 and four additional meetings have also been held since then in Tel Aviv and Ankara that includes participants from private sector representatives from the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, the Manufacturers Association of Israel and the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ Hazbay, "Political Troubles between Turkey and Israel?" <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2150>.

³⁰⁰ "Israeli PM Olmert to Turkey to Travel on Wednesday," <http://www.theisraelproject.org>.

Conclusion

The international environment that has changed with the end of the Cold War, together with regional developments and domestic political environment has altered Turkey's foreign policy-making principles which resulted in a more active Turkey in multi-regions. In this respect, the Middle East has been the main region where Turkish foreign policy has been very active in the 1990s. The regional developments not only enhanced Turkey's strategic importance in the eyes of the West, especially the United States, but also enabled Turkey to develop closer relations with Israel compared to Cold War era, since both parties has shared common strategic concerns. The Gulf War followed by the Oslo peace process removed the greatest obstacles for an open relationship with Israel since Turkey and Israel strengthened their position vis-à-vis the Arab states that lost the backing of a superpower, being fragmented with the Gulf Crisis, and no longer held political and economic weapons to pressure Turkey in its relations with Israel.

Additionally, all these changes occurred during a time when the Turkish military increased its influence in foreign policy-making process. The Turkish military believed that at that time Turkey's internal and external problems became intertwined and touched on the military-security sphere that an alignment with a strong democratic, Western-oriented regional power as Israel would increase Turkey's security and meet the modernization requirements of Turkish army, since Israel has acquired advanced weapons and technological know-how that would not be subjected to political restraints. In this sense, military and intelligence oriented secret Peripheral Alliance of the 1950s transformed into an open and broader partnership that extended beyond military co-

operation, and enabled Turkey and Israel to improve their co-operation in the diplomatic and economic spheres. Thus, the relationship throughout the 1990s has diversified, and has become institutionalized and structured that has involved regular high-level meetings between the two countries. The Turkish-Israeli relationship not only has embraced important regional implications for Turkey and Israel but to the United States since it has attached great importance to this relationship in terms of its strategic interests in the greater Middle East.

However, some regional developments in the Middle East and developments in Turkey's domestic politics have put strain on the Turkish-Israeli relationship in the 21st century. These external and internal factors have raised questions about the stability of the Turkish-Israeli relationship in this new century. In spite of all those concerns, the Turkish-Israeli relationship has continued to evolve consistently. The second Palestinian intifada in 2000, the election of Islamic oriented AKP in 2002, the United States' war in Iraq in 2003 and the situation of Northern Iraq and Kurds, and the Hamas visit to Ankara in 2006 have caused a cooling period in diplomatic relations.

Turkey has always been very sensitive to the Palestinian cause. In 2000 the outbreak of the second intifida and in response Israel starting a military campaign and using excessive power towards the Palestinians had raised great concerns in Turkey. Israeli actions had been subjected to criticisms from Turkish officials, such as Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit likened the Israeli actions as 'genocide', and Turkey had adopted a political approach that was more supportive of the Palestinians. However, it is significant that Turkey had always softened its tone, and even tried to find a balance between Israelis and Palestinians by offering to mediate between both parties. Eventually,

although the second intifada caused a cooling period in diplomatic relations, it did not affect the Turkish-Israeli relationship seriously that the military and economic co-operation between the two countries has continued to evolve independently from the diplomatic tensions.

The AKP victory in 2002 elections has raised great concerns in Israel regarding the future of the Turkish-Israeli relationship since the founders of this new party were affiliated with the previous Refah party that tried to diminish the relations with Israel and deepen with the Islamic world. Although the AKP government promised to maintain the strategic co-operation with Israel, diplomatic relations entered into a crisis period with Israel's operations in the West Bank and Gaza that resulted with civilian deaths, assassination of Hamas' religious leaders of Sheik Ahmet Yasin and his successor Abdülaziz Rantisi in March and May 2004, the reports, which claimed that Israel was secretly training Kurdish commandos in Northern Iraq, and lastly, radical Hamas government's visit to Ankara.

Like the previous government, the AKP government has been very sensitive to the Palestinian cause. Even before the victory some senior political leaders harshly criticized Israel's policies towards the Palestinians. During Israel's operations in West Bank and Gaza, and the assassination of two Hamas' religious leaders, both Turkey's Prime Minister Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Gül harshly criticized Israel that Erdoğan had gone so far as to describe the Israeli actions as 'state terrorism'. The AKP government even postponed official visits to Israel, which raised concerns that the Turkish-Israeli relationship would break down. All these tensions occurred during a period when Turkey has accelerated its relation with the European Union. This even

deepened Israel's concerns that as Turkey moves closer to the EU, it would adopt a more European attitude than U.S one, which has been very critical of Israel. Also for the sake of joining the club Turkey has been required to diminish the role of the military in politics, since the Turkish military had been in the centre of establishing closer relations with Israel in the 1990s. Contrary to what has been envisaged the Turkish-Israeli relationship has continued to evolve during the AKP's tenure. It is striking that following the harsh criticisms the AKP government has softened its tone of criticisms toward Israel to lessen the tension between the countries. Additionally, Turkey did not take any concrete step toward Israel besides condemning it. Once again the diplomatic tensions due to Palestinian-Israeli conflict did not seriously challenge the strong co-operation between Turkey and Israel. The institutionalized and structured military and economic co-operation between the two countries did not let diplomatic relations to weaken the relationship between both parties.

The status of Kurds in Northern Iraq following the U.S. war on Iraq is another issue that has created tension between the two countries, since Kurdish separatism has been one of the top national security issue in Turkish domestic and foreign policy agenda. There were assertions that Israel has been supportive of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq, and even training Kurdish commandos in Northern Iraq. These were denied by Israeli government that Israel would not be in any action in the region that would endanger Turkey's security. Similarly, Turkey hosting the radical Hamas government that has opposed the very existence of a Jewish state, and resorted to violent actions toward Israel, raised great concerns in Israel. Turkish officials made an explanation that this meeting was part of a Turkey's effort to bring two conflicting parties

together for the sake of peace in the region. Turkey and Israel overcame these two problems in a short period since both countries has shown that they have confidence in each other.

Despite all these tensions, the Turkish-Israeli relationship has continued to evolve in the 2000s. Neither Turkey nor Israel would risk losing their strategic partnership since the Middle East continues to be a zone of turmoil that both Turkey and Israel continues to share common security concerns, and both parties have been enjoying great benefits from this relationship. The two countries' economies have been so complementary that economic relations between both parties have continued to increase consistently the volume of trade between the two countries exceeded \$2 billion in 2006, and become the largest in the Middle East in terms of its diversity. The military co-operation continues to constitute an important part of the relationship in the 2000s. The joint military training exercises, joint projects, technology transfer and intelligence co-operation in the 2000s show that this relationship still provide mutual advantages to both Turkey and Israel.

For Israel's part the regional developments continues to endanger its national security, which are: Iraq's unstable situation, Iran's atomic program that was believed by Israel and the West that Iran is trying to acquire nuclear weapons, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this sense, Turkey's geographic advantages offer Israel further intelligence gathering since Turkey shares a border with Iran. Additionally, Turkish land serves for the effective missile defense systems. Also as many observers have questioned, an independent Kurdish state as an ally would not override an alignment with Turkey. It is true that Israel had supported Kurds in the past, and now in the 2000s, Kurds would be an indispensable ally against Iran and Syria. However, it is debatable whether Israel would

be willing to sacrifice its strategic alignment with Turkey. The situation of a Kurdish state would be risky since none of its neighbors—Syria, Turkey and Iran—would be willing to accept an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq. In case of its formation, it would gather Turkey, Syria and Iran in the same direction, which might further Israel’s isolation in the region. Thus, the stability of such an ally would be questionable.

Finally, although Turkey’s offer to act as a regional broker between Israel and Arab states not welcomed by the Israeli government, Turkey’s efforts should be appreciated. Turkey as a regional power has been willing to take a more active part in the Middle Eastern politics in the 2000s, and in this sense, it has been trying to establish good relations with all of its neighbors. Yet Turkey could not be in a position to be a mediator, it would be a facilitator when conflicting parties decide to sit at the negotiation table.

For Turkey, breaking off relations with Israel would cost too much for it. Not only Turkey would lose the benefits of its relationship with Israel, as stated above, but also it would harm its position in Washington since Israel has been a close friend of the United States, and has a strong Jewish lobby in the U.S. that has been a counterbalance to Greek and Armenian lobbies. The relationship between Turkey and the U.S. have entered in to a cooling period with Turkish Parliament’s rejection of the proposal that would allow the US-led coalition forces to use Turkish bases during the Iraq War. The territorial integrity of Iraq and the situation of Kurds in Northern Iraq have been the top regional concern for Turkey in the post-Iraq War era. In this sense, Prime Minister Erdoğan’s visit to Israel in May 2005 was evaluated by many analysts as a part of a plan to improve Turkey’s relations with the United States. Some commentators in Turkey described this visit as an “American visa for Turkey”, since Jerusalem seemed to be the most obvious gateway to

Washington.³⁰¹ It is also significant that there were reports stressing that during his visit, Erdoğan made contacts with important names from the American Jewish lobby and the U.S. Senate. Although Turkey has been enjoying great benefits from its relationship with Israel since the 1990s, the United States factor should not be underestimated. The United States still dominates the world politics in the 21st century. It also continues to maintain its presence in the Middle East by its democratization process. If Turkey wants to take a more active part in the Middle Eastern politics as a regional power, it should establish good relations with the United States, since the U.S has been shaping the region. Besides, Turkey's support is still crucial for the United States in the post-Iraq War era when one takes into consideration of the current situation in Iraq.

Overall, the recent efforts that has been demonstrated by Turkish and Israeli governments to repair the damage done to the relationship stress that the relationship continues to provide strategic benefits to both countries that neither of the two would disrupt in the near future.

³⁰¹ Yossi Eli, "Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Visit to Israel: The View from Turkey," *Tel Aviv Notes*, 5 May 2005, no.132, <http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/tanotes/TAUnotes132.doc>.

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