

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**  
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**THESIS**

**STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF EXPANDED TURKISH-  
ISRAELI MILITARY RELATIONS**

by

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December 1999

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RELATIONS**


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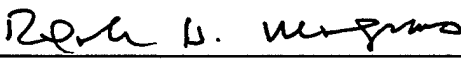
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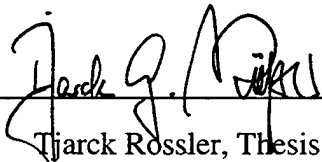
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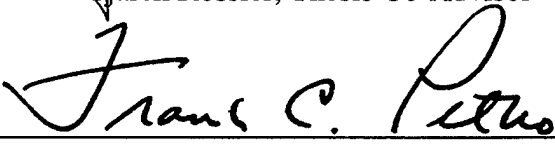
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## ABSTRACT

The Oslo prospects for a new dawn of economic, social and cultural friendship in the Middle East never came true. Instead, in the post-Cold War era the Middle East region became more complicated and it is rapidly sorting itself into new regional power blocs. Turkey and Israel, two countries that in many ways are natural partners, constitute the core of the first and most powerful one.

The thesis will argue that the expanded Turkish-Israeli military relations has affected decisively the balance of interests within the region, as well as the context of strategic relations in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. The incentives and motivations that have driven both countries to realize security co-operation with each other can be detected and justified by the historical and geographic context in which both countries find themselves, as well as their relations with their regional neighbors. However these factors have also created stumbling blocks to their cooperation. Furthermore, it would be not an exaggeration to counter such cooperation as the outrider of NATO's enlargement in the area, or a strong incentive for Turkey's acceptance from the E.U. Nevertheless, the alliance's prospects for the future are definitely good.

## **DISCLAIMER**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the Cold War perturbed the world order and caused revolutionary changes in global politics and economics. For the Middle East region the post-Cold War reality included regional and domestic changes that led to the Madrid peace process, to the momentous agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in September 1993, to the Peace Treaty with Jordan, and to a new set of relations between Israel and the Arab world. The new Middle Eastern reality provides for the rationale that age-old animosities should inexorably yield to political reconciliation. Ideally, the forces of reaction and disorder would be in the process of being beaten back, and a new dawn of economic, social, and cultural rapprochements between the Middle Eastern states could be at hand. There is a new Middle East. It is not, however, the one envisioned by the post-Cold War, post-Oslo utopians. It is far more complicated than that, and far more perilous.

The Middle East, as a result of its strategic importance and its oil resources, became in the aftermath of the Second World War one of the major theatres of the Cold War. Both superpowers pursued policies in purpose of being capable of projecting power in the Middle East. Although Israel, Turkey, Iran and the Arab states were in favor of the United States there were countries like Syria, Libya and Egypt (until mid-1950's) that benefited Soviet support. Thus the foreign and domestic policies of the Middle Eastern countries during the Cold War had been shaped from the bias of the East-West conflict and not from public and governmental concerns.

Consequently, in a world no longer dominated by the rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the Middle East is rapidly sorting itself into a new modality of

coalitional politics. There are two main inclinations in which those regional coalitions are being based. On the one side are the liberalizing coalitions which support the goal of a greater integration with the world economy by promoting strategies of industrialization and requiring strong security arrangements that would be complimentary from the international community. The recompense of such policies was the Madrid peace process in 1991, which paved the way for the Middle Eastern countries "to enter in unprecedented bilateral and multilateral negotiations with Israel."<sup>1</sup> Turkey was the first Middle Eastern country that forcefully pursued overt close relations with Israel in the new regional order. On the other side stand nationalist-populist coalitions that oppose the overall spirit of Madrid peace process and denounce the Western type liberalization while seeking solutions to social and political problems within Islamic fundamentalism. Syria and Iran stand at the center of such a coalition group.

Turkey and Israel, two countries that in many ways are natural partners, comprise the core group of the liberalizing coalitions. Having maintained quiet working relations for decades, they entered into a more public and more intense period of cooperation following Israel's agreement with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in September 1993. Both countries are non-Arab, democratic, and Western-oriented. Each maintains a strong military — compared in terms of combat preparedness, up-to-date weaponry and fighting experience, with their neighbor countries — and faces a major threat of terrorism. Both put great store in their relationship with the United States. And each has problems with both Syria and Iran, the two countries that represent an

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<sup>1</sup> Etel Solingen, "Domestic Aspects of Strategic Postures: The Past and Future in a Middle East Nuclear Regime" in Efraim Inbar and Sandler Shmuel, eds., *Middle Eastern Security: Prospects for an Arms Control Regime* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), p.141.

alternative alliance of political and economic forces that can stand up for the national and regional interests.

This thesis will focus on the military relationship between Turkey and Israel. The military partnership between those two countries will be examined from the perspective of being a security cooperation between the two countries, leading to efforts to enhance both sides' national security interests. This can be seen in the development of closer ties between the each armed forces, arms procurement policies including cooperation in defense industries and associated areas of security concern. In that sense the Turkish-Israeli military ties bear the potential to dramatically change the strategic balance not only in the Middle East region but also to the East Mediterranean area. Considered by most Arab countries as an anti-Arab alliance triggers the cause for the creation of counter alliances. In these alliances could be included Greece and Cyprus as they also felt threatened from the budding military development between Turkey and Israel. However, such moves and reactions need a profound consideration while they deal with the strongest militaries in the Middle East region.

The new era of Turkish-Israeli military relations began on February 23 1996, when the Turkish Deputy Chief of the General Staff, General Cevik Bir, and the Director-General of the Israeli Ministry of Defense, David Ivry, signed the Military Training Cooperation Agreement (MTCA). This agreement covered the "exchange of staff for training and education, sending observers to military exercises and personnel exchange in social and cultural areas."<sup>2</sup> This sudden shift in political and military currents has affected the balance of interests within the region, as well as the context of strategic

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<sup>2</sup> Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkish-Israeli Relations," November 1997, Turkish Embassy, Washington, DC. Available [Online]: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/sam/11.97/dort.htm> [14 February 1999].

relations in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. There are other aspects to the Turkish-Israeli relationship, especially economic interactions, but these facets, as seen in the light of Middle Eastern politics, do not have the same glaring effect on other states as the martial elements. On the other hand it is arguable to support that the widening of cooperation between the two countries in fields other than military could be pursued so that "to tamp down criticism about this military collaboration."<sup>3</sup>

The analysis will show that the budding military relationship between Israel and Turkey does not constitute a "routine accord"<sup>4</sup> — as both countries, for deliberate reasons, officially declare — but an accord with great political and strategic importance. This thesis will argue that, since the establishment of the Jewish State, an axis of political and military alliance has long existed between Jerusalem and Ankara. Although there was a diminution of that political and military co-operation during the 1960's and 1970's, it has never disappeared. The United States played a catalytic role in the initiation and sustenance of the bilateral relationship between Israel and Turkey. Finally, the argument will be made that this alliance is not reversible, at least for the near future, and its development will have profound implications not only for the region but also for the entire post-Cold War world, particularly for the United States.

## **A. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

The effective examination and explanation of the recent developing military relationship between Israel and Turkey demands a focus on several interesting aspects of this relationship. First, the thesis will examine the incentives that have driven Turkey and

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<sup>3</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," *Middle East Quarterly*, June 1998, p.26.

Israel to pursue a deepened security co-operation. It will look beyond simple declaratory policy to other considerations that may have influenced their decisions. To that end, the thesis will provide historical background beginning with cooperative activities in 1950, but concentrating on the intensified cooperation since 1996. It will examine the historical and geographic context in which both countries find themselves. To that end, a close look at the history of their regional relationships will reveal that many of these relations have contributed to their respective physical insecurities and engendered a need to overcome these deficiencies by bringing their militaries closer together.

Second, it will attempt to examine the current state of these regional relationships and their implications for future cooperation between Turkey and Israel. The reasons and motivations behind the decisions by Jerusalem and Ankara to collaborate militarily can be found in their relations with their regional neighbors. Particularly, their relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran, since both Turkey and Israel have substantial disagreements and disputes with each of these states. In the case of Turkey, disputes with Greece will be considered as well. "The Israeli-Arab conflict and the Cyprus problem will, unless resolved, prove a permanent impediment not only to tripartite relations (between Israel, Turkey, and Greece) but to normal bilateral relations as well."<sup>5</sup>

Third, it is not inconceivable that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Allies could agree on further expansion of the geographical scope of their security interests, perhaps on a case-by-case basis. This could eventually encompass the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Because Turkey is a member of NATO, this could

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<sup>4</sup> "Why Turkey's Partnership with Israel is a 'Historic Political Sin' and How the Arabs Can Counter It," *Mideast Mirror*, 30 April 1996. Available [Lexis/Nexis]: MDEAFR/CURNWS [22 June 1999].

<sup>5</sup> Nachmani Amikam, *Israel, Turkey and Greece* (London, England: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1987), p. vii-viii.



have implications relating to the Turkish-Israeli military cooperation. Additionally, a question can be raised about the influence of that cooperation on the European Union (EU) and their decision-making about Turkey's application to join that alliance. The main issues that the EU has taken into serious consideration for its decision to accept Turkey in the union deal with Cyprus, violation of human rights and the development of the Turkish economy at large. Especially the Cyprus issue is prevailing among the differences between Greece and Turkey. Since Cyprus is on track to become a member of the European Union — the potential for an accession is very likely as long as Cyprus is included in negotiations — the Turkish-Greek relations are an important factor to consider. Their relations might also have an effect on NATO cohesion, as well as on the Eastern Mediterranean Peace Process.

Finally, the thesis will examine the problems that pose difficulties for the preservation of the military cooperation between the two states. It will also consider some of the implications for international security as a result of this military cooperation. The U.S. attitude toward the Turkish-Israeli military cooperation is important because the U.S. is still the predominant superpower influencing international politics in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean.

In its conclusion, this thesis will try to assess the efficaciousness of the Turkish-Israeli cooperation and the ability of the two states to overcome the potential obstacles and difficulties standing in the way of obtaining progress. It will also examine the potential for the continuation and strengthening of this relationship to have important effects on Middle Eastern politics and Eastern Mediterranean security in the years to come.

## B. TURKISH-ISRAELI MILITARY COOPERATION

Israeli-Turkish military cooperation formally dates from the signing of two defense cooperation agreements that are considered to be its defining landmarks. The two countries signed a strategic and technical cooperation agreement, the Military Training Cooperation Agreement, in Tel-Aviv on February 23, 1996, followed by the Defense Industry Cooperation Agreement in August of that same year. The main principles of both agreements have remained classified, and it can be safely assumed that many aspects of subsequent arrangements are also unobtainable for public consumption. There have, however, been a number of press leaks about the confidential provisions. The facts since these agreements justify the wide belief that they contain "protocols regarding officer exchanges, visits by military delegations, naval port calls, access to training areas, joint air and naval training, cooperation in the areas of counter-terrorism and border security, and defense industrial cooperation."<sup>6</sup> The following information is based on what little has been gleaned from official sources and what can be assumed and deduced from a study of Turkey and Israel's relations with Middle Eastern, regional, and other powers.

What both countries consistently and strenuously pursue, especially since the end of the Cold War, is for their relationship to take on such a cohesive character that it could be steered by the mutual evaluation of the common threats that face them and a combined effort to confront those threats. This combined effort would be based on a strategy of mutual, peripheral defense. Moreover, few issues have been hidden from each other, and these have primarily been exceptional issues relating to each country's national security.

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, "Turkish-Israeli Military Cooperation: An Assessment," *The Washington Institute's Policywatch*, no. 262, 24 July 1997, p.1.

In this sense the two countries have developed and expanded their military cooperation in five principal areas that not all can be considered evidently as military aspects. However, it should be taken into account that in Turkey and Israel the military elites are at least deeply involved in the decision-making for the overall policy of the countries. Yet, aspects like economic cooperation, industrial re-orientation, financial reconsideration and intelligence are being entrenched into a military perspective and included into a general orientation of national security interests.

The first area deals with armament upgrades (Table 1). Israel's aviation industries are benefiting from Turkey's attempts to reduce its dependence on armament bought from the United States as much as from other Western partners in NATO too. Israelis bids for upgrade Turkish armament prevailed even against of those of German industries. Thus Israel's aviation industries won a \$650 million pact — \$800 million with interest, once the financing is worked out, due to the Turkish inability to pay the amount up front — to upgrade fifty-four Turkish F-4 Phantom fighter planes and to transform them into Phantom 2000s equipped with "Popeye I" air to ground missiles. The deal also included the installation of advanced avionics packages, such as radar, electronic warfare capabilities, and navigation systems.<sup>7</sup> The deal was finalized on 28 August 1996 when Director-General Ivry and Turkish Undersecretary of Defense Tuncer Kilinc signed the Defense Industry Cooperation Agreement. Twenty-six of the planes would be upgraded in Israel, and twenty-eight in Turkey, within six to eight years. Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI) is responsible for upgrading Turkey's F-4 jets. IAI is also competing in the bid to upgrade 48 Turkish F-5s in a \$100 million deal. Moreover, on 8

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<sup>7</sup> Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkish-Israeli Relations," November 1997, Turkish Embassy, Washington, DC. Available [Online]: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/sam/11.97/dort.htm> [14 February 1999].

December 1997, Tadiran Spectralink, a unit of Israel's Tadiran Ltd., announced it had signed an agreement worth about \$5 million to supply the Turkish Air Force with helicopter Airborne Rescue Systems (ARS).

Armament	Country-born	Quantity	Upgrade Features	Cost
Jet Phantom F-4	USA	54	Upgrade to Phantom 2000s (Missiles Popeye-I Avionic Package: Radars, Electronic Warfare Capabilities, Navigation Systems)	\$650 million (with interest \$850 million)
Jet F-5	USA	48		\$100 million
Helicopter Cougar	France	25	Supply of Airborne Rescue Systems (ARS)	\$5 million total for the upgrade of both types
Helicopter Black hawk	USA	6	Supply of Airborne Rescue Systems (ARS)	
Battle Tank M60A3	USA	1000	N/A	N/A

According to Tadiran, the ARS will be supplied over the next two years and would be used on 25 French-made Cougar and six U.S.-made Blackhawk helicopters being purchased by Turkey's armed forces. Finally, it is considered certain that a secret provision of the August 1996 agreement was for the upgrade of 1000 Turkish US-born Patton-M60A3 battle tanks out of their inventory of 4000.<sup>8</sup>

The second area has to do with arms sales. In January 1997, Turkey announced that it had sweeping plans to completely overhaul its armed forces and modernize them effectively to meet all potential threats to its security. Turkey expects to spend \$150 billion over the next twenty-five years to modernize its military. Out of this total, \$60

<sup>8</sup> Demir Metehan, "Turkey, Israel Launch Secret Strategic Talks," *Turkish Daily News* (December 9, 1977).

billion will be allocated to the ground forces, \$65 billion to the Air Force, and \$25 billion for the Navy.<sup>9</sup> This "massive modernization program"<sup>10</sup> (Table 2) envisions cutting Turkish Army Forces (TAF) from 639,000 personnel, to a professional force of 350,000 over a period of 10 years.<sup>11</sup>

Table 2. Turkish Armed Forces Modernization Program

Estimated Time Period for Completion: 10 Years			
	Military	Air Force	Navy
Interest in	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Radar systems for detecting plastic and conventional mines.</li> <li>2. Fences and Radars for the surveillance of Turkish borders.</li> <li>3. 1000 <i>Merkava Mark III</i> battle tanks.</li> <li>4. <i>Galil</i> infantry rifles</li> <li>5. Armament upgrades</li> <li>6. Joint productions (<i>Homa</i> anti-ballistic missiles, <i>Arrow</i> and <i>Delilah</i> missiles)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Popeye I</i> missiles</li> <li>2. <i>Falcon</i> early warning aircraft system</li> <li>3. Naval Patrol Aircraft</li> <li>4. Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs)</li> <li>5. Armament upgrades</li> <li>6. Joint productions (<i>Popeye II</i> missiles)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restructure of the Turkish Navy to become an open seas one.</li> </ol>
Total Cost	\$60 billion	\$65 billion	\$25 billion

Some weapons, such as the Popeye I missiles that come along with the upgrade of the Turkish Phantoms, are purchased separately. *Turkish Daily News* reported that "Turkey has decided to increase its Popeye missile order from Israel from 100 to 200 after a series of talks on the scale of their F-4 modernization program and the Popeye missile deals."<sup>12</sup> In addition, Turkey has expressed interest in the Falcon early-warning aircraft systems, a radar system for detecting plastic and conventional mines, and fences

<sup>9</sup> Nachmani Amikam, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," *Middle East Quarterly*, June 1998, p.25.

<sup>10</sup> Malik Muftu, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal*, Vol.52, No.1, 1998, p.47.

<sup>11</sup> Lale Sariibrahimoglu, "Arming For Peace," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 19 August 1998, p.25.

<sup>12</sup> Demir Metehan, "Ankara Requests More Popeye Missiles from Tel Aviv," *Turkish Daily News* (December 4, 1997). Available [Online]: [http://www.turkishdailynews.com/tdn/free\\_daily/latest/tdn.html](http://www.turkishdailynews.com/tdn/free_daily/latest/tdn.html) [14 August 1999].

and radars to seal off the Turkish borders with Syria and Iraq — to prevent the Partia Kakaren-i Kurdistan, known as PKK, infiltration. Israel also hopes to supply Turkey with 1000 Merkava Mark IIIs, its main battle tanks, at total cost of about \$5 billion. Other reports tell of Turkish interest in Galil infantry rifles, naval patrol aircraft, unmanned air vehicles (UAV), and early warning aircraft.<sup>13</sup> The Turkish Navy's modernization program aims to increase Turkey's naval capabilities in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean with a view to protecting its trade routes. The importance of the Turkish Naval Forces Command is likely to increase if Turkey's Ceyhan port becomes a hub for Caspian oil supplies. A 1998 White Paper stressed the necessity to "restructure the Turkish Navy Forces Command from a littoral warfare character to an open seas one."<sup>14</sup>

The third area deals with joint productions and the exchange of technical expertise and knowledge. The second defense agreement signed on 28 August 1996 primarily dealt with this area. The two sides "have agreed to jointly produce the sophisticated Popeye II air-to-ground missile in a deal initially worth about \$100 million dollars."<sup>15</sup> Turkey is also interested in acquiring the Homa anti-ballistic missile defense system, including the Arrow and Delilah missiles.<sup>16</sup> Turkish and Israeli senior defense officers have stated that Turkey and Israel are planning to produce these missiles. Both missiles have a range of up to 500 kilometers. The Arrow missile project is partially funded by

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<sup>13</sup> Demir Metehan, "Turkey, Israel Launch Secret Strategic Talks," *Turkish Daily News* (9 December 1977).

<sup>14</sup> Lale Sariibrahimoglu, "Arming For Peace," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 19 August 1998, p.37.

<sup>15</sup> Arie O' Sullivan, "Israel, Turkey to Make Popeye Missiles," *The Jerusalem Post* (18 May 1997). Available [Online]: <http://www.jpost.com/com/Archive/18.May.1997/News/Article-2.html> [2 August 1999].

<sup>16</sup> Arie O' Sullivan, "Defense Ties with Turkey bolstered," *The Jerusalem Post* (9 December 1997).

the U.S. and still is under development. Thus, there is a need for U.S. permission, which is very unlikely, for Turkey to participate to the project.

The fourth area extends to the training issues. Both countries have tried to emphasize, not hide, the provisions about training. The air force training exchange agreement calls for Israeli and Turkish aircraft to train in Turkey and Israel respectively, for a period of one week, eight times a year. During the first visit, in April 1996, eight Israeli F-16 fighters spent a week at Akinci air base near Ankara. In June of the same year, 12 Turkish planes flew in Israel. Since that time, exercises have occurred on a regular basis.<sup>17</sup> Such visits are mutually beneficial. They enable the Israelis to gain experience flying long-range missions over mountainous areas (a skill that would be necessary for missions over Iran, for example,) and provide greater opportunities for overland training than are available in a small country like Israel. This enables pilots to refine their competitive skills, since it is much harder for pilots to visually identify enemy aircraft over land than over water. Such exercises also enable both air forces to become familiar with procedures and tactics used by their counterparts. This familiarity could facilitate cooperation in wartime. Turkey could also give Israeli Air Force planes sanctuary in an emergency and could allow Israel to conduct electronic surveillance flights along Turkish borders with Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

The Turkish Army has begun conducting military exercises along its Syrian and Iranian borders and the Turkish Navy has increased its presence with naval exercises along the Syrian coasts. In June 1996, large-scale military maneuvers by the Turkish Second Army, codenamed 'Taurus 1996', took place near the Syrian and Iranian borders,

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<sup>17</sup> Carol Migdalowitz, *Israeli-Turkish Relations* Congressional Research Service, Foreign Affairs and National Defence Division, 17 July 1998, Report to be presented to the U.S. Congress, p.4.

while Turkish naval vessels were engaged in their Sea Wolf 1996 war games off the Syrian coast.<sup>18</sup> Turkey and Israel held joint naval and air maneuvers in the Mediterranean Sea in June 1997 with the ostensible purpose of coordinating search and rescue procedures. Additionally, since June 1997 Turkish warships began visiting Israeli ports and vice versa. The biggest Arab and Iranian protests, however, came when a tripartite U.S.-Turkish-Israeli naval exercise, code-named "Reliant Mermaid", was held on January 7, 1998.<sup>19</sup>

The February and August 1996 agreements also provided for the establishment of a security forum for strategic dialogue between the two countries. A semi-annual strategic dialogue is now in place. The Turkish Army's Chief of Staff, Ismail Hakki Karadayi, traveled to Israel in late February 1997, marking the first trip there by a senior Turkish military officer. The exchange began in earnest when Israel's Foreign Minister, David Levy, visited Ankara on April 8-9 of the same year. Turkey's Defence Minister, Turhan Tayan, visited Israel later that month, and Cevik Bir visited Israel the next month (May 4-6.) In October, Israel's Chief of the General Staff, Ammon Lipkin-Shahak, visited Turkey. In each case sizeable entourages accompanied these figures, so that during the early part of 1997 nearly all-ranking flag officers of both militaries met each other. "The talks are aimed at evaluating threats against both nations, in an effort to prepare for and initiate joint measures in the event of future instability in the region."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "Syria Battling Pressure From Turkey, Israel, U.S., Jordan and Gulf Ahead of Arab Summit," *Mideast Mirror*, 20 June 1996. Available [Lexis/Nexis]: MDEAFR/CURNWS [22 August 1998].

<sup>19</sup> "U.S., Israel, Turkey Flex Muscle at Sea," *Chicago Tribune*, 8 January 1998. Available [Online]: [http://www.sltrib.com/old/98/jan/010998/nation\\_w/16579.asp](http://www.sltrib.com/old/98/jan/010998/nation_w/16579.asp) [8 June 1999].

<sup>20</sup> Demir Metehan, "Turkey, Israel Launch Secret Strategic Talks," *Turkish Daily News* (9 December 1997).



The fifth area of cooperation is in intelligence sharing. The military agreements are believed to have included intelligence cooperation between the two countries. For the past three years, Turkey has benefited from the intelligence gathered by Israel's Mossad on terrorism and narcotics trafficking. In November 1994, Turkey signed an agreement with Israel to share intelligence and police cooperation to combat drug dealing and terrorism. Despite the fluctuations in time in their bilateral relations, Turkey and Israel seem, from the historical evidence, to have a tacit and frequent sharing of intelligent information since the establishment of Israel. The main reason for that was that the shared intelligence information was primarily concentrated on the two common threats to both country's national security; terrorism and their neighbors.<sup>21</sup> "It is well known that Turkey and Israel have cooperated and shared information on the activities of the Kurdish separatist movement, known as Partia Kakaren-i Kurdistan (PKK, by its Turkish acronym), Kurdish nationalist organizations, and the PLO for decades."<sup>22</sup> The Turkish-Israeli cooperation is a new type of realistic strategy by these two nations in the Middle East.

One of the most important benefits for Turkey will be the access to information gathered by the Israeli intelligence community on issues affecting Turkey's national security and regional affairs. During Turhan Tayan's visit to Israel in April of 1997, the first ever by a Turkish Defense Minister, Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai promised his Turkish counterpart that he would assist Turkey in the gathering of information with the purpose of fighting terrorist groups in the region. Mordechai stated

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, "Turkish-Israeli Military Cooperation: An Assessment," *The Washington Institute's Policywatch*, No.262, 24 July 1997, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Olson, "Israel and Turkey vs. the PKK," *Middle East International*, No. 554, 21 February 1997, p.14.

that "both our states are victims of terrorism. Israel is prepared to assist Turkey with know-how and other means in the fight against terrorism."<sup>23</sup>

Another area in which Turkey can greatly benefit from Israel's intelligence apparatus is in the fight against terrorist operations, especially by the PKK. The Turkish decision-makers seek to find an end to the 13-year old internal conflict. The end of the conflict is crucial for Turkish national unity and the continuation of development in the coming decades. The prospect of intensifying intelligence gathering in areas of conflict, especially southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq, will enable the Turkish armed forces to operate more effectively in their military operations against the PKK. Ultimately, this will downplay the influence of the PKK and reduce the intensity of its terrorist activities.

During Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai's visit to Turkey in early December 1997, it is believed that Israeli and Turkish officials developed plans for Turkey to set up a border security and monitoring system similar to the one on Israel's border with Lebanon.<sup>24</sup> It is expected that Israel will provide Turkey with the necessary information on how to maintain an efficient intelligence gathering system in a volatile area.

Of course, the two countries denied all the potential secret provisions of the accords and gave assurances that their military cooperation has not expanded to anything other than training purposes. They also gave assurances that the alliance is not a threat to any third country within the region.<sup>25</sup> All these assurances cannot mitigate the anxiety

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<sup>23</sup> "Turkish Defence Minister Begins Three-Day Visit to Israel," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 30 April 1997. Available [Lexis/Nexis]: MDEAFR/CURNWS [25 August 1998].

<sup>24</sup> Demir Metehan, "Turkey and Israel Focus on Main Threats: Iran, Syria and Iraq," *Turkish Daily News* (9 December 1997).

<sup>25</sup> "President Mubarak Says Turkish-Israeli Pact No Threat to Arabs," *British Broadcasting Cooperation*, 13 July 1996. Available [Lexis/Nexis]: MDEAFR/CURNWS [25 August 1998].

that comes from the Arab states over the undeclared purposes of the alliance. The biggest worries come from Syria and Iran. They have the notion that a Turkish-Israeli axis is taking shape in the region.

The United States seems to welcome and approve of this alliance. This can be concluded from a series of diplomatic moves and official announcements that were integrated with the agreements. "It seems to us natural and positive that Turkey and Israel would work together militarily," explained State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns in early May 1997. "If certain other Arab countries don't like that, that's just tough... We don't care that rogue states like Iran and Iraq object to it."<sup>26</sup>

The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, who visited Turkey at about the same time as the signing of the agreement, welcomed it and said that it was a very important and strategic agreement. U.S. support for the alliance has also expanded to technological equipment support. A joint system of surveillance has been put in both countries, in places considered as security zones, with the help of the United States. "This included ultra-sensitive receivers, cameras, satellites, and the like."<sup>27</sup> The participation of the U.S. in the joint naval search and rescue exercise dubbed "Reliant Mermaid" was the culmination of the U.S. policy of approval. However, the U.S. stance concerning the growing military ties between the two states has been very cautious and attempts have been made to dispel Arab suspicion in the region.

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<sup>26</sup> Zeynep Alemdar, "Turkey, Israel Redefine Relations," *The Associated Press News Service* (15 May 1997).

<sup>27</sup> Alain Gresh, "Turkish-Israeli-Syrian Relations and Their Impact on the Middle East," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 52, No.2, Spring 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www2.ari.net/mei/gresh.htm> [15 April 1999].

It should be noted that, simultaneously with their military cooperation, the two countries have also developed, at a rapid pace, their industrial, agricultural, and tourist relations. Since Turkish President Demirel's state visit to Israel in March 1996, a free trade status between the two countries, along with agreements for prevention of double taxation and mutual encouragement and protection of investments, has been promulgated. Finally, it should be also mentioned that there is a program of joint ventures and economic aid, with the cooperation of the U.S., for the Caucasus and Central Asian countries in which, it is speculated, there is abundant underground energy resources. Overall, there is an expectation of cooperation in military, economic, and trade relations within, and between, the military, commercial, and industrial establishments of both countries.<sup>28</sup> In addition, there has also been an increase in cultural exchanges between the two countries. In conclusion, it appears that the strategic goal of Turkey, in its relations with Israel, is to develop and strengthen those ties in such a comprehensive way that they could decisively influence the economic, social, and cultural relations between the two countries.

The collaboration between Turkey and Israel has other determinants behind the cooperation agreements as well. For Turkey, one main reason could be the disregard that it has received from the Western powers, namely the EU-countries and the U.S. Furthermore, both countries are surrounded by unstable and hardly democratic regimes (Syria, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia) and in several cases there is a history of mutual antagonism and enmity toward both countries (namely Syria, Iran, and Iraq). The

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<sup>28</sup> "Turkish-Israeli Relations Diversified at Surprising Speed and Volume," *Pulse of Turkey*, 8 August 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.turkpulse.com/turkish2.htm> [15 April 1999].

following chapters will examine in greater detail the motivations that have fostered the closer ties between Turkey and Israel.

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TURKISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS

### A. INTRODUCTION

Albeit their different histories, which spanned different lengths of time, Turkey and Israel have certain things in common that have converged in recent years to form a manifold relationship that continues to develop. The solidarity in the relations between Turks and Jews stems in part from a shared "sense of otherness"<sup>29</sup> within the Middle East, drawn from having the Arab and non-Arab Muslim populations of the region view the Turks and Jews as having settled in the area at the expense of the Arabs already living there.

Turkish rule over much of Arabia was overthrown early in this century, after a series of British-backed rebellions; Israel since its establishment is most of the time in conflict with some or all of its Arab neighbors. Both countries have considered as threats to their security Syria, Iraq, and Iran. "Turkey's military planners portray their country as caught inside a 'Bermuda Triangle' of chaos, with the Middle East on one side, the Caucasus on another and the Balkans, including their traditional rival Greece, on the third."<sup>30</sup> In that sense for both countries, Turkey and Israel, the need for a strong regional friend was mutual.

Furthermore, the discontented view that the Arab and non-Arab Muslims of the region have had for both Turkey and Israel, was strengthened by their strategic relationship with the United States combined with a lack of support from other countries

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<sup>29</sup>Alain Gresh, "Turkish-Israeli-Syrian Relations and Their Impact on the Middle East," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Spring 1998), p. 192.

<sup>30</sup>Stephen Kinzer, "Israel and Turkey: A Mideast Friendship," *The New York Times* (13 April 1997).

in international organizations like the United Nations (UN). The United States always looked upon Turkey as the focal point for a variety of American operations in the Middle East. Moreover, a substantial number of American businessmen have used Turkey to coordinate their entrepreneurial activities with the Arabic countries. Turkey has been used by thousands of American businessmen for a variety of activities concerning and aiming at the Arab countries. Israel from the very outset of its existence found very beneficial to exploit the influence in the Arabic world of all these American entrepreneurs to favor its establishment in the region. "These men included representatives of large commercial corporations, film companies, oil prospectors, etc. they proved responsive to the blandishments and the money offered by Israeli representatives."<sup>31</sup>

All the above constituted a strong basis for a growing relationship between the two countries especially to the sectors of economy and military. Consequently, the historical relationship between Turkey and Israel has never been violent, but it constituted from peaks and dips over the years, which were reflected inversely by developments in the Arab-Israel conflict and the waves of strain and rapprochement in Turkish-Arab relations.

Relations between the two countries could be divided into two periods. The first, from 1948 to the early 1980's, comprised generally covert links, fluctuating in volume, military and intelligence-oriented in nature. The second era, since the early 1980's has included an astounding expansion of connections – military, economic and civilian. These ties then reached unknown heights in 1996.

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<sup>31</sup> Nachmani Amicam, *Israel, Turkey and Greece*, (London, UK: Frank Cass, 1987), p.10.

During the first few decades after Israel's establishment, relations between the two countries were characterized by Turkey's foreign policy fluctuations between active support for the West, which could be interpreted as tacit support for Israel, and advocacy of the Muslim world's goals. By and large, ties between the two countries officially remained at low-level although there were a lot of undeclared active links in intelligence and military sectors. It is only in the last decade that Turkey unveiled its expectancies and has come to see Israel as a potential strategic ally and, in the last eight years, gradually become more open about its desire for co-operation, military and otherwise, with Israel.

#### **B. TURKISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS 1948-1980**

The state of Israel was proclaimed on May 15, 1948. Modern relations between Turkey and Israel began one year later in 1949 when Turkey was one of the first nations to recognize the state of Israel. However, the historical relations between Turkish and Israeli peoples date back to the 15th century. In 1492, Sultan Beyazid II welcomed the Sephardic Jews when they were expelled from Spain.<sup>32</sup> On that occasion, Sultan Beyazid II stated: "The Catholic monarch Ferdinand was wrongly considered as wise since he impoverished his country with the expulsion of the Jews, and enriched ours."<sup>33</sup> Five centuries later, when the Nazis were persecuting the Jewish people, Turkey served as one of the sanctuaries for Jewish people fleeing Germany and other countries occupied by the

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<sup>32</sup>John Patrick Douglas Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1977).

<sup>33</sup>Molly Mcanaily, "Jewish History in Anatolia," *Turkish Daily News* (1 December, 1997).



Nazis. Based on these two historical events, one can argue that Turkish-Israeli cooperation is not a new phenomenon.<sup>34</sup>

Diplomatic missions between the two states were opened in December 1949 at the legation level. Although Israel's initial diplomatic attention to Turkey can be characterized as complacent, the idea of presenting Israel's case in a non-Arab Moslem country was considered as important. In the first years of the State of Israel, Turkish affairs were entrusted to the Ministry's Middle East department. This was a point for disagreement while Ankara forcefully demanded to be classified together with Western Europe. Finally, the Turkish desk was indeed moved and "only following the 1967 war did Turkish affairs revert to the Middle East department."<sup>35</sup>

The Arabic and generally the Muslim populations of the Middle East have opposed from the beginning Turkey's diplomatic ties with Israel and pressured her constantly with diplomatic and economic measures to sever these ties. In 1956 Turkey reduced their diplomatic presence in Tel Aviv to that of a legation, the lowest possible diplomatic level, as a result of the Baghdad Pact alliance of Turkey and Iraq. But, even this diplomatic move did not tame the anxiety and the suspicion of the Arab and Muslim world for the undeclared purposes of the relationship between Turkey and Israel. Since then the official upswing in Turkish-Israeli relations "began in 1991 with the Madrid Peace Conference, which provided the diplomatic stepping stone for Turkey to upgrade relations to full ambassadorial level in 1992."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Akif Oktay, First Secretary, Turkish Embassy, Washington, DC "Speech on Turkish-Israeli Relations," Washington, DC, 11 November 1997.

<sup>35</sup> Nachmani Amicam, *Israel, Turkey and Greece*, (London, UK: Frank Cass, 1987) p.46.

<sup>36</sup> Alan M. Schneider. "Turkey and Israel: Shared Enemies, Shared Interests." Available [Online]: <http://www.bnaibrith.org/worldcen/erjourn15.html> [1 September 1999].

For Israel closer ties with Turkey were and still are suitable with its peripheral strategy and military doctrine first articulated in the early 1950's from the Turkish educated Israel's Prime Minister David Ben Gurion. According to this doctrine, which subsequently superseded by Israel's African states policy of the late 1950's and early 1960's, Israel should seek to offset the diplomatic and economic boycott of the Arab world by forging close ties with non-Arab, Muslim states and nations on the periphery of the region, including countries, which whereas they opposed the establishment of the state of Israel there was no direct conflict with them. Accordingly, Turkey, Iran, Ethiopia, Sudan, Lebanon, and Kurds were potential allies for Israel and Israel's policy has always been aimed toward that purpose. However, "since then, Iran has turned from a western oriented monarchy to the West's and Israel's worst nightmare. Ethiopia, ravaged by civil war and famine, its strategic importance abridged by the secession of Eritrea, is one of the poorest nations on earth."<sup>37</sup> Only Turkey still fulfills Israel's requirements for cooperation while remains a pivotal power in the region, the largest Moslem nation in the Middle East straddling both East and West.

Turkey, for its part, although with the Truman Doctrine had been drawn into the Western orbit soon after World War II, has not had being willing to sever altogether its connections with its fellow Muslim states. Thus, in November 1947 Turkey voted against the UN partition plan, which divided Palestine into two states, a Jewish state and an Arab state. The decision was taken ostensibly in deference to Turkey's Moslem loyalties however, the greater motivation was Turkey's irreconcilable anti-Communism. Turkey was suspected that the Jewish state might constitute a Soviet bridgehead and thus considered as her vital interest the maintenance of the British presence in the Middle

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

East.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the increasing Western support for the new Jewish state was sufficient to overturn Turkish resoluteness and in the 1948 war between Israel and Arab states, Turkey remained neutral.<sup>39</sup> Subsequently, in March 1949, after the Western powers recognized Israel, Turkey followed suit and the two countries exchanged ministers in December of that year. Since then sensitivities and an attempt by Israel to reach a delicate equilibrium has characterized the development of ties between the two countries.

Turkey always kept the fear that Israel might be harboring a Communist menace. This was one of the biggest problems for the relations of the two countries in the Cold War era. Turkey had a rigid belief that Israel was biased politically to the left and tacitly supported Soviet Union. Israel's efforts to convince Turkey of its Western reliability were straiten from the Israelis' anxiety to preserve their linkage with the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and consequently with the governments of those countries. An open juxtaposition with the West could harm those links and consequently a departure from its professed policy of neutrality. For the Turks neutrality in a bipolar world with Communists and non-Communists was unacceptable and untenable. Turkish perception contemplated neutrality as adherence to Soviet principles and "whoever refused to see that was blind and deserving of 'severe punishment' and not of Turkish friendship."<sup>40</sup>

Under those circumstances and for the successful implementation of the doctrine of the peripheral strategy it became for Israel a top national priority to convince the Turks

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<sup>38</sup> Nachmani Amicam, *Israel, Turkey and Greece*, (London, UK: Frank Cass, 1987) p.44.

<sup>39</sup> Eleni Athanassopoulou. "Western Defence Developments and Turkey's Search for Security in 1948," in Kedurie Sylvia, ed., *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics* (Lodon-Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1996), p.81.

<sup>40</sup> Turkish Foreign Minister, Fuad Köprülü, to Eliyahu Sasson, Israel's first minister to Ankara, Ankara to Foreign Ministry, 31 January 1951, Israel State Archives (ISA) 2515/11.

that Israel was not an adherent of the Soviet Union. In that sense the Israelis were forced to adopt a verbal formula acceptable to the Turks in which they praised the democratic regimes and came down to any attack, whether external or internal against Western democracies. However, "as late as 1956, Ankara still expressed concern over the political balance in the Knesset. But the tacit pro-Western bias of the policies pursued by Israel in practice finally reassured the Turks."<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the Turkish insistence on Israel's clarification of the issue of its inclusion in the Western bloc caused Israel, from the beginning of the relationship, to deal with Turkey in a delicate manner, avoiding everything that could irritate Turkish national sensitivity.

Because of the vacillations of the Turkish foreign policy the fruitful periods in the relationship of the two countries were few and brief and only two can be compared to the recent crest of the 1990's. The first was from 1950 till 1955 and the second started in 1958 and ended in 1959. "During the first period, trade and air agreements were signed, parliamentarians, journalists and athletes exchanged visits and the two countries coordinated their positions at the UN."<sup>42</sup> Military relations between the two countries officially started with the residency of an Israeli military attaché in Ankara in 1954. Since then Ankara remained Israel's lookout post for military and intelligence purposes in the Middle East even when the diplomatic and political relations between the two countries were strained. Especially, at the intelligence level since 1954 "the secret services of both countries began a relationship that has continued ever since."<sup>43</sup> The

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<sup>41</sup> Nachmani Amicam, *Israel, Turkey and Greece*, (London, UK: Frank Cass, 1987), p.49.

<sup>42</sup> Schneider M. Alan. "Turkey and Israel: Shared Enemies, Shared Interests." Available [Online]: <http://www.bnaibrith.org/worldcen/erjourn15.html> [1 September 1999].

<sup>43</sup> John Nomikos, "A New Era for Turkish-Israeli Relations," *Research Institute for European and American Studies*. Available [Online]: <http://www.itel.gr/riies/Papers.htm> [13 November 1998].

good relations seemed to sour in 1955 when Turkey and Iraq formed the Baghdad Pact, later joined by Britain, Pakistan and Iran.

However, the contradictory Turkish move of the signing the Baghdad Pact was not originated only from pure Turkish motives but also from Turkey's assessment to fulfill American wishes, which contribute the necessary preconditions for the creation of pro-Western defence treaties in the Middle East. Therefore, the Turkish signing of the Baghdad Pact was not so treasonable to Israelis. Israel's resentment was for the pro-Arab Turkish attitude while Turkey's precondition for signing the Baghdad Pact was the affixion to the provisions of the Pact that military assistance at times of crisis was valid for, and specifically linked to, the Palestine problem.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the Turkish stance by stressing the limitations, which had been imposed to their relations with Israel, and by refusing to issue a supportive declaration for Israel's territorial integrity and sovereignty irritated the Israelis. However, all these Turkish actions aimed at convincing other Arab states to join the pro-Western Baghdad Pact for the creation of an anti-Soviet bloc in the Middle East.

Moreover, the Suez Crisis in 1956 made Turkey's policy of balance more untenable. To assure Arab goodwill, Ankara withdrew its ambassador from Tel Aviv in November 1956, after the Israeli invasion of the Sinai Peninsula, although it quietly explained that relations would remain friendly, and later the diplomatic relations were downgraded to the legation level.

In 1958 Turkey felt threatened because the pro-Western Arab regimes either collapsed, like in Iraq or came under heavy pressure from Syrian Nasserist and pro-Soviet

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<sup>44</sup> Philip Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (New York, USA: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Council of Foreign Relations Press, 1991), p. 77.

elements like in Jordan and Lebanon. Under the circumstances Turkey expedited its strategic relation with Israel by joining Israel in a "peripheral strategic and intelligence alliance."<sup>45</sup> Thus in August 1958 Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion flew secretly to Ankara so that, together with Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, to set the principles for a regional cooperation between Israel and Turkey, which could also be designed to embrace Iran and Ethiopia as non-Arab Middle Eastern states. The secret discussions concluded in the "signing of a broad ranging strategic agreement between the two countries which included military, diplomatic, technological, agricultural and economic cooperation."<sup>46</sup> The agreement deflected the hidden mutual desire of both signatories for strategic cooperation while "Turkey sought the relationship in order to placate the West and also to obtain the support of the American Jewish community in Turkey's effort to join NATO, [and] Israel courted Turkey in the context of its survival strategy of forging alliances with non-Arab states in the region."<sup>47</sup>

The Turkish-Israeli relations in the intermediate years between 1958 and 1967 were characterized by a basic harmony. It was an era when Turkish foreign policy did not vacillate between the Arab world and the West but kept a neutral stance so that it was able to consolidate its links with the United States and the Western alliance (NATO) and at the same time not have any friction with the Arab states. Thus Turkey would refrain from involving itself in disputes between the Muslim world and the West. Doing so

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<sup>45</sup> Nachmani Amicam, *Israel, Turkey and Greece*, (London, UK: Frank Cass, 1987), p.67.

<sup>46</sup> Schneider M. Alan. "Turkey and Israel: Shared Enemies, Shared Interests." Available [Online]: <http://www.bnabrith.org/worldcen/erjourn15.html> [1 September 1999].

<sup>47</sup> John Nomikos, "A New Era for Turkish-Israeli Relations," *Research Institute for European and American Studies*. Available [Online]: <http://www.itel.gr/riies/Papers.htm> [13 November 1998].

included not supporting the Arab world's position on complete Palestinian independence at the expense of Israel's security or safety.

This intermittent state of affairs prevailed up to June 1967, when Turkey abandoning its professed neutrality in the Arab-Israeli conflict, expressed cautiously its solidarity with the Arab states in their conflict with Israel. Right after the end of the Six Day War, Turkey at the UN voted for the withdraw of Israeli forces from the territories occupied during the war "but asserted the right of all regional states to live within secure and recognized boundaries."<sup>48</sup> In that way Turkey refused to use harsh rhetoric against Israel, and did not condemn the Jewish state as the aggressor, although it did call for a return to the pre-1967 borders.

Turkish diplomacy during 1960's was able to "express sympathies toward the Arab states involved in the [1967] war without offending Israel."<sup>49</sup> Yet, the Turkish-Israeli relationship during that period was downgraded, mostly due to an increase of anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism in Turkey, including the kidnapping and murder of Israeli diplomats and attacks on synagogues.<sup>50</sup>

The decisive factor in the two countries relations revolved around developments in the Middle East. Since 1967, perhaps even earlier, and until the early 1980's Middle Eastern politics have been overshadowed by the Six Day War, the Yom Kippur War, the oil crisis of 1973, the 1980 "Jerusalem Law" and the Intifada. Those manifestations made the Turkish-Israeli relations fall away precipitously. Despite appearances to the

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<sup>48</sup> Philip Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (New York, USA: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Council of Foreign Relations Press, 1991), p. 78.

<sup>49</sup> Ferenc A. Vali, *Bridge Across the Bosphorus* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), p. 308.

<sup>50</sup> John Nomikos, "A New Era for Turkish-Israeli Relations," *Research Institute for European and American Studies*. Available [Online]: <http://www.itel.gr/riies/Papers.htm> [13 November 1998].

contrary, Turkey has had a profound interest in the welfare of the Arab and Moslem world and that tilted the Turkish foreign policy toward the Arabs. However, the Cyprus issue and the Arab world's political juxtaposition with Greece on it (since 1974, when Turkey mobilized troops to Cyprus, the Arab world has sided with Greece), convinced the Turkish policy makers that "religious brotherhood with the Arab world cannot be a crucial criterion for developing policies related to the national security of Turkey whenever an Arab nation or its interests are involved."<sup>51</sup>

### C. TURKISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS 1980-1998

In the early 1980s, Turkish-Arab relations flourished, while Turkish-Israeli relations dimmed. However, relations in the diplomatic and intelligence levels between the two states were never severely interrupted despite mutual misgivings, suspicions and regular backtracking. In September 1980, the Knesset declared the united and complete Jerusalem was the capitol of Israel. That Israeli enactment resulted in a sharp reaction by the Turks and a scaling down of their representation in Israel. Diplomatic representatives from fifteen Islamic countries and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) went to the Turkish Prime Minister and demanded that all ties with Israel be severed. The Turkish Prime Minister refused, but did recall Ankara's charge d'affaires from Tel Aviv and asked Israel to do the same.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Turkey started to support anti-Israeli resolutions submitted by the Arabs by that time. The serious derangement of the relationship by that time proved that a cooperation based only on the shared fears –

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<sup>51</sup> Joseph Leitmann, "Turkey: Benefiting from David's Army," *International Relations Journal*. Available [Online]: <http://psirus.sfsu.edu/IntRel/IRJournal/Wi97/Leitmann.html> [15 April 1999].

<sup>52</sup> Hakan M. Yavuz, "Turkish-Israeli Relations Through the Lens of the Turkish Identity Debate," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, Autumn 1997, Issue 105, p. 24.



Soviet Union, Syria because of the annexation of the Hatay region and the Golan Heights, and the Palestinian and Armenian terrorism – was not sufficient to last for long time.

However, the deterioration of the relations was again very short and temporary and right after the military intervention in Turkey on 12 September 1980, it was announced that Turkey's representation in Israel was being reduced to second secretary level. Still, Ankara prompted by the military preserved the realism in its foreign policy and in February 1982 desisted from voting on a United Nation's resolution condemning Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights. That Turkish abstention from the UN voting was reciprocity for the useful information that was given to the Turks from the Israelis about the Armenian terrorists after the Israeli invasion in Lebanon in 1982. During the Israeli military expedition against the Palestinians in Lebanon in 1982 the Israelis arrested a lot of Armenian terrorists, members of the Armenian extremist group ASALA, and captured their bases, which were full of archival material. Turks were very interested in all the information they could get about the ASALA and the Israelis gave it to them.<sup>53</sup>

Another big proof for the continuing cooperation between the two countries was their collaboration in the early 1980's with the U.S. in the notorious case of Iran-Contra (Contra gate). The case was about the illegal sale of American weapons to the Iranian rebels and the use of the earnings to arm Contras guerillas, which were fighting against the Santinistas in Nicaragua. The airlift for the weapons' transportation that was going on from 1980 until 1985 had been used Israeli and Turkish airports as intermediaries until the weapons got to Iran and especially to the Tabriz airport.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Robert Fisk, " Jerusalem Draws in the Turks to Spy on Arab Foes," *The Independent of London*. Available [Online]: <http://salam.org/turkey/fisk-on-turkey-alliance.html> [20 August 1999].

<sup>54</sup> Marios L. Evriviadis, *The Hegemonic Turkish-Israeli Axis*, (Athens: E.K.O.ME. Society for Social and Economic Studies, 1998), Research Paper E962, p.7.

By the later 1980s, relations between Israel and Turkey were growing again. Diplomatic relations were officially restored at the legation level in 1985, and Israel's representative in Ankara was quietly appointed to the rank of charge d'affaires. The next year Turkey followed suit with its diplomatic delegate. Economic cooperation especially in agricultural sectors started in 1986. In October 1989 the Israeli press announced that Turkey would permit the participation of Israeli companies in the huge international project for the agricultural development of East Turkey. Israeli companies started considerable participation immediately.<sup>55</sup>

In the 1980's, Turkey started serious and finally successful efforts to positively affect the Jewish lobby groups in New York and Washington to cozy up to the Americans and highlight Turkey's strategic importance to the Middle East in the post-Cold War era. "Inevitably, pro-Israeli groups have now begun to sympathize with Turkey's contention that the 1915 Turkish massacre of 1.5 million Armenians did not constitute genocide and may not have been - despite absolute proof to the contrary - the century's first holocaust."<sup>56</sup> Consequently, the Jewish lobby in August 1987 helped a lot to convince U.S. Congress to vote against a resolution setting aside April 24 in commemoration for the victims of the Armenian massacre perpetrated by the Turks in the early part of this century. Moreover, in September 1987, the Turkish and Israeli foreign ministers, V. Halefoglu and S. Peres respectively, met together officially in New York after a UN

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.9.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Fisk, " Jerusalem Draws in the Turks to Spy on Arab Foes," *The Independent of London*. Available [Online]: <http://salam.org/turkey/fisk-on-turkey-alliance.html> [20 August 1999].

General Assembly meeting. After that meeting S. Peres stated publicly to the reporters: "Israel and the Jewish lobby in the United States support Turkey."<sup>57</sup>

The 1980's can be characterized by the political will and the coordinated efforts of both countries to tighten their relations at the international and regional level. There are many incidents that can substantiate that mutual political stance but two were prevailing. The first was the Palestinian Intifada, which started in 1987 and ended with the Oslo agreements in 1993. Israel tried from the beginning of Intifada to suppress it cruelly and bloodily with military intervention. Turkey simply condemned Israel with statements but did nothing more than that. The evolutionary process for the tightening of the Turkish-Israeli relationship was not affected at all. The second incident was in 1988 when Turkey despite her diplomatic relations with Israel was among the countries, that recognized the State of Palestine, which was declared by the Palestine National Council on November of the same year. The Israeli reaction was mild and cautious so as not to affect the good relationship between the two countries. However, in 1989, Turkey for the first time voted in the UN against a proposed resolution to reject Israel's credentials.

In the early 1990's, the period in which the two countries started to declare overtly their relationship and cooperation began. The Gulf War in 1990 initially prompted that attitude. Turkey's tilt toward the Arabs since the 1970's began to crumble as of the Gulf War. Turkish policy makers realized in the aftermath of the Gulf War the fragmentation of the Arab world. Turkey began to feel that it needed to rely more on the West than it had hoped, and especially the United States. As a result it abstained from a General Assembly vote that repealed the 1975 UN resolution equating Zionism with

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<sup>57</sup> Marios L. Evriviadis, *The Hegemonic Turkish-Israeli Axis*, (Athens: E.K.O.M.E. Society for Social and Economic Studies 1998), Research Paper E962, p. 8.

racism, and in December of 1991, it upgraded its diplomatic relationship with Israel to the level of ambassador (although it did the same for the PLO). The Madrid Peace Agreement in October 1991, between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, convinced the Turks that there was no need to be "more Arab than the Arabs"<sup>58</sup> while the Arab states and the PLO were eager to develop good relations with Israel.

Moreover, there were several facts that indicate a growing tension between Turkey and the Arab world and a growing cooperation between Turkey, Israel and United States since 1990. The American use of Turkey's air bases in operations against Iraq; Turkey's military maneuvers in northern Iraq to destroy Kurdish separatist camps there; Arab support of Kurdish rebels in Anatolia; its control over the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and its water policies, including the desire to have Israel participate in the eventually aborted water conference of November 1991; general lack of Arab support for Turkey's international position; and its membership in NATO, which seemed to be increasing as Turkey's role in its original mission was transformed into regional security.

In 1992 there was a cultural event that took place which emphatically showed the full restoration of the Turkish-Israeli relations at the international level. It was initiated from the Turkish-American and Turkish-Jewish lobbies to commemorate in Istanbul mainly, but also in Israel and the U.S., the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and the invitation for their establishment in the Ottoman Empire from the Sultan Beyazit. A year later in 1993, for the first time since Israel's creation in 1948, a Turkish highest-ranking official, the Turkish foreign minister Hikmet Cetin, visited officially Israel. It was the beginning of a budding relationship for the restructuring of the Middle East as

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<sup>58</sup> Hakan M. Yavuz, "Turkish-Israeli Relations Through the Lens of the Turkish Identity Debate," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, Autumn 1997, Issue 105, p.29.

the Turkish minister told the journalists upon his return to Ankara.<sup>59</sup> The framework for wide bilateral negotiations on issues regarding trade, investment, and for cooperation in scientific, military, and other fields had been established. Over the next three years economic and diplomatic relations reached significant levels.

Cetin's visit in Israel was followed by the visit in Turkey in late January 1994, of Israeli President Ezer Weizman, which was the first Israeli head of state to visit Turkey. In April 1994, Israeli then-Foreign Minister Shimon Peres went to Ankara, where he met with Turkish then-Prime Minister Tansu Ciller. Their discussions covered issues for extensive cooperation between the two countries and the prospect of Turkish troops patrolling a security zone in Hebron was looked into. It is not desultory that in June of that same year, Israel and Turkey conducted for the first time a joint midair refueling exercise with a variety of Turkish planes. Moreover, in that same month a Turkish parliamentary delegation visited Israel for the first time. On October 6, delegations from the two countries prepared a draft to cooperate in combating terrorism with which both have extensive experience drug trafficking, and organized crime. The agreement was officially signed in November 1994 when the Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller became the first Turkish Head of Government to visit Israel. The final agreement also included cooperation in the fields of telecommunications and postal services. There was also a strong pursuance from the Turkish side for a free trade agreement, which finally "was signed only on 14 March 1996 and not ratified until April 1997."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p.30.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.31

Ciller's visit was intended for Turkey to "actively and dynamically develop its relations with Israel."<sup>61</sup> Moreover, one can argue that Ciller's visit to Israel and her meetings with Israeli officials, especially with the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, served to lay the groundwork for a stronger cooperation between the two secular democracies in the Middle East. Furthermore, Ciller and Rabin "articulated the vision for enhanced cooperation" between the two countries.<sup>62</sup> Rabin stated that the developed and improved relationship between Israel and Turkey was strategic because it was "vital for the cultivation of a 'New Middle East.'"<sup>63</sup>

First and foremost Ciller's visit to Israel was important politically. Turkey openly showed for the first time its political tilt towards Israel and that symbolized a political change in the region. It was remarkable that although "Foreign Minister Mumtaz Soysal, a staunch supporter of Palestinian self-determination, forced Ciller to visit Orient House in East Jerusalem, she openly praised Zionism with her Israeli hosts and compared Ben-Gurion with Atatürk."<sup>64</sup>

The political and military facet is only one part of the growing closeness, and this fact must be borne in mind when discussing broader Turkish-Israeli relations. There is a growing realization in both countries that, martial support aside, the two have many reasons to co-operate and much to gain, in numerous ways, from such co-operation. Economic links are profitable, and growing. In 1993 the Turkish-Israeli Business Council was established. Around the time of Weizman's visit to Turkey in 1994, talks

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<sup>61</sup> Akif Oktay, First Secretary, Turkish Embassy, Washington, DC "Speech on Turkish-Israeli Relations," Washington DC, November 11, 1997.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Hakan M. Yavuz, "Turkish-Israeli Relations Through the Lens of the Turkish Identity Debate," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, Autumn 1997, Issue 105, p.31.

between the two countries were beginning to focus on economic issues, such as tourism, trade, customs, monetary policy, and banking.

In 1996, the Turkish-Israeli relationship was culminated. The landmark agreements on military cooperation in February and on military industrial cooperation in April 1996 proved that the most significant component of the relationship thus far has been military. The military agreements on 1996 have produced unprecedented military exercises and training, arms sales, and strategic talks. However, very significant developments had been made in other than political and military fields. During the visit of Turkish President, Suleyman Demirel to Israel in March of 1996, four agreements between the two nations were signed. The first was a Free Trade Agreement, which became effective in May 1, 1997. The second was an Agreement on the Prevention of Double Taxation, which has entered into force in the beginning of 1999. The third was an Agreement on the Protection and Encouragement of Investments and, the fourth was an Agreement on Cooperation in Economic, Scientific and Technical Fields.<sup>65</sup> The two countries have since signed 16 agreements regarding economic relations.<sup>66</sup> According to the Israelis, the visit of the Turkish President justified the importance of the Turkish-Israeli relations. "This visit constitutes an important milestone in relations between Israel and Turkey in recent years, especially since the start of the Oslo process."<sup>67</sup>

The four agreements signed in 1996 subsequently resulted in large increases in Turkish-Israeli trade. The mutual trade volume is heading for approximately \$2.5 billion

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<sup>65</sup> Turkey today, "President Demirel Makes First State Visit to Israel," 12 March 1996. Available [Online]: <http://www.turkey.org/turkey/today/ta5.htm> [17 October 1999].

<sup>66</sup> Joseph Leitmann, "Turkey: Benefiting from David's Army," *International Relations Journal*. Available [Online]: <http://psirus.sfsu.edu/IntRel/IRJournal/Wi97/Leitmann.html> [15 April 1999].

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

for the year 2000 and mostly in Turkey's favor.<sup>68</sup> The two countries came to an agreement on March 24 1998 for protocol on exports between them. Although most of the provisions of the agreement have not been disclosed it is well known that Turkish exports to Israel include iron and steel products, cement, woven clothing, and synthetic fibres. Israeli exports to Turkey are chemical products, plastics, cotton, seeds, and optical equipment.<sup>69</sup>

Tourism is also evident of the budding relationship between Turkey and Israel. The number of Israeli tourists to Turkey has grown significantly since 1986. Especially since 1994, the annual number of Israeli tourists to Turkey is 350,000, and with an approximate average spending of \$1000 each. Amongst the biggest attractions to the Israelis tourists in Turkey are the casinos. It is estimated that Israelis yearly are betting amounts that go beyond \$1.5 billion.<sup>70</sup>

These facts and figures are significant, in that they point out that Turkish-Israeli military co-operation is one aspect of the relationship, and that both reinforce each other to significant degrees. Politicians in both countries have to take into account that under the status of such an economic growth it is unlikely for Turkish and Israeli people to favor deterioration in the relations between the two countries.

Consequently, cooperation between the two countries has extended to the international political agenda, as well. Israeli lobbies in Europe forcefully promoted Turkish stands upon the issue of Turkey's customs union with Europe when the voting in the European Union was taken place. Moreover, former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon

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<sup>68</sup> Pulse of Turkey, "Turkish-Israeli Relations Diversified at Surprising Speed and Volume," 8 August 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.turkpulse.com/turkish2.htm> [15 April 1999].

<sup>69</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," *Middle East Quarterly*, June 1998, p.26.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p.27.



Peres used his contacts in the Socialist International to further the cause. The favor was returned when Turkey abstained during the United Nations vote at the beginning of 1996 condemning the Israeli military offensive in Lebanon.

On 28 July 1996, elections in Turkey brought to the government the Islamic Refah Partisi (Welfare Party) and its leader Necmettin Erbakan. Erbakan while in opposition had raised his political power for being supportive of Islam and hostile to the Turkish secular system, the West, and Israel. Thus, Israel was very concerned by the time of his election about the establishment in Turkey of an Islamic government. However, Erbakan since he became Prime Minister transformed significantly his political discourse and his stands toward many sensitive domestic and foreign issues. Relations with Israel not only remained steady but have grown closer, especially in the political-military fields. On April 8 1997, then Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy visited Turkey, where he met with the Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, the deputy Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, military commanders, and business leaders. Furthermore, during the same month, the first official Muslim religious delegation from Turkey arrived in Israel.

The cooperation between Turkey and Israel from the very beginning was bounded from the progress on the Arab-Israeli peace process and the peculiar Turkish foreign policy which always tried to keep a balance in Turkey's stance between the West and the Middle East. In that way the relationship had to be developed on a flexible basis with a lot ups and downs depending on the Arab-Israeli dynamic and Turkey's foreign policy needs. However, the end of the Cold War changed the, politic, and strategic orientations of almost all the countries all over the world while they do not have any more to side with

one of the two poles of an international bipolar system rather than to seek for coalitions on regional and international level that are appropriate and beneficial to their national interests. In that sense, Turkish decision makers do not need to vacillate in their foreign policy anymore, and so they can overtly show their preference for closer ties with Israel in a wide spectrum of interests and fields. The omens for an open and steadily rising cooperation came right after the signs of resolution of the Arab-Israeli contention, which were the Oslo agreement and the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles on 13 September 1993. Both countries understood that it is in their interest to develop close and stable relations in a wide spectrum of fields.

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### III. EXPLANATIONS AND ORIGINS OF THE FACTS

#### A. INTRODUCTION

Despite the official Turkish and Israeli explanations that their military cooperation does "not aim at setting up a front against other sides"<sup>71</sup> it is obvious by analyzing post-Cold War Middle Eastern events that the main driving force behind military-industrial collaboration emanates from relations with their regional neighbors. Syria, Iraq, and Iran all pose dangers for Israel and Turkey, and afford ample impulse for Ankara and Jerusalem to overtly strengthen and expand their military and economic ties. For Turkey, such forces can also be found in Greece, with which Turkey has a long-standing, multi-faceted antagonism.

Evidently the two countries by pursuing close cooperation, especially in the military sphere, are not only aiming at strengthening their position in the region, in geostrategic and geopolitical terms, but also improving their prestige and reliability in the international arena. Both countries obviously hope to have positive interactions between them and the United States on one hand, and Europe on the other. Moreover, the temptation of the NATO allies for a further expansion of the geographical scope of their security interests, on a case-by-case basis, should not exclude a long-term potential goal of the Turkish-Israeli cooperation agenda.

Strong reasons and motives for the rapprochement between the two countries can also be found in their sociopolitical backgrounds. The two powerful and leading elites the Turkish (military) and the Israeli (civilian), share a deep attachment to the West and

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<sup>71</sup> "Fresh Turkish Push Into Northern Iraq as Ecevit Questions Timing of Naval Exercises With Israel." *Mideast Mirror*, 26 September 1997. Available [Lexis/Nexis]: MDEAFR/CURNWS [23 September 1998].

Western values, which is unique in the region in which they are located. In that sense they are keen to adopt policies that contribute to their economic and social development as much as to their desire to remain strong in a volatile region while they "find themselves distanced from the continent of their choice, having to exist in regions where they feel profoundly ill at ease."<sup>72</sup> It is not coincidence that a number of Israeli politicians like "the president, Yitzhak Ben Zvi, the prime minister, David Ben Gurion, and the foreign minister, Moshe Sharett,"<sup>73</sup> took their academic studies in Turkey or that within the Israeli elite Atatürk is admired as an important historical figure.<sup>74</sup>

## **B. EXTERNAL DYNAMICS INCENTIVES AND DISINCENTIVES FOR THE TURKISH-ISRAELI MILITARY COOPERATION**

### **1. Regional**

Turkey and Israel define their security in the Middle East region by a common denominator, which is a strong and effective armed force capable of deterring any hostile activity against their territory. Having the strongest militaries in the region that notion of deterrence is significantly being strengthened by the cooperation between them. Both countries have had in time quarrels with Syria, Iraq and Iran and in the case of Turkey, with Greece too. With their military collaboration they "will send a [warning] message to aggressors in the area, while at the same time [they will have the] increased opportunity for cooperative assessment of the Middle East situation."<sup>75</sup> Despite the fact

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<sup>72</sup> Philip Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), p.82.

<sup>73</sup> Amicam Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece*, (London, UK: Frank Cass, 1987), p.58.

<sup>74</sup> Philip Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), p.84.

<sup>75</sup> Demir Metehan, "Turkey, Israel Launch Secret Strategic Talks," *Turkish Daily News* (9 December 1997).

that at the present time the potential of these quarrels to erupt into violent friction is minimum, Turkey and Israel, continue their preparedness for a potential war with their neighbor countries while their experience from the region's history is that survival always depends upon the alertness to confront vital contingencies.

Turkey and Israel have a mutual notion that Muslim countries like Syria, Iran and Iraq should never be discounted for their ability to cause serious armed violence in the region no matter how impotent they seem to be for such a potential as being "three rogue states"<sup>76</sup> in the past. The present moderate American pressure on Syria, Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent impositions of sanctions by the international community, and Iran's relative international isolation, cause huge difficulties, but the possibility of those three states involving themselves in armed conflicts in the future remains.

Furthermore, Turkey and Israel have had to cope with the threat of domestic terrorism prodded from those countries. The terrorism issue has been considered from both countries as vital for the protection of their national security interests. Fighting terrorism organized by the Kurdistan Workers Party (*Partiya Karkerana Kurdistan*, or PKK) is a job of the security forces, which form a part of Turkish's armed forces, and which are supported by the regular Turkish army, according to Turkish armed forces organization chart, as it is quite the same also in Israel.

In that sense Turkey and Israel have seen themselves as natural allies in a region in which antagonisms, enmity and armed conflict are predominant. For the Turkish and Israeli common perspective their closer cooperation "exude a tone of status quo over the

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<sup>76</sup> Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: the Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente," *The National Interest*, Winter 1997/1998, p.36

region”<sup>77</sup> and such would be a strong factor of stability and peace for it deters Hafiz al-Assad, Saddam Hussein, and the Iranian mullahs to carry out any hostile military and terrorist action to upset that status quo.

**a. Israel**

The Israelis perennial quest for security is the cornerstone for the development of their regional and international policies as much as it has had a profound effect in their day-to-day life. The main concern of Israelis since the establishment of their state has been “to put an end to their regional pariah status”<sup>78</sup>; in other words to convince the Arab and non-Arab Muslim states in the Middle East that it has a right to exist in the region. This concern has not disappeared, despite the fact that Israel has signed peace treaties with two Arab countries and the Declaration of Principles with the PLO. This is because according to the Arab view “peace treaties and agreements have not stopped Israel, especially, but not exclusively, under the Netanyahu government, from pursuing one of the most ambitious militaristic projects in the region.”<sup>79</sup> Moreover, Israel has reneged on its agreements with the Palestinians and in the opinion of many Arabs, it disregards calls by the international community to pave the way for a just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on the principle of land for peace.

Consequently, for Israel the process to achieve its right to exist in the region has been violent and debilitated, as it has taken place in a contentious environment. For such reasons the need for regional and extra-regional friends was and still is strong and crucial

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<sup>77</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," *Middle East Quarterly*, June 1998, p.29.

<sup>78</sup> Dov Waxman, "Turkey and Israel: A New Balance of Power in the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter/1999, p.30.

<sup>79</sup> The Star Arabia Online, "Our Say....: Dangerous Alliance," 8 May 1997. Available [Online]: <http://star.arabia.com/970508/OP3.html> [5 November 1999].

for Israel's survival. While Arabs have been hostile to Israeli's right to exist the Israeli search for regional friends has founded on non-Arab countries in its periphery. Turkey's rapprochement was considered from the beginning as important and vital for Israel's peripheral strategy to thwart Arabic ambitions for its destruction.

Israel, in comparison with Turkey, does not stand to benefit from the Military Training Cooperation Agreement, and all the subsequent accords with Turkey, with any material gains in the same manner as does Turkey. The recent Turkish-Israeli military and defense agreements for Israel promised to "create an over-the-horizon capability to deal with the thread of long-range missiles, nuclear weapons and chemical and biological warfare from a recalcitrant Syria, Iran, Iraq and Libya."<sup>80</sup> Those Muslim states with attitudes considered as hostile to Israel have, after the signing of the Turkish-Israeli agreements, to take into account that in case of a hostile action against the Jewish state Ankara's position should be considered as aligned with Israel and which could provide the basis for a second front against them. That possibility could be surmised from Turkey's tacit acceptance of Israel's deployment of combat forces and technologically sophisticated weaponry in its southern border or its using Turkish air space and probably Turkish airport facilities along the Turkish borders with Syria, Iraq and Iran. Thus military cooperation with Turkey changes the base of Israeli military thinking about the way of deployment of its armed forces and their weaponry against hostile actions of its regional neighbors.

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<sup>80</sup> James Bruce, "Israel and Turkey the Mideast's Odd Couple Find Common Ground Despite Political Surprises," 12 September 1996. Available [Online]: <http://pollux.com/defenseweb/1996/sep96/mideast!.html> [15 September 1999].



It should be mentioned that Turkish and Israeli tensions with Syria, Iraq and Iran differ in character and substance. Turkish disputes are concrete and physical in nature (for example water rights and territorial issues) while Israel's frictions with its regional enemies are mainly based (except from Syria) on ideological and religious issues.

Of the three Muslim states, Syria, Iraq and Iran, which Israel and Turkey consider as contentious, only Syria has geographical borders with Israel. Syria in the past made the most of its geographical contiguity with Israel and launched a northern invasion of Israel in 1948 and 1973. Syria also conducted vicious and far ranging raids into Israeli territory following the declaration of cease-fire lines in 1949. The Golan Heights was for Syrians the strategic area from which to conduct all their raids of the northern Israeli settlements. During the Six Day War in 1967 Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria.<sup>81</sup> Since then the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights remains the thorniest issue in Syrian-Israeli relations along with security zone issue in Lebanon. In Lebanon the recent problem is Israel's occupation of a self-declared security zone in the south of the country, and the violent opposition to it by the Hizballah, a small Shi'ite faction, "which is backed by Syria and funded by Iran [and] has inflicted heavy losses on the Israeli forces."<sup>82</sup> Moreover, the Syrian unofficial policy to offer shelter to radical Palestinian factions intent on sabotaging the peace process and continuing the armed conflict with Israel similar to the Syrian support for the Kurdish PKK constitutes another main issue for the Syrian-Israeli enmity.

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<sup>81</sup> Israel annexed the Golan Heights unilaterally and this action is not considered legal by the international community as the *United Nations Security Council Resolution 242* (22 November 1967) demands for "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied from the recent conflict."

<sup>82</sup> Alain Gresh, "Turkish-Israeli-Syrian Relations and Their Impact on the Middle East," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol.52, No.2, Spring 1998, Available [Online]: <http://www.2.ari.net/mei/gresh.html> [15 April 1999]

Theoretically, a genuine peace between Syria and Israel seems to be against their individual goals and hopes within the region and their relations with other countries in the Middle East. For Syria a peace agreement may mean its decline in eyes of the Arab world and a retreat from its territorial demands in Golan Heights. Israel for its part would increase its regional influence, but the good relations with Egypt and Jordan would be negatively affected. For those reasons, achieving peace in the near future should be considered improbable. However, practically any agreement with Israel would have to include Syria's demands for Golan Heights (at least almost all,) along with military neutralization of Golan.

Due to all these issues it is obvious that Israel and Syria have serious tensions between them which could lead to armed violence. Thus, the border remains volatile and the current impasse in the peace process contributes to a mistrustful atmosphere between the two countries. The Israeli government had been frustrated with the Syrian stance to the peace process in 1996 and "wanted to exert pressure on Syria from another perspective,"<sup>83</sup> and an alliance with Turkey was satisfactory for such a cause. In other words, Israel uses its military collaboration with Turkey to warn Syria that Israel would have an effective and efficient Turkish ally in case of armed conflict along with abundant information about terrorist activities in its territory. Yet, Israel's response to any option of hostile activities initiated by Syria would be immediate, accurate, and effective.

Israel considers Iraq an indirect threat since it does not have any borders with the Jewish state. However, the potential for an Iraqi direct physical threat in the future has

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<sup>83</sup> Carol Migdalowitz, "Turkey, Israel: Unprecedented Ties," *Turkistan Newsletter*, Vol.98, Issue 2, No.155, (23 September 1998), Available [Online]: [http://136.142.87.124/~tasa/mail\\_archive/msg00124.html](http://136.142.87.124/~tasa/mail_archive/msg00124.html) [15 April 1999].

never been excluded from Israeli speculation. During the 1991 Gulf War, Saddam fired 39 Scud missiles at Israel in hopes of breaking up the Arab coalition against him.<sup>84</sup> Israel at that time did not retaliate, but Israel has been prepared for the unexpected from Saddam ever since.

Iraq after the Gulf War has suffered tremendously from military, economic and demographic losses. However, despite its ruination, Iraq has continued to defy the United Nations and more so the United States. Additionally, the UN monitors realized after the Gulf War that in addition to conventional weaponry, the Iraqi nuclear, chemical and biological capabilities remained considerable. Though the nuclear program has been effectively 'eliminated', it is believed that Iraq is still hiding a substantial amount of information on its nuclear program. On December 1998 Saddam once more threatened Israel that he might fire missiles with chemical or biological warheads at Israel if U.S. air strikes brought him to the verge of collapse.<sup>85</sup> Although nothing happened then, Israel was much better prepared to deal with an Iraqi missile attack than it was in 1991 while Israel's air defense forces reinforced by *Patriot*-systems which were added to the inventory during the Gulf War.

The Iraqi perception of the creation and establishment of Israel also raises an ideological dispute and a hatred for Israelis. The Israeli behavior in the twentieth century strengthened the Iraqi belief that the Jewish people since the beginning of their immigration to Palestine, at the end of nineteenth century, have succeeded displacing the

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<sup>84</sup> Jack Katzenell, "Army: Saddam May Strike Israel," *Associated Press*, 31 December 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.mt.net/~watcher/israeldefenditself.html> [5 November 1999].

<sup>85</sup> Patrick Goodenough, "Israel Prepares for Possible Iraq Attack," *Associated Press*, 17 December 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.conservativenews.org/indepth/archive/199812/IND19981217d.html> [5 November 1999].

Arabs there to establish their state. Using this reasoning Iraq has rejected the peace process with Israel and is totally opposed to any attempt to assimilate Israel in the regional political and economical plateau.

In that sense what the Israelis consider to be most threatening is the indirect Iraqi approach, which can cause troubles to Israel, and to its alliances or policy alignments with other hostile countries, to especially Syria. Although the two Arab Baathist regimes have been at odds with each other for decades (since the 1960's) and all attempts to create reconciliation between the two neighboring countries have met with dismal failure, the peace process stagnation in 1996 along with the signing of the military agreements between Turkey and Israel forced them, especially Syria, to pursue reconciliatory policies. Thus, "all this has encouraged Assad to deepen Syria's strategic depth, in the case of war with Israel, by mending his fences with Saddam Hussein."<sup>86</sup> The process began in June 1997 when Assad reopened the Syrian border with Iraq as a prelude to re-establishing trade links between the two neighbors.

Israel uses its military alliance with Turkey as a warning to Iraq that an Israeli harsh response to any infringements by Iraq on Israeli regional interests or safety is by no means feasible while Israeli Air Force can use Turkish air space. The Turkish-Israeli military cooperation also provides for assurances that the capabilities with which both states could confront any threat to their national interests has now been increased. Such assurance is necessary to prevent hostile Iraqi actions since it is well known that Saddam not only defies UN declarations but has chosen in the past to absorb an American military attack in 1991 rather than back down from the confrontation.

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<sup>86</sup> Hiro Dilip, "Politics-Syria: Making Friends With Iraq as Well," *Inter Press Service*, 16 July 1998. Available [Online]: [http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/jul98/15\\_26\\_063.html](http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/jul98/15_26_063.html) [6 November 1999].

The relations between Israel and Iran can be divided in two periods with the dividing line in the Islamic Revolution in Iran. In the period before the revolution, in relation to Iran, certain geo-political goals came into existence for Israel, alongside the mutual co-operation that existed between Tehran and Tel Aviv. From the Israeli viewpoint, regional co-operation with Turkey and Iran indicated that Israel could co-exist peacefully with Muslim countries. Thus, Middle Eastern countries regarded the Israel-Iran-Turkey strategic triangle as one of the means for maintaining the regional power of the United States. This triangle was continuously under attack by more radical entities, such as Syria, Iraq, Egypt and even more so from fundamentalist entities such as Saudi Arabia.

After the Revolution Iran has been considered by Israeli decision-makers as "an outcast state because it supports international terrorism, opposes the US-mediated peace process in the Middle East, and plans to acquire nuclear weapon, and must be marginalized by all means."<sup>87</sup> The Israeli-Iranian enmity since the Islamic Revolution in Iran is a peculiar one in the sense that its origins can be found not only in ideological issues but also in an Iranian desire for military confrontation while there is no geographical contiguity between Iran and Israel. The ideological front stems from Iranian opposition to the peace process and even to recognition of Israel. According to Iranian perception, the establishment of the Jewish state is blameworthy not only because it came after an impudent occupation of Arab lands but also because it is connected with

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<sup>87</sup> Hiro Dilip, "Iran: Demirel and Erbakan Embrace Teheran," *Inter Press Service*, 22 December 1996, Available [Lexis/Nexis]: MDEAFR/CURNWS [17 September 1998].

the very existence of Judaism in a region that is overwhelmingly Muslim.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, for the radicals in Iran, Israel is considered a supporter of the old repressive Shah-regime. Right after the Shah's downfall Iranian radicals propagated secret documents, which brought to light a secret strategic alliance between Iran, Israel and Turkey. According to those documents, which also precluded top-secret American data to justify their content, there was a secret trilateral agreement with the code name *Trident* between the intelligent services of Israel (Mossad), Turkey (MIT), and Iran (SAVAK) to cope with mutual threats in the region of the Middle East.<sup>89</sup>

The Iranian desire for an armed confrontation with Israel has been expanded in Teheran's political, military and economic support for terrorist organizations such as HAMAS and Islamic Jihad, which operate in the West Bank, and Hizballah, whose focus is southern Lebanon. The destructive and lethal action of all these terrorist organizations in Israel's territory and settlements constituted a rationale for Israelis to cooperate militarily with Turkey while their agreements aim to counter terrorism. Moreover, the Turkish permission for Israeli planes to fly within Turkish air space gives Israel the opportunity to have an early warning of any Iranian hostile moves towards Israel. That ability is enhanced by the use of Israeli high tech surveillance equipment along the Turkish borders with Iran<sup>90</sup> and with the potential surveillance flights from Israeli Air Force close to the Turkish-Iranian borders.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ebrahim Mottaghi, "An Analysis of Israel's Conduct Vis-à-Vis the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Siasat-e Defa'i [Defense Policy] (Quarterly)* Spring 1997, No. 18, Available [Online]: <http://netiran.com/Htdocs/Clippings/FPolitics/970400XXFP01.html> [6 November 1999].

<sup>89</sup> Marios L. Evriviadis, *The Hegemonic Turkish-Israeli Axis*, (Athens: E.K.O.M.E. Society for Social and Economic Studies, 1998), Research Paper E962, p.6.

<sup>90</sup> Abboud B. Mounir, "Israel Gets a Foothold in Turkey," *Moneyclips*, 18 May 1996. Available [Lexis/Nexis]: MDEAFR/ALLNWS [17 August 1998].

<sup>91</sup> "Turning Up the Heat on Syria," *Mideast Mirror*, 5 June 1996. Available [Lexis/Nexis]: MDEAFR/ALLNWS [19 August 1998].

Beside the Iranian contribution to terrorist groups there is also an Israeli concern with Teheran's potentiality in nuclear and non-conventional weapons as well as in long-range ballistic missiles. Having such capabilities the Iranians could easily accomplish their desire for direct-armed confrontation with Israel. Although Iran claims that it wants to restart the two nuclear reactors at Bushehr for peaceful purposes, reason which were severely damaged during the Iran-Iraq war, there are several reasons, which could change the Iranian rationale for achieving nuclear power.<sup>92</sup> Iran is an embattled country, weak militarily, with well-armed foes, and some of them nuclear. Moreover, US forces are in the Gulf and with the Turkish-Israeli military agreement Israeli pilots came closer to Iranian borders. All this constitutes "a nuclear status as an obvious stem [however] still out of reach."<sup>93</sup>

Whereas Iran has the potential to cause serious problems to Israel up to now, it seems not to have the willingness or the ability for overt hostile actions. Moreover, have shown that "despite its ideological and political outlook and its rhetoric, Iran does not have the necessary means to challenge Israel and achieve its political goals."<sup>94</sup> Thus, Teheran has not put any serious obstacles to the peace process except for exhortations that the Middle Eastern countries should not support any attempt, which leads to Israel's assimilation within the region. It is true that since Ayatollah Khomeini died in 1989 Iran is more concerned "with stability and trade than with spreading a revolutionary Islamic message [and so it is trying] to avoid upsets rather than to cause them."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> "Is Iran the Godfather?" *The Economist Newspaper*, 17 August 1996. Available [Lexis/Nexis]: MDEAFR/ALLNWS [24 August 1998].

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ebrahim Mottaghi, "An Analysis of Israel's Conduct Vis-à-Vis the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Siasat-e Defa'i [Defense Policy] (Quarterly)* Spring 1997, No. 18. Available [Online]: <http://netiran.com/Htdocs/Clippings/FPolitics/970400XXFP01.html> [6 November 1999].

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

However, there is a strong Israeli notion for preparedness for serious Iranian hostile action in the future. Thus the Turkish-Israeli military cooperation can provide Israel with real time intelligence information about Iran's posture by maintaining access to signal intelligent sites along the Turkish-Iranian borders. Despite the Turkish and Israeli denial for such a level of cooperation the real evidence calls for the opposite conclusion and proves high tech electronic surveillance along side the Turkish-Iranian borders.<sup>96</sup>

#### b. Turkey

Turkey's regional attitude towards Middle Eastern countries (and especially these whose borders are contiguous) has been passive and most often has depended upon Turkey's intention to follow imperatives deriving from its relations with the United States and the West. As a Muslim state in the Middle East, Turkey's disputes with its neighbors are based on concrete tangible issues rather than on ideological ones. The division of the waters from the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, and the provision of the Kurdistan Workers' Party from Syria and Iraq with shelter and military aid are the main Turkish disputes with Syria and Iraq. With Iran the differences are located on ideological issues, which refer to the secular orientation of the Turkish state. However, Turkey is also annoyed by the support that Iran ladles out to terrorist groups.

The innate Arab unwillingness to resolve their differences with the others along with their resentment of the Turkish political system which bases its political institutions on secular values rather than on Islamic ones are two of the main reasons that disputes

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<sup>96</sup> Tom Hundley, "Samurai Cultures Help Bond Israel, Turkey," *Chicago Tribune* (30 December 1998).



between Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran will remain unsolved for the foreseen future. It seems that in recent years the Arabs have shown "an incredible impotence to uphold their common interests and prevent the draining of their human and material resources."<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, Turkey by having close military relations with the strongest army in the region feels more powerful to confront any aggression from its neighbors and so the potential to compromise on disputed issues is unlikely.

However, relations between Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran in modern times also had their cordial periods despite their differences. Whenever Turkey was disappointed with the Western posture it used to turn its eyes toward the Middle East. However, the Arabs were suspicious all the time about the Turkish intentions while Turkey's policies for decades had as their purpose a military role as NATO's eastern bulwark. Thus Turkey had been alienated from its natural environment and its neighbors. In that way Turkey "had stopped seeing itself as part of the Middle East or the Islamic world, and its neighbors had stopped seeing it as one of them."<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, Turkey and its neighbor states, Syria, Iraq and Iran, all share a common perspective on the Kurdish issue. They are not in favor of an independent Kurdish homeland established in Iraq where the Kurds have more potential for autonomy. In such a case, Iraq would be dismembered and the Kurdish populations in the other states would embrace the same Kurdish aspirations.

In last decade regional circumstances forced Turkey to develop closer military and economic ties with Israel. The Turks fear that quarrels with Syria and Iraq have a

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<sup>97</sup> "Whatever Happened to Inter-Arab Solidarity?" *Mideast Mirror*, 16 May 1996. Available [LEXIS/NEXIS]: MDEAFR/CURNWS [29 August 1998].

<sup>98</sup> David Hirst, "Turkey Beats a Path to the Arab World," *The Guardian*, 31 August 1996. Available [LEXIS/NEXIS]: MDEAFR/CURNWS [27 September 1998].

great potential to erupt into armed conflicts in the near future, along with the Turkish anxiety about the proliferation of missile technology and the search by many Middle Eastern states for nuclear capability, have alarmed Ankara and made her tilt towards Israel.

In its context of regional security, Turkey has to take into account the relations with Greece. The Turkish-Greek relationship is full of tensions and suspicions over issues that deal with Cyprus and the Aegean Sea status. In NATO both countries enjoy full membership, while in EU and WEU Greece is full member, and Turkey has got 'associate member'-status in WEU, and is granted a 'customs union'-agreement with EU with no status at all. In that sense the effects of the Greek-Turkish contentious relationship outflank the regional level of consideration.

Syria is the contiguous state with which Turkey has the most intractable disputes in the Middle East region. Turkish-Syrian antagonism is centered on three issues: the fair share and usage of the water from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers; the Syrian relations with the PKK; and the Syrian claim over the province of Iskenderum (Alexandretta), which the then-colonial power in Syria, France, ceded to Turkey in 1939, which since then is called Hatay. The resolutions of these problems are difficult to find while both countries sustain a status of power in the region.

Although Syria has not the back up from a superpower to pursue its regional policies, it remains one of the regional actors that can influence dramatically the peace process and any other regional dialogue. In June 1996 the Arab summit in Cairo succeeded to "breath life into Arab solidarity and formulate a clear Arab position toward

the [new Middle Eastern] challenges”<sup>99</sup> after the efforts exerted for that aim by Syrian President Assad. Unambiguously, Syria is the only regional actor that has not been affected politically and militarily much from the new regional order after the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Gulf War. In comparison with Iran and Iraq the other two states that can be a direct threat to Turkey in the foreseeable future Syria is considered by the Turks to be the most efficient for causing serious troubles in Turkey, while Iran has been isolated internationally after the Islamic revolution and Iraq lost a vast amount of its military capabilities after the Gulf War.

The water problem between Turkey, Syria and Iraq is very complicated and also a key feature of Turkish-Syrian hostility, as is Syria’s support for the PKK. The complexity of the problem derives from the fact that there is no definitive legal answer to determine a fair share for Turkey, Syria and Iraq of the Euphrates and Tigris waters and in absence of clear traditional use allocation, modified sovereignty applies. The tense status of each of the river basins provides serious reasons for regional non-cooperation. On the Tigris and Euphrates, the three riparians (Turkey, Syria and Iraq) have built storage capacity far in excess of annual water availability, due to mutual mistrust.<sup>100</sup> Additionally, their competing plans for water use exceeded the amounts of water that are naturally available. Turkey’s Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), an immense undertaking designed to built dams and hydroelectric plants, further complicates this already complex situation.

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<sup>99</sup> "Summit Sends Clear Message to Israel but Mixed Signals About Inter-Arab Reconciliation," *Mideast Mirror*, 24 June 1996. Available [LEXIS/NEXIS]: MDEAFR/CURNWS [22 August 1998].

<sup>100</sup> Daniel Hillel, *Rivers of Eden: The Struggle for Water and the Quest for Peace in the Middle East*, (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 103.

The water problem between Syria and Turkey is closely connected with the problem of Syrian support to the Kurdish terrorism. Syria is using the PKK card for achieving its aims in the water dispute with Turkey.<sup>101</sup> However, such a policy triggers Turkish sensitiveness on the issue immensely while several thousands of Turks have lost their lives due to PKK's attacks. Thus, quarrels between the two states can easily achieve the tension to erupt into violent conflict. Such tensions were so intense that the flurry of threats in the period 1997-1998 prompted Turkey's military commander, Gen. Hüseyin Kivrikoglu, to declare that Turkey and Syria were in a "state of undeclared war"<sup>102</sup>

One of the major Turkish motivations for military collaboration with Israel is effective fighting against Kurdish terrorism. As far as Turkish-Syrian antagonisms the military Turkish-Israeli alliance helps tremendously as a counterweight to Syria's use of the PKK. Israel considerably aids Turkey in the fight against regional terrorism by providing them with all their expertise, knowledge and technology in counterterrorism. Although the proclamation for the Turkish-Israeli military agreements took place on February 1996, the negotiations begun in the time period from 1991 till 1993, while on 31 March 1994 the two countries came to an agreement for safeguarding the security of top-secret issues and materials between them.<sup>103</sup>

Syria's relations with Greece also fueled Turkish suspicions of an unfriendly grouping against Turkey. Turkish security planners, who believe Athens and Damascus signed an agreement in 1995 on Greek use of Syrian airbases, take seriously the

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<sup>101</sup> Ismat Gawdat, "Turkey, Syria End Stand-off," 20 October 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.mideastnews.com/Turkey21oc.htm> [6 November 1999].

<sup>102</sup> The Estimate, "The Turkey-Syria Confrontation," 9 October 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.theestimate.com/public/100998.html> [8 September 1999].

<sup>103</sup> Marios L. Evriviadis, *The Hegemonic Turkish-Israeli Axis*, (Athens: E.K.O.M.E. Society for Social and Economic Studies, 1998), Research Paper E962, p.9.

possibility of encirclement as a long-term threat.<sup>104</sup> It should be mentioned, however, there appears little prospect that such a disparate and resource-limited grouping is likely to pose a coordinated threat to Turkey.<sup>105</sup> However, the purported Syrian-Greek military pact enhanced Turkey's willingness to pursue closer military ties with Israel. Ankara felt encircled by its enemies and sought for a counter-pact. By allying with Israel Syria's role in this encirclement attempt was nullified effectively.

Quarrels and disputes are present in the regional context between Turkey and Iraq. However, the situation never was such as to need a quick solution to avoid friction. The rise of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 1968 caused a big change in the Turkish-Iraqi relations. Despite their participation in the Baghdad Pact prior to the 1958 Iraqi coup, the two countries dismissed their alliance while the new Iraqi government by promoting anti-Western, and pan-Arabic policies was totally opposed to the secular and democratic character of the Turkish polity. The traditional unresolved problems that Turkey has had with Iraq include water rights and the Turkish intrusions in northern Iraq to go after Kurdish separatists who sometimes flee into it. The latter has exasperated the Iraqis several times although Turkey has always declared that sending troops to northern Iraq has nothing to do with Iraq's sovereignty, but rather for the repression of PKK's insurgency.

Since Saddam came to power in Iraq another problem added to the bilateral agenda. That was Baghdad's adventurous regional policies so that Iraq can play a more

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<sup>104</sup> "Damascus Assures Ankara," *Turkish Daily News* (4 April 1996). Available [Online]: <http://www.hri.org/news/agencies/trkn/96-04-04.trkn.html#03> [29 November 1999].

<sup>105</sup> Alan Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, SAIS Review, Winter-Spring 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/alansais.htm> [7 November 1999].

influential role in the region's political future. Saddam's appetite for the latter has not been reduced after the Gulf War, which caused Iraq's military destruction. As the UN monitors have found Iraq has not lost its nuclear and non-conventional weapons capabilities. Thus, Turkey still feels threatened from a regime totally opposed to its secular and democratic orientation and which does not seem to respond to international pressure to cease its aggressive gestures against neighboring countries.<sup>106</sup>

Turkey feels, therefore, that it must remain vigilant toward a regime that, since the end of the Gulf War, notwithstanding its military destruction, has been working to rebuild "the armed forces to their pre-war strength."<sup>107</sup> For Turkey the military co-operation with Israel is a strategic means of checking Iraq's development of weapons of mass destruction, which would be cause for great concern to Ankara. Allying itself to the most advanced military power in the area gives Ankara another state on which to rely for aid were Iraq to become belligerent and take some form of hostile action against Turkey.<sup>108</sup>

The Islamic revolution in Iran caused Turkey a lot of anxiety and reason for vigilance. The mullahs in Iran in every occasion show their willingness to export the Islamic principles of their revolution whether by force or example especially in the region. From that perspective Turkish secular democracy is a vital issue for opposition and destruction. In that way Turkey feels unsafe and is the main target of such a policy in the region along with Israel. Additionally, what makes Turkey more anxious is Iran's insistence to achieve an efficient non-conventional weapons arsenal. Furthermore,

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<sup>106</sup> Joseph Leitmann, "Turkey: Benefiting From David's Army," *International Relations Journal*, Winter 1997. Available [Online]: <http://psirus.sfsu.edu/IntRel/IRJournal/Wi97/Leitmann.html> [15 April 1999].

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Philip Robins, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1991), p.62.

Ankara, Jerusalem, and Washington have become apprehensive about Iran's program of ballistic missile development. The military co-operation with Israel is another method of warning Teheran that Ankara will brook no threats to its national safety.

Turkish consideration about Iran also deals with the Iranian-Syrian relations. The latter countries have shown several times in the past signs and reasons for cooperation. During the Iran-Iraq War, Syria defied the united Arab support for Iraq and sided with the non-Arab Iran. There is a strong Turkish notion that it is in both country's interest to counteract the Turkish-Israeli military cooperation by expanding their relations further.<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, Iran forcefully supports regional coalitions that aim to antagonize Turkish and Israeli regional policies. In December 1997, Iran, Greece, and Armenia, (which also bears historical bitterness toward Turkey) signed a Memorandum of Understanding intended to pave the way for long-term co-operation in economic and commercial areas. Although this is an economic agreement, given that these three states have been antagonized by Ankara in recent years, Turkey's apprehension at such developments is understandable.

The Turkish-Israeli military alliance should be considered in the Turkish view as a counter-weight to any union Iran can cobble together with Syria, Greece, or any other regional state. Although a war between Iran and Turkey in the near future is unlikely, the Turkish-Israeli axis gives a considerable warning to Teheran to avoid any regional adventures that collide with Turkish national interests.

Turkish motivations for closer military ties with Israel can also be found outside the Middle Eastern context because its relations with Greece bear the potential for violent

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<sup>109</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," *Middle East Quarterly*, June 1998, p.28.

confrontation. Turkish-Greek differences are also highlighted by concerns of national interest in the Aegean Sea and in Cyprus. Turkish-Greek animosity spreads beyond regional boundaries for both countries are NATO members and associates in the EU and WEU. Thus, the effects of their quarrels or disputes go beyond the regional level of consideration.

The roots of Greek-Turkish hostility are profound and are historically rooted in the era of the Ottoman Empire. Since the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and for almost four hundred years later Greek territory was under Turkish rule. In 1829, after eight years of revolution Greece achieved its independence without having seized all the regions of the former Greek territory. During the next century, recapturing those regions was the uppermost goal of the Greek state. The Treaty of Lausanne signed by Turkey and the victorious powers of World War I on 24 July 1923, determined the boundaries of the present Greek territory except the Dodecanese islands, which were placed under Italian control.<sup>110</sup> The Dodecanese islands eventually became Greek sovereign territory with the signing of the Treaty of Paris on 10 February 1947 between Italy and the victorious Allied powers of the Second World War.

Since 1923, Greco-Turkish relations have gone through cycles of detente and confrontation. This is likely to continue at present in view of the divergent policies and policy objectives of both countries. However, until now resort to force has been avoided despite numerous near conflict situations in the post World War II period, as in 1955 and in 1974, 1976, 1987, and most recently, 1996. On the other hand the possibility of

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<sup>110</sup> Georges Castellan, *History of the Balkans (Histoire des Balkans)*, Greek trans. Aliferi Vasiliki (Athens: Govosti Publications, 1991) p.569.



conflict remains quite real due to miscalculation, misperception, limits testing, escalation, political instability, and internal problems in Turkey.

By 1955, the post-World War II Greco-Turkish detente collapsed under the strain of the Cyprus dispute and its impact on the Greek minority of Istanbul and the ecumenical Patriarchate. Greco-Turkish issues that are currently in dispute mainly deal with Cyprus and the Aegean Sea. Some of these issues are old, as in the case of minorities in Cyprus. Most of the other issues are relatively new and have come about since late in 1973, particularly after the 1974 Turkish invasion and continuing occupation of the northern part of Cyprus.

The Republic of Cyprus gained its independence from Britain in 1960 as a result of the Zürich-London Agreements. Since then the relationship between Greek and Turkish communities has been viewed from within the context of each community. Greek Cypriots consider the relationship as a minority-majority issue, while the Turkish Cypriots consider it as a two equal communities. Thus, the Greek Cypriots, being the majority, claim the right to decide on the island's future and oppose the Turkish Cypriots belief for equal rights inside the community. Greece and Turkey acting as the protectors — along with the United Kingdom, according to the Zürich-London Agreements — of each community respectively “have also held conflicting views over Cyprus.”<sup>111</sup> From the Turkish perspective, the control of Cyprus and the security of the Turkish Cypriot community is essential for Turkey's security and prestige. On the other side Greece believes that Cyprus historically belongs to the Hellenic world, as do Greek Cypriots.

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<sup>111</sup> Oliver P. Richmond, *Mediating in Cyprus*, (London, Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1998), p.xv.

Consequently, for Greece and Turkey the situation has proven to be a point of contention between them because of these inter-communal tensions, and because were Greece to achieve a union with the island it would place Turkey in a strategically vulnerable situation. This is why the efforts of the Greek military Junta from 1967 until 1974 to bring about a union of Cyprus with Greece sparked direct conflict with Turkey's interests, while "Cyprus is an issue involving Turkey's vital national and strategic interests."<sup>112</sup>

In 1974 the Junta, which then ruled Greece, staged an abortive coup against the Cypriot president Archbishop Makarios and Turkey launched an invasion "as a guarantor power on 20 July 1974 in conformity with its treaty rights and obligations"<sup>113</sup> to restore constitutional order. The international community strongly condemned the military invasion and rejected Turkey's explanations.<sup>114</sup> In 1983, the Turkish community in Cyprus declared the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which has been subsequently recognized only by Turkey. Since then, there have been sporadic outbursts of violence and killings, which has intensified the friction between Athens and Ankara.

The Republic of Cyprus currently increased its defence expenditures and signed in 1993 a defence pact agreement (Joint Defense Doctrine) with Greece that calls for Athens to respond to any perceived attack against Cyprus. Part of the implementation of the Joint Defense Doctrine between Cyprus and Greece was the Cypriot purchase from

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<sup>112</sup> Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Information Note on the Cyprus Issue," Available [Online]: <http://inter.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ad/add/note.htm> [8 November 1999].

<sup>113</sup> Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "How Did the Situation Change after July 1974?" Available [Online]: <http://inter.mfa.gov.tr/grupe/eh/eh07/05.htm> [8 November 1999].

<sup>114</sup> United Nations Secretariat, Resolution 353, Adopted by the Security Council at its 1781st meeting on 20 July 1974, Available [Online]: [gopher://gopher.undp.org/00/undocs/scd/scouncil/s74/9](http://gopher://gopher.undp.org/00/undocs/scd/scouncil/s74/9) [8 November 1999].

Russia of the defense system S-300 surface-to-air missiles on January 1997.<sup>115</sup> Ankara has been alarmed at these developments and distressed at the recent decision of the Greek-Cypriot government to purchase from Russia S-300 missiles, which with a range of 150 kilometers are capable of reaching areas in the Turkish heartland. Turkey's threatening statements made after this announcement in turn elicited a Russian offer to sell Cyprus Tor-M1 missiles to protect the S-300s. The fact that an arms-build-up is threatening to take place in such a volatile area has caused much anxiety in Ankara.

From the Turkish perspective the Turkish-Israeli military cooperation could be used to counteract regional coalitions and Greece's particular position in the Arab world. During its visit to Israel on 7 September 1998, Turkey's Foreign Minister Ismail Cem "surprised Israeli officials by asking Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for political and military assistance against the deployment of the Russian missiles to Greek Cyprus."<sup>116</sup> However, Israel has officially declared that it would stay out of a Greek-Turkish Cypriot war. Nevertheless, the fact that Israeli planes are stationed in Turkey and are doing their necessary flight training could give the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) the chance to intervene on behalf of the Turks should a confrontation with Greece arise.<sup>117</sup>

Disputes involving the Aegean Sea are the second major cause of Greek-Turkish hostility. These involve the delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf, territorial waters (how much of the Aegean should be considered Greek, and how much Turkish),

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<sup>115</sup> GLAVX, "Cyprus: Chronology of Events 1997," 17 January 1998, Available [Online]: <http://www.glavx.org/cyprus/chronology/199701.html> [7 September 1999].

<sup>116</sup> Widdershoven Cyril, "Middle East Realigns," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 November 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.northernlight.com/BM19981027010049419.html> [16 August 1999].

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

air space (extension of Greece's limits would decrease Turkey's airspace and the international areas above the sea, and have dangerous effects on Turkish national security), and the status of the eastern Aegean islands. These contentious issues affect the economic, political, and security rights of the two littoral states and have as yet defied resolution.

Politically, Greece has used its position as a member of the European Union to effectively hinder Turkish chances for membership, using its veto to override any possible economic or political benefits that are proffered to Ankara. In December 1997, Greece declared it would maintain its veto on Turkish admittance until Ankara agreed to submit their bilateral disputes to the International Court of Justice.<sup>118</sup> On April 27 1998, Athens vetoed the release of E.U. financial aid (about \$410 million) to Turkey, which had been voted to Turkey in 1995 to help it cope with the customs union. Greece's E.U. partners were displeased with this action, as they had hoped the money would be a gesture to Turkey after the Luxembourg summit rejected Turkey's membership application once again.

Clearly, these conflicts pose a threat to Turkish national interests, in the political, military, and economic spheres. An outbreak of armed conflict between Greece and Turkey is unlikely in the near future; the Greek military is no match for the Turkish army. But the possibility exists, given that these differences directly impact Turkey's national security. The military agreements with Israel help ensure Turkey's military edge, as well as provide a counterweight to any Greek-Syrian or Greek-Iranian axis.

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<sup>118</sup> Macedonian Press Agency, " Turkey-EU Rapprochement Leads To Impasse," 12 December 1997. Available [Online]: <http://www.mpa.gr/archive/1997/12/12/eng/e1312.html> [9 November 1999].

Turkey is not as threatened from its neighbors with a war situation as is Israel. However, for all the regional reasons already discussed and also under the dawn of a new regional and international order, Turkish foreign policy changed and tilted towards a collaboration with Israel as the more appropriate coalition for achieving the new Turkish goals. Turkey can also use the Military Training Cooperation Agreement with Israel to deter hostile gestures from its Muslim adversaries as did Israel. Syria's support to PKK to offset Turkish water policies now can be counterbalanced with Syria's encirclement from Israel and Turkey. Moreover, collaboration with Israel offers the means for Turkey to sustain itself as one of the strongest regional military powers. Turkey, with its complacent stance towards negative criticism from the official Arab and non-Arab Muslim Middle Eastern states seems to prefer stability in the region through powerful military coalitions which provide for deterrence of hostile actions rather than continuation of old animosities and individual confrontations in the region. As long as the Turkish-Greek enmity continues, although Israel is unlikely to side overtly with Turkey or Greece in a confrontation between them, the military alliance with Israel can be considered as strengthening Turkish armed forces in relation to Greece's military.

## **2. International**

The primary reason for the Turkish-Israeli military collaboration is to enhance their national security. In regional terms the alliance serves as deterrence to their adversaries to implement any hostile actions against Turkey and Israel. However, the two signatories will also secure benefits from their close military and economic bonds in international terms. Their relationships with non-regional states, like the United States and key European states, as much as with security and economic organizations, like

NATO and EU respectively, would be transformed in such a way that they will add to their security. As the most powerful militaries in the Middle East region, by allying themselves Turkey and Israel enhanced their potential to be supported by the United States and the West generally in case of armed conflicts in the Middle East region, and to be provided with military aid or a guarantee of political and even military support. On the other hand, the United States and Europe have to reconsider the amount and the kind of support they have to provide to Turkey and Israel, while the latter countries by signing bilateral military and economic agreements have significantly fortified their arsenal and their economies.

However, it would be foolish for Israel to replace the United States with Turkey or for Turkey to substitute itself in place of the US in terms of American-Israeli relations. The same stands for Turkey in terms of her needs regarding Europe and the US. In other words, although Turkey and Israel have improved their security status in the Middle East region by their military and economic rapprochement, this does not mean that they can defy the preponderant influence of Washington in international relations or the fact that the EU represents a huge potential market. Thus, they do not have to give up any goals they might have regarding their relationships with non-regional states and international security and economic organizations.

Since its establishment, Israel's role and standing in the region has been clearly transformed from a struggling young democracy deserving direct and indirect US economic and military assistance to a robust regional power capable of serving US interests in the Middle East. Thus, the US strategy for the Middle East has revolved

around the defense of Israel.<sup>119</sup> However, since the end of the Cold War American-Israeli relations are facing crossroads while Israel's strategic value to the West has changed. While the US still has major interest in the area, the US-Israel relationship will continue however "at a lower level with reduced aid."<sup>120</sup>

The successful cooperation between the US and the Arab states initiated a US consideration for the American discriminatory policy towards the Arabs in the Middle East for the sake of Israel. Washington realized that the new Middle Eastern reality calls for promotion of its own regional interests without having as primary goal the preservation of Israeli national security. Moreover, the proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction in most of the Middle Eastern countries has reduced confidence in Israel's military might. Consequently, it was in Israel's interest to seek an alliance with Turkey to offset the declining American support.

The Cold War's end engendered insecurity among Turkish decision makers, as Turkey's strategic importance for the West seemed to diminish.<sup>121</sup> This concern coincided with the rejection of Turkey's application for membership in the European Union and was aggravated by Iraq's increasingly belligerent behavior towards Turkey over sharing waters of the Euphrates River. The Turkish decision to support United Nations' sanctions against Iraq and shut down the Kerkuk-Yumurtalik oil pipeline following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait raised questions about the potential Iraqi aggression toward Turkey and whether NATO would be committed to defend Turkey. Any sense of

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<sup>119</sup> "US Strategic Reach in the Middle East," *US Foreign Policy In Focus*, Vol. 1, No. 17, November 1996. Available [Online]: <http://www.foreignpolicy-infocus.org/briefs/vol1/MIDEAST.html> [18 November 1998].

<sup>120</sup> Gabriel Sheffer, ed., "The United States and the Normalization of the Middle East and Israel," in *US-Israeli Relations at the Crossroads*, (London, U.K.: Frank Cass, 1997) p. 10.

<sup>121</sup> David Sezer, "Turkey's Grand Strategy Facing a Dilemma," *The International Spectator*, Vol.27, No.1, January-March 1992, pp.21-28.

relief of credibly relying on NATO was short-lived. A combination of factors including "a reduced US presence, in and commitment to, Europe's security, lack of Western resolve in addressing the Balkan crisis, and an increasingly visible and aggressive Russian military presence in the Caucasus region, suggest to Turkey that its-iron-clad links to NATO and the West are more fragile than they have been in several decades."<sup>122</sup>

United States-Turkish defense relations have also suffered recently, raising questions among Turkish decision-makers about the reliability of that alliance. Since the establishment of the Jewish state, the US has considered Israel as a more reliable ally in the Middle East than Turkey, which was all the time balanced between the West and the Arabs. The two Cyprus crises in 1964 and 1974 along with the removal of Jupiter nuclear-armed missiles in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis were incidents that caused Ankara to rethink its complete reliance on the US.

Accusations and recriminations have been noted many times in the agenda of US-Turkish relations. More recently during the course of 1996 effective lobbying in the Congress by human rights organizations and by ethnic Armenian and Greek groups culminated in the United States aid to Turkey being cut, including suspension of the transfer of two frigates and ten Super Cobra helicopters to Turkey. The U.S. administration's inability to get the transfer of these arms through Congress caused considerable bitterness in Turkish military circles. This delay is of special concern since the generals consider Cobra helicopters to be of vital importance in fighting the PKK. The Turkish government withdrew its order in November 1996 and considered domestic

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<sup>122</sup> Jed D. Snyder, "Arms and Security in the Mediterranean Region," in R. Aliboni, G. Joffe and T. Niblock, eds., *Security Challenges in the Mediterranean Region* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), p.179.



production or alternate sources of supply. This setback motivated Turkey to pursue a military collaboration with Israel.

In trying to deter possible aggression, and contrary to its NATO allies, Turkish defense expenditures are consuming a large proportion of the governmental budget the recent years. Among the NATO allies, Turkey, after Greece had the largest defense budget in proportion to its GDP for the period 1998-1999.<sup>123</sup> According to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Turkey was the world's sixth largest arms importer for 1994.<sup>124</sup> The General Staff has estimated that Turkish armed forces will need \$150 billion for its weapon and modernization requirements in the next 25 years.<sup>125</sup> However, that estimation must be belittled to the present reality for in 1998 the defense budget came at the amount of \$8.2 billion while according to the previous estimation for the 25 years the expenditure number should have been \$6 billion per year.<sup>126</sup>

There are several reasons for this high level of expenditure. During the Cold War Turkey maintained a large standing army and bought U.S. weapons systems. However, the U.S. arms embargo imposed on Turkey between 1974-78, as a result of Turkey's intervention in Cyprus, created an urgency to develop a local defense industry. This was reinforced by a determination to modernize an army that still used some equipment of World War II vintage. Since the late 1980s the Turkish defense industry has been built up and now produces many of its own weapons systems including surface-to-air missiles,

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<sup>123</sup> NATO Press Release M-DPC-2, "Financing and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence: Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries 1975-1999," 2 December 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-152e.htm> [5 December 1999].

<sup>124</sup> Birler Hayari, "Arab League: Turkish-Israeli Military Agreement Contradicts Peace Process," *Turkish Daily News* (July 5, 1996).

<sup>125</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," *Middle East Quarterly*, June 1998, p.25.

<sup>126</sup> NATO Press Release M-DPC-2.

submarines and ships, tracked armored vehicles, and transport planes. Israel has contributed much to this Turkish effort and progress.

All these facts do not support the conclusion that the Turkish-American relationship is not substantial under the new strategic concept in the Middle East. Turkey will always be an asset to the US due to its geostrategic location at the crossroads of the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus and close to the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, most of the Turkish armed forces weaponry comes from the US so Turkey will always need access to American armaments. However, it is a Turkish-Israeli notion that nowadays there is a changing balance of power in the Middle East region due to the proliferation of nuclear and non-conventional weapons, and more so with the increased capabilities of ballistic missiles in most of the Middle Eastern countries. Because of this, it is of major strategic importance and sense to create regional arrangements by which the state's arsenal is enhanced and the state's military capabilities expanded so that it can deter hostile actions even from non contiguous states.

Turkey has also to confront a European disregard stemming from the Turkey's human rights record, the Cyprus issue, and the poor Turkish industrial and economic development in comparison with the West European average. However, Ankara is highly interested in participating in European affairs. Turkey in that way aims to increase its political and economic status. Thus, since 1987 little progress has been made for the Turkish application for full membership in the European Community, except the Customs Union with Europe, which has been effective since 1 January 1996.

Turkish-E.U. relations took a turn for the worse in mid-December 1997, when the Union convened in Luxembourg for a summit on expansion and enlargement. The

summit ended with a declaration that talks on entry would begin in 1998 with the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and Cyprus (by which they meant the internationally-recognized state led by the Greek-Cypriots, not the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus which is recognized only by Turkey); countries not on the immediate list but scheduled for discussions at a later date are Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovakia. Turkey, which deemed itself a long and loyal ally of the West, was conspicuously missing from the agenda. Turkish disappointment and resentment was evident while the European behavior has been unfair and discriminatory.

Consequently, the Turkish decision-makers understood well that they had to look elsewhere for friends in order to achieve the aims of enhanced security and economic development. While in the 1970's and 1980's they tried, without much success, to lure their Arab and non-Arab Middle Eastern neighbors, in the 1990's they find it tremendously beneficial to establish a military and economic front with the Israelis.

Without the blanket protection of the United States under the mantle of bipolarity, Israel and Turkey have had to make choices previously unnecessary. Under the rubric of structural change, Jerusalem and Ankara have sought closer relations in order to better survive in the international system and increase their own security and capabilities. This resulted in the Military Training Cooperation Agreement, which served as the beginning of a relationship that has continued to grow ever since.

### **3. Internal**

Turkey's strategic ties with Israel are a foreign policy issue, but the interaction with domestic concerns is dynamic and far-reaching. It is impossible to understand the

impact of the Israeli-Turkish alliance on Turkey's domestic scene without delving into the sociopolitical background of the identity debate.

Turkey's swing towards Israel comes as the nation, formed in 1923 by a pro-western military commander, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, is caught in a political struggle between those who believe it should maintain its secular, pro-Western course, and an increasingly powerful movement that backs a return to its Muslim roots and a rejection of its NATO membership and close partnership with the United States. In Turkish reality there is a very clear sense that the steering of the Turkish helm is controlled by the military. The Turkish generals are supervisors of the governmental steering and they have taken over every time they felt threatened for the oneness of their secular values, and those were the periods of the Turkish military coup d'etats.

The Islamists, even after their victory at the July 1996 elections, were unable to promote their declared policies for advancing the Islamic nature of Turkey, understanding the clout of the military. It is noteworthy that Erbakan and his Refah (Welfare) Party when he took office in July 1996 did not keep a firm stance when the Turkish military challenge his government by making Israel one of the most central issues in its broad disagreement with the fundamentalists. The military elite insisted not only on maintaining but even increasing ties to Israel. Erbakan knuckled under to the military pressures and became loyal to the military's political recommendations and suggestions. Incidents since the elections in 1996 have shown that in Turkey "fundamentalism has

been kept in check, so far, by the secularist legacy of Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, and by the military, the keeper of the secularist flame.”<sup>127</sup>

The after-effects of the commemoration of the ‘Jerusalem Day’ in Sincan town in the suburbs of the Turkish capital of Ankara are evident signs of the pro-Israeli sentiments that the Turkish military elite has overtly fostered since 1996. The way that the official guest of the Iranian ambassador in Turkey criticized Israel was considered by the military as very provocative. It resulted in his deportation along with the firing of the mayor of the Sincan. The next day after the commemoration, the town was virtually occupied by the military for celebrating the ‘Jerusalem day’. All these show that Turkey is the only Muslim country “where a powerful institution completely rejects the demonization of Israel and instead fosters a hard kernel of pro-Israel sentiment.”<sup>128</sup>

For the military in Turkey, which has the constitutional responsibility to defend and uphold the Turkish political system where there are obvious dangers to secularism notwithstanding, there exist highly important subtexts to the Israel-Turkey alliance. According to the military/secularist perspective the security of secularism antecedes the sanctity of democracy. They manifest that position in 1996 through a statement of the Secretary General of the powerful National Security Council — the behind-the-scenes body which really navigates foreign relations and internal policy, made up of both military and government leaders and headed by the Chief of Staff — who said that Turkey’s secular society and secular educational system, are basic tenets of national

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<sup>127</sup> Daniel Pipes, "A Mideast Friendship Alters the Strategic Map," in *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 12 August 1997. Available [Online]: <http://www.access.ch/tuerkei/NEWS/TODAYS/Tifp/08-97/TWSJE1208.htm> [8 September 1999].

<sup>128</sup> Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente," in *The National Interest*, Winter 1997/1998, p.31.

security [and because of that] the military would not refrain from using force to ensure Turkey's continued secular orientation.<sup>129</sup>

However, Turkey still is a Muslim country and not everyone in Turkey is thrilled with the developing alliance. In May 1996, an unemployed pharmacist who opposed the defense pact with Israel tried to kill President Suleyman Demirel in protest.<sup>130</sup> Despite the military crackdown aimed at reinforcing the secular nature of the Turkish state, pro-Islamic political parties remain popular in Turkey and have not greeted the tighter ties with Israel enthusiastically. Unambiguously, the generals in each country have primarily driven the current warming of relations between Turkey and Israel and this is not surprising, because the military establishment heavily influences the politics of each country. The recent military alliance between the two countries is like "two samurai cultures [which] they found each other."<sup>131</sup>

In Turkey the view of the Kurds and the overpowering of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) is the most essential issue where disagreement between the military institution and the political elite can be assessed. The political elite has been in favor of a concession in the form of securing the cultural rights of the Kurds, and for the first time in Turkey's modern history, to recognize them as a separate ethnicity. The military has been totally opposed to such ideas and constantly sends troops to the Kurdish areas in southeast Turkey and across the Iraqi border to chase the PKK's guerrillas. However, both sides agreed that terrorist actions from PKK are a national interest concern and a

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<sup>129</sup> Alan Schneider, "Turkey and Israel: Shared Enemies, Shared Interests," *The Jerusalem Journal*. Available [Online]: <http://www.bnaibrith.org/worldcen/gerjourn15.html> [10 May 1999].

<sup>130</sup> "Crowds Cheer Demirel Day After Assassination Attempt," *Ha'aretz* (19 May 1996).

<sup>131</sup> Tom Hundley, "Samurai Cultures' Help Bond Israel, Turkey," *Chicago Tribune*, 3 November 1997. Available [Online]: <http://chicagotribune.com/news/printedition/article/0.2669.SAV-9711030403.FF.html> [2 August 1998].

solution has to be found. The army institution in Turkey still insists on a military solution, while the political elite is seemingly convinced that such a solution is not effective.

However, the Turkish military strongly believes that military cooperation with Israel would greatly benefit the fight against terrorist operations, especially by the PKK, by exploiting Israel's intelligence apparatus. In that sense the Turkish decision-makers sought to find an end to the 13-year old war. Such a success with the Kurdish problem would be crucial for the Turkish national unity, the stagnation of the process for Turkey's acceptance in EU, and for the dissolution of the American arms embargo. The efficaciousness of the military operations against the PKK would be most effective under the prospect of intensifying intelligence gathering in areas of conflict, especially southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq. Ultimately, this will "downplay the influence of the PKK and reduce the intensity of its terrorist activities."<sup>132</sup>

By and large the struggle between the secularist military and the fundamentalist political elites has caused Turkey deep internal trouble which could be epitomized in the rise of the Refah party and the development and expansion of the Kurdish problem. Thus, Turkey's domestic and foreign policies became increasingly governed by a deepening sense of insecurity. This shaped one of the motives of the Turkish generals to pursue closer relations with Israel. They were convinced that evidently they have a better chance of surviving politically at home by expanding military involvements beyond their borders. The Turkish-Israeli collaboration enhanced the preponderant role of the Turkish

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<sup>132</sup> Joseph Leitmann, "Turkey: Benefiting from David's Army," in *The International Relations Journal*, Winter 1997. Available [Online]: <http://psirus.sfsu.edu/IntRel/IRJournal/Wi97/Leitmann.html> [15 April 1999].

military in the foreign policy. As Deputy Chief of Staff General Cevik Bir put it "the Turkish Armed Forces have become an integral part of Turkey's foreign policy."<sup>133</sup>

For its part Israel also has motives for pursuing a close relationship with Turkey, that are derived from its social and political status. Israeli generals may have less political punch, however they also represent a rigid and influential institution. The political elite is not able to act without regard to the view of the military.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, the deepening bonds with their Turkish counterparts offer Tel Aviv a boost that goes far beyond any strategic impact: it breaks the psychological barrier of regional isolation. It can prove to the Israeli "people that they can have normal relations with an Islamic country."<sup>135</sup> In that sense close ties with Turkey enjoy consensus support in Israel. Yet, between the Turkish and Israeli military institutions a difference can be found in the stage of societal intervention. In contrast to the wide societal intervention of the Turkish military, as emphasized above, it is necessary to underline that the degree of political democracy in Israel has always limited the institutional role of the military to national defense and strategic policies.

The stagnation of the peace process the recent years also raised a motivation in Israeli public opinion for rapprochement with Turkey. Netanyahu's election in May 1996, expressed the Israelis disappointment over the peace process progress. For Israelis, Turkey has kept a friendly stance from the beginning since it was the first Moslem state to recognize their state in 1949. It is a general belief that the "always-precarious [Israeli]

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<sup>133</sup> Hakan M. Yavuz, "Turkish-Israeli Relations Through the Lens of the Turkish Identity Debate," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No.1, Autumn 1997, Issue 105. Available [Online]: <http://www.ipsjps.org/html/yavuzart.html> [13 April 1999].

<sup>134</sup> Yehuda Ben-Meir, *Civil-Military Relations in Israel*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), reviewed by Amos Perlmutter in *Middle East Journal*, (No.1, Winter 1996,) p.117-18.

<sup>135</sup> Rod Usher, "Growing Ties Between Israel and Turkey," 2 June 1997. Available [Online]: <http://www.duth.gr/maillist-archives/thrace/tl31/msg00094.html> [14 August 1998].



security is greater within a U.S.-Turkey-Israel triple alliance than a dubious peace with the Arab states.”<sup>136</sup> However, there are deep divisions in Israeli society, particularly the religious secular cleavage and the Jewish-Arab divisions and this is what is reflected from the result of the 17 May 1999 elections. Barak’s victory by taking the votes of a substantial majority “increases the scope of his mandate, particularly when it comes to making difficult compromises in negotiations with the Arabs.”<sup>137</sup>

However, there are few skeptical Israeli voices. One cautioned against providing Turkey with missiles, fearing that they might ultimately be used against Israel or other friendly countries like Greece, should Turkey be taken over by a fundamentalist regime. Substantially, according to Turkish press reports Turkey intended to use the Israeli-made Popeye missiles for the destruction of the Greek Cypriot S-300 ground-to-air missiles. Greece, “which openly designates NATO ally Turkey as its number-one security threat,”<sup>138</sup> considers as worrisome any qualitative improvement in Turkey’s military capability. Israel traditionally has good relations with the nearby Greek Cypriot-controlled Republic of Cyprus and clearly has no quarrel with Greece (although Greek-Israeli relations have never been warm). Israeli-Turkish relations could have a direct impact on both those nations, however.

Some in the Israeli Foreign Ministry are reportedly concerned about the Defense Ministry’s pace of improving ties with Turkey and disregard of the adverse regional reactions. For Israel, the biggest challenge may be to avoid stumbling into Turkish

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<sup>136</sup> Franz Shurman, “New U.S. Surrogate in Mideast: Turkey,” 1 July 1996. Available [Online]: <http://www.pacificnews.org/jinn/stories/2.14/960701-turkey.html> [28 September 1999].

<sup>137</sup> Neill Lochery, “What Did Israel’s Elections Decide?” *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1999, p.43.

<sup>138</sup> Alan Makovsky, “Israeli-Turkish Cooperation Full Steam Ahead,” *Policywatch*, No. 292, 6 January 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/watch/Policywatch/policywatch1998/292.htm> [24 September 1999].

disputes that Jerusalem sees as having little or no direct bearing on Israeli interests, namely those with the PKK, Greece, and Greek Cyprus. Its plate already full of terrorist enemies, Israel does not want to be a PKK target as well.

The Turkish-Israeli alliance projected the nature of intra-social and political relations in the Israeli and the Turkish societies. Undoubtedly both societies were experiencing severe division; in Israel because of the peace-process, and in Turkey because of the controversial view on Islam and the Islamic World and the relations with the West. The new military alliance could be seen as projecting the globalization of national crises, or in other words a rational attempt to solve domestic social, economic and political crises within a regional network of economic expansionism, where the role of the military power experiences an essential transformation in its nature from self-defence to a guarantee for economic expansionism.

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#### IV. ANALYSIS — INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TURKISH-ISRAELI COOPERATION

##### A. INTRODUCTION

Unambiguously, significant implications for the dramatically increasing ties between Israel and Turkey exist not only for the cooperative countries but also for their regional environment, which is the Middle East as a whole including the east Mediterranean. Despite the controversy and the diversity, which have characterized their relations in much of the region,<sup>139</sup> both countries being pro-Western in their political orientation are likely to foster an economic and military axis in the Middle East. However, this may have questionable long-term results for stability and peace in the region. On the other hand, it is certain that the short-term results indicate (1) a success in Turkish-Israeli collaboration in terms of achieving a military and economic status which would be a deterrence to their neighbors thinking of provoking hostile acts and (2) an opportunity for their European and American allies to reassess their nascent interest in the region; that is, which way they should orient their support in the region to achieve security and stability in their own interests.

However, the perspectives from which Turkey and Israel consider the future of their own military relationship vary in essence and orientation for each country. For Israel the external potentialities are most consequential while for Turkey, the domestic issue is foremost. The former refers to the prospects of the Syrian-Israeli relations and the potential for a peace agreement between them while the latter point deals with the eventual social and political changes that could occur inside Turkey as an outcome of the

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<sup>139</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," *Middle East Quarterly*, June 1998, p.19.

rise of political Islam and its declared opposition to the collaboration with the Jewish state.

If Middle Eastern countries realize how more beneficial a collaborative and competitive status among them could be, as the post-Cold War world order calls for, then the regional arguments for close collaboration between Israel and Turkey would cease to exist. However, although the willingness for conflict among the Middle Eastern countries is nowadays less than the previous decades because of the psychological and economic fatigue that caused the long-standing state of war in which they are involved, today's reality offers a peace process under stalemate, the economic conditions of the Middle Eastern states unimproved for long time, and Turkey's and Israel's regional disputes showing no sign of abating in deference to regional cooperation.

Finally, Turkish-Israeli military cooperation should be considered as one of the major determinants for Mediterranean and Middle Eastern security. Thus, it should be also analyzed in terms of its implications in the new security strategy that European and American countries along with NATO are interested in implementing or promoting, particularly for the east Mediterranean and the Middle East. For the latter regions the Soviet military threat has been replaced with new security threats coming from issues such as "social, political and economic disparity, with localized instability and risks of regional wars."<sup>140</sup> As Turkey and Israel have both declared that their military and economic collaboration is attempting to avoid such causes of instability, their motivations for closer ties are important to the European, NATO and United States initiatives for security and stability in the area.

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<sup>140</sup> Matthew Nimetz, "Mediterranean Security after the Cold War," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Spring 1997, p. 24.

## B. INTERACTIONS OF THESE FACTORS IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

### 1. Turkey

In the light of tremendous changes after the end of the Cold War along with the creation of a more appropriate Western profile for its acceptance in Europe, Turkey in the last decade sought a more active role in its regional scheme. The other Middle Eastern countries should not interpret this active role as a threat to their security. Closer bonds with Israel, a regional country which shares common values and interests for the security and stability in the Middle East, was the perfect way for Turkey to achieve this goal. On the other hand, for the Turkish military the real driving force behind Turkish policy, "the alliance with the Jewish state appeared to be a clever way out of mounting domestic and regional difficulties."<sup>141</sup>

The secularist Turkish military establishment, watching in recent decades the emergence of a grass roots Islamist movement which threatens the Western orientation of the Turkish Republic founded by Kemal Ataturk in 1923, was looking for ways to prove that they continue to steer the fate of Turkey. Right after the election of the Refah Party and its leader Erbakan in July 1996, the Turkish military successfully used the close bonds between Turkey and Israel "to embarrass the pro-Islamic government by exposing its powerlessness to halt an alliance it openly had opposed."<sup>142</sup> As a result of the military's warnings of the threat to Turkey's secular republic, the dormant opposition and judiciary galvanized into an anti-Islamist campaign that forced Prime Minister Necmettin

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<sup>141</sup>Nabil M. Kaylani, "Israeli-Turkish Alliance May Prove to Be New Destabilizing Factor in Middle East," *Washington Report* on Middle East Affairs, January/February 1999, p. 47.

<sup>142</sup>Hakan M. Yavuz, "Turkish-Israeli Relations Through the Lens of the Turkish Identity Debate," *Journal of the Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, Autumn 1997, Issue 105. Available [Online]: <http://www.ipsjps.org/html/yavuzart.html> [10 November 1999].

Erbakan to quit several months after he came to power. The continuation and the deepening of the military-economic cooperation between Israel and Turkey even during the Refah Party-led government period indicates that although Turkish generals had appeared to be withdrawing from politics since the mid-80s, their influence remained strong and since 1996 they "are taking a more commanding role on the political stage."<sup>143</sup>

In the country's eastern regions, the Turkish armed forces had been increasingly frustrated and embarrassed by their failure to crush the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) of Abdallah Ocalan, despite a costly military campaign, which has claimed an estimated 35,000 lives since its inception in 1984. On 16 February 1999, in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, Abdullah Ocalan, the founder and supreme leader of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), was captured and promptly sent to Turkey to face trial. Many support the theory that the capture of Ocalan was succeeded after "Ankara probably received intelligence support from at least one of its two key allies — the United States and Israel."<sup>144</sup> Both countries have had very good intelligence relations with Kenya and it was in their interest to assist in Ocalan's capture, since their policy realignment in the Middle East in 1996 with the signing of the military agreements between Israel and Turkey were welcomed by the United States. The PKK with its leader captured could lose its ideological and political purpose and ultimately fall to strategic defeat. The Turkish government, convinced and certain of its success on Kurdish issue, could now easily eliminate the insurgent threat by adopting "an intelligent combination of measures such as a generous

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<sup>143</sup> Middle East Times, "Turkish Generals Driving Force Behind War Preparations." Available [Online]: [http://metimes.com/issue98-41/reg/turkish\\_generals\\_driving.htm](http://metimes.com/issue98-41/reg/turkish_generals_driving.htm) [9 October 1999].

<sup>144</sup> Michael Radu, "The Capture of Abdullah Ocalan and the Future of Counter-Terrorism," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 18 February 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.turkey.org/apo-pkk/apo8.htm> [14 November 1999].

amnesty for middle-level cadres and rank- and-file PKK members, and increases military pressure on the remaining units.”<sup>145</sup>

The Israeli-Turkish alliance has enhanced Turkey’s ability to confront firmly its disputes with neighboring countries and generally made it more arrogant in its regional behavior. It increased its “military capabilities and because the Turks think that the worldwide Jewish diaspora, especially in the United States, is now solidly behind them.”<sup>146</sup> Two incidents exemplify the increased dynamic in Turkish foreign policy after its military collaboration with Israel: the October 1998 tensions with Syria and the dispute with Greece about the deployment of Russian air-defense missiles S-300 in Cyprus.

In October 1998, Turkish generals and political leaders demanded that neighboring Syria expel the Kurdish rebel leader, Abdullah Ocalan, who has directed a 14-year guerrilla war in southeastern Turkey. They strongly hinted that Turkey would attack Syria if it did not comply, and they sent soldiers to the Syrian border. In late October, Turkey and Syria reached an agreement in which Syria would end its support for the PKK and turn over its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, to Ankara. Syria’s concession and retreat to Ankara’s demands should be attributed to recent close military relations between Turkey and Israel. Syrian President Hafez Assad was certain that in event of armed conflict, Syria would have to fight in a two front war. Thus, being weak and

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Marios Leonidas, "Cyprus and Israel: Lingering Suspicions," *The GreekAmerican Newspaper*. Available [Online]: <http://www.greekamerican.com/13/28/8mario.htm> [4 July 1999].



unprepared for such an eventuality "it became very clear very early that he [Syrian President Hafez Assad] was going to do whatever was necessary to avoid hostilities."<sup>147</sup>

Turkey's most recent foreign policy success came on the tense island of Cyprus, which is divided between Turkish and Greek sectors. The Cypriot Greek-backed Government there had planned together with the Greek government to deploy on the island the Russian S-300 anti-aircraft missiles. Turkey has voiced its opposition to such a decision by Cyprus, warning it would take all measures possible to stop the island from deploying the missiles, even to bomb them. The Cypriots, in order to prevent a crisis in the region, backed down. Cyprus finally ordered the S-300s but agreed to divert them to Greece in December 1999 after the Turkish threats "and pressure from Washington and the EU, which hinted that the row was hurting Cyprus's chances of joining the EU."<sup>148</sup>

Turkey's new foreign policy goal is to emerge as a more assertive power in the region while in the past in its effort to keep a balance between the West and the Muslims in the Middle East it vacillated between the two and in that way followed a rather passive, status quo oriented foreign policy. Turkey within its collaboration with Israel has emerged economically and militarily as a much stronger power in the region. Moreover, fighting the PKK in northern Iraq on a steady basis since 1991 has made the Turkish military more battle experienced than the neighboring militaries. However, it is unlikely "to see an aggressive Turkey, a Turkey looking to expand its borders, but you do

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<sup>147</sup> Charles Recknagell, "Middle East: Is Turkey Becoming a More Aggressive Neighbor?" *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 4 November 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1998/11/F.RU.981104155444.html> [3 August 1999].

<sup>148</sup> Cyprus Mail, "Greece Will Have Operational Control Over Missiles," 10 February 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.cynews.com/February/10/news021002.htm> [14 November 1999].

have a Turkey that will be more willing to assert its prerogatives and use the threat of force to defend its interests.”<sup>149</sup>

In recent years, mounting human rights criticism in the United States and Europe has been a persistent thorn in Ankara's side. The Turks cemented a close military partnership with Israel in order to access an escape hatch from the human-rights pressure exerted occasionally by Washington and almost constantly by Europe. In 1996 the US Congress, influenced by a coalition of arms-control and human rights groups, blocked two pending sales to Turkey of Cobra helicopters and frigates. On December 1997 Turkey faced the European rejection for its application to the European Union for the main reason of not having any improvement to the human rights issue. Israel by not “intervening in any internal matters of any country in the world,”<sup>150</sup> offers to Turkey the ability to sidestep the human rights obstacles and still maintain its access to the American weaponry through Israeli defence companies. In that way Turkey would be able to fulfill its “massive modernization program”<sup>151</sup> for the Turkish Armed Forces, which is decisive for the Turkish reputation of being one of the strongest military powers in the region.

Moreover, Turkey with close relations with Israel since 1996 succeeded “to gain a ‘back door’ to Washington via Israel's good offices, countering the Greek and Armenian lobbies.”<sup>152</sup> In Washington it is evident that the pro-Turkey and pro-Israel lobbies are

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<sup>149</sup> Charles Recknagell, "Middle East: Is Turkey Becoming a More Aggressive Neighbor?" *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 4 November 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1998/11/F.RU.981104155444.html> [3 August 1999].

<sup>150</sup> Jennifer Washburn, "Power Block Israel and Turkey Lock Arms," *The Progressive Magazine*, December 1998. Available [Online]: [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/New\\_World\\_Order/PowerBloc\\_TurkeyIsrael.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/New_World_Order/PowerBloc_TurkeyIsrael.html) [4 February 1999].

<sup>151</sup> Malik Muftu, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal*, Vol.52, No.1, 1998, p. 47.

<sup>152</sup> Yavuz M. Hakan, "Turkish-Israeli Relations Through the Lens of the Turkish Identity Debate," *Journal of the Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, Autumn 1997, Issue 105. Available [Online]: <http://www.ipsjps.org/html/yavuzart.html> [10 November 1999].

working together to pursue their common interests. Turkey "was pleased to have the support of the powerful Jewish lobby in Washington, [which] helped to get Congress to unfreeze the sale of two frigates"<sup>153</sup> to Ankara. For Turkey, this is an implementation of its long-standing goal, which is to have an ethnic constituency in the U.S. that can strengthen Turkey's lobbying presence in Washington.

Turkey is now able to seek American support for its regional position within the influence of Israel's powerful lobby in United States. By strengthening its regional position Turkey, besides putting its neighbor countries to seriously consider before provoking contingencies, also expands its strategic planning to the east in Caucasus and the former Soviet Central Asian republics. It is not coincidental that recently Turkey is "using high-pressure tactics to persuade foreign oil companies that they should build their main export pipeline for Caspian crude through Turkey rather than another route."<sup>154</sup> This is a project, which also interests the United States and the European countries for its implementation. Yet, Turkey by allying itself with Israel is raising its credentials for the success of the pipeline building.

On the other hand, Turkey being closer to the United States is using its rejection from being a member of the EU as an indirect American challenge to the European Union. According to the Turkish point of view the decision should be reversed while "Turkey has been a most loyal American and NATO ally, and is unfortunately being short-changed."<sup>155</sup> Turkish officials are expecting as reciprocation from their support to

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<sup>153</sup> The Economist, "The Turkish-Israeli Affair," 19 September 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.economist.com/2gfiFmkt/editorial/freeforall/19-9-98/ir6804.html> [15 April 1999].

<sup>154</sup> Stephen Kinzer, Turkey Gets Tough With Its Neighbors, *The Age*, 7 January 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.theage.com.au/daily/990107/news/news22.html> [15 November 1999].

<sup>155</sup> Amos Perlmutter, A New Alliance Brightens the Middle Eastern Outlook, *The Jewish World Review*, 26 January 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.jewishworldreview.com/010198/allies1.html> [16 May 1999].

NATO enlargement “a definite prospect of their country’s membership in the European Union.”<sup>156</sup> Turkey has been a full member of the NATO alliance since 1952, and due to the unanimity principle of decision making, Turkey might be able to stop or bloc any new member accession. For example, Turkey could have stopped Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary from joining NATO, simply by refusing to ratify it. The old thinking was that the Turks would not dare, because they depend so heavily on their NATO allies for access to modern weapons. But that thinking underestimates the degree to which injured pride might drive Turkish policy. It also ignores the new strategic alliance between Turkey and Israel.

However, the Clinton administration has already indicated its disagreements with the European Union's decision to shut out Turkey and declared itself ready to help Ankara cement its ties to western institutions including NATO. President Clinton said at a news conference on December 1997: “I think it is very important that we do everything reasonable to anchor Turkey to the West.”<sup>157</sup>

That Turkey is benefiting and strengthening from the close military and economic relations with Israel is certain. What is questionable for the future of the alliance is the extent to which Israeli and Turkish interests — even the interests of the Turkish military — actually coincide. On the Kurdish issue it is unlikely for Israel to involve itself directly in a Turkish war against the Kurds and other oppositional groups. Without doubt the Israel’s peripheral strategy calls for good relations with the Kurds and support of their aim to create a state in northern Iraq, something that is totally opposed to Turkish views.

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<sup>156</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed*, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p. 117.

<sup>157</sup> Ozgurluk Organization Press, "After European Rebuff US will Show Turkey is a Valued Partner," 17 December 1997. Available [Online]: <http://www.ozgurluk.org/press/msg00006.html> [15 November 1999].

Moreover, although the Jewish lobby in US has helped a lot to promote the Turkish interests in Washington, the liberals within the American Jewish community are sensitive to human rights issues and have been critical of the military's abuses even against nonviolent Kurdish dissidents. Similarly, it is doubtful that the pro-Israeli lobby in Washington, which the generals tend to view as omnipotent, will continue to spend its own credit to lobby hard for Turkish interests with the U.S. government. It is true that the lobby has already helped Turkey obtain via Israel American arms blocked by Congress for human rights reasons, but such lobbying directly serves Israel's interests by making Turkey more dependent on it.

A more important question is whether it is really in Turkey's interest to embark upon a policy that alienates its neighbors. Relations between the Arab world and Turkey could have a bright future. Ankara would do well to address the concerns of Arab countries by avoiding action, which will be seen as a threat to their security. And it is certain that the Middle Eastern countries have seen the alliance with Israel as such. For the present they are incapable of strong reaction but no one can predict the Middle Eastern future while there is a continuous struggle for armament and a steady increase of Islamic fundamentalism among the people. Thus, according to Arab belief a "Muslim country that pursues an Israel-based foreign policy may bring relief to Israel, but it would isolate that country both in the region and in the international system."<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Yavuz M. Hakan, "Turkish-Israeli Relations Through the Lens of the Turkish Identity Debate," *Journal of the Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, Autumn 1997, Issue 105. Available [Online]: <http://www.ipsjps.org/html/yavuzart.html> [10 November 1999].

## 2. Israel

Israel since its establishment has been struggling to consolidate all those factors that fortify and entrench its national security. Thus, its domestic and foreign policies have constantly aimed to determine, check, and exploit the variables that affect Israel's national security. Those variables could be drawn from Israel's "strategic environment (international and regional) and the threats emanating from it; its ability to deter and/or overcome emerging challenges; and Israel's freedom to act according to its own assessment of strategic imperatives."<sup>159</sup> Thus, Israel has always to fulfill a necessity of strength, which is measured not only in military and economic power but also in capability to timely predict and deter contingencies. For Israel's part, the pursuing of close relations with Turkey has a strong rationale, which is related to all the above issues.

Israel's regional strategic environment in the post Cold War era still includes threats and demands for vigilance. The Israeli predicament of being a small state surrounded most by unfriendly neighbors has only to a limited degree changed as a result of first, though minor positive developments of the peace process. The surge in Islamic radical influence, the worsening economic situation in most Middle Eastern countries, as well as intensified conventional and non-conventional military build-ups including the proliferation of long-range missiles and the quest for nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction make the regional strategic reality disconcerting enough.

In such an environment Israel needs to enhance its early warning system and achieve in the best way the capacity to act timely with preventative and pre-emptive

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<sup>159</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Israel's Predicament in a New Strategic Environment," in Inbar Efraim and Sheffer Gabriel, eds., *The National Security of Small States in a Changing World*, (London, Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), p.155.

actions. For that purpose, it needs to deploy intelligence and surveillance operations in a wider area than its own, since the present Middle Eastern reality provides for limited hostile actions with missile attacks rather for temporary armed conflicts or wars in the borders. With the military collaboration with Turkey this precondition has been fulfilled to a vast extent by exploiting the tacit Turkish allowance to use Turkish territory and airspace for 'training' purposes.

The regional and extra-regional behavior of Israel has changed since 1996. According to international reports on June 1998 Israel was allegedly negotiating with both sides in the Afghan civil war for the deployment of Israeli intelligence gathering bases on Afghanistan border with Iran.<sup>160</sup> Additionally, Turkey is providing for Israel the use of an airbase in the southeastern Turkey very close to the Turkish border with Iran. Finally, Turkish pilots were trained in Israel for attacking anti-aircraft missile batteries S-300 immediately after the announcement of the Cypriot government that was going to purchase those missiles from Russia to enhance the island's arsenal. In the case of the truth of all these allegations for the Israeli activity in Turkey and Afghanistan, "then a key component of Israel's strategic reassessment is clearly the aggressive forward deployment of forces in an attempt to stalemate any hostile tendency by Israel's enemies."<sup>161</sup>

The budding Turkish-Israeli cooperation is also strengthening the Israeli position in terms of offsetting the increase of Islamic radicalism among the Middle Eastern populations especially in Turkey and Algeria. Being primarily a result of domestic

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<sup>160</sup> Azadi Afghan Radio, "Israel in Contact With Anti-Taliban Alliance," 14 June 1998. Available [Online]: <http://jahaan.knight-hub.com/news/june15a1998.htm> [16 November 1999].

<sup>161</sup> Ariga.Com, Global Intelligence Update, "More Reports of Israeli Attempts to Stalemate Foes," 16 July 1998. Available [Online]: <http://www.ariga.com/strat980716.htm> [2 February 1999].

inadequacies, the appeal of Islamic radicalism is little influenced by evolving Arab-Israeli relations. However, the Turkish situation is an issue of serious consideration for the Israelis while the growing of this Islamic appeal in Turkey came "after many decades of Turkish efforts to shape a secular and Western-oriented society."<sup>162</sup>

At the international level, Israel, by its collaboration with Turkey, showed the West and especially its most valuable ally, the United States, that it has realized the changes in the post Cold War strategic context and is willing to play its role on it in a more independent way while "the contribution of the United States undertaken, will probably be minimal, and this strengthens the need to maintain a high degree of self-reliance."<sup>163</sup> However, the "sharp asymmetries between Israel and Arab states in military manpower and resources"<sup>164</sup> have not been totally eliminated and thus Israel still needs tight bonds with the United States.

Consequently Israeli policy has to adopt its goals between two diverse trends; on the one side the importance for the continuation of the American support and on the other side the realization of the new orientation of the United States interests towards the Arab states. Under this perspective the continuity of US-Israeli relations could be significantly based upon "Israel's own strength and regional military role, its democratic traditions, and the recognition that close American ties to Israel do not prevent close ties to other key states in the region."<sup>165</sup> The US as the only superpower in the world today and

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<sup>162</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Israel's Predicament in a New Strategic Environment," in Inbar Efraim and Sheffer Gabriel, eds., *The National Security of Small States in a Changing World*, (London, Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), p.160.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, p.165.

<sup>164</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Yitzhak Rabin and Israeli National Security," *BESA Organization*. Available [Online]: <http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/books/25/analysis.html> [17 November 1999].

<sup>165</sup> Charles Lipson, "American Support for Israel: History, Sources, Limits," in Sheffer Gabriel, ed., *U.S.-Israeli Relations at the Crossroads* (London, Portland OR: Frank Cass, 1997), p. 143.



following the new post Cold War strategic context should be in a strong mediating position in the Middle East and influence both Israel and Arabs for achieving stability and peace in the region. The Turkish-Israeli military alliance is strengthening and widening Israel's military capabilities in the region and thus is serving as a powerful means to sustain the Israeli status quo power under the new strategic conditions. In that sense the Israelis believe that to ensure "the continued US military support, [through] presenting themselves as the front-line against Islamic fundamentalism — and Iran, in particular — which fits neatly with current US threat perceptions."<sup>166</sup>

The Turkish-Israeli military agreement had also positive effects in the Israeli society. During his election campaign the candidate Netanyahu voiced rigid rightist principles and when he became prime minister on May 1996 he continued to insist on those principles; he emphasized a policy of three 'Nos': no withdrawal from Golan Heights, no withdrawal or even discussion of the case of Jerusalem, no negotiations under any preconditions.<sup>167</sup> When the former labor government conducted the peace-process it created divisions in society because the party was representing only a half of the Israeli population. Then Netanyahu's policy represented the other half. The main objective of this hard line may lie in the efforts to contain the intensive resistance to the peace-process, by the rightist-religious groupings, because as he has been opponent of the peace-process, he postulates that it is his model of peace, which is favored by all Israelis. The latter rationale goes also through the results of the recent Israeli elections in May

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<sup>166</sup> James Bruce, "Israel and Turkey the Mideast's Odd Couple Find Common Ground Despite Political Surprises," *Defense Web: Eye on the Mideast*, September 1996. Available [Online]: <http://pollux.com/defenseweb/1996/sept96/mideast!.htm> [15 September 1999].

<sup>167</sup> "Cairo Summit: Leaders Fear Oslo Accord is Dissolving in the Face of Netanyahu's Intransigence," *The Independent*, 24 June 1996. Available [Lexis/Nexis]: MDEAFR/ALLNWS [22 August 1998].

1999 while there are "many similarities of view on the peace process between Barak and Netanyahu"<sup>168</sup> and the elections result was predetermined from the Israelis belief that Barak is better able to advance the peace process.

In that sense, the military cooperation between Turkey and Israel could have positive effects in the efforts of the political elite to rehomogenize the Israeli society after the divisions on the peace-process. Actually the parties against which the agreement mainly was aimed, Syria, Iran, and Islamic fundamentalism, are considered enemies by both the pro- and anti-peace process supporters. These adversaries are estimated by both as wanting to sabotage the peace-process and to destroy Israel as well.

Since the threat from the Arab world seems to diminish because of the peace process, Israel is formulating a new military doctrine based on the ability to wage a conventional, regional war, counter the terrorist threat, and create an over-the-horizon capability to deal with the threat of long-range missiles, nuclear weapons and chemical and biological warfare from a recalcitrant Syria, Iran, Iraq and Libya.

While this post-Cold War doctrine, underpinned by Israel's nuclear monopoly, and ballistic missile program, has yet to coalesce, the developing alliance with Turkey, if it does indeed continue to expand, could play a vital role.

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<sup>168</sup> Neill Lochery, "What Did Israel's Elections Decide?" *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1999, p.43.

## C. REGIONAL AND EXTRA-REGIONAL IMPACT OF THE TURKISH-ISRAELI PARTNERSHIP

### 1. Middle East

Most Middle Eastern countries dislike the Turkish-Israeli relationship. According to their perception it is clear that the military agreements between Israel and Turkey go far beyond responding to Israel's purported need for extra airspace in which to conduct exercises. It is the important culmination of a series of rapid steps toward military cooperation taken by the two sides, which turn Turkey into one of Israel's most important military partners. Countries like Syria, Iran, and Iraq feel that the Turkish-Israeli relationship and its strategic, military and political implications pose a direct and genuine threat to their security and interests. Their reaction tilts towards counter alliances and thus an alteration of the regional balance of power is at hand. However, it is too early to assess the importance and the impact of those alliances to the Turkish-Israeli relationship while the potential allies, although they have a consensus of threat perception, lack a consensus for responses to the perceived threats.<sup>169</sup>

The Islamic Republic of Iran signed a series of trade agreements with Syria, and the two states signaled intent to expand relations further. Syrian-Iraqi relations have improved, despite Damascus's professed concern about being tarnished by association with a leper state like Iraq.<sup>170</sup> Iran's relations with Egypt, cold for nearly two decades, appear to be on the mend, though Cairo's apprehensions regarding Teheran's role behind Islamist terrorism in Egypt and North Africa remains in obstacle.

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<sup>169</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, "Strategic Aspects of U.S.-Israeli Relations," in Sheffer Gabriel, ed., *U.S.-Israeli Relations at the Crossroads* (London, Portland OR: Frank Cass, 1997), p. 209.

<sup>170</sup> "Improvement in Syrian-Iraqi Relations," *Ha'aretz* (28 July 1997).

Several military developments also need to be seen in the light of Turkish-Israeli relations. When Russian and Syrian anti-aircraft units held joint exercises at a Russian experimental site in late September 1997, drilling with Russian S-200 surface to air missiles designed for use against high-altitude planes, the exercises were explicitly presented in response to the joint maritime exercises of Turkey, Israel and the US to be held January 1998.<sup>171</sup> Similarly, Iran defends the expansion of its army with the need to defend itself against what it terms "the Israeli-Turkish conspiracy."<sup>172</sup>

However, despite these steps regional reaction will be mainly confined to rhetoric. This was strongly confirmed by the Arab summit, which held in Cairo on 24 June 1996, which "revealed the pitiful disarray of the Arab countries and their incapability of mounting a serious opposition to Turkish-Israeli policies."<sup>173</sup> The final statement of the summit was in accordance with U.S. and Turkish suggestions for discretion upon the issues of Israel and Turkey. Additionally, the prospect of a regional counter-alliance is doubtful. Baghdad's rifts with Tehran and Damascus are too deep, and Tehran lacks motivation and significant means to boost its support for Damascus. Egypt does not feel directly threatened, however, and will not involve itself in an operational effort to block or counter Israeli-Turkish cooperation. Furthermore, "Syria is reluctant to take up Iran's offer to conclude a bilateral defense agreement designed to counter the burgeoning Israeli-Turkish alliance while they were afraid that in that way they would jeopardize its relations with the Gulf Arab states."<sup>174</sup> However, this was an excuse while "growing

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<sup>171</sup> "Syria, Russia, Holding Joint Air Exercise to counter Israeli-Turkish-US Naval Maneuvers," *Ha'aretz* (17 September 1997).

<sup>172</sup> Phillip Robins, "Turkish Foreign Policy under Erbakan," *Cumhuriyet* (23 September 1997).

<sup>173</sup> "Summit Sends Clear Message to Israel, but Mixed Signals About Inter-Arab Reconciliation," *Mideast Mirror*, 24 June 1996. Available [LEXIS/NEXIS]: MDEAFR/CURNWS [22 August 1998].

<sup>174</sup> "Government Seeks to Blunt Arab Summit Outcome and Revise Hebron," *Mideast Mirror*, 21 June 1996. Available [LEXIS/NEXIS]: MDEAFR/CURNWS [22 August 1998].

Syrian and Iraqi dependency on water from Turkish sources leaves little scope for muscular anti-Turkish demarches.”<sup>175</sup> After all, not all Arab states are critical. In addition to Jordan, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have been mainly mum while Kuwait and the U.A.E. are sufficiently content with Ankara.

Middle Eastern countries, which have felt that, are the targets of the Turkish-Israeli alliance, although they are presently weakened, would not stand idle until this alliance achieves its goals. Indeed, they have begun in earnest to take steps to build an Arab movement to isolate any country which belongs to the alliance, such as Turkey and Jordan, and to review all channels of economic and cultural co-operation with them. These Arab countries would not confront the Turkish-Israeli alliance through a bilateral or trilateral alliance, but rather through efforts to unite the ranks of Arab states, and others who oppose the alliance, into a bloc, the aim of which would be to challenge the attempts to upset the existing balance in the region and fight the policy of alliances.

## **2. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**

The Mediterranean is traditionally perceived as a border between a wealthy, developed, and stable Europe on one side and a fragmented North Africa and Middle East on the other side. Today, in the region there is no major military threat as was the case in Europe during the Cold War. However, the region is destabilized by a combination of wide-ranging inter-state and intra-state conflicts, socioeconomic risks and low-intensity violence. Most of these conflicts and risks have their sources along the south shore and at the sub-regional levels.

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<sup>175</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," *Middle East Quarterly*, June 1998, p.29.

The first category of conflicts is constituted by territorial and border disputes such as those between Israel and Palestine; Israel and Syria; Israel and Lebanon; Greece and Turkey; Turkey and Syria; Egypt and Sudan; Spain and Morocco; and those in the Western Sahara. The second category is represented by ethno-cultural rivalry as in the former Yugoslavia, Cyprus, and that which is part of the Kurdish question. To this list we may add the violence of terrorism in Algeria and Egypt. However, we should also not overlook the future importance of potential conflicts over water supply, particularly in the Middle East among Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Israel and its neighbors, Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia where in some cases the situation is complicated by the fact that there are connections between the territorial and ethno-cultural sources of conflicts. For example, the Greek-Turk rivalry and the Arab-Israeli dispute, whose cases belong to the category of "intractable conflicts."<sup>176</sup> The geopolitical environment described above illustrates the specificity of the security issues in the Mediterranean — especially the Eastern part — and the Middle East and the difficulty in duplicating the East-West model of conflict prevention and management. Turkey and Israel are involved in most of the potential cases for territorial and ethno-cultural conflicts in that area.

Unambiguously, while international politics are based on national, domestic vital and strategic interests, which determine national objectives and goals, the Mediterranean Basin — Europe's "strategic backwater" — along with the Middle East constitute an area of vital and strategic interest for Europe, which contains — especially in the post-Cold War era — military as well as non-military risks and challenges for European security. One

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<sup>176</sup> Louis Kriesberg, "Intractable Conflicts and Their Transformation," (Syracuse University Press: 1989), p.52.

statement about what these European interests are was made by Western European Union (WEU) in November 1995 during its extraordinary Council of Ministers in Madrid:

Most European countries are largely dependent for their supplies of energy and raw materials on countries whose political and economic stability over the medium term cannot be taken for granted. Gas and oil are conveyed, at least in part, through pipelines crossing countries of uncertain stability. In the event of a major crisis, the disruption of those supplies is a distinct probability and maritime transport routes could be vulnerable. The flow of gas and oil to European markets through reliable pipeline and maritime routes hold great political and strategic significance. The diversification of European energy supplies may help reduce these potential risks.<sup>177</sup>

Hence, growing turmoil in the Mediterranean and Middle East region will increasingly affect Europe's interests. NATO, being a security organization with its major interest in the European continent is very concern nowadays for the stability and security in the Mediterranean and Middle East while there is major interaction with the security in Europe. Thus, in the new post-Cold War strategic landscape, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and the Balkans have been transformed from a backwater of Euro-Atlantic security into an area of strategic importance to the Alliance. Any conflict in the region, whether triggered by strategic resources, such as oil or water, political revolutions or ethnic, historical, and religious rivalries, would have serious consequences for the Alliance. In other words the end of the Cold War has removed the major outside threat to Western interests in the Mediterranean region, but the security of the region remains vitally important to U.S. and European interests.

Violent conflicts erupted in Algeria, the former Yugoslavia and Albania. The rise of political Islam in Egypt and Turkey and, to a lesser extent, in Tunisia and Morocco created a risk perception in Western circles. There is an arc of conflicts from Kurdistan and Iraq to Western Sahara, Algeria, the Turkish

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<sup>177</sup> WEU Extraordinary Council of Ministers, *European Security: a Common Concept of the 27 WEU Countries* (Madrid, 14 November 1995), no.26. Available [online]: <http://www.weu.int/eng/95-madrid-b.htm> [10 February 1998].

Greek confrontation, Cyprus, the Balkans, and the Middle East peace process. Democracy and human rights are conflictual issues in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, while racist tendencies are also rising in Europe.<sup>178</sup>

Consequently from all the above issues NATO's policy since the 1994 Brussels Summit has enhanced in a progressive way the Alliance's relations with non-NATO Mediterranean countries (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia) through political dialogue and cooperation. NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue is one of the new tasks of the Alliance presenting a cooperative approach to security.

The emerging military balance in the Mediterranean will present the Atlantic Alliance with new military missions, although continued contribution to alliance programs by some NATO members will be problematic. The key security challenge in the region — the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) — is likely to fall outside of the alliance's purview. While there is some prospect that NATO members may cooperate within the formal alliance structure to address the WMD threat, the NATO imprimatur could act to deter broader cooperation for either reluctant NATO members or non-members. The former prospect is relevant with Turkey's case and the latter with Israel's case. This is why there is a notion among several Middle Eastern analysts that the Turkish-Israeli cooperation is "part of Washington's long-term scheme to extend NATO to the east and south."<sup>179</sup>

Turkey is a NATO member since 1952 and its external security environment is considerably troubled. Its bordering Middle Eastern neighbors -- Iran, Iraq, and Syria -- all have WMD programs. Iran, in particular, is widely believed to be less than a decade

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<sup>178</sup> Mariano Aguirre, "NATO Needs a New Approach to the Mediterranean" 4 July 1999. Available [Online]: <http://www.worldcom.nl/tni/archives/aguirre/nato.htm> [2 June, 1999].

<sup>179</sup> Nadire Mater, "Turkey: Naval Exercises with Israel Hint at Enemies Elsewhere," *Inter Press Service*, 23 September 1997. Available [Online]: <http://nw3.nai.net/~virtual/sot/armanews.htm> [24 August 1998].



away from developing a nuclear weapon. Turkey, which has long been under the U.S./NATO nuclear umbrella, has no known national WMD capability, no anti-missile capability, and no significant offensive missile capability. Yet, Turkey needs NATO support for serving as "a countervailing force of moderation against Iran, Iraq and Syria,"<sup>180</sup> and NATO could always have an excuse for military interest and likely intervention with its formal structure.

On the other hand a fundamental problem for NATO and US is how to neutralize Israeli nuclear capability as a motivation and justification for other regional states to acquire a similar capability. Similarly, it becomes more questionable how to restrain Israeli tendencies toward preemptive military action against aspiring regional nuclear weapons states, or worse, how to react to an Israeli *fait accompli*.

While the Middle East and the Mediterranean regions are effectively outside of the jurisdiction of the Western alliance in that NATO was not designed to address issues of trans-national disputes, it is difficult to imagine how NATO, even if significantly restructured and reoriented, could justifiably address all the above issues. However, for the moment while the security and stability in the Middle East and East Mediterranean region is important for NATO, its Mediterranean Dialogue is meant to reinforce other international efforts such as those undertaken by the EU, the OSCE, the WEU and the Middle East Peace Process. Moreover, NATO supports the Middle East Peace Process and urges all participants to remain firmly committed to it. While NATO does not play a direct role in the process, some of its member states are directly or indirectly involved.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Richard C. Hottelet, "Turkey, NATO's Eastern Hinge, Is Far From Breaking Loose," *The Christian Science Monitor* (19 November 1996), p.19.

Turkey and Israel have a long history of political and military ties with Europe, NATO, and the United States. Under that perception their budding military and economic relationship is not a matter of indifference to all these actors of the international political scene. For the reasons mentioned above NATO, although in its present structure and orientation incapable of promoting sufficient means for stability and security in the Mediterranean and Middle East region, in its potential future reorientation is sure that there would be under serious consideration of strategic and political implications that derive from the Turkish-Israeli military and economic alliance.

For the moment, NATO's interest in the Mediterranean and Middle East region passes through the security of its members in those areas. In that sense Turkey definitely is still one of the biggest NATO's assets. While it constitutes the second largest army among NATO members and will "not only remain central to the security and prosperity of the West, but will also be one of the key states in the containment and resolution of a host of problems inherited from the Cold War era."<sup>182</sup> Thus the tripartite naval maneuvers between Turkey, Israel and the United States (and with Jordan as an observer) in the East Mediterranean with the code-name 'Reliant Mermaid', undertaken at Turkish-Israeli instigation, would not be an exaggeration to be represented as an advance on Israel's and Turkey's efforts to develop an operational capability with NATO in the Eastern Mediterranean.

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<sup>181</sup> Jetty Nordam, "The Mediterranean Dialogue Dispelling Misconceptions and Building Confidence," *NATO Review*, No.4, Vol. 45, July-August 1997. Available [Online]: <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/9704-6.htm> [21 November 1999].

<sup>182</sup> Joseph Leitmann, "Turkey: Benefiting from David's Army," *International Relations Journal*, Available [Online]: <http://psirus.sfsu.edu/IntRel/IRJournal/Wi97/Leitmann.html> [15 April 1999].

### 3. United States Of America (US)

The U.S. strategy for the Middle East revolves around the defense of Israel.<sup>183</sup> This alliance with Turkey is suitable to Israel peripheral strategy and military doctrine. Since its establishment, Israel has pursued treaties and alliances with non-Arab, Muslim states and nations outside of the area, including countries which oppose the establishment of the state of Israel. Accordingly, Turkey, Iran, Ethiopia, Sudan, Lebanon, and the Kurds have been potential allies for Israel and Israel's policy has always been aimed toward that purpose. Inevitably, Turkey has big political, strategic, and economic importance for the survival of Israel. Thus, the support of the U.S. to this alliance was certain and encouraging. Moreover, Turkey and Israel are among the Middle Eastern countries that are very close to United States. U.S. economic aid in the region—a key instrument of U.S. influence—goes primarily to Israel, Egypt, Turkey, and Jordan. The first three account for most of U.S. military assistance.<sup>184</sup>

Although U.S. administrations have traditionally cheered the progress made by democratic forces and welcomed alliances between democracies, particularly those close to Washington, in the case of the Turkish-Israeli military agreements American reaction was different. Washington kept a “thunderous silence about the Turkish-Israeli ties.”<sup>185</sup> Simple statements of approval and encouragement of the expansion of the military and economic ties between Turkey and Israel were made but the general reaction to the issue was insignificant.

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<sup>183</sup> "In Focus: U.S. – Strategic Reach in the Middle East," *U.S. Foreign Policy in Focus*, Vol. 1, No. 17, November 1996. Available [Online]: <http://www.foreignpolicy-infocus.org/briefs/vol1/MIDEST.html> [3 October 1998].

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> "A Cause for Celebration," *The Jerusalem Post* (13 June 1996,) Editorial.

This U.S. attitude has derived from several reasons. The Turkish-Israeli alliance angered the Arabs and caused a lot of frustration among them, especially in Syria, and Egypt. The United States, being the guarantor and sponsor of troubled Israeli-Arab peace process, wanted to avoid anything that might irritate the Arabs, mainly Syria, and cause them to withdraw from the peace process. That was something that even the Israeli labor-led government of Shimon Peres did not want. The real problem for the peace process and the U.S. came with the victory of Likud party. Benjamin Netanyahu's election as Israel's Prime Minister in May of 1996 was a new factor requiring adjustments to US strategy. The Netanyahu opposition to the 'land for peace' process, as represented by the three Netanyahu's 'nos' —no to the return of the Golan and South Lebanon; no to the division of Jerusalem; and no to an independent Palestinian state—needed a lot of evaluation and consideration from the American policy makers in Middle Eastern issues.

The declared and undeclared aims of the Turkish-Israeli alliance fit a priority issue in the U.S. Middle East policy, which continued to be the Arab-Israeli peace process, but it also focused on issues concerning the Persian Gulf and terrorism.<sup>186</sup> In 1996, terrorist attacks within Israel, against US forces in Saudi Arabia, and even within the US itself--though not always Middle East related--pushed American attention toward that issue to a record high. For the first time, Middle Eastern terrorism became a domestic problem in U.S. politics and society.<sup>187</sup> Furthermore, the U.S. encouragement of Turkey's recent expansion of economic and military ties with Israel was aligned with the U.S. Middle Eastern policy and overall strategy of

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<sup>186</sup> "In Focus: U.S. – Israel Policy," *U.S. Foreign Policy in Focus*, Vol. 1, No. 9, November 1996. Available [Online]: <http://www.foreignpolicy-infocus.org/briefs/vol1/ISRAEL.html> [22 November 1999].

<sup>187</sup> "In Focus: Islamists and U.S. Policy," *U.S. Foreign Policy in Focus*, Vol. 1, No. 21, December 1996. Available [Online]: <http://www.foreignpolicy-infocus.org/briefs/vol1/islam.html> [3 October 1998].

trying to strengthen moderate countries and increase regional stability, while seeking to weaken and isolate radical states such as Iraq and Iran.

Another reason, strongly adopted by a lot of analysts for the U.S. diplomatic silence for the Turkish-Israeli alliance, has to do with the relations between the U.S. and Iran. Iran still is the key country for the safety, political stability, and the economic development of the Middle East and Central Asia. The U.S. and Israel have not adjusted to the 'loss' of Iran in the post-Cold War era. The defection of Iran from the American peripheral security system, due to the Islamic Revolution in 1979, created an irreplaceable safety and power vacuum within the greater geographic area and had a number of destabilizing implications. Only with the readmission of Iran into the international system—meaning the normalizing of the relations between Iran and U.S. and consequently, but in an indirect way, the normalizing of the relations between Israel and Iran—will this vacuum be covered and the preconditions for the political stability and economic development in the greater Middle Eastern region be achieved. With the improvement of relations between the U.S. and Iran, the military cooperation between Turkey and Israel will possibly lose its dynamic and become militarily idle.<sup>188</sup>

The US feebleness in promoting the peace process in the Middle East is interwoven with the fact that Syria does not want to participate in bilateral negotiations with Israel and Teheran is strongly opposing the peace process. An effective interaction between the U.S. and Iran would terminate the U.S. policy of the isolation of Iran and the enforcement of sanctions. Iran, in return, would adopt a more conciliatory foreign policy. In that way, Iran will neither become an adherent of the Middle East peace process nor

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<sup>188</sup> Marios L. Evriviadis, "The Hegemonic Turkish-Israeli Axis," *E.K.O.M.E. Society for Social and Economic Studies*, Research Paper E962, 1998, p.3.

recognize Israel —at least not yet—but it will stop strongly opposing the Middle East peace process.<sup>189</sup> This option is considered by many analysts to be the more plausible way to overturn the recent condition in the region from a pre-war procedure, to become consistent with the decisions made in Madrid and Oslo.

The effects of such an evolution would be significant for the peace process. Hizbollah attacks in Southern Lebanon against the Israelis would decrease. Furthermore, Syria, without Iranian support, would be forced to attend the essential discussions over the issue of the Golan Heights with the Israelis. The problem with the Likud Israeli government was whether it would follow the Labor's policy for that issue— which was to withdraw from the Golan Heights—or not. The US government by that time tried forcefully to convince the then new Israeli government that a fair agreement for the Golan Heights with Syria was the key to the termination of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Finally, the impotent Palestinian State would be under the protection of Israel and in that way there may be an end to the bloody circle in the Middle East. Simultaneously, the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, confronting the U.S. – Iran axis would be forced into a more moderate stance.

The anticipation of economic gains that derive from a possible compromise between the U.S. and Iran are huge. There will no longer be a need for the implementation of very expensive plans that include projects and policies, such as oil pipeline construction, which exclude Iran from being an oil passageway for the energy reservoirs in the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. Iran will play a decisive role in the energy needs of the twenty-first century at a global level. This is not a secret among the multinational companies that have to invest a lot of money in the exploitation,

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid, p.4.

transportation, and distribution of the Iranian reserves. The normalizing of the American-Iranian relations would make all these companies natural allies of Iran.<sup>190</sup>

On the other hand, there are two more very important reasons that advocate a crucial geopolitical role for Iran and the normalizing of the relations between U.S. and Iran. First, the biggest demand for oil in the twenty-first century will come from the East, especially Japan, China, India, and Southeast Asia. Secondly, the most preferable way for the Central Asia countries to transport their natural wealth to the international market without being dependent on Russia is through Iran. It is a very important issue for the U.S. that the Central Asian countries are not dependent on Russia.

The U.S.-Iran, and indirectly Israel-Iran, rapprochement would cause the downgrading of the peripheral role of Turkey in the U.S.-Israel strategy for the Middle East. Good relations with Iran will reduce the threat, especially from the Arab states, to the U.S.-Israeli interests in the volatile Middle East region. Thus, the 'raison d'être' for the Turkish-Israeli military alliance will not exist.

Finally, the US is always concerned and cautious for the increasing Islamic tensions of the Turkish society. Although, Erbakan's Refah Party-led coalition government was ousted in 1999 elections due to pressure from the Turkish military, however the actions that it had been undertaken since taking office in mid-1996 (it refused to back the Clinton administration's September 1996 bombing of Iraq and has continued to mobilize other nations for an end to the oil embargo against Iraq, which has cost Turkey billions of dollars in trade since the Gulf War) were indeed for serious US consideration.

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<sup>190</sup> Aninci Ugur, "Engaging Iran: A US Strategy," *Turkish Daily News* (28 May 1998,) p.4.

## V. CONCLUSION

Muslim Turkey and Jewish Israel are a natural fit. There is a strong basis for close relations. Both states are Western-oriented and pro-U.S., with military inventories based mainly on U.S. equipment. Both are deeply concerned about terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. Turkish military, which plans Turkish foreign and domestic policy, behind the scenes, strongly supports secularism in Turkey. An Islamist Turkey, isolated from the Western bloc, is the last and worst thought that they can have. Non-Arab and largely secular, both are generally mistrusted in a region influenced by Arabs and conservative Islam. They are also the two most democratic, economically dynamic, and militarily powerful states in the region.

Close relations serve the strategic interests of both sides. Israel gets access to the vast Turkish air space to train its pilots for long-range missions who could then be employed against regional weapons-of-mass-destruction sites. Israel also enhances its ability to collect intelligence against arch-foes Syria, Iraq, and Iran, greatly expands its arms-sales opportunities, and eases its regional isolation. Turkey sharpens its military know-how through joint training and close cooperation with the Israeli military, boosts its intelligence-gathering against hostile and potentially hostile Middle Eastern neighbors, and, most importantly, gains access to sophisticated arms and materiel that can flow unimpeded by supporters of Greek, Armenian, Kurdish, or human rights causes. These are issues that make West European states and the U.S. uncertain arms partners for Ankara. The Turks also anticipate that, over time, close ties with Israel will boost their standing with the U.S. Congress and restrain Syria, which borders both Turkey and Israel,



from supporting the Kurdish separatist PKK or taking other aggressive actions against Turkey.

The U.S. approach to the alliance was very diplomatic and punctilious. Washington has rightly taken a supportive position toward ties between two key allies, underscored by its participation in the trilateral naval exercise named 'Reliant Mermaid', while letting Ankara and Jerusalem direct the pace. Moreover, the tripartite exercise had a symbolic meaning in that the two major U.S. allies in the region will continue to cooperate in the future and in a wider spectrum. The United States can more easily reap benefits if the Israeli-Turkish relationship does not carry a 'made in the U.S.A.' label.

To U.S. advantage, Israeli-Turkish cooperation serves as a model of regional normalization in a period when the multilateral peace process is starting to have a slow, however hopeful pace towards success. It also serves as a potential nucleus (and cover) for pulling other pro-U.S. states, such as Jordan, into a wider regional security regime, provides an opportunity for deeper trilateral cooperation enhancing Israeli and Turkish security and increasing weapons inter-operability for U.S. forces at times of regional crisis, acts as a source of pressure on Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad's hard-line peace process policies, and is a mean for the executive branch to bypass Congress in supporting Turkey (through Presidential waivers on Israeli sales of arms that include U.S.-origin technology). Moreover, Iran and Iraq constitute, for the time being, a common enemy for the U.S., and Turkey has been instrumental in containing both of these countries' roles in the Gulf region. In other words, the Turkish-Israeli military alliance has been carried out under the auspices of the US and will continue to work at containing Iran and Iraq.

On the other hand, it would be more preferable for the U.S. not to have Iran as an enemy but as an ally. Although Turkey has a strategic position in the region and always has been a meaningful ally of the United States however the historical past shows that Turkey did not always favor the American Middle Eastern policy. Turkey, since Ataturk's death, has been trying to find which way is more profitable to follow: the Western secular or the Middle Eastern Islamic one. This dilemma causes a lot of shifts in its foreign and domestic policy, with unpredictable results for the U.S.-Turkish relationship.

The risks that are being taken by Turkey, Israel and the U.S. to enforce this agreement between Turkey and Israel are manageable. Close ties with Turkey enjoy consensus support in Israel. For Israel, the biggest challenge may be to avoid stumbling into Turkish disputes that Jerusalem sees as having little or no direct bearing on Israeli interests, namely those with the PKK, Greece, and Cyprus.

Turkey is taking most of the risks. First, the alliance with Israel Middle Easternizes Turkey and creates an exclusivity, instead of leaving Ankara with leeway as a regional power linked with the Balkans and the Caucasus. Second, it increases the potential for terrorist activities by those who feel targeted by the agreement, endangering the fabric of Turkish and Israeli society. Third, it destroys Turkey's equidistance between the Arabs and Israel and instead of a tilt toward the Arabs, which is rationalized from historical, cultural and religious reasons, we have a tilt toward a Jewish state. This deprives Turkey from having a leading role in the Moslem world, which could be decisive for its willingness to join the Western block. Finally, the deal jeopardizes Turkey's domestic politics by blocking the Refah Party's path to power, which is now

outlawed and since changed its name to 'Virtue' Party. But all these seem to be manageable by the real authority in Turkey, the military. The U.S. confronts the possibility of facing a stagnation of the peace process by supporting the alliance, although by delicate diplomatic maneuvers the problem could be avoided.

Regional reaction has been mainly confined to rhetoric. This was strongly confirmed by the Arab summit in Cairo, which revealed the pitiful disarray of the Arab countries and their incapability of mounting a serious opposition to U.S. policies. The final statement of the summit was in accordance with U.S. and Turkish suggestions for discretion upon the issues of Israel and Turkey. Additionally, the prospect of a regional counter-alliance is doubtful. Baghdad's rifts with Tehran and Damascus are too deep, and Tehran lacks motivation and significant means to boost its support for Damascus. Egypt does not feel directly threatened, however, and will not involve itself in an operational effort to block or counter Israeli-Turkish cooperation. Moreover, not all Arab states are critical. In addition to Jordan, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have been mainly mum; Kuwait and the U.A.E. are sufficiently content with Ankara.

Whether the Israeli-Turkish relationship will reach the ambitious levels envisioned by the architects in Israel, Turkey and the U.S. remains to be seen. On the strategic level, it will remain strong and will maintain and enhance its special characteristics. On the military level, Turkey will be able to hold the line and maintain the agreement because the military, which is very influential on matters of national security, seems very determined to keep it in place. They feel a connection with Israel, the strongest military power in the region. They see the Turkish-Israeli agreement as very much in the Turkish national strategic interest, and particularly as a deterrent to

Syrian support of Kurdish terrorism. The Turkish military sees its cooperation with Israel as a strategic relationship that should grow.

Consequently, strong Turkish-Israeli ties will enhance the region's stability by serving as a powerful military deterrent against would-be enemies. Aggressive states must watch their step in the face of a formidable combination of the Middle East's largest military force and its most advanced, and this diminishes the likelihood of war. It is not just mere coincidence that Syria has decided against a strategic alliance with Iran, fearing that this might "lead to increased coordination between Ankara and Tel Aviv against Damascus"<sup>191</sup> and to its own further isolation.

Beyond the military relationship the political and especially the business elite in Israel and Turkish have grandiose plans for the two countries. These include joint ventures in the tourist industry, in agriculture, in the textile industry, and in high technology industries. According to the Turkish press, Israeli businessmen are seeking funds and loans to help finance or complete important infrastructure projects in Turkey in exchanging for Israeli participation in these projects. These include a number of highway projects, a third bridge over the Bosphorus and perhaps one over the Dardanelles, projects related to the Southeastern Anatolia project that eventually may lead to a water pipeline ending in Israel proper, and the much talked about oil pipeline across Turkey to transport Caspian oil to the Mediterranean. Financing estimates for these projects range between ten and fifty billion U.S. dollars. These funds are reportedly sought from a consortium of Japanese banks. As a consequence, Turkey and Israel could start by enhancing both economic and political cooperation among a group of like-minded countries that have

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<sup>191</sup> Pipes Daniel, "A New Axis," *The National Interest*, Winter 1997/1998, p.38.

already achieved a certain degree of political and economic liberalization domestically. Ultimately, the objective would be to encourage the emergence of 'democratic peace' in the region.

The U.S. has a predominant role in the region. Openly supporting the Turkish-Israeli alliance creates a double standard in the area and this constrains the peace process. Without condemning the agreement, it will be wise to create the preconditions for undermining the necessity for the existence of a military Turkish-Israeli axis in the region. This goal demands a series of moves such as reassessing the policies designed to undermine Iraq and isolate Iran, questioning the special relationship between the U.S. and the Israel, ensuring equitable access to regional water resources, and insisting on the end of Israel's occupations of southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights in return for full peace. An American policy in accordance with the above demands will reassure the neutral character of the U.S. and will encourage the promotion of peace in the region. It is very encouraging that nowadays the U.S. policy shows tilts to that direction.

#### **A. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE**

As a preliminary conclusion, it can be said that the future of Turkish-Israeli relations looks bright, but it remains to be seen how long it will last, both in terms of intensity and length. The free trade agreement signed between the two is a good indication of long-term thinking on the part of policy-makers in Jerusalem and Ankara. But like every relationship there are difficulties. It must be remembered that Middle Eastern politics is in reality a complex set of intertwining issues. Sometimes religious and ethnic elements play the determining role in its course, and other times political and security considerations are predominant.

It is difficult to predict with any certainty what the future holds for the Turkish-Israeli relationship. It seems as though the prospects for long-term co-operation are positive. The advent of some success in the Arab-Israeli peace process afforded Ankara the opportunity to become more open about its desire to link itself with Israel, especially as the Palestinians were themselves signing agreements with Israel. It can be argued that were the peace process to begin to unravel Turkey might become more wary of its ties with Israel.

The security environment Turkey and Israel face has not changed for the better with the end of the Cold War, and both have much to gain from an established relationship. As of yet, this has not been translated into concrete defence pacts between the two countries; all relations have been based on co-operation agreements, and neither Jerusalem nor Ankara have referred to any strategic alliance.

The Arab and Muslim regimes in the Middle East show no sign of fading, or changing. Although Presidents Assad and Saddam Hussein are ageing, and in May 1997 Iranians overwhelmingly elected a moderate cleric as president who has since alluded to the need for dialogue between Iranians and Americans, all three states have acquired political and military and religious elites that are loyal to the current rulers' policies. The possibility that after Assad or Saddam's death a more passive leader might take power, one committed to peace and integration with Israel, remains low and difficult to imagine.

For Turkey and Israel this means that their external situations will in all likelihood not change in the near future, and so military collaboration between the two will continue to benefit them both. As related throughout this thesis, there are very good reasons and motives for the relationship. Conflict has remained endemic in the Middle East since the

age of recorded history began, when empires marched and clashed over its length, width, and breadth, and there have not been serious indications that this is about to end.

However, the Military Training Cooperation Agreement was signed only in 1996, and it is still too early to relate with any real certainty what form this relationship might take in the foreseeable future. There remain several disputes between all states within the Middle East. For example, those analysts who study water politics are convinced that this rare natural resource will become a point of contention, perhaps even violence, in the near future. Given that Turkey controls the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and given that Israel will soon be in desperate need of water for itself, one can assume that water politics will become ever more important in the coming years. This assertion carries with it the prospect of more conflict and even war. The Turkish-Israeli military relationship may become even more consequential as a result of these future possibilities.

Turkey and Israel are compelled by strong theoretical and practical reasons to draw close together. However, things change, and even theories prevalent at any one time can be discarded in favor of newer ones better able to explain the course of international politics. What cannot be denied about this recent development, though, is the effect it has had on regional politics. Whether or not the Turkish-Israeli relationship will remain strong, or fade away, it can be argued with certainty that it will affect the course of Middle Eastern politics for some time to come.

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