

Altering Interests and Orientations between Israel and Turkey: A View from Israel*

OFRA BENGIO**

ABSTRACT

This essay analyzes the relationship between Turkey and Israel against the background of the AKP ascent to power in Turkey in 2002 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. It argues that notwithstanding the sea changes that occurred in the region following the invasion, as well as the far-reaching changes in Turkey's foreign policy, both states still have vested interests in maintaining their close relationship, even at times of crisis. One of the most important explanations for their relations' longevity is that the two states have no serious problems on the bilateral level, while their strategic, economic and societal common interests have been strong enough to weather crises. The paper also explores the implications for the future of the Turkish-Israeli relationship of Turkey's policy during Israel's operations against Hamas in Gaza.

Under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government Turkey's foreign policy toward the Middle East has undergone profound changes, which were, in turn, the outcome of various domestic and regional developments. These changes altered Turkey's threat perceptions and its new understanding of its role in the region, and led to a redefinition of who its appropriate regional partners were. The two most important determinants of the change were the advent to power of the AKP in 2002 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The fact that the two events occurred almost simultaneously contributed significantly to Turkey's evolving new vision regarding the Middle East.

* *The views expressed here represent the author's own opinions. This essay will also be printed as postscript to Ofra Bengio, *The Turkish-Israeli Relationship*, 2nd edition, (New York: Palgrave, 2009).*

** *Professor, The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, bengio@post.tau.ac.il*

The main guiding principles of Turkish policy under the AKP toward the Middle East, however conflicting they may be at different times, are the following:

1. Playing a pivotal role in the region, or what Turkish analysts have termed as Neo-Ottomanism or the Turkish grand strategy in the Middle East.
2. Multilateralism, which meant courting Arab and Muslim countries of the region while keeping its ties with Israel.
3. Engaging its neighbors for the sake of insuring “zero conflict” with them.
4. Playing the role of mediator in different regional problems.
5. Attempting to strike a new balance between its European and Middle Eastern policies.
6. Setting a model of a democratic Muslim state for Arab and Muslim countries, in contrast to Iran.¹

The most important transformation is that the AKP turned Islam into a platform for advancing its bid for regional leadership. As long as nationalism was the dominant ideology in the region, Turkey and major Arab countries were frequently at loggerheads. Now with its advent to power, the AKP used Islam as a glue between the three major nationalities in the region, Turkish, Arab and Iranian.

In an attempt to enhance its stature in the Muslim world, the AKP engaged Hamas and granted it legitimacy, rather than ostracize it as most world countries did. The invitation to Hamas’s senior personality in Damascus, Khalid Mash’al, to visit Ankara in early 2006, was a harbinger of things to come.² Second, unlike Egypt, Saudi Arabia or Jordan, for example, Ankara did not raise the specter of Shi’a Islam, allowing it to pose as neutral party in the Sunni-Shi’a conflict raging in the region and thus enhance its stature in the Muslim world. Accordingly, it managed to keep on good terms with Shi’a Iran as well as with both the Sunnis and Shi’ites of Iraq. Similarly, in the last few years Turkey has sought closer ties with Arab and Muslim countries due to different domestic political and economic considerations, such as attracting investments from Arab oil-rich countries at a time of economic crisis. At the same time, it continued its attempts to play the

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role of mediator, using both its European and its Middle Eastern credentials.

Turkey’s threat perceptions in the recent decades emanated largely from the support which the neighboring countries -- Iraq, Syria and Iran -- might grant the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), hence

the special importance it attached to its relations with them. But by the turn of the century one could notice a change in the role of these neighbors. While in the 1990s Ankara perceived Syria and Iran as the main source of threat, following the Iraq War in 2003, it came to assign this role to Iraq.

Turkey's relations with Israel should be seen against this background, as well as the sea changes that have occurred in the region since the AKP's advent to power in Turkey in 2002.

The Changing Strategic Map of the Region

In the 1990s, many factors combined to create a fertile environment for a rapprochement between Turkey and Israel. For example, the 1991 Gulf War was an important trigger for rapprochement.³ Turkey and Israel were in agreement on the necessity of the war and on their support for the US. The Turkish military, which was at its apex of political power, played a leading role in the rapprochement. Turkish-Syrian hostility provided another motive for rapprochement, as Damascus was considered a common enemy that needed to be checked. Similarly, Iran's Islamic Republic was perceived as posing a common threat. On the positive side, the Palestinian issue appeared to be on its way to resolution, removing a severe stumbling block in Ankara-Jerusalem relations.

In recent years, most of these common denominators had disappeared. Moreover, a number of potentially damaging developments had emerged. The concurrent strengthening in Turkey of ultranationalist and Islamist currents posed a potential threat to relations with the Jewish state. The Turkish military elite, the chief architect of Turkey's close links with Israel, lost its hold over the political system and thus its ability to dictate foreign policy lines. Moreover, the growing friction between this elite and the AKP government, manifested in the still-unfolding Ergenekon scandal, only added to the ambiguity toward Israel. The 2003 US-Iraq war sparked deterioration in Ankara's relations with Washington, and also had negative effects on Turkey's perceptions of Israel's role in the region, especially regarding Iraqi Kurdistan and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG).⁴ At the same time, Turkey has developed close relations with Syria, thus lessening Turkey's need for a strong ally in the south to counterbalance Damascus. Similarly,

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for the ruling AKP, the Islamic Republic of Iran appeared much less threatening than it did to previous governments. No less important, the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, particularly the outbreak of the second *Intifada* in fall 2000, and the more recent conflict with Hamas in Gaza severely damaged Israel's image in Turkey. Ankara's tilt toward Hamas, which the EU considered a terrorist organization, could be noticed from Turkey's invitation to the Hamas leader to visit Turkey, as well as the harsh attacks by Turkish officials on Israel following the Israeli offensive on Hamas in early 2009. Capping these changes is the fact that the long-standing, inherent asymmetry in Turkish-Israeli relations became even more pronounced under the AKP.

Asymmetry and Ambiguity in Turkish-Israeli Relations

The asymmetry in Turkish-Israeli relations exists on a number of levels: declaratory, diplomatic and political. Israel is usually the courting partner -- the needy party, politically speaking -- and thus the one that initiates actions to maintain good relations. For Israel, relations with Turkey are a source of pride and legitimacy; for the Turkish governments, in contrast, they sometimes serve as an embarrassment or pose a dilemma. For example, notwithstanding the fact that Israel is considered Ankara's strategic partner, it does not exist on the map of the weather report broadcast by TRT1, a Turkish national television station. Damascus, Amman and the rest of Arab capitals do appear on the nightly weather map displayed to viewers, but Jerusalem and Tel Aviv do not.

Turkish politicians have no qualms about vehemently attacking Israel because of its policies toward the Palestinians, yet Israeli politicians walk on tiptoes regarding any issue that touches on Turkish sensitivities.⁵ Thus, for example, they refrain from even mentioning Turkey's policy regarding the Kurds, let alone criticizing it.⁶

As for the Turkish media, most of its reports on the Palestinian problem are one-sided and biased against Israel. Israeli attacks against Palestinians are always reported, but the Turkish media rarely dwells on Hamas terrorist attacks against Israel.⁷ In contrast, the Israeli media reports on the fighting between the Turkish army and the PKK mainly from the Turkish point of view, and rarely shows any sympathy to the PKK.

There is no doubt that Israel has lost the battle to receive fair treatment from the Turkish media, which may reflect negatively on Turkish politicians' decision making.⁸ In this context, it should be noted that the media at times takes its cue

from the politicians. Thus for example, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declared in June 2004 that: “Jews were the victims [in Spain]. Today Palestinians are the victims and the people of Israel are treating Palestinians as they were treated 500 years ago.”⁹ Even if unintentionally, such declarations certainly contribute to the spread of anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic expressions in the media and among the Turkish public.



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The quality of Israeli-Turkish relations will undoubtedly continue to be affected by the course of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Indeed, there are signs of growing anti-Semitism in Turkey in recent years. Thus, for example, “Kavgam” (Mein Kampf), was for a time a best-seller in Turkey.¹⁰ The immediate causes for the rise in anti-Semitism are not very clear. It could be the result of the strengthening of ultranationalist trends, or that the very ascent to power of an Islamic party has given it impetus. One thing is certain: the Turkish government has not done enough to fight this phenomenon. Whereas Germany and other states forbid the publication of “Mein Kampf”, the Turkish government did not do so on the flimsy pretext of protecting democracy. And although Prime Minister Erdoğan declared time and again that Turkey was against anti-Semitism, his other declarations seemed to tip the balance in the Turkish street. Official Israel, on the contrary, has done its best not only to take into consideration Turkish sensitivities on the Armenian issue but also lobbied hard in Washington against any attempts to achieve US recognition of the Armenian massacres as genocide.¹¹

What Keeps Turkish-Israeli Relations Going?

Having said all this, we need to put things in proportion. My main argument is that notwithstanding the sea changes that occurred in the region after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as well as the far-reaching changes in Turkey’s foreign policy, still both states have had vested interests in maintaining the close relationship, even at times of crisis. One of the most important explanations for their longevity is that the two states have no serious problems on the bilateral level. They have never engaged in a war against each other, nor do they pose any sort of strategic menace to one another. Quite the opposite. Similarly, the generally positive historical bonds between the two nations have also contributed to this longevity.

Thus, the strength and depth of the Turkish-Israeli bilateral relationship had been without parallel anywhere else in the Middle East. By way of comparison, Israel's peace with Egypt is still a cold one, 30 years after the signing of their peace treaty. President Hosni Mubarak has never visited Israel on an official visit, nor did Egyptian intellectuals and journalists find it easy to be associated with Israel or even visit it. The same was true for Jordanians, with whom official relations were established much later.

By contrast, since the upgrading of Turkish-Israeli relations to the ambassadorial level in 1991, bilateral ties have been quite cordial and even intimate. Visits by high-level officials, including heads of state, to each other's capitals have been frequent. Under the AKP governments alone, most of Turkey's top officials, including Prime Minister Erdoğan and former President Ahmet Necdet Sezer have traveled to Israel.¹² For their part, Israeli officials have been only too eager to reciprocate. Thus, all Israeli prime ministers, presidents and defense ministers have visited Turkey during the last decade.

With regard to the increase of anti-Semitic expression in Turkey, one cannot ignore the efforts by a number of Turkish intellectuals and the more liberal-leftist media to oppose it.¹³ As a balance to "Mein Kampf", one should also mention that a Turkish novelist, Ayşe Kulin, wrote a novel about Turkish diplomats' endeavors to save Jews from the Nazi horrors.¹⁴ Such a phenomenon is almost impossible to find in the literature or the media of Arab countries, including those which have diplomatic relations with Israel. On another level, Israelis have flocked to Turkey, but generally shunned Egypt and Jordan. In 2007 the number of Israeli tourists to Turkey exceeded half a million, totaling 511,435.¹⁵ Thus, unlike Israel's relations with Arab countries, which are mainly on the official, governmental level, Israeli-Turkish relations have had a significant societal dimension.

The Bonds of Common Interests

Since the 1990s, the strategic map and the strategic challenges in the region have changed dramatically for both Turkey and Israel. For Turkey the challenge shifted to Iraq and the Kurds, for Israel to Iran and the Palestinians. Yet Turkey and Israel still share common threat perceptions. Both states have common interests in fighting terror. Although there might be differences between Turkey and Israel on the definition of what constitutes terror and who exactly is a terrorist, the two are likeminded in perceiving the seriousness of the threat being posed, their common interest in combating it and the importance of developing the proper military means to do so. Thus, in early 2005 Turkish Prime Minister

Erdoğan and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon signed an agreement for the establishment of a “hot line” for the exchange of intelligence on terror between their two offices.¹⁶

The fact that Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak visited Turkey just days before the onset of large-scale Turkish military operations against PKK bases in Iraq at the beginning of 2008 is itself telling. Indeed, Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül subsequently revealed that Turkey had benefited from Israeli military know-how in its actions against the PKK.¹⁷ Such revelations are greeted uneasily in Israel, which is concerned with possible PKK revenge acts, as occurred after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, in 1999. However, Israel generally refrains from complaining about them, in order not to ruffle Turkish feathers.

Iran is another cause of concern for both states. It is true that on the face of it, high-ranking Turkish officials seem to support the Iranian stance on the issue of its nuclear program, but in fact both the government and the military in Turkey dread the day when Iran will possess a nuclear weapon, and the possible dramatic alteration in the regional balance of power.¹⁸ Thus, in many ways Israel is doing the dirty job which Ankara is unable, or unwilling, to do because it wishes to remain on good terms with Tehran. That strategic relations have remained strong between the two military establishments is proved by the fact that the Turkish secretary general to the National Security Council (MGK) visited Israel in May 2005, the first such visit in the history of the relationship.¹⁹

Notwithstanding conspiracy theories regarding Israel’s allegedly malevolent role in northern Iraq, the Turkish and Israeli governments share common concerns regarding the possible negative consequences of the disintegration of Iraq and its splitting into three states. In their view, such a development would not only further destabilize the region, but would also be likely to encourage the Kurds in Turkey and Palestinians in Israel to take the Iraqi Kurdish case as a model for their own activities.

With regard to Turkish-Arab relations, the AKP government has made significant efforts to forge closer ties with Arab countries for ideological, political and economic considerations. Indeed, in a most important volte-face Ankara has established strong relations with Syria, its one time archrival in the region.²⁰ Still, mutual suspicions and antipathies have not entirely dissipated. As in the Iranian case, Israel serves as bulwark against real or imagined threats emanating from Turkey’s Arab neighbors.

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Cognizant of the danger of putting all of its eggs in the military basket, Israel sought from the start to diversify its links with the Turkish state and society. Economically, Israel sought to further deepen the links which have been flourishing since the early 1990s and which

reached a peak in 2008. Thus, in the first part of 2008 Israeli exports to Turkey grew by 56 percent compared to the first part of 2007, totaling \$821 million, while Israeli imports also grew by 30 percent, totaling \$1 billion.²¹ On another level, Israel acquiesced to Ankara's desire to play a role as a facilitator or a mediator between Jerusalem and Damascus. Israel's acceptance of Ankara's diplomacy served to acknowledge the legitimacy of Turkish ambitions to play a leading role in the Middle East.

For Turkey the move highlighted its pivotal role in the region. Thus, while the George W. Bush administration was reluctant to mediate between Israel and Syria, and with Egyptian-Syrian relations too antagonistic for Cairo to fulfill such a role, Ankara was only too eager to do so. Generally speaking, Turkey was of the opinion that one should engage Syria, Iran and Hamas rather than isolate them, and in this it was at odds with the Bush administration. Turkey's mediation, as long as it went on, added another important dimension to Turkish-Israeli relations in that it deepened the bonds of mutual confidence and diversified ties by adding diplomacy to the existing links in the military, economic and political spheres.

Turkey's New Role as a Mediator

Turkey's new role as a mediator between Israel and Syria is intriguing. This is indeed a 180-degree change compared to the situation that existed during the mid-1990s. While in that period Turkey moved to forge the alignment with Israel for fear, among other things, that the latter would conclude peace with Syria, now that Ankara has settled its differences with Damascus, it has emerged as a peace broker between Israel and Syria. In fact, what might have pushed Syrian president Bashar al-Assad to negotiations with Israel could be the urgent need to get back the Golan Heights after he had given up on regaining Alexandretta/Hatay from Turkey as a price for rapprochement with Ankara.

Indirect peace negotiations between Israel and Syria resumed in May 2008 after eight years of deadlock, this time under Turkish auspices. The Israeli rep-

representatives to the negotiations in Turkey were Shalom Turjeman and Yoram Trubovitz; their Syrian interlocutor was Riyad Dawudi. Four rounds of meetings took place in Istanbul and Ankara during the spring and summer, in which the Turkish mediator played the role of messenger, since the negotiators neither met face to face nor resided in the same hotel. In a statement issued by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on 21 May 2008, on the day of the first meeting, he revealed that preparations for that move had begun a year earlier and that it was Israel which approached Turkey asking it to mediate.²² Describing the opening of the negotiations as an exciting event, Olmert emphasized that it was “a national duty” and that he was following the path of his predecessors in office.²³

Turkey’s new role gained great support at home. Newspapers of different political convictions described the move in superlative terms. Sami Kohen, writing in the centrist *Milliyet*, stated: “As a result of the intensive efforts of Turkish diplomacy, Israeli and Syrian representatives have come to Turkey and begun the process of proximity talks. Turkey is trusted by both sides. In fact, it might be described as the only country of its kind. The fact that Turkish diplomacy has assumed such a role is a development that gives Turkey credibility in the international arena.” Erdal Şafak, in the centrist *Sabah*, emphasized that “Turkey, as the only country trusted by both parties, has acquired power in the Middle East, a card in the EU and prestige in the world. And in the event the talks result in a peace agreement that will change the balances and dynamics in the Middle East, Turkey’s power and prestige will reach an extraordinary and amazing degree.” İbrahim Karagül also highlighted Turkey’s new role in the liberal pro-Islamic *Yeni Şafak*: “Turkey, which has not been included in any talks in the Middle East for years and whose influence has always been kept limited, has become the sponsor of a great initiative for the first time, and in the most difficult arena. This means that Turkey, which has been trying to open to the region for about ten years, has now become a key country.”²⁴

Another phase in Turkey’s mediation efforts took place on Dec. 22, 2008, when Prime Minister Olmert came to Turkey to discuss the issue with Prime Minister Erdoğan. Concurrent with Olmert’s visit, President al-Assad declared his readiness to hold direct talks with Israel. However, not much came out of the mediation, as Olmert himself had less than two months left in office before the February 2009 Israeli general elections, and as al-Assad decided to call off the negotiations due to the Israeli offensive on Hamas in early 2009. For Prime Minister Erdoğan, the Israeli offensive that cut short his mediation efforts was like a slap in the face.

The Gaza Setback

The Israeli three-week offensive in Gaza in January 2009 had a negative impact on the Turkish-Israeli relationship. And the questions that need concern us are: why was it so? Will this alter the basics of relations? What is the long-term significance of this episode?

The harsh Turkish reaction to the offensive was on both the official and popular level. Prime Minister Erdoğan led the way by warning Israeli leaders that history will judge them for the black stain they are leaving on humanity. He even went as far as to declare that the blood of the dead Palestinian children would not be left on the floor, and that Israel's deeds were 'a crime against humanity.' Worse still, he demanded the expulsion of Israel from the United Nations for ignoring the organization's call to stop the fighting in Gaza.²⁵ Then came the Davos incident at the end of January in which Prime Minister Erdoğan demonstratively walked off the stage during his debate with Israeli President Shimon Peres. No wonder, then, that Erdoğan came to be considered a hero by Gazans, Iranians and Syrians.

Taking their cues from him, the media and the Turkish populace escalated their anti-Israeli and at times even anti-Semitic attacks to a point which sometimes surpassed those voiced in Arab countries.²⁶ Huge anti-Israeli demonstrations flooded the streets of Turkey's major cities and towns,²⁷ in which demonstrators burned Israeli flags and waved anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic slogans. In a number of stores, albeit relatively few in number but with great publicity, signs were displayed refusing to serve Jews or, in the case of Jewish shops, stating, "Do not buy from here, since this shop is owned by a Jew." A group in Eskişehir placed posters on its building: "Jews and Armenians are not allowed, but dogs are." Graffiti also appeared, with such slogans as: "Kill Jews," "Kill Israel," "Israel should no longer exist in the Middle East," and "Stop Israeli massacres."²⁸ In another incident, someone wrote on the door of one of the biggest synagogues in Izmir, "We will kill you," which led to the closing of synagogues.²⁹ The reaction on the popular level was partly spontaneous and partly officially organized, including even the mobilization of school children, which points to a political hand acting behind the scenes.

Evidently, there was clear sympathy toward the Palestinians among the Turkish people. At the same time it was also evident that the government was attempting to manipulate this sympathy for different purposes: mobilizing support for the AKP in the Turkish local elections in March; deflecting attention from the domestic PKK problem; challenging the military, the architect of relations with

Israel; and, finally, enhancing Turkey's role among Arab and Muslim countries. For all of these rhetorical and emotional reactions, it should be pointed out that practically speaking the Turkish government did not initiate any punitive move against Israel. Thus, for example, it did not recall its ambassador to Ankara as it had done on an earlier occasion. Moreover at the very time that Prime Minister Erdoğan was lashing out at Israel, media reports suggested that an arms deal worth \$167 million was signed between Ankara and Jerusalem.³⁰

Conclusion

Under the AKP government, relations between Turkey and Israel have witnessed a lot of ups and downs which had to do not with any direct difficulties in bilateral relations between Ankara and Jerusalem but mainly with the stance of either of the two toward third parties. These included the Kurds of Iraq, Israel's second war against Lebanon in 2006 and its offensive on Hamas in Gaza in January 2009. Yet, notwithstanding these myriad changes in recent years, Turkish-Israeli relations have remained on the whole quite solid. Turkey benefited from certain military know-how and other strategic matters while Israel enjoyed official recognition and legitimization by a Muslim country. The price was the anti-Israeli lip service that Erdoğan and other Turkish officials had to pay to appease public opinion or buy its goodwill at home as well as in the Arab world. At the same time, the attacks against Israel also reflected a genuine inner conviction among certain Turkish politicians.

One should note that the correlation between progress in the peace process with the Palestinians and the Turkish-Israeli relations, first apparent in the early 1990s, continued to hold. The collapse of the peace process in October 2000 and the ensuing violence caused considerable damage. In contrast, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in summer 2005 engendered a flood of visits by high-ranking Turkish officials. In May, in anticipation of the withdrawal, Prime Minister Erdoğan traveled to Jerusalem. In contrast with his harsh attacks on Israel a year earlier, he now praised Israel's then-prime minister, Ariel Sharon, for his decision to withdraw. However, the Israeli attack on Hamas in 2009 has once again brought new tensions to the relations. Yet while Prime Minister Erdoğan called the attack 'a crime against humanity' he also attempted to play the role of mediator for the

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conclusion of a cease-fire between the two parties.³¹ Thus, the quality of Israeli-Turkish relations will undoubtedly continue to be affected by the course of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

To sum up, asymmetry and ambiguity continue to characterize the relationship, and it seems that both Turkey and Israel have accepted the rules of the game. Israel keeps its complaints to itself, for the sake of political and strategic considerations. Thus, Israel demonstrated that it had learned the lesson of the past: It avoided repeating its mistake of 1956, when it recalled its ambassador in protest against similar move by Turkey, only to find that it would take more than 30 years to return. For its part, the Turkish government, with an eye to Arab and Muslim sensibilities, sticks to its ambiguous pronouncements and attitudes, while also pointing to its close relations with Israel in order to curry favor in Western capitals, to enhance its role of mediator in the region as well as to placate the Turkish military. Finally, although Turkish-Israeli relations under the AKP governments have lost much of the intimacy of the 1990s, the bonds of interests remain strong enough to enable the two partners to overcome occasional crises.

Endnotes

1. For general discussion of Turkish foreign policy, see Mustafa Aydın, *Turkish Foreign Policy Bibliography: Sources in English, French, And German, 1919-2001*, (Ankara: Center for Strategic Research, 2002); Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach*, (New York: Routledge, 2003); Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür Kavli, *Turkey: Challenges of Continuity and Change*, (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005); Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies: *Turkey: Between the European Union and the Middle East* (proceedings of symposium), (Tel Aviv, 2006).

2. Soner Çağaptay, " Hamas Visits Ankara: The AKP Shifts Turkey's Role in the Middle East," *Washington Institute for Near East Policy: Policy Watch*, Feb. 16, 2006.

3. For the impact of 1991 Gulf War on Turkey, see Amikam Nachmani, *Turkey -- Facing a New Millennium: Coping with Intertwined Conflicts*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 16-29.

4. On the impact of the Kurdish issue on relations see, Efraim Inbar, *Israel's New Strategic Partners: Turkey and India*, *Iyyunim babitahon haleumi*, No.77 (July 2008), pp. 8-9.

5. For such an example see, *Today's Zaman*, March 16, 2008.

6. True, Israeli Gen. Avi Mizrahi, a veteran professional officer, called on Prime Minister Erdoğan to look in the mirror, accusing Turkey of committing genocide against the Armenians, the suppression of the Kurds and the occupation of northern Cyprus. *Haaretz*, Feb. 13, 2009. However, such a declaration was an exception to the rule and was condemned by the Israeli establishment.

7. See for example, *Mideast Mirror*, Jan. 5, 2009.

8. For example, the Turkish media hardly mentioned the Qassam missile attacks launched from Gaza on southern Israeli communities for eight years, while dwelling at length on Israeli attacks on the launchers of the missiles.

9. BBC, June 3, 2004.
10. More than 100,000 copies were sold in early 2005. *The Guardian*, March 29, 2005.
11. Israel's stance on the Armenian genocide was not only instrumental, namely to help an ally, but also principled. Many in Israel are of the opinion that the term genocide could not be applied to the Armenians, but should be reserved to the unique case of the Genocide of the Jews under the Nazis.
12. For an in-depth discussion of relations under the AKP government, see Gencer Özcan, *Türkiye- İsrail İlişkilerinde Dönüşüm: Güvenliğin Ötesini*, (İstanbul: TESEV Yayınları, 2005), pp. 149-167.
13. See Burak Bekdil, "The great Turkish Hypocrisy," *Turkish Daily News*, March 14, 2008.
14. Ayşe Kulin, *Nefes Nefese*, (Istanbul: Everest, 2002).
15. "Israeli Tourism to Turkey Breaks All-time Record", *Istanbul Bulletin*, 35 (February 2008), <http://www.icvbulletin.org/trnews35.htm>.
16. Ynet, May 1, 2005, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3079777,00.html>.
17. Crienglish.com, Feb. 13, (<http://english.cri.cn/2947/2008/02/13/1321@322582.htm>); Jerusalem Post, Feb. 12, 2008. He was supposedly referring to the use of Israeli-made UAVs.
18. Inbar, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
19. Prime Ministry Web Site: May 16, 2005, <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Archive/Spokesman/2005/05/spokemes160505.htm>.
20. For a discussion of the rapprochement see Gökhan Bacık, "Turkey-Syria: a Belated Friendship," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2007), pp. 67-74.
21. Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor: Aug. 12, 2008, <http://www.tamas.gov.il/NR/exeres/3AE60DC9-4FB0-4CE7-9FDC-209858FB2A5C.htm>
22. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: May 21, 2008 <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFAHeb/Diplomatic+updates/Events/Syria%20and%20Israel%20start%20peace%20talks%20%20210508>. According to a later version by Erdoğan, it was Syria that approached him on the matter. *Washington Post*, Jan. 31, 2009.
23. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: May 21, 2008, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFAHeb/Diplomatic+updates/Events/Syria%20and%20Israel%20start%20peace%20talks%20%20210508>.
24. *Mideast Mirror*, May 22, 2008.
25. *Al-Jazeera*, Jan. 6, 2009; *Cumhuriyet*, as quoted in *Mideast Mirror*, Jan. 12, 2009; *Sabah*, Jan. 18, 2009.
26. See for example, Heymi Bahar, "Turkey," in *MERIA*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (March, 2009).
27. *Today's Zaman*, Dec. 29, 2008.
28. *Milliyet*, Jan. 18, 2009; *Yisrael hayyom*, Feb. 19, 2009; Bahar, "Turkey".
29. Private information. Needless to say that for the Jewish community in Turkey these events were very traumatic.
30. The Turkish government denied these reports. *Hürriyet*, Jan. 6, 2009.
31. *Today's Zaman*, Dec. 29, 2008. Unlike in the Syrian case, this time Israel did not accept the Turkish mediation -- possibly because of what it considered to be Ankara's anti-Israeli bias.