

## **Alliances and Alignments in the Middle East: the Turkish-Israeli Axis**

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The April 10, 1996 statement issued by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and circulated in Washington D.C. on behalf of Ankara by its public relations counsel Fleishman-Hillard Inc., was at pains to explain that a military agreement signed in late February between Turkey and Israel was nothing more than an innocuous "military training" accord and that it had no secret agenda aimed at third countries. "This agreement", among others, the statement read, "which is similar to agreements that have been enacted with many other countries and specifically encompasses military training is not aimed at any third country." <sup>1</sup> Concluding the statement emphasized that,

It is wrong to think that Turkey, who has always been in favor of peace, stability and comprehensive cooperation to the benefit of all peoples in the region - where the main problems and conflicts continue - would create new concerns and further divisions. We believe that Turkish-Israeli cooperation, which does not target any third country, will contribute to regional peace, stability, as well as to the furthering of the Middle East peace process and to the environment of cooperation which is expected to dawn with the finalization of this process.

The Turkish government found it necessary to issue this written statement as well as offer numerous and often contradictory explanations, bilaterally and publicly to its Middle Eastern neighbors, most of whom make either extremely perturbed or outright hostile to what they considered as an unprecedented alliance between a Muslim country and the state of Israel. Egypt referred to the accord as a "dangerous example" that posed a "danger for the region" and that it could lead to instability and possibly war. Iran denounced Ankara for bringing "Zionism to Iran's door", for standing against the Arab and Islamic world and for providing facilities "to the Zionist regime ... that are against the vital interests in the Islamic world and the region." Syria called on Turkey to reconsider the accord which it described as dangerous "not only for the neighboring countries, but for the security of Islamic countries." With the notable exception of Jordan, reactions were similar throughout the Arab world. According to the deputy secretary-general of the Cairo-based Arab League, the agreement was directed against Arab countries and it was a sign "that Turkey and Israel both have ill intentions toward the Arab world." <sup>2</sup>

Reactions within Turkey were more muted. But criticism of the accord came from Turkey's Islamic Welfare Party (Refah). N. Erbakan's party called it "a betrayal of fellow Muslim states," described it as marking a "strategic change" in Turkey's security policies, declared that the Turkish military initiated it on their own without consulting the civilians, and promised to challenge it. Criticism of the accord also came from prominent Turkish journalists and even by the country's coalition Prime Minister at the time, Mesut Yilmaz, although his remarks that the accord did more harm than good, were later denied by the Foreign Ministry. <sup>3</sup>

The attempt by Ankara, but also strongly by Jerusalem, to downplay the accord flies against evidence and actions over the last decade and a half that demonstrate a deliberate, slow and step by step policy by Turkey and Israel to improve their relations across the board. In these efforts Ankara and Jerusalem were often prodded and pushed by the US, especially officials in the Reagan Pentagon, as well as by non-governmental elites, especially businessmen in Istanbul, Jerusalem, New York and Washington.

Indeed what this paper will attempt to argue and demonstrate is that the recent accord between the two states is in effect a revitalization of the Jerusalem - Ankara axis which was forged, again with U.S. prodding and guidance, during the 1950s and which although downgraded by Ankara was never in effect broken. And that, mutatis mutandis what Turkey, Israel and their Atlantic partner and protector want today differs only in degree from their objectives in the 1950s. In short the intention is to dominate the oil rich region of the greater Middle East politically and militarily, with the supplementary support of insecure and weak regimes like for example that of the Hashemites in Jordan and of the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia. Access to the indirect control and the unhindered flow of oil to world markets from the greater Middle East region remains the strategic objective of the US today as it was during the fifties. <sup>4</sup> Just like in the 1950s Turkey and Israel have a vital role to play as satraps of US strategy. However it should be emphasized that this American strategy served their own regional goals and ambitions as well. <sup>5</sup> And whereas in the fifties communism and Arab nationalism (Nasserism) were contained and neutralized, this time around, the new threats are defined as emanating from Islamic radicalism, terrorism and the national ambitions of "rogue" states like Syria, Iran and Iraq armed with weapons of mass destruction. <sup>6</sup>

Let me commence by reviewing the background and circumstances that led to the recent Israeli-Turkish accord. To begin with the February accord although signed separately, is part and parcel of a number of economic and political agreements formalized during the March 11-14, 1996 visit of President Suleyman Demirel to Israel, the first ever by a Turkish head of state since the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948. <sup>7</sup> The others, designed primarily to bolster trade and investment that could lead to the establishment of a free trade zone between the two states and, depending on political exigencies, even to a customs union, are agreements setting the framework for economic cooperation, for the prevention of double taxation and protection of bilateral investments, and a free trade agreement similar to the one Turkey has with the European Free Trade Area countries.

The military accord entitled "the Agreement on Military Training Cooperation" was signed in Tel Aviv on February 23, 1996, by the Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maj. Gen (Res.) David Ivry and the Deputy Chief of the Turkish General Staff, Cevik Bir. The February agreement was complementary to an earlier one signed secretly on September 18, 1995, of the previous year in Tel Aviv entitled "Memorandum on Military Aircraft and Training".<sup>8</sup> And both these agreements are subject to the provisions of secrecy of yet another agreement signed on March 31, 1994, in Ankara, governing the confidentiality of these and subsequent agreements.<sup>9</sup> It is thus evident that by early 1994 relations between Israel and Turkey have advanced to such a stage as to require an agreement on confidentiality and secrecy in anticipation of a deepening relationship.

In so far as the Turks were concerned it should be noted from the outset that it was the military who negotiated, signed, provided public explanations and have been the most ardent defenders of the military accords with Israel. In fact, as noted earlier, domestic critics have accused the military of entering into military commitments with Israel above the government and the heads of civilian ministers.<sup>10</sup> Considering the pervasive role of the military in Turkish politics and in matters of national security, this means that Turkey's military and geo-strategic needs, apprehensions and regional ambitions played the decisive role in Turkish decision making. Any future decision therefore whether to further expand, freeze or cancel the accord, will be taken by the Turkish military and not any civilian authority. Thus however long the Islamists under Erbakan might be at the helm of Turkey's coalition politics, they will not dare take any measures that will substantially affect the nature of the accord as set forth by the Turkish military, unless the latter provides the green light.

The Turkish-Israeli military accords fall short of a conventional military alliance. But what has been revealed about them so far in Turkey, Israel and the U.S., suggests that the two states intend on establishing a comprehensive military collaboration that, with U.S. support, can in fact lead to a realignment of the power matrix in the greater Middle East region.

A key component of the accords concerns the mutual access to the airspace and bases of both countries by their respective forces for separate or joint airforce and naval training exercises, for refueling and emergency situations and for mutually agreed electronic surveillance flights. Other aspects include intelligence cooperation to counter "common enemies"; border security; exchanges of military know-how and joint military ventures; observation of national military exercises; military academy exchanges; and the establishment of a security forum for a strategic dialogue between Israel and Turkey.

The most controversial aspect of the accords involves the utilization of the vast Turkish airspace, bordering such countries as Syria, Iraq and Iran, by Israeli pilots for training. By mid-April 1996, Israelis were already training in the NATO-built training center at Konya, in Central Turkey. And at the base of Akinci near Ankara, a special area unobserved from the perimeter had been sealed off for their exclusive use. High level military visits also began in earnest. And despite denials from the Turkish side, at least one joint midair refueling exercise was conducted. Turkish pilots began training in Israeli Lavi fighters while joint naval exercises are envisioned.<sup>11</sup>

The training in particular of Turkish pilots in Israeli Lavis is taking place because the Israeli planes contain the same advanced avionics systems, including radar, electronic warfare and navigation systems, with which the 54 Turkish F-4 fighter bombers will be equipped in the context of a 600-650 million dollar, five year deal, between Turkey and Israel for the upgrading of the Turkish jets. The deal was initiated in April and is expected to be signed before the end of the year.<sup>12</sup>

The Israeli combat experience against Soviet made weapons systems, with which Turkey's potential enemies and in particular Syria are equipped, make this training as well as the upgrading of Turkish jets, of critical importance for Turkey's military. Beyond the joint training exercises, the high level military, political and non - governmental visits exchanged, as well as the spectacular rise in commercial and trade relations between the two states, of which more will be said later, by mid-summer a number of cases of cooperation could be cited, that are indicative of the secret agenda of the Israeli - Turkish accords. One such case is the supersensitive, for Turkey, issue of the Kurdish rebellion. According to Turkish and Western sources and press reports, during the April 1996 forays against Hezbollah basis in Lebanon's Bekaa valley, Israeli jets specifically targeted suspected bases of the Kurdistan's workers Party (PKK), the Kurdish guerrilla organization that has been waging an independence campaign against Turkey. The Turks have also been the recipients of intelligence data from western countries involved with Operation Provide Comfort and also from Israel, on Kurdish guerrilla operations within Turkey. On the basis of this intelligence Turkish troops supported by American supplied Super Cobra helicopters, engaged the Kurds in a fierce one week fighting at Saqqoze, near the Kurdish unofficial capital, Diyarbakir. The clashes which ended a four month old PKK unilateral cease fire, reportedly foiled plans for a PKK spring offensive, which PKK commanders had met to finalize.<sup>13</sup> Israel, it should be noted, possesses superior intelligence on Kurds because in the early seventies Israeli advisors, in collaboration with the C.I.A. and the Shah's SAVAK, operated clandestinely in the Kurdish mountains with Kurdish guerrillas against Iraq. When the Shah reached an agreement with Saddam Hussein in 1975, he and his Israeli and American partners abandoned the Kurds to the mercy of Hussein's butchers.<sup>14</sup> Besides the supply of intelligence on the activities of the PKK in the region, Israel, together with the U.S. are helping Turkey to electronically "seal" its borders with Syria, Iraq and Iran so as to stop Kurdish infiltration into Turkey. When completed this electronic fence will combine features found in the "security

zone" that Israel has established in Southern Lebanon and that set up by the US on its Mexican borders to stop the flow of Mexican "wetbacks" into the U.S. Israel's interests will also be served through this because with Turkey's cooperation it will be in a better position to intercept the flow of arms from Iran to the Hezbollah in Lebanon that is currently taking place along the Iranian - Turkish - Syrian border.

The military accords and the deepening, economic ties demonstrate the intention of the military and political elites in both countries to forge a strategic and economic relationship between them similar to the one that has long existed between the U.S. and Israel and like the one Turkey has been striving to achieve and has come very close to, with the U.S. In fact the U.S. has provided the links in the chain linking Israel, Turkey and the US in a triangular strategic nexus. Officials in Washington, especially in the Pentagon during the Reagan years and after, assiduously pushed the two countries together. So did conservative Jewish - American groups working with the Turkish legation in Washington and a number of prominent Turkish - American businessmen with business and blood connections with Turkish Jews in Istanbul and those who had settled in Israel. 15

Actually what these various interests have managed and what in fact occurred with the signing of the above-mentioned agreements, was the revitalization of the Jerusalem-Ankara axis that had been forged during the fifties and which had atrophied for some time but which had never been broken. It simply had been deliberately downplayed, mostly by the Turks, during the late sixties and seventies primarily on account of the Arab oil weapon.

Relations between Israel and Turkey flourished during the fifties. 16 Turkey was the first Moslem state to recognize the nascent Jewish state (March 28, 1949), the first to establish diplomatic relations and to sign a commercial agreement with it in 1950. By the mid-fifties both countries commenced a multi-level relationship, which included military and intelligence cooperation, that had continued ever since. 17

It was Israel which first sought and cultivated this relationship. Turkey was initially a "reluctant" recipient but it later responded enthusiastically as in fact it does today. Israel, in a hostile environment, courted Turkey in the context of its strategy for survival, a key ingredient of which was its "peripheral strategy" of forging alliances with non-Arab and non-Muslim states and peoples like Iran, Ethiopia, Christian Sudan (non-Muslim Africa), Christian Lebanon, the Kurds and the Copts. 18 The Israelis furthermore viewed Turkey as a critical listening and intelligence post and set up one of their most active missions there. They also recognized the importance of "marrying" Israeli know-how with the Turkish economic potential and pushed hard and successfully in that direction emphasizing the complementarity between the economies of two states. These geostrategic and political reasons are just as relevant today as they were then.

Turkey, on the other hand, sought the relationship with Israel for a number of interrelated reasons. Prominent among them was to carry favor with its western allies, especially the US, and to utilize the Israeli /Jewish influence with western centers of power to further promote its determined policy to join NATO. It should be noted that most NATO members, including the US, were initially opposed to Turkish NATO membership. It should also be noted that the Israeli government and especially its Ankara legation were well tuned with the nuances of Turkish domestic and foreign policy concerns and apprehensions and did act with the appropriate tact and sophistication in promoting Turkish objectives in Washington. 19 At Turkey's request the Israeli government was also mobilized to help Turkey obtain financial credits from international financial centers, at a time when Ankara was facing serious economic and financial difficulties which were compounded on account of the notoriety it acquired as a bad debtor. 20

The cooperation between Israel and Turkey during the fifties was as comprehensive as it could be. It covered all aspects of relations between states including the most vital one: military and strategic cooperation. This cooperation climaxed in 1958 with the signing of a secret military pact by Prime Minister D. Ben-Gurion and his Turkish counterpart A. Menderes, on 29-30 August, during a secret visit by Ben-Gurion to Ankara. 21

At the time the US has also acted as a catalyst. The Eisenhower doctrine for the Middle East had been proclaimed, US marines had landed in Lebanon and the US had been busy setting in motion a coalition and contingency plans for an invasion, yes, of Iraq. 22 The Kassemite anti-western coup that occurred there in 1958 had wrecked the pro-Western Bagdad Pact. Turkey and Israel were active partners in this American venture. It was then that they concluded their secret pact. The two countries had also agreed to joint military action and to act as proxies for the west if Aden (South Yemen) succumbed to Egyptian subversion something that would have endangered the oil tanker routes. 23 The 1958 Israeli-Turkish pact committed the two countries to cooperate in the military and intelligence fields, including mutual military training; to exchange technological and technical know-how, with the Israelis helping the Turks in agriculture, industry, the building of airports (an offer was discussed to help finance and build an oil pipeline from then friendly Iran to Turkey which the Shah ultimately vetoed because it made Iran dependent on Turkey); to help secure financial credits for Turkey; and to utilize Israel's world wide connections, including at the United Nations, to counter Greece on the Cyprus issue. 24

The Israeli-Turkish relationship was gradually downgraded during the sixties with the rise of anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism in Turkey, which included the kidnapping and murder of Israeli diplomats. Other factors included the 1967 Israeli conquest of Arab lands, including East Jerusalem, and especially the rise of Arab oil power. This relative shift in the balance of power in the Middle East, coupled with Turkey's isolation in the UN following its 1974 attack against Cyprus, forced Ankara to rediscover its Moslem and Arab brothers, the Organization of Islamic Conferences and other virtues of its Islamic past that Kemal Attaturk has jettisoned. 25 Ankara downgraded its relations with Israel,

especially with symbolic acts like demoting its diplomatic representation, voted against Israel at the UN, presumed to become the protector of Moslem Holy Places in Jerusalem and never recognized the latter as Israel's capital.<sup>26</sup> But the strategic axis remained in place.

The revitalization of the Israeli-Turkish relationship, ushered with the recent agreements, actually commenced in 1979-81, despite the fact that in 1980, for example, relations between Israel and Turkey appeared to have reached rock bottom because of the Knesset decision to declare Jerusalem as its eternal capital. The 1980 Turkish coup put an end to anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism which had made the 20,000 or so Turkish Jews extremely nervous and raised apprehensions in Israel. The fall of the Shah in 1979 destroyed an important strategic ally of the US and of Israel and a competitor, and too often, an antagonist of Turkey for western aid, arms and attention. The US had lost its most important guardian of Middle East oil, while Israel an equally important asset. Israel, it should be said in passing, had also forged, in the context of the periphery strategy, a strategic alliance with the Shah, the full extent of which had been revealed in documents that the Iranian mullahs publicized after the fall of the Shah.<sup>27</sup>

In this context and especially because of apprehensions in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in late 1979, that the Soviets may move against Middle East oil wells, Turkey emerged as the centerpiece of US geostrategy for the region. Instrumental in promoting Turkey for this role was the late Chicago Professor Albert Wohlstetter, a strategist, better known for his contributions in the realm of nuclear strategy and deterrence. In various writings, many classified under contracts with the Pentagon or for Pentagon contractor RAND Corporation, Wohlstetter argued incessantly for the upgrading of Turkey in US strategy and its arming with the most sophisticated US weapons in order to perform a series of roles: as a bulwark against Soviet communism, as a US staging post for Middle East contingencies and as a strategic ally of Israel. This was the Wohlstetter doctrine for Turkey.<sup>28</sup>

One of Wohlstetter's students, and for a while son-in-law, was an aggressive young man with family roots in Russia, Richard Perle. It was under Richard Perle's tutelage, as Assistant Secretary of Defense, that Turkey became the central linchpin for US geostrategy up until the end of the Cold War. Perle implemented to an iota Wohlstetter's Turkey doctrine. Billions of dollars in weapons and aid began to pour in Turkey. Most importantly, Turkey's southeastern regions bordering with Iraq, Iran and Syria were militarized and turned into staging posts from where the US Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) could be deployed to counter threats to US interests and of course against the oil fields. Airfields at Batman, Erzerum, Bitlis and Mus were built to NATO specifications and equipment was propositioned there for contingency action.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time Perle signed a series of agreements with the Turkish military and organized and institutionalized a Turkey Watch Group within the Pentagon that is still functioning today. Finally, in close coordination with the Turkish military regime and its diplomatic legation in Washington, Perle set in motion a sophisticated program to educate US legislators on the strategic importance of Turkey and the benign role of Turkish power in the region. This active role of the US government in supporting and promoting Turkey, coupled with a persistent lobbying and public relations campaign lavishly financed by Ankara in the American capital, achieved the desired results.<sup>30</sup> Contributing towards this end were the endeavors of individual and non-official groups referred to earlier and in particular of conservative Jewish-American groups which worked together with Turkish and Turkish Jewish elites primarily in Istanbul, New York, Washington and in Israel proper.

Evidence that the Jerusalem-Ankara axis, until its recent revitalization, was never broken is supplied by at least two serious events. Before the rise of Kurdish nationalism, the most serious threat faced by Turkey was posed by Armenians determined to avenge the near extermination of their nation at the hands of the Young Turks early this century and the unwillingness of Kemalist Turkey to acknowledge the genocide. The Armenians shadowy group, the ASALA, had began a campaign that cost the lives of over thirty Turkish diplomats in the mid-seventies world wide. ASALA's operational base was in Lebanon. During the 1982 Israeli campaign against Palestinians in Lebanon, Israeli forces overran many guerrilla bases including Armenian ones. Israel passed captured intelligence on Armenians to Turkey which the latter utilized accordingly.<sup>31</sup>

The most important evidence, however, had been the collaboration of Israeli and Turkey with the US in the Iran-Contra affair i.e., the illegal selling of US arms to the mullahs of Iran with the profits from the sale used to buy arms for the guerrillas fighting the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, again in violation of US law.<sup>32</sup> This was orchestrated by the Reagan Administration as far back as 1982. By 1985 an airbridge involving the US Israel and Turkey was in operation supplying arms to Iran. Unmarked Israeli and US planes carrying TOW missiles and Hawk anti-aircraft batteries flew a northwest vector from Israel to the Mediterranean in Cyprus's airspace, then northwest into the Kurdish areas of eastern Turkey. Their final destination was the Iranian city of Tabriz where they unloaded their cargo. Communications' silence was maintained throughout the trips and on occasion the planes made stopovers at the newly-constructed Pentagon bases in eastern Turkey. This Turkish-Israeli role in the Iran-Contra affair hardly received any attention and was only indirectly addressed in the Iran-Contra hearings that took place in the US Congress in the late eighties.<sup>33</sup> A number of other developments during the 1980s also speak to the underlying strength of the relationship between Jerusalem and Ankara, which was not warranted by the downgraded level of diplomatic relations. Reference has already been made to the Israeli-Turkish cooperation targeting ASALA. But the whole question of the Armenian genocide is considered taboo in official circles in Israel and so much so that the matter is not permitted to be mentioned "in any government-controlled media or government-sponsored activities."<sup>34</sup> Under pressure from the Turkish government that threatened

the safety of Jews in Turkey, the Israeli government mounted a vigorous, but ultimately unsuccessful campaign, to cancel an international conference on genocide in Tel Aviv in 1982 because the Armenian genocide was on its agenda.<sup>35</sup> In February 1986 the Israeli navy shot up the Turkish merchant boat Laros I, killing her captain. It also arrested the crew on the charge of smuggling. There was hardly a protest from Turkey.<sup>36</sup> In September of the same year the largest Jewish synagogue in Istanbul, Neve Shalom was bombed. Twenty Turkish Jews, including seven rabbis died in the attack. No arrests were ever made and both Turks and Israelis went out of their way to downplay the incident.<sup>37</sup> Within a short period of time a letter-bomb campaign targeted numerous recipients in Israel again without repercussions in Turkish-Israeli relations.<sup>38</sup> The long and bloody Palestinian intifada also passed with Turkey confining its protests to verbal condemnation of Israel. And there were hardly any Israeli reactions when Ankara recognized, in November 1988, the declaration of Palestinian statehood.

Finally, three other events are worth noting which can be seen as direct precursors to what happened between Israel and Turkey in the nineties. Both countries officially gave their endorsement and supported, materially and otherwise, the efforts by various groups in Turkey, Israel and the US to jointly celebrate the 500th anniversary in Turkey and Israel of the decision of the Ottoman Sultan Beyazid, to welcome to his domain the Jews expelled from medieval Spain. The celebration took place with much fanfare in 1992. In 1988 and 1989 there were finally two significant press reports, portends of things to come. In March 1988 Jane's Defence Weekly reported that Israel had already closed an arms deal with Turkey worth USD 2 billion and that an agreement that, inter alia, included the modernization of Turkey's F-4E fleet would be announced soon.<sup>39</sup> This deal is implemented today, after a hiatus of many years, with the modernization of Turkey's F-4E jets as its centerpiece. The other report, which appeared in the Israeli press, was that Turkey would permit the participation of Israeli firms in grand project involving agricultural development in Southeastern Turkey where its gap program was underway.<sup>40</sup> The official Israeli participation, which had begun then, today has mushroomed into an important project involving Israeli and Turkish joint ventures in agro-economics.

The Israeli-Turkish relationship, now in the open, but kept in an opaque state for so long, emerged revitalized on account of a number of developments. By far the most important has been the demise of the Cold War and the emergence of the US, Turkey's and Israel's strategic ally, as the world's preponderant power. This US preponderance was matched by the waning of Soviet/Russian and Arab power, which traditionally threatened Turkey and Israel. The reduction of the strategic vulnerabilities of both countries has permitted them, especially Turkey, to dismiss and/or disregard reactions from the Arab/Moslem world, something Turkey could ill afford to do in the not so distant past. Both countries now have the luxury to reveal their long standing relationship with anodyne costs.

The Middle East peace process and the normalization of relations between key Arab states and Israel, has also provided the appropriate context for Turkey, in particular, to justify in Moslem eyes her relationship with Israel. In the context of the peace process, Turkey is also keenly concerned of a possible rapprochement between Israel and Syria. By cementing her relations with Israel, Turkey can hope to affect the evolution of relations between Israel and Syria and especially preempt any developments that can affect the regional balance of power at her expense.

There is finally another dimension in the Israeli-Turkish relationship that may well involve a secret bilateral agenda between them that does not involve the U.S. <sup>41</sup> If this turns out to be the case, and there is evidence pointing in this direction, Israel and Turkey may end up antagonizing and even frustrating U.S. policies in the region. While the end of the Cold War brought considerable benefits to both Israel and Turkey, both countries found their role as strategic assets in the security policies of the US, reduced with Turkey the biggest loser. The Israeli-Turkish alliance serves the additional purpose of compensating for this loss of strategic weight by both country's vis-a-vis the U.S. Again this is more true for Turkey than Israel with Turkey "using" its special relationship with Israel to win battles with those in the U.S. Congress who look askance at her policies on a number of issues including Cyprus, Greece the Kurdish issue and human and political rights. Turkey also sees Israel as a state possessing advanced weapons technology that has no scruples providing it to Turkey, in contrast to a lot of European countries, including the US, which implement a selective arms, embargo against Turkey on account of her behavior at home and abroad. <sup>42</sup>

If Israel and Turkey, embolden by their combined strength prove unwilling to come to peace terms with their neighbors, and if the U.S. is serious about addressing the problems of peace in the wider Middle East, then one can anticipate problems between the U.S., Israel and Turkey in the future. Problems may also arise, irrespective of the peace process, if Israel undercuts U.S. arms business in Turkey by outbidding U.S. arms suppliers while using U.S. technology granted to it on license by the U.S. for its own exclusive use. <sup>43</sup>

Be that as it may, whether the current Israeli-Turkish relationship will reach the ambitious levels envisioned by its architects in Israel, Turkey and the U.S. remains to be seen. In the strategic level, it will remain strong and will maintain and enhance its special characteristics, some of which have been referred to earlier. But it is unlikely to reach the level of planned joint military action in the region, analogous to the one that existed in the fifties when such action was planned in furtherance of their national interests or when the two states were acting as proxies for the West. The Israeli-Turkish axis will be weakened considerably if the peace process yields results on the Israeli-Syrian front and if the much talked about rapprochement between Iran and the U.S. takes place. If the U.S. and Iran re-establish relations this would also mean that the mullahs would have to put their hostility against Israel on ice. <sup>44</sup> The re-entry of Iran into the politics of the region as a legitimate player will change once again the strategic map of the wider Middle East and will take much of the steam out of the Israel-Turkish alliance. But it will not cancel it.

Beyond the military relationship, the political and especially the business elites in Israel and Turkey 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 exchange 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 US dollars. These funds reportedly are sought from a consortium of Japanese banks.

Irrespective of whether all these projects may come to fruition or not, critical political decisions have been taken in Jerusalem and Ankara that set Israeli-Turkish relations apart from others in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Enemies and antagonists of both states in the region must include the Jerusalem-Ankara axis in their foreign policy calculus, bearing in mind, as well, the instrumental role played by the U.S. in forging it. On the other hand and inevitably, the enemies and antagonists of Israel and Turkey will try to counterbalance this alliance of the two strongest powers of the region, by counter-alliances and alignments. The history of the region speak to the fact that any attempt at hegemony by one state or group of states is doomed to failure.

1. See, "Turkey's Military training Cooperation Agreement with Israel." Press statement for Immediate Release issued in Washington D.C. April 10, 1996, by Fleishmann-Hillard, Inc., registered foreign agents in the U.S. for the government of Turkey.

2. For the Arab, Iran and Muslim reactions, see generally The Turkish Daily News, April 9, 1996. The Washington Times April 10, 1996; The International Herald Tribune, 27-28 April 1996; The Chicago Tribune May 22, 1996; The Wall Street Journal, May 30, 1996; The Washington Post, June 2, 1996 and The International Herald Tribune, June 17, 1996.

3. See The Turkish Daily News, May 23, 1996 and Zaman (Turkish) May 22, 1996.

4. See generally, Melvyn Leffer, A Preponderance of Power: National Security, The Truman Administration and the Cold War. (Stanford :Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 79-81 and 237-9.

5. Cf. Townsend Hoopes, The Devil and John Foster Dulles (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), pp. 413-4); Dwight D. Eisenhower, Waging Peace, 1956-1961 (Garden City : Doubleday and Company, 1965)

6. Cf. Rober Stephens, Nasser: A Political Biography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971) cf. also.

7. For the critical background to relations between the two countries, see Amikam Nachmani, Israel, Turkey and Greece (London :Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1987) pp.13-82) For the recent developments see Turkish Probe March 15, 1996 and April 12, 1996. See also Marios L. Evriviades , "Israel and Turkey: Long Latent Alliance Now - Flaunted", The Cyprus Weekly, June 21-27, 1996 and idem, Η Πρόσφατη Συμφωνία Ισραήλ - Τουρκίας: Πολιτικοστρατιωτική Σημασία και Επιπτώσεις, (Αθήνα : Εταιρία Κοινωνικών και Οικονομικών Μελετών -EKOME, Ιούνιος 1996.)

8. See Turkish Daily News, June 5, 1996.

9. The February 23, agreement was leaked by the Turkish Islamists to the Islamic magazine Aksion, on May 18-24, 1996. From there it was reprinted in Israeli and Arab newspapers and also publicized by the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service.

10. See Turkish Daily News

11. See Turkish Daily News, June 5, 1996

12. See *ibid.*, June 11, 1996. See also Alan Makovsky, "Turkish-Israeli Cooperation, the Peace Process, and the Region ", Policy Watch, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, No.195 (April 26, 1996)

13. See Turkish Probe April 12, 1996. See also The Turkish Daily News, May 8, 1996 and The Economist, May 11, 1996, p.34.

14. The extend of the abandonment of the Kurds by their erstwhile allies the Israelis, the Iranians and the Americans was first revealed in the 1975 Pike Committee Hearings in the US House of Representatives held to investigated the abuses of U.S. intelligence agencies.

15. Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Policy Richard Perle was a key player in this regard. See below. On the pro-Turkey lobbying activities in Washington, see Spyros Vryonis Jr. The Turkish State and History (Thessaloniki:The Institute of Balkan Studies,1991), pp.89-131.

16. See Nachmani , pp.3-82.

17. This was formalized in 1958 with a wide ranging military pact .See below.

18. On the Israeli peripheral strategy, see Nachmani. See also Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, The Israeli Connection (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), pp. 8-18 and 188-192 and Dan-Raviv and Yossi - Mellman, Every Spy a Prince (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Company 1990), pp. 76-94.

19. For details see Nachmani ,pp.43 - 82

20. *Ibid.* pp.53-54.

21. *Ibid.* pp. 74-76 for details. To ensure no leaks, Turkish diplomats acted as waiters in a luncheon between the two leaders.

22. Cf. Eisenhower, Hoopes and Stephens and also Wilbur Crane Eveland, Ropes of Sand (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1980) *passim*.

23. Nachmani , p.75.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-70 and 98-101.

25. Cf. George E. Green, "Dynamic Progress in Turkish - Israeli Relations," Israeli Affairs, Vol. 1 No 4 (Summer 1995), pp. 47-50.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Cf. Uri Bialer " The Iranian Connections in Israel's Foreign Policy 1948 -1951, The Middle East Journal, Volume 39, No. 2 (Spring 1985 ), pp. 292-315. See also the still classified March 1979 CIA Report, Israel: Foreign Intelligence and Security Services, which was kept on file in the U.S. embassy in Iran and was made public with other documents by the Iranians after the 1979-80 embassy takeover. This document contains details of the Israeli - Turkish - Iranian cooperation (Trident agreement ) and was reproduced in the American magazine Counterspy, vol. 6, No. 36 (1987).pp. 34-57.

28. For details see, Euripides L. Evriviades, "The Evolving Role of Turkey in U.S. Contingency Planning and Soviet Reaction", Study submitted to the John F. Kennedy School of Government, January 1984.

29. Ibid. Cf. also Richard Perle , " Turkey and U.S. Military Assistance " in George S. Harris, editor, *The Middle East In Turkish - American Relations* (Washington: The Heritage Foundation and The Foreign Policy Institute of Ankara, 1985), pp. 23-27. When he resigned his post in 1988, Perle became a paid agent of influence or lobbyist, for the Turks for a substantial amount of money. See, John J. Fiaka, "Former Defense Official Creates Firm to Lobby in Washington for Turkey", *The Wall Street Journal*, February 16, 1989.
30. See Vryonis.
31. See below.
32. See Murat Yetkin, "Turkey and Israel Start Afresh", *Turkish Probe*, November 18, 1993, p.2. See also Gruen, p.59.
33. Cf. Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating the Iran - Contra Affair , 100th Congress ,1st session H. Rept., No. 100-433, S. Rept., No 100-216. U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), passim.
34. See Beit -Hallahmi, p.17
35. See "Parley on genocide in Doubt; Pressure by Turkey Reported", *The New York Times*, June 2, 1982 p. A1 and "Genocide Seminar, Opposed by Israel, Opens", *The New York Times*, June 22, 1982.
36. See *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, Vol.6 (April 1988).
37. Cf. Sami Cohen, *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 10, 1986 and Harut Sassounian, "Who killed the 21 Jews in Istanbul Synagogue?" *The California Courier*, September 18, 1986.
38. In a two day period eight letter bombs were mailed to Israel from Turkey. *The Jerusalem Post* December 31, 1987.
39. See, *Jane's Defense Weekly* March 9, 1988 cited in "Hugh Arms Deal with Turkey," *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, Vol.6 (April 1988).
40. Ibid. Actually private Israeli interest had become active in agriculture ventures in the region in the early eighties.
41. There is a school of thought in both Turkey and Israel that has no faith in the U.S. and the West and fears abandonment by both. Therefore the argument goes, Turkey and Israel, who do not have friends must stick together.
42. This US practice is also seen amongst European countries such as Switzerland, Sweden and Austria who at various times embargoed arms for Turkey because they had been used against civilians in the Kurdish war.
43. This is a recurrent irritant in U.S. Israeli relations and if the world wide arms business continues to shrink, this problem will no longer be contained and Israeli business with Turkey may be where it may surface.
44. Cf. "Possible Washington-Tehran Dialogue?" *Cosmos* Vol. II No. 4 (November- December 1997)