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**THE TURKEY-U.S.-ISRAEL TRIANGLE: 1991-2001**

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**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE TURKEY-U.S.-ISRAEL TRIANGLE: 1991-2001**

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During the Cold War, Turkey's main focus was on the perceived Soviet threat from the north. Turkey became one of the countries most deeply affected by the end of the Cold War. In the 1990s, Turkey pursued an activist foreign policy course, which was encouraged by a variety of factors. Especially the Middle East has become the region that Turkey's active and assertive foreign policy practices are most profoundly seen. Turkey's full backing for U.S. efforts in the Gulf War and building of close ties with Israel in this new era were outcomes of this assertive foreign policy course.

The United States mostly realized the great importance of Turkey and its diverse strategic roles in the post-Cold War period. Although the two countries had different approaches and conflicting interests on some issues, where the Middle East became the region on which the most conflicting views came out, Turkey and the U.S. were mostly harmonious on various subjects. Developing close relations with Israel was among the major foreign policy orientations of Turkey. Both countries have benefited from this rapprochement and even they had some different approaches to some matters, positive outcomes of this strategic partnership have been more prominent. The triangular relationship between Turkey, the United States, and Israel had positive effects on the region and has been a very important force for maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East for a while. But one must keep in mind that it is not enough to assume that close ties in the past will assure smooth relations in the future. Strategic relations mean sharing plans, but this did not turn out to be the case for the triangular relationship in the long-run.

**Keywords: Turkey, the U.S., Israel, triangle, strategic partnership, foreign policy.**

## ÖZET

### TÜRKİYE-A.B.D.-İSRAİL ÜÇGENİ: 1991-2001

CIRIK, H. KAYIHAN

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Soğuk Savaş süresince Türkiye, kuzeyden algıladığı Sovyet tehdidine odaklanmıştı. Türkiye, Soğuk Savaşın sona ermesinden en ciddi etkilenen ülkelerden biri oldu. Doksanlı yıllarda, Türkiye, çeşitli etmenler tarafından desteklenen aktif bir dış politika çizgisi takip etti. Orta Doğu, Türkiye'nin bu aktif ve iddialı dış politika uygulamalarının en çok görüldüğü bölge oldu. Türkiye'nin Körfez Savaşında Amerikan çabalarına tam destek vermesi ve bu yeni dönemde İsrail ile yakın ilişkiler kurması, bu iddialı dış politika uygulamalarının sonuçları idi.

Amerika, Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde Türkiye'nin sahip olduğu büyük önemin ve çeşitli stratejik rollerin farkında vardı. İki ülke bazı konularda farklı yaklaşımlara ve çatışan çıkarılara sahip olmalarına rağmen, ki Orta Doğu üzerinde en fazla uyuşmazlığın ortaya çıktığı bölge olmuştur, Türkiye ve Amerika çok sayıda konu hakkında genellikle uyum içerisinde olmuştur. İsrail ile yakın ilişkiler geliştirmek, Türkiye'nin önde gelen dış politika uygulamalarından olmuştur. Her iki ülke bu yakınlaşmadan fayda elde etmiştir ve bazı konulara farklı yaklaşımlar da bu stratejik ortaklığın olumlu sonuçları daha belirgin olmuştur. Türkiye, Amerika ve İsrail arasındaki üçlü ilişkinin bölge üzerinde olumlu etkileri olmuştur ve bu ilişki Orta Doğu'da barış ve istikrarın sağlanmasında bir süre önemli bir güç olmuştur. Fakat unutulmamalıdır ki, geçmişteki yakın ilişkiler, gelecekte de ilişkilerin iyi olacağını farz etmek için yeterli değildir. Stratejik ilişkiler, ortak planlara sahip olmak anlamına gelir fakat üçlü ilişkilerde uzun dönemde durum böyle olmamıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, A.B.D., İsrail, üçgen, stratejik ortaklık, dış politika.**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout the Cold War, Turkey's main focus was on the perceived Soviet threat from the north. Turkish foreign and security policy attitude was limited to a few basic but difficult and crucial issues, namely to contain Soviet power, to protect Turkish interests in relation to Greece and Cyprus, and to maintain and strengthen ties with the West in general and with the United States in particular. Moreover, somewhat less critical but still important were issues of furthering Turkey's integration with Western Europe and, during the latter part of the Cold War, defending against terrorism supported by neighbors like Syria, Iraq, and Iran. The Turkish Republic pursued a policy of neutrality and non-alignment, through the Atatürk era, which seemed to fit Turkey's objectives in the conjuncture. Turkey focused its energy on internal development and sought to avoid foreign tensions that could divert it from that goal. It remained neutral almost all of World War II, but joined the allied side only in the last days with the conclusion already decided. Stalin's post-World War II claims on Turkish territory pushed Turkey to an alliance with the West. Later, in the mid-1960s, Turkish foreign policy experienced another change and Turkish policymakers started to reorient their foreign policy away from excessive dependence on the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The end of the Cold War and the superpower competition together has had important effects on global and regional politics. Turkey was among the countries most deeply affected by the end of the Cold War and rapidly changing international environment, particularly the transformation of the political and

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy", *SAIS Review*, (Winter-Spring1999), pp.92-113, and *Insight Turkey*, 1:2 (April-June1999), pp.3-21.

strategic landscape of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the outbreak of brutal ethno-national conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus, and the changing environment in the Middle East. These developments drastically changed Turkey's foreign policy environment, creating opportunities to expand its role while also presenting new risks and challenges.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1990s, Turkey pursued an activist foreign policy course, which was encouraged by a variety of factors. The upsurge of political instability, war and ethnic conflict in the vicinity of Turkey, in the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans stimulated Ankara to become involved in these regions. Especially the Middle East has become the region that Turkey's active and assertive foreign policy practices are most profoundly seen. Turkey's full backing for U.S. efforts in the Gulf War and building of close ties with Israel in the 1990s were outcomes of this assertive foreign policy course. As Criss and Bilgin stated, Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East has always been regarded as an extension of its pro-Western foreign policy. Besides its Middle Eastern aspects, the new Turkish-Israeli rapprochement has also strengthened this general feature, particularly regarding Turkey's relations with the United States.<sup>3</sup>

In line with these considerations, by this thesis, it will be attempted to find and provide answers to the following questions:

1. How and why did Turkey's foreign policy alter in the post-Cold War era regarding its surrounding regions in general and the Middle East in particular?

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<sup>2</sup> Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: the Challenges of Multi-Regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1, (Fall 2000), p.169.

<sup>3</sup> Nur Bilge Criss, Pinar Bilgin, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East.", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 1:1, (January 1997).

2. How and why Turkey's foreign policy alterations affect Turkish-American relations in the new era?
3. What are the motives and interests behind the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement?
4. What were the implications of the Turkish-American-Israeli strategic partnership in the Middle East?

This study begins, in Chapter I, with the evaluation of the Turkish foreign policy alterations in its surrounding regions in general, and in the Middle East in particular. After a brief summary of Turkish Foreign policy during the Cold War, the reasons of new policies of the country in the post-Cold War period will be explained. While pursuing prudent policies in some regions like the Caucasus and Central Asia, and supporting multilateralism in others like in the Balkans, Turkey has pursued an assertive activism in the Middle East. Turkey's new foreign policy course also had effects on its relations with the United States.

Chapter II will explain the Turkish-U.S. relations after the disappearance of the common challenge. Following a short review of the history of Turkish-U.S. relations, effects of the end of the Cold War on the relations will be made clear. Redefinition of Turkey's geo-strategic significance and areas of divergence and convergence between the two countries will be examined. While the Middle East became the region on which the most conflicting views came out, developing close relations between Turkey and Israel was among the major foreign policy orientations of Turkey.

The Turkish-Israeli rapprochement will be evaluated in Chapter III. Important changes and developments in the 1990s as well as appropriate

conditions that emerged after the Gulf War, which gave Turkey the opportunity to shape its Middle East policy freely and attempts to get closer to Israel, will be discussed. Improving relations between the two countries on both civilian and military domains plus motives and common interests will be studied. The Turkish-Israeli relations have important linkage to the United States which also needed to be examined.

Then, Chapter IV will examine the triangular relationship between Turkey, the United States and Israel. U.S. interests in Turkish-Israeli relations, approaches of the three countries to the challenges of Iran, Iraq, and Syria and triple exercises conducted by Turkey, the U.S., and Israel will be scrutinized. And implications of the triangle will be clarified, given the available data.

This study was formed in four interrelated chapters, where reasons of Turkey's new foreign policy course and in turn its affects on Turkey's relations with the United States and Israel as well as the trilateral relations between these three countries were examined.

The methodology used in this thesis relies primarily on a descriptive analysis of resources. The resources used are primary sources, including treaties and transcripts of government policy statements, and secondary resources such as scholarly and journal articles.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA AND ACTIVIST POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST**

#### **1.1. Turkish Foreign Policy during the Cold War**

During the Cold War era, Turkey's security was mostly shaped by its location as a neighbor of the Soviet Union. Its foreign and security policy attitude was relatively restricted and obviously dominated by the country's role in the containment of Soviet power. There were also some essential but difficult and vital subjects; namely, the protection of Turkish interests in relation to Greece and Cyprus, and maintaining and strengthening ties with the West, particularly the United States and NATO. Additionally, somewhat less critical but still important were issues of furthering Turkey's integration with Western Europe and, during the latter part of the Cold War, defending against terrorism supported by neighbors like Syria, Iraq, and Iran.<sup>4</sup>

To start with, a brief outlook of the evolution of Turkey's foreign policy strategy will be beneficial. The international status and borders of the Turkish Republic were established by the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 24 July 1923 which also provided the basis for the creation of the climate of peace and stability needed by the country. Since then, Turkish foreign policy guided by well-known principle "peace at home, peace in the world" attributed to the founder of the modern Turkish state, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. This was reasonable for a country in the middle of fundamental reforms and development with its geographical location. The Turkish Republic put an end to expansionist foreign policy of its

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy* (Washington D.C: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), Introduction.

predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, abstained from getting involved in the turbulent affairs of neighboring regions and concentrated mostly on domestic issues. In this perspective, the primary objectives of Turkish foreign policy were to establish and to develop friendly relations with all countries, particularly with neighboring ones; to promote and to join regional and international cooperation; to resolve disputes through peaceful means and to contribute to regional security, peace and stability.<sup>5</sup>

During the Atatürk era, Turkey's international course was neutrality and non-alignment which appeared to fit its objectives in the conjuncture. The Turkish Republic was mainly focused on internal structuring to strengthen its statehood, to create a strong, modern state which could preserve its territorial integrity and political independence, and further to make Turkey a full, equal member of the Western community of nations. Atatürk concluded a series of treaties with neighboring states aiming to form a security belt on its western and eastern borders. Turkey played a leading role in the establishment of the Balkan Entente of 1934 and the Saadabad Pact of 1937. The Montreux Convention for the Turkish Straits was also signed in 1936.<sup>6</sup>

Turkey remained neutral during almost all of the Second World War, joined the allied side only in the concluding months of the war with the result already decided. In the aftermath of World War II and the development of a

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<sup>5</sup> See Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu, "Turkey's Security and the Middle East", *Foreign Affairs*, 62:1, (Fall 1983).

<sup>6</sup> *Balkan Entente*, formed by Turkey, Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia on 9 February 1934, to protect the borderline in the Balkan states, aimed at developing cooperation among these states and aimed at Bulgaria which was following a revisionist policy in the region; *Saadabad Pact*, formed by Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, in 1937 with the principle of non-interference in each others' affairs; *Montreux Convention*, on 20 July 1936, re-established Turkish sovereignty over the Straits, with full right to remilitarize the zone, Ankara thus gained a heightened sense of international security in a period of growing distrust of collective security and non-aggression pacts.

bipolar international system, foreign policy decision-making in Turkey became widely defined by the role Ankara played in the international system. In 1945, Moscow abrogated the Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Neutrality and Nonaggression of 1925 and demanded the return of Kars and Ardahan provinces, as well as military bases along the İstanbul (Bosphorus) and Çanakkale (Dadanelles) Straits. Unsurprisingly, this crisis led Turkish politicians to realize the seriousness of the threat coming from the Soviets, and pushed Ankara toward alliance with the West.<sup>7</sup>

In this new bipolar international system, neutrality could no longer guarantee the security and integrity of the Turkish state. Therefore the policymakers recognized that they would only be able to prevent Moscow's demands if Turkey had Western support for its defense, and Ankara shifted from its previous policy of neutrality. With the Truman Doctrine of 1947, Washington supplied considerable amount of military and financial assistance to support Turkey's efforts in opposing Soviet claims. Later in 1950, in order to prove its commitment to the West, Turkey actively got involved in the Korean War and contributed troops to the Allied coalition mission. As a result Turkey joined NATO in 1952. The Balkan Pact of 1954 and the Baghdad Pact of 1955 were also developments related to Turkey's alignment to the West. For the next four decades, Turkish security policies were basically conducted parallel with NATO's strategies, namely containing the Soviet threat.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Yasemin Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), pp.xi-xiv.

<sup>8</sup> *Balkan Pact*, treaty of alliance, political cooperation, and mutual assistance between Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia, was signed on August 9, 1954, in an atmosphere in which Yugoslavia had tense relations with Soviets; the *Baghdad Pact*, also referred to as 'Middle East Treaty Organization', was signed on February 24, 1955 between Turkey and Iraq, later UK, Pakistan, and Iran, finally with Iranian signature in November 1955, joined. This involved cooperation for

Two exceptions to this situation were the eruption of the Cyprus crises of 1963-1964 and 1973-1974. With the purpose of protecting and ensuring the security of the Turkish Cypriot community during the bi-communal violence in Cyprus, Turkey decided to intervene in the island but US president Lyndon Johnson sent his famous letter of 1964, warning Turkey to stop preparations for an intervention and threatening Turkey that it could not trust US protection if Soviets were involved in the conflict. The thought that Turkey could find itself isolated on security issues, forced policymakers to begin to reorient their foreign policy away from excessive dependence on the United States, and starting a rapprochement with Moscow. In 1974, after a coup staged against Makarios with the objective of forming union with Greece, Turkish troops intervened and undertook military operations, opposing the advice of the US. Then the US Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey that would last until 1978.<sup>9</sup>

The mid-1960s was the time when the international environment was changing as a result of *détente*, and the hostilities between the superpowers were rather subsided. Turkish policy makers, in this period, were able to give more emphasis to developing relations with Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union. Turkey felt itself more capable of producing foreign policy behaviors independent from American interests whose effects could be seen in 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars. In 1963, Turkey became the Associate

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security and defense and refraining from any form of interference in one another's internal affairs, took the name Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) after Iraq left in 1959.

<sup>9</sup> Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal*, 52:1, (Winter 1998), pp.41-42.

Member of the European Economic Community, the forerunner of the European Union, and established strong economic ties with member states.<sup>10</sup>

Despite these brief alterations in foreign policy manner, developments by the end of the 1970s, namely Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution, the so called second Cold War, led Turkish policy makers to reassess ties with the West. For most of the Cold War period, for that reason, Turkey remained loyally Western oriented in its foreign policy course.<sup>11</sup>

Another important element of Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War period was the effort to stay out of the unstable affairs and politics of the Middle East. Saadabad Pact of 1937, with the principle of not interfering in each others' affairs, was a successful example of how Turkey's foreign policy kept itself away from the Middle East.<sup>12</sup> There was a brief period in which Turkish policymakers wandered away from their established pattern. Turkey joined the Baghdad Pact and the succeeding Central Treaty Organization with the desire of having a leadership position. But the effectiveness of the pact had undoubtedly been questionable. All through the 1950s, Turkish foreign policy was obviously a product of pro-Western alignment, and its foreign policy purposes reflected Turkey's fears that the Soviet Union was enlarging its influence over Middle Eastern countries. Throughout the rest of the Cold War era, Turkey stayed out of the conflicts of the region.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Yasemin Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), pp.48-50.

<sup>11</sup> Nur Bilge Criss, Pinar Bilgin, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East.", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 1:1, (January 1997).

<sup>12</sup> Nur Bilge Criss, Pinar Bilgin, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East.", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 1:1, (January 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Mustafa Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Changing Patterns and Conjunctures during the Cold War", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36:1, (January2000), pp. 113-114.

Turkey's foreign policy challenges during the Cold War were risky and posed real dangers, besides the threat of nuclear destruction shared by all NATO allies. Conversely, the Cold War also imposed a certain amount of order, regularity, and predictability. As a NATO member, Turkey's long border with the Soviets and its short one with another Warsaw Pact ally, Bulgaria, remained calm. With the likely exception of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, direct hostilities with the Soviet Union or the Warsaw Pact were unlikely during the Cold War. For the duration of the Cold War period, Turkey's regional environment had presented more stability than it did in the Post Cold War era. The Balkans were controlled by Tito's rule in Yugoslavia and by the power that the Soviet Union implemented over most parts of the region. The Caucasus and Central Asia were under strict control of Moscow. The Middle East was a source of instability but unlikely to provoke an actual war.<sup>14</sup>

Why did Turkish foreign policy change its track from the policy of neutrality of roughly the first two decades after the foundation of the Republic? The first reason was that there was a change in the nature of the international system which developed from a 'balance of power' structure to a 'bi-polar' one, in which a policy of neutrality was not very rational or possible in any way for a country like Turkey. The other reason was that the Soviet Union came out as a superpower and had claims upon Turkey. Besides, the victory of the Western democracies and Turkey's belief in this system, and economic needs of the country, a remarkable change in the Turkish political structure, namely the

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<sup>14</sup> Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy* (Washington D.C: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), Introduction.

transition to a multi-party system, and economic needs were other reasons for Turkey to choose the Western course.<sup>15</sup>

A different question is why did Turkish foreign policy experience another change in the mid 1960s? The Cyprus question came out as the most substantial factor leading to the reassessment and diversification efforts of Turkish foreign policy. The 1964 Cyprus crisis and the Johnson letter were regarded as the turning point. The *détente* process and the following softening of inter-block tensions were the other reasons. Furthermore, Turkish leaders' realization that their firm adherence to a pro-Western alignment in a period of changing international system had left Turkey nearly isolated in the world, led to the changes in Turkish foreign policy.<sup>16</sup>

In the post-Cold War era, Turkey faced no existing threats, but even though there was no fear of nuclear war, its neighboring region was more complicated than the previous era. Undoubtedly, there were growing numbers of regional problems Turkey faced in the new era. Turkey was directly involved in some different, if overlapping, regions: Western Europe, the Balkans, the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Caucasus-Caspian complex, Central Asia, and the Black Sea. This new post-Soviet world was still full of threats and also opportunities for Turkey. In addition, the removal of the Soviet Union's influence from the Arab world has given more flexibility to Turkey's Middle Eastern policies.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Mustafa Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Changing Patterns and Conjunctures during the Cold War", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36:1, (January 2000), pp.106-110.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.115-130.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy* (Washington D.C: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), Introduction.

## **1.2. Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era:**

### **1.2.1. General**

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the world witnessed remarkable changes. These were; the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, collapse of totalitarian regimes, emergence of new independent states, Gulf War, reunification of Germany, spread of pluralist democracy and free market economies, especially in Europe, and the end of the bipolar system and East-West rivalry. Additionally, new threats to security emerged, such as ethnic nationalism, irredentism, religious fundamentalism and international terrorism, causing regional instability and conflicts.<sup>18</sup>

The end of the Cold War and the superpower competition together has had important effects on global and regional politics. In this new era, all states sought to adjust to the new international realities. Turkey was among the countries most deeply affected by the end of the Cold War and rapidly changing international environment, particularly the transformation of the political and strategic landscape of Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the outbreak of brutal ethno-national conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus. These developments drastically changed Turkey's foreign policy environment, creating opportunities to expand its role while also presenting new risks and challenges.<sup>19</sup> With the increase in the number of Turkey's neighbors, new independent republics, forgotten kindred, and brother republics had entered into the area of

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<sup>18</sup> See [www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr), the official web site of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkish Foreign Policy".

<sup>19</sup> Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: the Challenges of Multi-Regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1, (Fall 2000), p.169.

interest of Turkish foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, some internal developments, namely the intensification of the Kurdish problem and the strengthening of political Islam that increased tension on Turkey's political and social order, made the difficult task of adjustment to the post-Cold War international system even more challenging for Turkey than for most other countries.<sup>21</sup> In other words, Turkey has not come out from the Cold War with a sense of increased security.<sup>22</sup>

Many people had guessed that the end of the Cold War and the removal of the Soviet threat would diminish Turkey's strategic importance for the West in general, and the United States in particular. But the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait gave Turkey a chance to secure its strategic position in the new international environment, and to reassert its role and importance in the new era.<sup>23</sup> To meet the challenges of this period, Turkey altered some of its established Republican foreign policy principles and assumed new initiatives. Ankara's attempts had been described by Makovsky as a policy of "new activism", and by Müfti as the policy that presented both "daring and caution".<sup>24</sup> Without a doubt, Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s was considerably more activist and self-confident in the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. On the other hand,

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<sup>20</sup> Şule Kut, "Türkiye'nin Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dış Politikasının Anahatları", (The Mainlines of Turkey's post-Cold War Foreign Policy), in Gencer Özcan, Şule Kut, (eds.), *En Uzun Onyıll (The Longest Decade)* (İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları, 1998), p.45.

<sup>21</sup> Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: the Challenges of Multi-Regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1, (Fall 2000), p.169.

<sup>22</sup> Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal*, 52:1, (Winter 1998), p.33.

<sup>23</sup> Yasemin Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy* (Westport, Connecticut: Preager, 1999), p.119.

<sup>24</sup> Alan Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy", *SAIS Review*, (Winter-Spring1999), pp.92-113, and *Insight Turkey*, 1:2 (April-June1999), pp.3-21; and Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal*, 52:1, (Winter 1998), pp.32-50.

this did not mean to give up the traditional Turkish approach to international and regional affairs that can be described as moderate and cautious.<sup>25</sup>

In order to understand the reasons for alterations in Turkish foreign policy, its security environment, in the new era should be glanced at briefly. At the centre of a huge landscape, Eurasia, stretching from Europe to Central Asia, Turkey is surrounded by neighbors with whom it has had problematic relations and concerns. These concerns were primarily related to four neighboring countries, namely, Greece, Syria, Russia and Iran. Turkey has territorial disputes with Greece. In addition to the well known Cyprus and Aegean problems between the two countries, new ones came out in the post cold war period. In June 1995, the Greek Parliament ratified the international Law of the Sea Treaty, paving the way for an extension of territorial waters to 12 miles, which Ankara threatened war if Greece implements the 12-mile limit. Moreover, Greece's support to Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the crisis of the islet of Kardak, called İmia by Greece, in 1996, and further the crisis with the Greek Cypriot government regarding the air defense missile system (S-300) in 1996-97, worsened relations between the two countries. Syria, as well, is another neighbor with which Turkey has territorial disputes. Damascus has longstanding claims on Hatay (*sancak* of Alexandratta) province, has been against the construction of dams on the Euphrates River, and provided safe heaven to PKK.<sup>26</sup>

Two other neighbors can be labeled as Turkey's rivals on the issue of having influence over the Caucasus and Central Asia. Turkey had concerns

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<sup>25</sup> Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: the Challenges of Multi-Regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1, (Fall 2000), 169.

<sup>26</sup> Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal*, 52:1, (Winter 1998), pp.34-36.

about Russia's manipulation of regional conflicts to draw the former Soviet Republics back into its sphere of influence. The two countries were also in disagreement over the question of how the Caspian oil was to be exported. Chechen and Kurdish issues were subjects of tension between Turkey and Russia. Regarding Iran, on the other hand, there is a competition between Turkey's secular republicanism and Iran's Islamic revolution. Existence of Azerbaijani Turks, which compose one third of Iran's population, is also a factor boosting up Tehran's concerns.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, Ankara's suspicion of the unreliability of its Western Allies, as an historical legacy of Turkish foreign policy, had played an important role in shaping Turkey's new policy orientation. Some events that shaped and strengthen the suspicion of Turkey were, as mentioned above, the Jupiter missile crisis, even if for the wrong reasons, the Johnson letter, and the US arms embargo.<sup>28</sup>

The reasons for Turkey's more assertive policies were different and overlapping. Economic growth, due to the major reforms which were undertaken in 1980, and the growing prosperity have differentiated Turkey from many of its neighbors and created a sense of self-confidence. In addition, by increasing its defense expenditures, Ankara upgraded its military equipment to have a more efficient military and the increase in military capacity gave Turkey the ability for power projection into adjacent regions. In contrast, especially three of its traditional rivals, namely, Russia, Iraq and Syria have experienced severe weaknesses in military strength in the 1990s. Syria has not been receiving

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<sup>27</sup> Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal*, 52:1, (Winter 1998), pp.36-40.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.41-42.

advanced weaponry free of charge from Moscow, and has not been able to modernize its equipment. Similarly, Iraq's military was badly damaged in the Gulf War, and sanctions imposed on the country reduced its ability to get new equipment. Besides the weakening of these states, Turkey no longer shared a border with Russians for the first time in centuries. And Iran might be added to the list as a weakening neighbor who had troubled economy after an eight-year war with Iraq in the 1980s. Another reason was that the new era created new regional opportunities for Turkey with its ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic ties to the neighboring regions of the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Central Asia and the Middle East. And finally, by the end of the Cold War and the restraints it imposed, Turkey felt a greater sense of policy independence.<sup>29</sup>

Another factor also affected the process of Turkey's new policy orientation which is the changing dynamics of the Turkish foreign policy decision making. Traditionally, Turkish foreign policy was determined by the prime minister, foreign minister and the military. In the 1990s, the presidency had come out as a key player, beginning with President Turgut Özal (1989-93), actually as a consequence of the 1982 Constitution.<sup>30</sup>

On some matters, mainly the ones relating to Middle East, specifically, northern Iraq, Syria and even Cyprus, in Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey implemented policies that were daring and risky. But, on others, regarding the ethnic and national conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus, Turkish activism

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<sup>29</sup> Alan Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy", *SAIS Review*, (Winter-Spring 1999), pp.94-100.

<sup>30</sup> Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy* (Washington D.C: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000).

was visibly cautious and modest, despite significant public pressure for greater military aid to struggling Muslim and Turkic communities.<sup>31</sup>

### **1.2.2. Assertive Activism in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean:**

The Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean have become regions where Turkey's active and assertive foreign policy practices are most strongly seen. As mentioned before, Turkey has continuously pursued cautious and modest policies toward its southern neighbors, with the exception of a brief period in the mid-1950s, because of a number of worries. With its center of attention on the Soviet threat from the north, Turkey had been concerned about the possibility of being drawn into regional conflicts, and some regional countries' close ties with the former Soviet Union had restricted Ankara's actions during the Cold War period.<sup>32</sup>

But the Gulf Crisis marked the beginning of a new period in Turkish foreign policy toward the region. Turkey became one of the first countries to ally with the United States against the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in August 1990, and joined the United Nations coalition. Later, in the first week of the crisis, Turkey closed the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik oil pipeline in line with the UN embargo.<sup>33</sup> When the air war against Iraq commenced on January 18, 1991, the Turkish government allowed American military aircraft to use the Incirlik Air Base for air

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<sup>31</sup> Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: the Challenges of Multi-Regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1, (Fall 2000), pp.169-170.

<sup>32</sup> Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: the Challenges of Multi-Regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1, (Fall 2000), p.170.

<sup>33</sup> Meltem Müftüler, "Turkey's New Vocation", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 22:3, (Spring 1999), p.6.

strikes into Iraq and deployed Turkish troops alongside the Iraqi border to intimidate Saddam Hussein about the possibility of two-front war. The main reason for Ankara's direct involvement in the Gulf War was President Özal's desire to protect Turkey's role and strategic importance in the post-Cold War era where its traditional geo-strategic position against Soviet expansionism would no longer be of great value to its Western allies. The decision to become so engaged in the crisis was made almost totally by President Turgut Özal. Nevertheless, many among the Turkish political and military elites were similarly concerned that involvement in the Allied coalition would cause Turkey to undergo unnecessary threat from Iraq with which Turkey shares a long border. Foreign minister Ali Bozer's and Defense minister Sefa Giray's resignations from their cabinet positions in October 1990 were followed by the resignation of Chief of Staff, Gen. Necip Torumtay, in December, because of his disagreement with Özal's personalized way of policymaking.<sup>34</sup>

Turkey's participation in the Gulf War had some positive as well as some negative effects. The United States and the European Community expanded the value of Turkish textile quota, the US contributed additional military and economic assistance and also influenced Egypt to buy Turkish manufactured F-16s, and furthermore Turkey's role in the Gulf War highlighted the value of the Turkish alliance to the West and Turkey's geopolitical importance. On the negative side, Turkey lost quite a lot of money in rental revenue that it had been earning before the war, from the pipeline that carried Iraqi oil to the Mediterranean. Moreover, Turkey and Iraq had been close trading partners prior

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<sup>34</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, "Güvenlik Kısacında Türkiye-Ortadoğu İlişkileri", (Turkey-Middle Eastern Relations in the Context of Security), in Gencer Özcan, Şule Kut, (eds.), *En Uzun Onyıl, (The Longest Decade)*, (İstanbul:Boyut Yayınları, 1998), p.330.

to the war but the United Nations sanctions imposed on Iraq affected this partnership negatively.<sup>35</sup>

Another negative development for Turkey was the establishment of the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq as an outcome of the Gulf War. As a result, the extension of Turkey's role in the Middle East continued after the Gulf War. The emergence of a power vacuum in this area enabled PKK to set up bases and camps to launch operations into Turkey. Ankara acted in response to the PKK's challenge and practiced active policies in northern Iraq while toughening its military counter-insurgency operations. Since then, Turkish military has mounted incursions into northern Iraq, trying to destroy PKK camps and pursue PKK militants. Later on, the basis of the Turkish foreign policy toward northern Iraq became to preserve the territorial integrity and the national unity of Iraq.<sup>36</sup>

As the regional consequences of the Gulf War, pan-Arab solidarity had been totally set aside, and the region had no longer been perceived as a mono-ethnic district merely composed of Arabs. The new vision of an enlarged Middle East, including Turkey, Israel, Iran and the Kurds, effected Turkey's perceptions deeply.<sup>37</sup> Syria, besides the aforementioned ongoing disputes, was playing the 'Kurdish card' in relations with Turkey, through its support for PKK operations. Egypt has been suspicious about Turkey's role as a rival in Middle Eastern affairs outside the Arab framework, because of Turkey's pro-Western stance. Jordan

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<sup>35</sup> Yasemin Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), pp.143-144.

<sup>36</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, "Güvenlik Kışkacında Türkiye-Ortadoğu İlişkileri", (Turkey-Middle Eastern Relations in the Context of Security), in Gencer Özcan, Şule Kut, (eds.), *En Uzun Onyıl, (The Longest Decade)*, (İstanbul:Boyut Yayınları, 1998), pp.335-337.

<sup>37</sup> Gencer Özcan, "Doksanlı Yıllarda Türkiye'nin Değişen Güvenlik Ortamı", (Turkey's Changing Security Environment in the 1990s), in Gencer Özcan, Şule Kut, (eds.), *En Uzun Onyıl, (The Longest Decade)*, (İstanbul:Boyut Yayınları, 1998), p.23.

has been open to a strengthened security relationship with Turkey, to some extent as an additional measure of assurance against its own insecure environment. Iran on the other hand has had regional weight and it was an energy producer and supplier for Turkey. But Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs are of considerable concern to Turkey, and Tehran's support to Hezbollah and PKK has worsened the relations between the two countries.<sup>38</sup>

In consequence of all the abovementioned developments, Turkey took some actions in accordance with its new foreign policy posture. One of these was Ankara's threat to use military force in case the Greek Cypriots deployed the S-300 surface-to-air missiles system in the southern part of the island. Ankara has considered Cyprus an important base for the security of Turkey's southern coasts and a key element in the defense of southern Anatolia. This includes the security of the oil traffic route from the Bay of İskenderun after a full resumption of Iraqi oil delivery through the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik oil pipeline or after the possible new flow to Turkey's Mediterranean shore from the Caspian basin. So Turkey reacted strongly to Greek Cypriot plans to acquire Soviet made S-300 missile system, and demonstrated its determination by military maneuvers in northern Cyprus that supposedly were training troops to destroy the missiles. After repeated Greek Cypriot rescheduling of the date of delivery from autumn 1997 to late 1998, Greek Cypriots and Greeks agreed to deploy the missiles in Crete. Turkey's threat to act disclosed a new assertiveness and confidence in its

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<sup>38</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "Turkey in a Changing Security Environment", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1 (Fall2000), p.191.

foreign policy, and may also be a sign of the changing military balance in the post-Cold War eastern Mediterranean.<sup>39</sup>

Another striking example was Turkey's decision to send a strong and decisive signal to Syria in 1998. Turkey showed its determination to follow its own policy on the Kurdish problem and threatened Syria to use military force if the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, were not expelled from his longtime refuge in Damascus. The Turkish military buildup along the border in early October 1998 convinced Syria about Ankara's seriousness. Having positioned most of its troops near the Israeli border, Syria would not have been able to resist a Turkish invasion. With the fear of engaging in a two-front war between Turkey and Israel, Damascus accepted the Turkish proposal. On October 19, 1998 the two countries signed an agreement in which Damascus pledged to stop its support for the PKK. The confrontation with Syria, which led to Öcalan's expulsion from that country, was an outstanding example of the transition from the foreign policy behavior of the Cold War period to a more active approach to issues that Turkish policymakers perceived to be critical to national security.<sup>40</sup>

But the effective role which the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement played in the examples given above should be kept in mind. Additionally, Turkish authorities charged Iran with giving the PKK logistic support and heartening its attacks inside Turkey. These occurrences brought tensions between the two countries while Iran rejected these accusations. It has even been rumored that

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<sup>39</sup> Heinz Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), pp.175-178.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

irritated Turkish government thought of a military attack on PKK bases in Iran in May 1995.<sup>41</sup>

At this point, it is necessary to mention the hostile alliances that appeared to encircle Turkey. In addition to Russia's treaties with Georgia in August 1992 and Armenia in September 1995, allowing Russian military bases on their territories, and the arms sales to Greek Cypriots, as mentioned earlier, Moscow concluded an agreement on military and technical cooperation with Greece in November 1995. Moreover, Russia stayed as the diplomatic ally and the arms supplier of Syria while relations between Iran and Russia were getting better. Greece, on the other hand, signed agreements with Bulgaria in the early 1990s for executing joint military exercises, concluded military agreements with Syria and Russia in 1995, and signed a military accord with Armenia in June 1996. Turkey watched the steps being taken by Greece to encircle Turkey militarily with concern.<sup>42</sup>

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, new countries and thus new neighbors appeared in the periphery of Turkey. The emergence of new regions of opportunity expanded the horizons of Turkish foreign policy and increased its alternatives. On the other hand, with the purpose of overcoming the troubles related to its neighbors, Turkey has found opportunities to strengthen its relations and create a security web with the countries on the

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<sup>41</sup> Kemal Kirişci, "Post-Cold War Turkish Security and the Middle East", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 2:1 (July 1997).

<sup>42</sup> Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal*, 52:1, (Winter 1998), pp. 40-41.

other side of its neighboring countries. Ankara's developing relations with Israel and Ukraine could be dealt with in this context.<sup>43</sup>

In the light of the developments mentioned above, and in the appropriate atmosphere created by the Oslo Agreement of September 1993, which was signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and by PLO's recognition of Israel, Turkey boosted its relations with Israel. In the first half of the 1990s, high-level Turkish and Israeli visits took place, including presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers. The signing of a military cooperation and training agreement in February was followed by a free trade agreement in March 1996. The conclusion of these agreements created an influential new alignment between the region's two strongest states; economically and militarily, which had important implications for regional balances of power. This strategic relationship was later reinforced by a number of developments in both military and civilian fields. Despite the fact that both countries repeatedly stressed that the military agreements were not directed against third parties, it was not welcomed by the Arab world, but this rapprochement presented Turkey several advantages. Turkey got a stronger deterrence capability against its problematic neighbors as it was proven in the crisis of Syria and Cyprus as mentioned earlier. The military agreement on defense industry has set up the legal framework for the transfer of military technology and know-how between the two countries. Israel also became an alternative source for Turkey's military weapons and technology when Turkey faced increased difficulties in obtaining sophisticated weapons from the US due

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<sup>43</sup> Gencer Özcan, "Doksanlı Yıllarda Türkiye'nin Değişen Güvenlik Ortamı", (Turkey's Changing Security Environment in the 1990s), in Gencer Özcan, Şule Kut, (eds.), *En Uzun Onyıllık*, (*The Longest Decade*), (İstanbul:Boyut Yayınları, 1998), pp.26-27.

to opposition from anti-Turkish ethnic lobbies and human rights groups in the Congress. Other than these principal purposes, additional considerations, such as intelligence sharing with Israel against the PKK, joint struggle opposed to terrorism and support from the Jewish lobby in Washington, also shaped Turkey's policy on Turkish-Israeli relations. By the end of the 1990s, the commercial and cultural ties between the region's two non-Arab, democratic and pro-Western states increased outstandingly as a result of military and security cooperation.<sup>44</sup>

### **1.2.3. Caution and Concern in the Caucasus and Central Asia:**

Another region where Turkey pursued an activist foreign policy was the post-Soviet South. Turkish policymakers, who had been looking for a new role for Turkey in the new era, viewed the dissolution of the Soviet Union as an important occasion, and the Caucasus and Central Asia became the center of Turkey's diplomatic efforts, reaching the highest point in the early 1990s. As Öniş asserted, the emergence of the Turkic Republics helped Turkey to break its sense of political and cultural isolation that originated from being neither Arab nor fully European.<sup>45</sup> Turkey tried to take advantage of its strong cultural and linguistic ties with the new independent states, quite the opposite of its Cold War policies, and became one of the first countries to recognize the new

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<sup>44</sup> Heinz Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), pp. 129-136, and Alan Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy", *SAIS Review*, (Winter-Spring1999), pp.100-102. See also Alan Makovsky, "Israeli-Turkish Relations: A Turkish 'Periphery Strategy'?", in Henry J. Barkey, (ed.) *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East*, (Washington D.C.: USIP Press, 1996), pp. 147-170; and Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente.", *National Interest*, 50 (Winter97/98), pp. 31-38.

<sup>45</sup> Ziya Öniş, "Turkey in the Post-Cold War Era: In Search of Identity", *Middle East Journal*, 49:1, (Winter 1995), pp. 48-68.

republics. Particularly, Turkey began to build independent ties to the Turkic-language states, initiated the organization of annual summits involving the presidents of Turkic Republics and Turkey, established air routes from Istanbul, started to transmit television broadcasts to the region, developed large scholarship programs for thousands of students to study in Turkish universities, trained Central Asian and Azerbaijani diplomats, and, of course, searched for regional commercial opportunities.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, Turkey had been promoted as a model for the Turkish Republics by the West in the early 1990s. The 'Turkish Model' was used to describe the characteristics of being secular in nature with a predominantly Muslim population, having a multi-party system with a parliamentary democracy and having a market-oriented economy and pro-Western values. The model was projected to these states as a guide for their transition. And the Turkic republics turned to Ankara as their mediator in integrating into the international political and economic system with the expectation of benefiting from Ankara's close ties with the US. Turkish policymakers, meanwhile, believed that closer ties with the new republics would improve Turkey's regional role, present Turkey new economic and business opportunities and prevent Russia and Iran from expanding their influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The possible alternatives to the 'Turkish Model' appeared to be an Islamic-based Iranian model or a return to Russian domination.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ziya Öniş, "Turkey and the Post-Soviet States: Potential and Limits of Regional Power Influence", *MERIA*, 5:2 (Summer 2001), pp. 67.

<sup>47</sup> İdris Bal, "Soğuk Savaş Sonrasında Türkiye'nin Uluslararası İlişkilerde Model Olarak Yükselişi ve Amerikan Onayı", (The Rise of Turkey as a Model in International Relations in the post-Cold War Era and the United States' Approval) *Avrasya Etüdleri*, 18 (Sonbahar-Kış2000), pp. 127-136

On the other hand, Turkish foreign policy in the post-Cold War era had another aspect that revolved around the cooperation axis. With the hope of playing a strategic role in international politics through cooperation with surrounding countries, Turkey led the formation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC). The aim was to promote regional economic cooperation and as a result peace, stability, security and prosperity in the area. Turkey also played a leading role in the formation of a Naval Task Force for the Black Sea (*Blackseafor*) that would respond to emergencies and environmental disasters. The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was another organization that Turkey has been a participant.<sup>48</sup>

But Turkey's efforts to expand its regional influence and to play a leadership role in the region came across some impediments. To begin with, the newly independent Republics were suspicious of Turkey's domination as an 'elder brother' and were in favor of more limited and equal relationship. There was also a considerable amount of Russian influence on the region causing the local leaders to consider the pressures and dangers coming from Moscow. Turkey's limited financial capacity and economic difficulties were also added to the previous ones. From the Western point of view, the 'Turkish Model' seemed

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<sup>48</sup> Meltem Müftüler, "Turkey's New Vocation", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 22:3, (Spring 1999), p.10-14. *BSEC*, was given birth by the signing of the Istanbul Summit Declaration and approval of the Bosphorus Statement on 25 June 1992. Eleven member states are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine; *Blackseafor*, was formed by the signing of an agreement in Istanbul on 02 April 2001, by six countries, namely Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and Georgia, with the purpose of strengthening of regional stability, friendship, good relationship and mutual understanding among the Black Sea littoral states. *Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)*, originally founded in 1977 under the name Regional Organization for Cooperation and Development (RDC) between Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, later replaced by (ECO) in 1985, and received seven additional members namely Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan in 1994.

to lose its significance after the realization that initial fears regarding Iran's influence had been exaggerated.<sup>49</sup>

The Caspian region has emerged as one of the largest energy supplies. The beliefs of the Turkish policymakers that the proposed East-West energy corridor for the transportation of Caspian oil and natural gas to Western markets would increase Turkey's strategic importance shaped Ankara's search for a greater regional role. So, Turkey became intensely involved in competition for the construction of pipelines and offered, the most direct, cost-effective in the long-run, technologically and environmentally feasible and safe option, namely the Bakü-Ceyhan pipeline, from the Caspian basin to the Mediterranean coasts of Turkey. However, the outbreak of ethnic and secessionist conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia and Chechnya boosted Turkish concerns about their negative influence on stability and energy security in the region. As a result of a number of developments, Turkish policy makers exercised caution in their relations in the region despite their initial activism.<sup>50</sup>

In order to understand the reasons of Turkey's cautious behavior, one should focus on Turkish-Russian relations. The economic relations between Turkey and the Russian Federation improved considerably in the 1990s. Despite the deepening relations in merely economic terms, overall relations between the two countries in the post-Cold War era have been characterized by significant friction and conflict. Immediately after the collapse of the USSR, through the early post-Cold War period, the Russian Federation primarily focused on internal problems of reconstruction and reform. But following 1993, Moscow gradually

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<sup>49</sup> Ziya Öniş, "Turkey and the Post-Soviet States: Potential and Limits of Regional Power Influence", *MERIA*, 5:2 (Summer 2001), pp. 68-69.

<sup>50</sup> Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: the Challenges of Multi-Regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1, (Fall 2000), pp.173-174.

concentrated on gaining hegemony again in the 'near abroad', namely the area ruled by the former Soviet republics. The basic aim behind the Russian policy toward its 'near abroad' was to keep the other countries like Turkey and Iran away from interfering in the region and Turkey was regarded as a greater threat than Iran, given Ankara's more assertive approach toward a number of former Soviet republics because of the aforementioned reasons. Frictions between the two countries had been worsened by the appearance of the pipeline competition. Russia was strongly opposing the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project and sought pipelines that travel through its territory to assure its regional hegemony in addition to the financial profits. As well, the attitudes of the two countries regarding each other's internal politics have also been a factor on rising tensions and instability. Turkey criticized Russian actions in Chechnya, influenced by its population who sympathized with their ethnic kindred in the area. However, Russia provided support over a long time for the Kurdish separatist movement in Turkey.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the fact that Turkey has not been sharing a border with Russia since the end of the Cold War, Ankara continued to view Russia with concern. The traditional Turkish-Russian rivalry, which has deep historical roots going back many centuries, contributed to Turkey's uneasiness, and supported worries about Moscow as a geo-political competitor and a source of regional risk. Despite the pressure from domestic sources, especially the public, Turkey refrained from getting involved militarily in the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict on the Azerbaijani side in the early 1990s. Turkey preferred to implement caution rather than challenge or risk in the ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus that could

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<sup>51</sup> Ziya Öniş, "Turkey and the Post-Soviet States: Potential and Limits of Regional Power Influence", *MERIA*, 5:2 (Summer 2001), pp. 69-72.

have brought it into a major conflict with Russia. In addition, the secessionist movements in Chechnya and Georgia had effects on Turkey's own Kurdish separatist problem. Ankara did not want to be in an unpleasant position of suppressing separatism at home while supporting it near its borders.<sup>52</sup>

#### **1.2.4. Multilateral Activism in the Balkans:**

There was a visible increase in Turkey's interest and involvement in the Balkans in the aftermath of the Cold War when compared to its relations in the previous era. This was a result of several regional developments. To start with, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and following violent ethnic and nationalistic conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, damaged regional stability. This also created a possibility that a major conflict could spread to Turkey. Another important development was that ethnic conflicts in the region resulted in a widespread attention and concern in Turkey because of the people who had ethnic ties to the region and had migrated from the various parts of the Balkans to Turkey over the years. Furthermore, Turkish-Greek rivalry and competition for regional political and economic influence was also a reason for Turkey's efforts to pursue a more assertive role in Balkan affairs in the post-Cold War era. Additionally, the overlapping policy objectives of the US and Turkey in the regional security issues became influential in assisting greater Turkish activism through multilateral, including participation in international peacekeeping operations, rather than unilateral, initiatives.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: the Challenges of Multi-Regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1, (Fall 2000), pp.174-175.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.175-176.

Initially, Turkey remained totally committed to the protection of the unity and the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, and criticized EU policies that appeared to encourage this process. Besides Ankara's worry about the potential for the escalation of regional tensions, Turkish policymakers opposed the fragmentation of Yugoslavia due to the concerns at home about its own territorial integrity on the face of the PKK-led insurgency, as with the secessionist movements in the Caucasus. However, Turkey's attitude changed as the circumstances altered. As the Bosnian war began and the Serbian ethnic cleansing policy against the Bosnian Muslims intensified, Turkey came out as an active player in support of Bosnia, and began to apply pressure for a strong Western response to stop the Serbian atrocities.<sup>54</sup> Ankara continuously urged its Western allies to take a determined stance to end the war quickly. Turkey was critical of the Western, especially the European powers' equivocation on the Bosnian crisis, and was in favor of launching a military intervention by NATO and imposing strong sanctions against Belgrade. Despite its sometimes aggressive rhetoric, Turkish policy makers cautiously avoided any single-handed activities and always made their policy parallel with the multilateral track. Exceptionally a member of both NATO and the Islamic Conference Organization (ICO), Turkey played a role in convincing NATO to step up its pressure on Serbia. So Turkey appreciated the US-led effort to end the violence through the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, and participated in the multilateral UN peacekeeping forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Philip Robins, "Turkish Foreign Policy" a lecture given in Madeleine Feher Annual European Scholar Lecture, [Online], Available: [http:// www.biu.ac.il/SOC/publications/mfa3.html](http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/publications/mfa3.html) [January 2003]

<sup>55</sup> Heinz Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), pp. 146-152.

Turkey's multilateral policy application in the Balkans continued with the escalation of the Kosovo conflict in 1998. Ankara's approach to the conflict between the Kosovar Albanians and the Serbs was remarkably more calm and controlled due to Turkey's opposition to secessionist movements and because of the concerns of the Turkish minority in Kosovo about being dominated by the Albanian majority. However, Turkey acquiesced to NATO's decision to use sanctions against Belgrade and contributed to both NATO's air campaign and subsequent UN peacekeeping forces in Kosovo.<sup>56</sup>

Until 1993, Turkish troops had not served outside of Turkey with the exception of Korea and Cyprus. But later, it has become an enthusiastic participant in multilateral peacekeeping operations both in its immediate region and distant. Since 1993, Turkish forces have participated in many peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations such as those in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, Georgia, Hebron (TIPH), Kuwait (the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission), Macedonia, and Pakistan (training Afghan refugees on mine-clearing).<sup>57</sup>

Turkey gave importance to the building of closer ties among the Balkan countries and to the creation of a stable atmosphere of understanding and peaceful cohabitation. It established working relations with all the states of the former Yugoslavia, including Serbia, developed close ties with Muslim Albania and with Macedonia. Turkey has launched major initiatives such as the

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<sup>56</sup> Heinz Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), pp. 152-154.

<sup>57</sup> Alan Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy", *SAIS Review*, (Winter-Spring 1999), p.104.

Southeastern European Cooperation Process (SEECP), and the Multinational Peacekeeping Force for Southeastern Europe.<sup>58</sup>

### **1.3. Conclusion:**

Turkey's activist foreign policy course in the 1990s was encouraged by a variety of factors. The upsurge of political instability, war and ethnic conflict in the vicinity of Turkey, in the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans, stimulated Ankara to become involved in these regions. Also, Turkish policymakers' efforts to show their country's geo-strategic importance to the West in the new era were effective in this course. Furthermore, some internal and external factors facilitated Turkey's efforts to expand its regional involvement. The economic progress of Turkey together with the modernization of its military, while its neighboring states experienced severe weaknesses in military power have been important factors in Turkey's ability to follow proactive and assertive policies on issues of vital national interest. The changing dynamics of the country's foreign policy making, namely the increased influence of the President and public opinion, were also effectual.

At the same time, post-Cold War developments such as the emergence of the Turkic republics in Central Asia, the Gulf War, and Caspian energy

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<sup>58</sup> See [www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr), the official web site of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Turkish Foreign Policy"; and Korkmaz Haktanır, "New Horizons in Turkish Foreign Policy", *Foreign Policy (Ankara)*, 22:3/4 (1998), pp.1-9. *Southeastern Europe Multinational Peacekeeping Force*, was formed in 1998 to participate in peacekeeping missions in the region, with the participants of Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, Italy, Romania, Macedonia, and Albania; *Southeastern European Cooperation Process (SEECP)*, founded in June 1996 under the name of *Process of Good Neighborliness, Stability, Security and Cooperation of the Countries of Southeastern Europe*, later took its current name. Full participant countries are Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Romania, observer countries are Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.

developments have created new opportunities for Turkey to play a larger role in several areas, while also giving Turkish policymakers self-confidence.

Turkey's main objectives have been to preserve its geo-strategic importance on the international scene, maintain stability in its neighboring regions, prevent ethnic conflicts from spreading to its territory, and gain new markets for its economic growth. But Turkish policymakers, while trying to reach their goals, carried out balanced policies between activism and caution.

To remind, undoubtedly, Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s was considerably more activist and self-confident in the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. On the other hand, this did not mean to give up the traditional Turkish approach to international and regional affairs that can be described as moderate and cautious. Especially the Middle East has become the region that Turkey's active and assertive foreign policy practices are most profoundly seen. As Criss and Bilgin stated, Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East has always been regarded as an extension of its pro-Western foreign policy. But, when compared to the major turning points of Turkish foreign policy, namely Turkey's participation in NATO in 1952, and its new course of developing multilateral relations after the mid-1960s, Turkey's assertive and active policy in the new era has to be regarded as the continuation of its traditional orientation, rather than a change. Whether it will stay on this course remains to be seen.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Nur Bilge Criss, Pinar Bilgin, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East.", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 1:1, (January 1997).

## CHAPTER 2

### TURKISH-U.S. RELATIONS: REDEFINITION OF TURKEY'S STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

#### 2.1. Cold War Origins of the Turkish-U.S. Relations

The arrival of the U.S. warship, *SS Missouri* in Istanbul, in April 1946, is often referred to as the symbolic event indicating the start of the bilateral relationship between Turkey and the United States. But even before, in the early 1920s, during the Turkish War of Liberation, Turkish leaders had sought U.S. cooperation attempting to counterbalance Britain in the region. However, because of the American policy of isolationism and lack of their interest in the area, official relations between the two countries did not even start until 1927.<sup>60</sup> Prior to 1945, the United States had been supporting Soviet demands to revise the Montreux Convention of 1936 regarding the Turkish Straits, a situation extremely worrisome for Turkish policy-makers. The situation deteriorated when Moscow abrogated the Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Neutrality and Nonaggression of 1925 and demanded the return of Kars and Ardahan provinces, as well as joint control of military bases along the Istanbul (Bosphorus) and Çanakkale (Dadanelles) Straits.<sup>61</sup>

However, when the United States realized the expansionist policy of the Soviet Union, Turkey's geo-strategic importance turned out to be an invaluable

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<sup>60</sup> February 17, 1927, signing of a *Modus Vivendi* concerning the establishment of diplomatic and consular relations between the two countries; October 12, 1927, the first American Ambassador to Turkey presented his credentials to the Turkish President.

<sup>61</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", in Barry Rubin, Thomas Keaney, (eds.), *Friends of America: US Allies in a Changing World*, (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp.185-193; also an earlier version of the article, *MERIA*, 2:4, (November 1998), pp.18-27.

asset for U.S. policy. The *USS Missouri* was conveying home the body of the late Turkish Ambassador to the U.S. who had died in Washington, DC, but its presence also served another purpose, to emphasize to the Soviet Union and to other nations the United States' support to Turkey against Soviet pressure and its concern about political instability in the region. Following the visit, Turkish-U.S. relations started and Turkey benefited from both the Truman Doctrine of 1947 and the Marshall Plan launched the following year. Then, especially with Turkey's contribution in the Korean War on the U.S.-led UN forces side, the United States supported Turkey's membership to NATO in 1952. During the following Cold War years, the two countries developed a close strategic relationship despite some fluctuations.<sup>62</sup>

Turkey and the United States raised their relations to the level of alliance with Turkey's membership to NATO and maintained their political and military relations in the NATO framework. What were the reasons for this alliance from both U.S. and Turkish perspective? From the Turkish point of view, there were three basic reasons. The first one was to ensure the country's security. As a result of Moscow's expansionist policy and territorial demands from Turkey in the aftermath of World War II, as mentioned above, Turkey began to regard the Soviet Union as a threat to its security. These events forced the Turkish leaders to seek U.S. military and diplomatic support against that threat. Another reason was Turkey's need for military and economic assistance. Efforts of modernizing its military and strengthening its economy were factors effecting Turkey's course. The third reason was about the ideological dimension of this alliance.

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<sup>62</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", in Barry Rubin, Thomas Keaney, (eds.), *Friends of America: US Allies in a Changing World*, (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp.185-186.

While emphasizing their country's democratic, secular and pro-Western characteristics, Turkish leaders considered the alliance as a means for their westernization project. Related to this fact is that the Turkish government, as of 1950, saw NATO membership as insurance for continuity in democracy. That is, since NATO would only embrace democratic countries. From the U.S. viewpoint, Turkey's geo-strategic importance was the main reason for the alliance. They saw Turkey as a barrier against Soviet expansionism toward the Middle East. Besides, the country had invaluable properties such as the Straits, numerically high armed forces, and the military bases which made it inalienable. That is to say, American leaders were mostly interested in preserving their interests.<sup>63</sup>

During the 1950s and the early 1960s, Turkish-American relations were in perfect harmony. These early years of the Cold War can be described as a 'golden age'.<sup>64</sup> Both countries were satisfied with one another. From Washington's perspective, Turkey was an effective ally for the Western interests in the Middle East. For Ankara, on the other hand, the U.S. was a necessary element guaranteeing Turkey's security and development. Turkish leaders gave so much importance to the alliance that Turkey supported and voted for all U.S. decisions in the United Nations and other international organizations. Ankara played the leading role in the formation of the Baghdad Pact in 1955, which was an extension of the U.S. containment policy in the Middle East, that later caused Turkey's alienation from the Arab world.<sup>65</sup> During the Suez Crisis of 1956,

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<sup>63</sup> Oral Sander, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri*, (Turkish-American Relations), (Ankara: AÜSBF Yayınları, 1979), pp.55-67.

<sup>64</sup> F. Stephen Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), p.163.

<sup>65</sup> The *Baghdad Pact*, also referred to as 'Middle East Treaty Organization', was signed on February 24, 1955 between Turkey and Iraq, later UK, Pakistan, and Iran joined, finally with Iranian signature in November 1955. This involved cooperation for security and defense and

Turkey supported U.S. attitude rather than backing the UK, its Baghdad Pact ally.<sup>66</sup> After the crisis, Ankara, again, gave unconditional support to the Eisenhower doctrine of defending the Middle Eastern states against the communist threat.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, although the US forces used Incirlik air base without informing Turkish staff beforehand, Turkey still supported U.S. intervention in Lebanon in 1958. The military *coup* of May 27, 1960 did not have a negative effect on Turkish-American relations initially, and Turkey maintained its support to the determined U.S. attitude in the Cuban crisis.<sup>68</sup>

The 1962 Cuban missile crisis, in which Washington decided to remove nuclear-capable Jupiter missiles based in Turkey in exchange of U.S.S.R.'s withdrawal of Soviet missiles in Cuba, was an important event in the course of Turkish-American relations. This event fostered doubt in the minds of the Turkish elites about the U.S. commitment to Turkish security. But İsmet İnönü the then-Prime Minister of Turkey handled the impacts of the crisis in as low a profile as possible. The crisis served to widen the gap between the Right and the Left. From that time, the relationship between the two countries has experienced intermittent reverses.<sup>69</sup>

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refraining from any form of interference in one another's internal affairs, took the name Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), in 1959 after Iraq withdrew.

<sup>66</sup> *Suez Crisis* was an armed conflict instigated by Israel, France, and UK on Egypt which was supported by the USSR, following the Egyptian President Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal. As a result of continued US and Soviet pressure, French, British and Israeli forces withdrew.

<sup>67</sup> The *Eisenhower Doctrine* was initiated on March 9, 1957, and asserted the right of the United States to employ force, if necessary, to assist any nation or group of nations in the general region of the Middle East requesting assistance against armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism. It resulted from the apparent increase in Soviet influence in Syria and Egypt and the threat of Soviet assistance to Egypt during the Suez Crisis.

<sup>68</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, (Turkish-American Relations)*, (Ankara: 21.Yüzyıl Yayınları, 2000), pp.102-136.

<sup>69</sup> Nur Bilge Criss, "Strategic Nuclear Missiles in Turkey: The Jupiter Affair, 1959-1963", *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 20:3, (September 1997), pp.97-122.

The 1961 constitution provided freedom for the press, created an opportunity for the public opinion to be articulated and foreign policy began to be debated for the first time. The most important event which inspired a sensation of anti-Americanism and questioning of NATO membership, though not at the state level, was American policy during the Cyprus crises of 1963-1964. When Turkey decided to intervene in the island with the aim of protecting and guaranteeing the security of the Turkish Cypriot community during the bi-communal violence in Cyprus, U.S. president Lyndon Johnson sent his infamous letter of 1964, warning Turkey to halt preparations for an intervention and threatened Turkey not to trust NATO protection if Soviets were involved in the conflict. The crisis further strained the relations between Turkey and the United States. The relaxation of Cold War tensions, *détente*, was another factor in Turkey's course. Turkish policy makers realized that Turkey's security interests and those of its allies were not necessarily in accord. Then, they began to reorient their foreign policy away from excessive dependence on the United States, and started a rapprochement with Moscow.<sup>70</sup>

After establishing more friendly relations with the Soviet Union in the mid-1960s, Turkish policymakers made some foreign policy decisions contrary to the desires of the United States. During the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars, Ankara did not allow the United States to use the bases in Turkey. But Turkey's foreign policy decisions were not totally opposed to the United States. In both wars the Americans were permitted to use the bases as communication stations.

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<sup>70</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, (Turkish-American Relations)*, (Ankara: 21.Yüzyıl Yayınları, 2000), pp.175-199.

Besides, the Americans carried out the evacuation operations from these bases during the Jordanian civil war in 1970 and the Iranian revolution in 1979.<sup>71</sup>

During the 1967 Cyprus crisis, the United States tended to follow a policy of supporting Turkey's situation. But later, another problem emerged as a source of disagreement between the two countries. Washington applied pressure on Ankara to cease the production of opium poppies, which the U.S. administration had concluded was a major source of the heroin that was illegally entering the United States. The above-party government, following the 1971 'coup-by-memorandum', accepted American demands and banned opium farming. Cultivation was resumed in 1974, by the new government, with new regulations designed to restrict the illegal drug traffic.<sup>72</sup>

Turkish-U.S. relations reached a low point in the mid-1970s, when the United States placed an embargo on arms supplies to Turkey. In 1974, after a *coup* staged against President Makarios with the aim of ridding the island of Turkish Cypriots and of forming union with Greece, Turkish troops intervened and undertook military operations. Then the US Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey in 1975, in response to the country's military operations. The Turkish government retaliated by suspending operations at all American-occupied installations in Turkey that were not clearly connected with NATO missions, and abrogated the 1969 Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA). Later, the embargo was lifted in 1978.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Yasemin Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), pp.49-50.

<sup>72</sup> Nur Bilge Criss, "A Short History of Anti-Americanism and Terrorism: The Turkish Case", *The Journal of American History*, 89:2 (September 2002), pp. 475-476.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476.

During negotiations over this issue, a new dynamic, which would continue to affect Turkish-U.S. relations in later years, became obvious. Whereas the executive branch of the United States government tended to have some sympathy for Turkey's position during the Cyprus crisis, and was not in favor of an embargo, the attitude of the Congress became increasingly unfavorable. After the Congress agreed to lift the arms embargo in 1978, the Ecevit government allowed resumption of operations at the United States facilities in Turkey.<sup>74</sup>

Developments by the end of the 1970s, namely the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, led Turkish policymakers to reassess ties with the United States. The two countries' ongoing strategic need for one another surfaced again as a result of abovementioned developments. In March 1980, Washington and Ankara reached compromises and signed the US-Turkish Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA).<sup>75</sup> After the *coup* of September 12, 1980, the military regime followed policies that were not different from the previous ones; moreover, it facilitated the improvement of Turkish-U.S. relations. The Americans, unlike the Europeans, did not criticize the military regime so much, due to the promise of returning back to democracy. They were also pleased with the fact that the coup had brought stability to the country, which was in the best interest of the Americans. In spite of the new

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<sup>74</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, (Turkish-American Relations)*, (Ankara: 21.Yüzyıl Yayınları, 2000), pp. 200-202.

<sup>75</sup> A *Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA)* was first signed on July 3, 1969 and renewed numerous times, consolidated various bilateral accords governing the US military presence in Turkey. Ankara abrogated the 1969 DCA on July 26, 1975, following the US arms embargo. On March 26, 1976, a new DCA was signed, but not approved by the Congress. Turkey lifted restrictions on U.S. activities in late 1978, after the end of the U.S. embargo. The two countries signed a *Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA)* on March 29, 1980 that established a new framework for U.S. military activities in Turkey and committed the U.S. to best efforts in providing defense support to the Turkish armed forces. The two countries signed an exchange of letters on March 16, 1987 to extend the agreement through December of 1990 and it continues to be extended on a year-by-year basis unless one of the two countries objects.

sense of cooperation between the two countries in the 1980s, there were still some conflicting issues. Turkish leaders were never fully satisfied with the amount of American military and economic assistance. They were not pleased with the 7:10 ratio of military aid allocation to Turkey and Greece. They also resented the Greek and Armenian lobbies that worked against Turkey in the Congress. The Americans, in the meantime, were discontented with Ankara's decision to give limited access to the American bases in Turkey. Plus, they were displeased with the declaration of an independent Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Turkey's recognition of this country. But, as a result, American leaders continued to attach great strategic importance to Turkey during the 1980s.<sup>76</sup>

## **2.2. Effects of the End of the Cold War on Turkish-U.S. Relations:**

The United States vacated most of its military bases in Turkey with the end of the Cold War. The U.S. decision was welcomed by the Turkish government because of domestic political reasons but the bases had been seen as a symbol of U.S. commitment to Turkey and Ankara realized that this decision has left Turkey without an important source of leverage over the United States. But more importantly, the Cold War's end itself created discomfort in the minds of the Turkish policymakers about the continuation of the strategic importance of their country in the eyes of its Western allies in the new era.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Yasemin Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), pp.62-63.

<sup>77</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), p.19.

The Gulf War, as mentioned earlier, became a watershed in terms of Turkish-American perceptions of the bilateral relationship. It gave Turkey an opportunity to reassert its geopolitical significance to the West in general, and to the United States in particular. Turkey became one of the first countries to ally with the United States in opposition to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in August 1990, and joined the United Nations coalition. Besides, Ankara let the Americans to use Incirlik airbase, the only remaining major U.S./NATO military base of strategic and military importance in Turkey, to launch air operations to bomb Iraq. The close cooperation between Turkey and the United States during the Gulf War was followed by the strengthened relations between the two countries in the aftermath of the crisis.<sup>78</sup>

The Gulf War demonstrated to the American policy-makers that Turkey could play an important strategic role outside the European area. Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) began as a humanitarian mission soon after the Gulf War, but shifted into an element of U.S. policy of containing and weakening Saddam Hussein.<sup>79</sup> OPC/ONW, based on Incirlik, became a chief and strong element in Turkish-American relations, and gave Turkey a new leverage on American foreign policy.<sup>80</sup>

Turkey's various strategic roles in the post-Cold War era were broadly realized by the United States. Turkey has been the sole example of secularism and democracy with its predominantly Muslim population, a pro-Western state in

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<sup>78</sup> Yasemin Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), pp.77-78.

<sup>79</sup> *Operation Provide Comfort (OPC)*, the Turkey-based, U.S.-led air operation that has enforced a 'no-fly' zone in northern Iraq almost since the end of the Gulf War (April 5, 1991-December 31, 1996) and it was renamed *Operation Northern Watch (ONW)* in 1997 (January 1, 1997-present). The *Hammer Force* is the Turkish nickname for the operation.

<sup>80</sup> Alan Makovsky, "Marching in Step, Mostly?", *Private View*, 3:7 (Spring 1999), p.32.

an area of instability, a supporter of Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and an important contributor to a possible normalization of Israeli-Muslim relations worldwide, a key element of Washington's Iraq strategy, and a base for Operation Northern Watch. In addition, Turkey has been a model, to some extent, for the Turkic Republics of the former Soviet Union, a bridge and line of communication between the region and the West, a buffer against possible Russian aggression toward the south, a rival against Russia for influence over the Caucasus and Central Asia, an ideological counterweight against fundamentalist Iran, an alternative to Russia and Iran as a possible gateway for Caspian energy resources, a powerful but peaceful supporter of besieged Muslims in its area, namely Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Bosnia and Kosovo, and a participant in Balkan peacekeeping.<sup>81</sup>

A close convergence of Turkish and American national interests existed in the post-Cold War era as it was the case during the Cold War years. This time the matter was no longer to restrain Soviet expansionism, but to ensure security, stability and prosperity in the Middle East, the Balkans and former Soviet Union republics.<sup>82</sup> In this new period Turkey obtained a unique position with its location at the center of regions that could affect the world system. Turkey was "...an island of safety in the middle of a sea of instability".<sup>83</sup>

Location means a potential for regional influence, but does not guarantee it. This geographic approach is a foundation concerning projection of military

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<sup>81</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), pp. 221-222.

<sup>82</sup> Meltem Müftüler, "Turkey's New Vocation", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 22:3, (Spring 1999), p.15.

<sup>83</sup> Nasuh Uslu, "1947'den Günümüze Türk-Amerikan İlişkilerinin Genel Portresi", (The General Description of Turkish-American Relations from 1947 to the present), *Avrasya Dosyası*, 6:2, (Yaz2000), p.223. [Author's translation]

power, lines of communication for resources and trade.<sup>84</sup> Turkey has been described as a 'pivotal state'. In addition to an important geographical location, key requirements are population and economic potential (military power might be added) for pivot status, and Turkey clearly qualifies by these measures. This outstanding pivot state position of Turkey also contributed to the improvement of Turkish-American relations in the post-Cold War era.<sup>85</sup>

In order to prevent confusion among the terms or concepts used in international relations, it will be helpful to clarify some of them. There are some terms, like, relationship, dialogue, cooperation, alliance, partnership etc. joined with many different adjectives, like, enhanced, special, strategic etc. Sean Kay, in his study, explains the term 'strategic partnership', which has been used to describe the relationship between Turkey and the United States, and he focuses on the two countries. After Turkey's membership to NATO, the two countries raised their relations to the level of alliance, which is described as "...a commitment by two or more states to provide one another with security guarantees in the event of an external threat or actual aggression." In recent years, Ankara and Washington began to characterize their bilateral relationship as a strategic partnership which "...enhances or justifies a close relationship between two states that seek mutual gains but whose interests may be competitive rather than shared." According to Kay, the phrase has been used to strengthen and broaden the Turkish-U.S. alliance and to emphasize a variety of

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<sup>84</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "Western Interests in a Changing Turkey", in Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, and F.Stephen Larrabee, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), p.57.

<sup>85</sup> Robert S. Chase, Emily B. Hill, and Paul Kennedy, "Pivotal States and U.S. Strategy", *Foreign Affairs*, 75:1, (January-February 1996), pp.37, 47-48.

shared long-term interests.<sup>86</sup> To make a broader summary, after being allies throughout the Cold War years, with the nature of the relations almost exclusively based on military cooperation, the two countries improved their relations in the post Cold War era while more explosive problems emerged. A new concept called 'enhanced partnership' was introduced in 1991, intended for expanding, deepening and developing the Turkish-American relationship. Later, in 1997, Ankara and Washington settled on formulating their mutual cooperation under a 'five part agenda', with the topics of energy, economy and trade, regional cooperation, Cyprus, and defense and security cooperation. In 1999, high level visits between the two countries, including presidents of both countries, paved the way for further enhancement of the relations. As of September 1999, the relationship between Turkey and the U.S. has been termed as 'strategic partnership'.<sup>87</sup>

### **2.3. The Areas of Divergence and Convergence:**

#### **2.3.1. Caucasus and Central Asia, Russia, Energy Security, Regional Economic Development**

A key point of convergence between the United States and Turkey, regarding the Caucasus and Central Asia, was that both have supported the emergence of democratic, secular, pro-Western regimes in the area and wanted to prevent the rebuilding of a Soviet/Russian Empire. Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize former Soviet republics and to support dynamically new

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<sup>86</sup> Sean Kay, "What is a Strategic Partnership?", *Problems of Post-Communism*, 47:3 (May-June 2000), pp.15-24.

<sup>87</sup> "Turkish Foreign Policy / Turkish-U.S. Relations" [Online], Available: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr> [March 2003]

regimes in Turkic republics, as well as Georgia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Macedonia and even Armenia, although it did not establish diplomatic relations with the latter.<sup>88</sup> In the early 1990s, Turkey's secularism, democracy, and market-oriented economy have been seen as a model of development for the Turkic republics of the former Soviet Union, which would have improved Turkey's international image and developed its relations with the West. But, as noted before, because of several reasons, such as, the lack of Turkey's financial means and resources, Russia's durable influence in the region, reluctance of the Republics to have a new 'big brother', and lack of their enthusiasm for the 'Turkish model', Turkey's efforts to expand its influence in the region proved to be limited. In addition, despite the inflated U.S. rhetoric, Washington's political and financial support has never materialized.<sup>89</sup>

On the subject of Russia, there has been a fundamental inconsistency in Turkish-Russian relations, in the post-Soviet era. The two countries have competed for regional influence in the new Eurasia which constituted a potential source of instability. On the other hand, wide-ranging economic relations between them created a remarkable bilateral partnership atmosphere which has generated significant Turkish-Russian interdependence and potential opportunity for reaching mutual trust. In the post-Cold War era, Turkey and Russia have mostly had conflicting interests. While Russia sided with the Serbs, Turkey has backed the Muslims of Bosnia and Kosovo in the Yugoslavia crisis, but this never became an issue between Turkey and Russia. Improved relations between Greeks, Greek Cypriots, and Russians created the impression of an evolving anti-

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<sup>88</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), p.20.

<sup>89</sup> F.Stephen Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), pp.100-101.

Turkish entente, while Russian sale of S-300 missiles to Greek Cypriots was another source of concern whereas the issue was resolved, as will be noted in the following paragraphs. Turkey and Russia were also on opposite sides of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Besides, Turkey's unilateral decree on traffic regulations in the Straits, Russia's claim of Turkey's support to the Chechens, Russia's noncompliance with the permitted ceilings of the treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) in the northern Caucasus, rivalry on Caspian Sea energy routes, question of granting political asylum to Abdullah Öcalan after his expulsion from Syria along with Russia's manipulation of Turkey's PKK problem, and the hijacking of the Turkish ferry *Avrasya* to protest Russia's Chechen policy were sources of tensions affecting Turkish-Russian relations. Economic relations between the two countries, in contrast, have been a remarkable achievement where three major areas have been trade, tourism, and construction.<sup>90</sup>

One important development in the post-Cold War era was that NATO put the Partnership for Peace (PFP) project into practice to connect Russia with the Western defense system. Turkish leaders have attached great importance to the process of both keeping their traditional rival under the control of multilateral Western defense structure through Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) process and Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, and relating Russia to the Western defense system. Both Turkey and the United States, have also believed that Ukraine was of great importance to Western security and agreed on dwelling upon the independence of that country to prevent Russian expansionism. Russia, as an important economic partner of

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<sup>90</sup> Duygu Bazoğlu Sezer, "Turkish-Russian Relations: From Adversity to 'Virtual Rapprochement'", in Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), pp.92-115.

Turkey on the one hand and a rival for regional influence on the other, was a country that Ankara remained cautious toward. For both Turkey and the United States, Russia's deepening influence in the region, attempts for taking the energy resources under its control, and its cooperation efforts with anti-Western Iran were sources of worry. However, Russia has also had some problems, such as economic crisis, and domestic ethnic problems, which lessens its ability to control the region.<sup>91</sup>

Both Ankara and Washington were cautious about Russia but Ankara was made even more cautious by the fact that it could not define the agenda for Russia's relations with the West. From the Turkish point of view, U.S. policy toward Moscow was too soft and should be tougher. It has been obvious that in an event of an unexpected or sudden deterioration in strategic relations between the West and Russia, Turkey would once again play a critical containment role. In contrast to the growing economic relations with that country, Turkish leaders were cautious about the potential for a renewed Russian military threat to Western interests.<sup>92</sup> For Turkish leaders, more optimistic approaches of the American leaders to Russia, when compared to Turkey, were a disturbing issue. Some Turks also believed that the U.S. contributed to the strengthening of Russian influence in the region by closing its eyes to Russian imperialism.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, (Turkish-American Relations)*, (Ankara: 21.Yüzyıl Yayınları, 2000), pp.321-325.

<sup>92</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "Western Interests in a Changing Turkey", in Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, and F.Stephen Larrabee, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), p.66.

<sup>93</sup> Obrad Kesic, "American-Turkish Relations at a Crossroads", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 6:1 (Winter 1995), p.101.

Turkey's worries about a resurgence of Russian aggression, highlighted by Russia's war on Chechnya, its threatening efforts toward Georgia and Azerbaijan, and its deployment of military equipment in southern Caucasus in excess of the permitted ceilings of the 1990 CFE treaty. The U.S. permitted Russian request to relax the CFE treaty restrictions and the agreement was modified in Russia's favor in 1999. Turkey initially opposed any revision but changed its stance when Russia dropped its demand for removal of all Article V ceilings.<sup>94</sup> While the West was closing its eyes to Russia's actions in the Caucasus, and permitting its failure to limit its forces in accordance with the CFE treaty, Russia ceased to oppose NATO's expansion toward the east including the Baltic States.<sup>95</sup> This created a discord in the minds of Turkish leaders. According to one prominent Turkish scholar, "... failure to address Moscow's aggression [in the Caucasus and Central Asia] betrays Washington's 'Russia-first' sentiments, leaving its dedication to the U.S.-Turkish partnership in question for many policymakers in Ankara."<sup>96</sup>

Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict—the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute— and Ankara's limited reaction was an example of restrictions created by Turkey's relations with the United States. Turkey tried not to offend its Western allies, refused to sign a defense pact with Azerbaijan and despite President Özal's proposal, did not intervene in the conflict. Russia, in contrast, has taken active

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<sup>94</sup> Duygu Bazoğlu Sezer, "Turkish-Russian Relations: From Adversity to 'Virtual Rapprochement'", in Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), pp.107-108.

<sup>95</sup> James Brown, *Delicately Poised Allies: Greece and Turkey*, (London: Brassey's, 1991), pp.141-142, quoted in Nasuh Uslu, "1947'den Günümüze Türk-Amerikan İlişkilerinin Genel Portresi", (The General Description of Turkish-American Relations from 1947 to the present), *Avrasya Dosyası*, 6:2, (Yaz 2000), p.227.

<sup>96</sup> Hasan Köni, "U.S.-Turkish Relations in the Post Cold War Era: The Ankara Perspective", a speech given in a discussion on "U.S.-Turkish Relations" organized by the CSIS Turkey, on 12 September, 2000. For the summary of his speech, see <http://www.csis.org/turkey/event000912.htm>

steps, and backed Yerevan against Baku.<sup>97</sup> Turkey's relations with Armenia were not crucial to Turkish-U.S. bilateral relations; Washington has encouraged Ankara to open its land border with Armenia that it had closed in response to Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijani territory and wanted Turkey to help Armenia reduce its dependence on Russia. Ankara, in fact under the influence of Baku, has kept it closed and Turkey would probably maintain its stance unless Armenia withdraw from the territories it had occupied.<sup>98</sup>

As mentioned before, to prevent the increase of Russian political or military influence in the region was a common concern for both Turkey and the United States. An important instrument for that was to develop an energy corridor, oil and gas pipelines, which went through Turkey in preference to Russia. Both countries agreed on the development of alternative pipeline routes to existing Russian ones bringing Caspian and Central Asian oil and gas to the world markets. However, there was some divergence over the preferred actual routing of pipelines. Washington supported multiple routes including on from Baku to Ceyhan, and Ankara supported this route with much more enthusiasm. This route, Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, would enhance Turkey's regional importance at the expense of Russia's and Iran's, and strengthen the independence of Azerbaijan and Georgia to loosen their dependence on Russia. While Washington was supporting the route but stating that it must be commercially viable, Ankara was paying less attention to the commercial or economic factors and feeling that

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<sup>97</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, (Turkish-American Relations)*, (Ankara: 21.Yüzyıl Yayınları, 2000), p.326.

<sup>98</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), pp.244-245.

the U.S. did not throw its full weight behind the pipeline.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, the Blue Stream project, to supply Russian gas to Turkey by an underwater pipeline in the Black Sea, in which Italy and Japan were also involved, conflicted with a U.S. backed project, the Trans-Caspian Pipeline (TCP) to carry Turkmenistani gas to Turkey via the Caspian, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. In fact Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan never agreed on the price and Turkey could not wait. The U.S. opposed Blue Stream and feared that Turkey would be too much dependent on Russia. But Turkey had already relied on Russian gas but had not taken pro-Russian attitude on regional issues.<sup>100</sup>

Both Turkey and the United States saw the region's Turkic Republics' entrance in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO's Partnership for Peace program (PFP), and North Atlantic Cooperation Council as critical to strengthening a new geopolitics in the ex-Soviet field of influence. Concerning regional economic development, the two countries seemed to support similar approaches. Turkey played an active role in promoting closer cooperation in the Black Sea region. Initiated by Turkey, Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) was designed to strengthen stability and security in the region by promoting private sector activity and stimulating the free movement of goods and services among member states. The United States gave this idea significant support and important institutional progress was achieved.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), p.20.

<sup>100</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), pp.242.

<sup>101</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), p.20.

### **2.3.2. Balkans, Greece and Cyprus**

Ankara and Washington have also closely cooperated in the Balkans. Both Turkey and the United States shared same ideas about the need for peace, stability and economic development in the region. Turkish policy toward the Balkans has been mostly harmonious with U.S. interests and preferences. As mentioned earlier, Turkey has followed an active policy toward the region, tried to normalize its relations with significant neighbors, such as Bulgaria, adopted a multilateral approach to regional security, took part in IFOR, SFOR and KFOR; by leading the formation of multinational peacekeeping force for the Balkans, and by permitting the use of its airbases in Thrace.<sup>102</sup>

All of Turkey's Balkan neighbors, with the exception of Greece, had been ruled by communist governments for about half a century and an active Turkish engagement had been limited as a consequence of the cold war system. Therefore, the end of the Cold War strongly affected the place of the Balkans in Turkish foreign policy priorities and Ankara sought to improve its relations with the region. Plus, with the beginning of the Bosnian war, the Balkans obtained a top priority in the minds of the Turkish policymakers and it became a region where an activist Turkish foreign policy has taken place. Turkey chose to act in accordance with the international community during different Balkan crises and became active in various regional multilateral cooperation efforts. Although some Balkan leaders stated that Turkey, as the heir of the Ottoman Empire, should stay out of Balkan affairs, Turkish national interests require it to be active in the region to control elements of instability in the area that connects the

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<sup>102</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "Western Interests in a Changing Turkey", in Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, and F.Stephen Larrabee, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), p.65.

country with Western Europe. Besides, a considerable part of Turkey's population has family bonds with various parts of the region.<sup>103</sup>

As the Bosnian war began, Turkey came out as an active player in support of Bosnia, and began to apply pressure for a strong Western response to take a determined stance to end the war quickly. Turkey was in favor of launching a military intervention against the Serbian side by NATO and lifting the U.N. arms embargo in favor of the Bosnians. This position placed Turkey against its European allies, and for the short term also created disagreement with the American administration. But the developments led to determined military reaction in the first half of 1995, and Ankara felt itself relieved with the justification of its policy. Turkish troops participated in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), and appreciated the US-led effort to end the violence through the Dayton Peace Agreement in December 1995.<sup>104</sup> Turkish units then became part of the NATO forces deployed in Bosnia, the Implementation Force (IFOR) and the follow-on Stabilization Force (SFOR), to implement the military aspects of Dayton Peace Accords. Then, Ankara played a key role in training the Muslim army in Bosnia under the U.S.-led "equip and train" program.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Şule Kut, "Turkish Policy toward the Balkans", in Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), pp.88-89.

<sup>104</sup> *General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP)* was signed in Paris, on 14 December 1995, after it had been negotiated in Dayton, Ohio, was known as *Dayton Peace Agreement/Agreement*. It was initiated by the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). The Agreement was witnessed by representatives of the Contact Group nations-the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and Russia- and the European Union Special Negotiator.

<sup>105</sup> Based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 1031, NATO was given the mandate to implement the military aspects of the Peace Agreement. A NATO-led multinational force, called *the Implementation Force (IFOR)* started its mission on 20 December 1995, and was given a one-year mandate. Under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1088 of 12 December 1996, *the Stabilization Force (SFOR)* was authorized to implement the military aspects of the Peace

Turkey's multilateral approach and participation in peacekeeping missions continued with the escalation of the Kosovo conflict in 1998. Although, Ankara's approach to the conflict between the Kosovar Albanians and the Serbs was remarkably calm and controlled, Turkey again participated in NATO's Air Operation, (Operation Allied Force), with F-16 jet fighters. Aside from providing exceptional military support in the form of aircraft, Turkey also accepted a significant share, up to 26,000, of Kosovar refugees. Ankara also let the use of several of its bases by the United States and NATO during the Kosovo conflict. After hostilities ended, Turkey provided troops to Kosovo Force (KFOR).<sup>106</sup> Turkey has been in favor of a lasting negotiated settlement of all Balkan issues that could become the source of future instability. In addition to the abovementioned operations, Turkish troops engaged in the U.N.-NATO efforts in Albania and the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). These moves have greatly contributed to strengthening the Turkish-U.S. relationship and enhancing Turkey's strategic importance in U.S. eyes.<sup>107</sup>

From the U.S. point of view, having the military of a predominantly Muslim country involved in these peacekeeping operations, indeed not only in the Balkans but also in Somalia, was seen as a crucial way of winning the confidence of the local Muslim population as well as the Muslim world. As being exceptionally a member of both NATO and the Islamic Conference Organization (ICO), Turkey, has inevitably been a factor for stability in the often troubled Balkans. The crises in the Balkans revealed how closely Turkish, U.S., and

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Agreement as the legal successor to IFOR. See <http://www.un.org/>, <http://www.nato.int/ifor/> and <http://www.nato.int/sfor/> for detailed information.

<sup>106</sup> Under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244, *the Kosovo Force (KFOR)*, as a NATO-led international force, was given the mandate to establish and maintain security in the region, and entered Kosovo on 12 June 1999. See <http://www.nato.int/kfor/> for detailed information.

<sup>107</sup> Heinz Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), pp.146-158.

European, interests are intertwined. Ankara's stance in these crises gave Turkey the chance do something for Muslims in the Balkans. Moreover, its military's existence in such humanitarian and peacekeeping operation has helped to relieve some exaggerated fears of Turkey in the Balkans. These kinds of operations have been seen as an important area of cooperation between Turkey and the United States, although it is not likely that Turkey will consent to operate outside its immediate region.<sup>108</sup>

Greece, on the other hand, had worries about the expansion of the Turkish influence in the Balkans. But the belief that Turkey was creating a 'Muslim belt' was proved to be false in view of Ankara's close relations with Orthodox-majority Bulgaria, Romania, and Macedonia and with Catholic-majority Croatia.<sup>109</sup> Turkey and Greece has had various longstanding disputes, primarily on Cyprus, Aegean, and minority issues and the two countries have come close to an armed conflict several times in the past. In early 1996, Turkey and Greece came to the brink of war over the islets of Kardak/Imia, and only last-minute U.S. diplomatic intervention prevented an armed confrontation. Later, another problem arose by Greek Cypriot plans to acquire Soviet made S-300 missile system and Turkey's strong reaction. After repeated Greek Cypriot rescheduling of the date of delivery from autumn 1997 to late 1998, Greek Cypriots and Greeks agreed to deploy the missiles in Crete. Also, the Öcalan affair

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<sup>108</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri: Belirsizlikten Yakınlaşmaya", (Turkish-American Relations: From Uncertainty to Intimacy), *Avrasya Dosyası*, 6:2, (Yaz/Summer 2000), pp.78-79.

<sup>109</sup> Şule Kut, "Turkish Policy toward the Balkans", in Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p.88.

deteriorated the atmosphere in early 1999 and pushed bilateral relations near a breaking point.<sup>110</sup>

The prominent place, that Washington gave Turkish-Greek relations and the Cyprus problem in the framework of Turkish-U.S. relations has irritated Turkey. The United States has long been involved in supervising Turkish-Greek divergences, mostly since the beginning of civil conflict on Cyprus in 1963. With the effect of the pro-Greece congressional lobby, Turkish-U.S. relations were indexed to progress in Turkish-Greek relations and the Cyprus dispute. The arms embargo in 1975 and Johnson's letter in 1964 were prominent examples. Washington's efforts to urge Turkey on solving its problems with Greece and trying to settle the Cyprus issue has not been welcomed in Ankara, although the former applied less pressure than the European capitals. While the Europeans had a pro-Greek stance, the U.S. has pursued a nuanced policy on Turkish-Greek disputes and even indirectly supported the Turkish position on the six-mile territorial-sea limit and on the limit of sovereign airspace.<sup>111</sup>

Ending of foreign assistance to Turkey and Greece in the year 1998 has had a paradoxically positive impact on Turkish-U.S. relations. Congressional pressure of a ratio for aid to Turkey and Greece, and attempts to impose Cyprus-related and other political conditions on Turkish aid has come to an end.<sup>112</sup> The earthquake that struck Turkey on August 17, 1999, became a turning point and the atmosphere of Turkish-Greek relations was transformed

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<sup>110</sup> M. James Wilkinson, "The United States, Turkey, and Greece-Three's a Crowd", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), pp.199-202.

<sup>111</sup> Şükrü Sina Gürel, *Tarihsel Boyut İçinde Türk-Yunan İlişkileri (1821-1993)*, (Ankara: Ümit Yayıncılık, 1993).

<sup>112</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), p.248.

overnight. Another earthquake struck Athens three weeks later, as if to strengthen the point. In the aftermath of the "seismic/earthquake" diplomacy, the impact of a new *détente* between the two countries was seen in Helsinki summit in December 1999. Although the new *détente* improved the climate on bilateral issues, it was slower to affect attitudes in the U.S. Congress.<sup>113</sup>

Washington has been trying to settle the Cyprus issue because it has thought that this would pave the way for improved Turkish-Greek relations and further for settling Aegean disputes, but the issue remained insoluble. The U.S. concern was that Turkish-Greek tension poses persistent threat to NATO cohesion. From Washington's viewpoint, it was a necessity to solve the Turkish-Greek disputes. Despite several past confrontations, the two countries had maintained the Aegean status-quo for many years without warfare, but the limit of an armed conflict between two NATO allies would probably be unknown. To avoid confrontations in the Aegean was a shared general interest between Washington, Ankara, and Athens. From the Turkish perspective, the existing problems were related to Turkey's vital security interests, sovereignty, and the protection of Turkish people, while, from the U.S. perspective, they were sources of uneasiness in Turkish-American relations.<sup>114</sup>

Turkey has become more important than Greece in the U.S. strategic calculations of the post-Cold War world. Turkey's distinctive connections to both Central Asia and the Middle East, its position as a reasonable route for Caspian oil and gas to the Western markets, its larger size and greater economic

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<sup>113</sup> M. James Wilkinson, "The United States, Turkey, and Greece-Three's a Crowd", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), p.209.

<sup>114</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, (Turkish-American Relations)*, (Ankara: 21.Yüzyıl Yayınları, 2000), pp.334-335.

potential, together with the continuing U.S. concern with Iraq, and the Turkish factor in the future of Russia were aspects that reinforced this idea. Possibly, it has not meant that Washington should therefore choose Turkey's side or pay less attention to Greece, but one thing has always been obvious that the peace and stability in the region suits the interests of all sides.<sup>115</sup>

### **2.3.3. The Middle East**

While most of the Turkish and American policies appeared to overlap in other regions, the Middle East became the one on which a mixture of cooperative as well as conflicting views came about. Ankara and Washington agree that the existing regional balance has to be maintained and stabilized, and rise of a regional hegemonic power must be prevented. The spread of weapons of mass destruction must be limited and controlled in the region. A successful conclusion must be reached in the Middle East peace process. But away from these common general views, regional policies of the two countries differ.<sup>116</sup>

The Iraqi question and the status of northern Iraq generated the most serious source of tension between Turkey and the United States. Firstly, Turks have been feeling that the territorial integrity and the national unity of Iraq should be preserved. Second, the Turkish economy has long been hurt by the U.N. sanctions which brought the official Turkish trade with Iraq to an end.<sup>117</sup>

Along with backing the U.S. efforts in the Gulf War, Turkey, closed the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik oil pipeline and participated in the U.N. sanctions against Iraq.

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<sup>115</sup> M.James Wilkinson, "The United States, Turkey, and Greece-Three's a Crowd", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), p.187-188.

<sup>116</sup> Heinz Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), pp.227-228.

<sup>117</sup> Duygu Bazoğlu Sezer, "On the Faultlines of the Post-Cold War Disorder", *Private View*, (Winter 1996).

This made Turkey a key element in the economic isolation of Baghdad, but created a massive economic cost to Ankara. Iraq had been one of Turkey's leading export markets prior to the Gulf War. In addition, Ankara gave support for Operation Provide Comfort/Operation Northern Watch (OPC/ONW), as mentioned before, which was an important binding element in bilateral relations, and gave Turkey a vital role in Washington's Iraq policy. But in the words of Obrad Kesic, "...Turkey could go only so far in supporting."<sup>118</sup>

Formally, Ankara and Washington agreed on the main principles of Iraq policy by stating that Iraq should comply with the related Security Council resolutions and advocated Iraq's territorial integrity. But both countries differ in their objectives and priorities, sometimes in important respects. Turkey's main policy goals in Iraq are; ending, or at least easing, the U.N. sanctions on that country, reassertion of full Iraqi sovereignty in the north, prevention of the emergence of a *de facto* Kurdish state or an autonomous Kurdish entity, and expulsion of PKK from northern Iraq.<sup>119</sup>

Turkey's economic losses, resulting from the U.N. sanctions on Iraq, was stated about \$35 billion, in 1997, which demonstrates that no country has suffered more from Iraqi sanctions than Turkey. Ankara has an apparent economic interest in the resumption of a large-scale trade relationship with Iraq that existed before the Gulf War. Turkey welcomed the Security Council Resolution 986, which permitted the import of petroleum and petroleum products originating in Iraq, as a temporary measure to provide for

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<sup>118</sup> Obrad Kesic, "American-Turkish Relations at a Crossroads", *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 6:1 (Winter 1995), p.99.

<sup>119</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), pp. 230-233.

humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, through the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline. But these limited measures were not sufficient in compensating for Turkey's losses. Ankara's bid for an Article 50 exemption from U.N. sanctions has been opposed by Washington, alleging that it would undermine the credibility of the sanctions.<sup>120</sup>

Ankara, when compared to Washington, clearly favors a stronger Iraqi central government; even run by Saddam, to preserve the integrity of the country and to prevent a development that could lead to the establishment of a Kurdish entity in northern Iraq. Washington, on the other hand, does not oppose Kurdish autonomy or a Kurdish component within a federated Iraq. Ankara fears that the U.S. efforts to topple Saddam Hussein may further destabilize the region and open a way for the creation of a *de facto* Kurdish state on Turkey's border, and as a result aggravate Turkey's internal struggle for Kurdish separatism.<sup>121</sup> In 1992, to minimize the harmful effects of internationalization of the Iraqi and Kurdish issues on Turkey's national security, Ankara developed a new approach to the region and began to hold tripartite meetings with Iran and Syria. With these meetings, Turkey intended to send a signal to the United States about the limits of Turkish-U.S. cooperation in the region, and it was stated that a Kurdish Federated state in northern Iraq would threaten the

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<sup>120</sup> For the texts of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions, and the Charter of the United Nations, see <http://www.un.org> Nasuh Uslu, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri, (Turkish-American Relations)*, (Ankara: 21.Yüzyıl Yayınları, 2000), p.328.

<sup>121</sup> F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkish Foreign and Security Policy: New Dimensions and New Challenges", in Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, F.Stephen Larrabee, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), p.47.

territorial integrity, political unity and sovereignty not only of Iraq, but of Iran, Syria and Turkey as well.<sup>122</sup>

Although Turkey has been giving an internally controversial support to OPC/ONW, it is skeptical about the emergence of a power vacuum in this area that enabled PKK to set up bases and camps to launch operations into Turkey. Ankara took action in response to the PKK's challenge, toughened its military counter-insurgency operations, and has mounted incursions into northern Iraq, trying to destroy PKK camps and pursue PKK militants. The powerful Turkish Army, together with its increasing proficiency in counter-insurgency operations, gradually contained the PKK threat in its military dimension.<sup>123</sup> Despite conflicting approaches of the two countries to the aforementioned issues, the United States, unlike Europeans, has been tolerant of Turkish incursions into northern Iraq, has backed Turkey in its counter-terrorism efforts, and accepted PKK as a terrorist organization. American intelligence services are widely believed to have helped Turkey in the capturing of Abdullah Öcalan in Kenya in 1999.<sup>124</sup>

Turkish-U.S. cooperation in dealing with Iraq has often been accompanied by Turkish mistrust of American actions. In September 1998, leaders of the two rival Iraqi Kurdish parties, namely Massoud Barzani of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), met with the officials of the State Department in Washington and reached a comprehensive agreement which would boost the U.S.'s Iraq

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<sup>122</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "Turkish Perspectives on Turkish-US Relations Concerning Persian Gulf Security in the post-Cold War Era: 1989-95", *Middle East Journal*, 50:3, (Summer 1996), pp354.

<sup>123</sup> F.Stephen Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), p.137.

<sup>124</sup> Yasemin Çongar, "Do You Understand What I'm Saying?", *Private View*, 3:7 (Spring 1999), pp.40-46

policy by fostering Kurdish unity against Saddam Hussein. For its part, Turkey was extremely displeased both with being left out of the negotiations and with the contents of the agreement exactly before when Turkey had initiated the Ankara process with the two. For Turkey, unlike the U.S., Saddam Hussein was not the primary threat to stability and peace in the region, but a self-governing Kurdish entity was the biggest source of instability.<sup>125</sup>

Another source of tension between the two countries has been the human rights issue, which was connected to the PKK problem, and will be examined elsewhere in this study. This issue has affected U.S. foreign policy toward Turkey especially after 1992, which in turn affected the arms relationship of the two countries.

Turkey has a significant place in U.S. strategy toward Iran as an active participant in the policy of containment. Besides, Ankara has its own sources of friction with neighboring Islamic Republic of Iran, including worries about Iranian support for Turkish Islamist fundamentalists and the PKK. Since the 1979 revolution, Turkish secularists have been concerned about the prospect for the export of Iranian radicalism.<sup>126</sup> Turkish officials have several times accused Iran of interfering in Turkey's internal affairs, supporting and hosting the PKK, and some terrorist attacks on prominent Turkish secularists were thought to have an Iranian connection. A brief period of close relations between Iran and the leader of the Islamic Welfare Party, Necmettin Erbakan, during the coalition government in 1996-97, disturbed the secular military and foreign policy elite.

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<sup>125</sup> Alan Makovsky, "Kurdish Agreement Signals New U.S. Commitment", *PolicyWatch*, No:341 (September 29,1998).

<sup>126</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "Western Interests in a Changing Turkey", in Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, and F.Stephen Larrabee, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), p.67-68.

However, Turkey prefers a policy of establishing good political and economic relations with Iran.<sup>127</sup>

Turkish-U.S. perspectives on Iran also differ considerably. While the United States have generally sought to isolate Iran, Turkey favors a policy of engagement. Ankara has sought Iran's cooperation on the Kurdish issue. Despite the occasional frictions on the subject, Ankara and Tehran developed a more cooperative relationship, from the mid-1990s, to control the activities of the PKK on both sides of the border.<sup>128</sup>

Energy supply and investment is an increasingly important aspect of Turkish-Iranian relations. Iran was one of Turkey's principal trading partners in the 1980s, due to Iran-Iraq war. Turks were certainly discontented about the idea that Turkey once more, as in Iraq, was expected to bear the economic burden of what they considered as mostly a U.S. foreign policy problem.<sup>129</sup> Ankara was disappointed by the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA), passed by the U.S. Congress in July 1996, calling for sanctions on foreign companies or states that made investments in the Iranian energy industry in excess of \$20 million.<sup>130</sup> But, because of its need for new energy resources, the Turkish government signed an agreement to purchase \$23 billion worth of Iranian natural gas on a 'take-or-buy' basis in August 1996. Turkey has a rapidly growing gas demand,

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<sup>127</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), p.233.

<sup>128</sup> F.Stephen Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), pp.147-149.

<sup>129</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), p.233.

<sup>130</sup> The United States has enacted two pieces of legislation to prevent investment in Iran, based on Iran's use of international terrorism, its opposition to the Middle East peace process, and its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. In 1995, President Clinton issued two Executive Orders that prohibited any investment in Iran by American companies. On July 23, 1996, the United States Congress unanimously passed the *Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA)*, which extended sanctions to cover foreign companies that invest more than \$20 million in Iran.

and it is estimated that about 55 billion cubic meters (BCM) of natural gas will be needed to import by 2010, while it was about 10 BCM in 1998.<sup>131</sup> Because of U.S. opposition, Turkey indeed delayed implementation of the agreement, announcing that the pipeline, on Turkish side, was not ready. Plus, Ankara considered this agreement as importation, not investment, whereas ILSA prohibits an 'investment' in Iran's energy sector. The United States opposed Turkish gas imports from Iran, and states that it sees Turkey as an alternative to the Iranian route, which is more convenient in reality, for Caspian oil and gas. This issue was the most important Iran-related source of friction in Turkish-American relations. To remind, in most cases, the Turkish approach to both Iran and Iraq was closer to the European view than to that of the United States.<sup>132</sup>

Syria is another country on which Turkey and the United States seem to have differing opinions, but this time with the roles changed. Turkish policymakers want the U.S. to apply more pressure on Syria, particularly regarding its support for the PKK. Even after Turkey compelled Syria, in early October 1998, to expel PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan from Damascus and to stop its support for the organization officially or risk a Turkish invasion of its territory, Ankara is still doubtful about the long-term reliability of Syria's commitment.<sup>133</sup> But, since then, Turkish-Syrian relations improved noticeably and the United States seemed more supportive of Turkey in this crisis.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> See <http://www.botas.gov.tr>, the official web site of BOTAŞ (Petroleum Pipeline Corporation), for natural gas supply and demand scenarios.

<sup>132</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "Western Interests in a Changing Turkey", in Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, and F.Stephen Larrabee, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), pp.67-68.

<sup>133</sup> Heinz Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p.228.

<sup>134</sup> Meliha Benli Altunışık, "The Breakdown of the Post-Gulf War Middle East Order?", *Perceptions*, 6:2 (June-July 2001), pp.53-54.

Turkey has supported the Arab-Israeli peace process, but has had long-standing concerns over Syria. In addition to providing safe haven to PKK, Damascus, has continued to claim the Turkish province of Hatay (*sancak* of Alexandratta), and has disagreements with Turkey over the share of downstream water of Euphrates river. According to a Turkish scholar, Turks have had concerns that the end of a Syrian-Israeli conflict might give Damascus more confidence about its demands toward Turkey by shifting its troops from the Golan Heights cease-fire line to the Turkish border.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, Turkish policymakers were likely to believe that the United States was more concerned about getting Syria's support for the peace process rather than forcing it to stop supporting terrorism. As with the water issue, as said by another scholar, there has always been some concern that the United States might pressure Turkey to provide Syria with additional amounts of water so that Syria can leave the water resources of the Golan Heights to Israel. U.S. failure to consult Turkey through the 1995-96 phase of Israeli-Syrian negotiations was received unfavorably in Ankara but the sudden end of the peace talks relieved Turkish worries.<sup>136</sup>

On the Israeli-Palestinian peace track, Turkish and American views coincide. To ensure security, stability and prosperity in the Middle East has been for national interests of both Turkey and the United States. Turkey, as a Muslim-majority state, may contribute to the peace process in a useful way to decrease tensions and build confidence among the parties. Progress on the peace process

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<sup>135</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), p.25.

<sup>136</sup> Ayşegül Sever, "Turkey and the Syrian-Israeli Peace Talks in the 1990s", *MERIA*, 5:3 (September 2001).

would create a more suitable environment for Turkey to strengthen its relations with Jordan, other moderate Arab states, and Israel.<sup>137</sup>

Turkey's intimate and diverse relationship with Israel was particularly a positive development from the U.S. perspective. In other words, Turkey raised its regional profile and value to the United States by way of this initiative. After decades of distant relations affected by declared Turkish sympathy for the Palestinians, the signing of the 1993 Oslo Agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) created an opportunity for Turkey to pursue closer ties with Israel. High-level visits between the two countries has resulted in several agreements on various subjects, involving trade, tourism, water, agriculture, anti-terrorism, military training, and the exchange of intelligence, where the most significant agreements were; the Military Training and Cooperation Agreement, Free Trade Agreement, and an Agreement on defense industrial cooperation. This relationship has expanded significantly and openly receives active U.S. support, including U.S. participation in trilateral search and rescue exercises, namely the Reliant Mermaid.<sup>138</sup>

Both Turkey and Israel had antagonistic relations with Iran, Iraq and Syria, as well as distant relations with most Arab countries. Especially Syria and its role in support of PKK was an increasing Turkish concern. Israeli Prime Minister, Benyamin Netanyahu condemned Kurdish terrorism, in 1997, and supported Turkey in its conflict with PKK. The freezing of Israel's negotiations with Syria was not a cause for disappointment in Turkey, as mentioned before.

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<sup>137</sup> Bülent Aras, "The Impact of the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Process in Turkish Foreign Policy", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 20:2, (Winter 1997), pp.49-72.

<sup>138</sup> Süha Bölükbaşı, "Türkiye ve İsrail: Mesafeli Yakınlıktan Stratejik Ortaklığa", (Turkey and Israel: From Distant Intimacy to Strategic Partnership), *Liberal Düşünce*, 4:13 (Kış/Winter 1999), pp.138-152.

This relationship provided Ankara with a decisive leverage on Damascus.<sup>139</sup> The Turkish-Israeli relationship placed useful pressure on Iraq, Iran, and Syria and improved Washington's ability to concentrate on specific issues such as terrorism and theatre ballistic missile defense. This relationship developed into a source of pressure on Syria's peace process policies. Moreover, it brought together separate elements of U.S. strategy, enhanced the security of two major allies, and opened new ways for trilateral or even wider regional cooperation, with the participation of other pro-U.S. states, such as Jordan.<sup>140</sup>

Ankara faced periodic difficulties in the transfer of arms and military technology from the United States and Europe. Whereas Western governments remained committed to the support of a strategic ally, the U.S. Congress and European parliaments related the issue with Turkey's human rights performance, the PKK, and disputes with Greece. One of the incentives for Ankara's efforts to expand defense ties with Israel has been its desire to avoid the human rights-related difficulties on defense purchases. Turkey had the support of powerful Jewish lobby in Washington as a balancing force against the Greek and Armenian lobbies. The Jewish lobby helped Turkey to get American arms that had been blocked by the Congress, and has limited the domestic restrictions on U.S. support to Turkey. On the other hand, Israel became an alternative source of arms supply for Turkey, without any prerequisite, where Israeli weapons are compatible with American ones.<sup>141</sup> For Washington, Turkish-Israeli cooperation

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<sup>139</sup> Nachmani Amikam, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie", *Middle East Quarterly*, 5:2, (June 1998), also in Nachmani Amikam, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (Ramat Gan: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 1999), pp.19-29.

<sup>140</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "Western Interests in a Changing Turkey", in Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, and F.Stephen Larrabee, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), p.66.

<sup>141</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership", *MERIA*, 5:2, (June 2001).

"...served as a potential means for the executive branch to bypass Congress in supporting Turkey (through Presidential waivers on Israeli sales of arms that include technology originating in the United States)".<sup>142</sup>

This partnership benefited U.S. strategic interests, including preserving pro-Western Jordan while containing Iraq, Iran, and Syria. As Larrabee and Lesser argued, as a Muslim-majority state, Turkey's improving relations with Israel created an appropriate atmosphere for the normalization of Israel's existence among the Arab states in the Middle East. It was seen, by some Turks, as means to strengthen the strategic relationship with the U.S., while it was perceived, by Washington, as a progress of a pro-Western alliance in the region.<sup>143</sup>

The United States had some concerns about this relationship. Initially, the addition of a military dimension to the Turkish-Israeli relationship created uneasiness in the minds of some American policymakers because of its negative effect on Israeli-Syrian peace talks. The U.S. also objected to certain aspects of Turkish-Israeli military cooperation particularly in the area of anti-missile technology. Moreover, Washington did not want this relationship to damage other key regional objectives, namely, Arab-Israeli peace and Turkish-Greek stability.<sup>144</sup>

Countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missiles in the Middle East was another shared interest for both Turkey and the United States. Three of Turkey's neighbors, namely, Iraq, Iran and Syria

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<sup>142</sup> Alan Makovsky, "Marching in Step, Mostly?", *Private View*, 3:7 (Spring 1999), p.34.

<sup>143</sup> F.Stephen Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), p.141.

<sup>144</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), p.21.

all have WMD programs, and Turkey was vulnerable to these missiles.<sup>145</sup> With its air force strike capability and its NATO membership, Turkish defense strategy was based on deterrence. During the Gulf War, U.S. and NATO anti-missile batteries had to be positioned in Turkey against a potential Iraqi missile attack. The absence of Turkish anti-missile capability and its vulnerability to its three neighbors, led Turkish leaders to counter it by means of Turkish-Israeli military cooperation. But, U.S. strategy has concentrated on preventing the spread of WMD by exerting pressure on Russia, China and North Korea not to supply these countries.<sup>146</sup>

#### **2.3.4. Human Rights Concerns, Lobbies in the U.S., and Other Related Issues**

Especially after the mid-1990s the human rights issue has become a live subject in Turkish-American relations. After the Gulf War, in the post-Cold War era, the issue of human rights abuses came out as a result of confrontations between Turkish security forces and the PKK. This attracted public and Congressional interest in the United States and affected Washington's foreign policy toward Turkey. Some strains on the Turkish-U.S. relationship were caused, occasionally, by Congress's linking economic and military assistance to Turkey to its improvement in human rights record. The Congress also demanded the Administration prepare reports on the use of U.S. military equipment in situations of human rights violations.<sup>147</sup> The powerful lobbying capability of anti-

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<sup>145</sup> Zalmay Khalilzad, "A Strategic Plan for Western-Turkish Relations", in Zalmay Khalilzad, Ian O. Lesser, and F.Stephen Larrabee, *The Future of Turkish-Western Relations: Toward a Strategic Plan*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), pp.86-87.

<sup>146</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), p.22.

<sup>147</sup> Ramazan Gözen, "Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri ve Türk Demokrasisi: 'Realist' Bağlantı", (Turkish-American Relations and Turkish Democracy: 'Realist' Connection), in Şaban H. Çalış, İhsan D.

Turkish ethnic lobbies, such as the Greek and Armenian lobbies, together with human rights and arms control groups considerably reduced the executive branch's ability to shield Turkey. Even when there were pro-Turkish lobbies, like Jewish and Defense lobbies, Turkey had in this regard a disadvantage of not having an effective lobby to influence the Congress in favor of Turkey.<sup>148</sup> The Democrats, under the leadership of Bill Clinton, had won the elections in the U.S. in 1992. This was also an important development that affected the U.S. foreign policy toward Turkey because it is known that the Democrats are much more influenced by the lobbies, and they give more emphasis to the domestic affairs when compared to the Republicans.<sup>149</sup>

U.S. arms exports to Turkey have also been affected. In 1996, the United States delayed the transfer of ten Super Cobra helicopters and as a result Ankara canceled the deal, and the shipment of three frigates to Turkey was also delayed for a long term. In 1997, the government permitted the U.S. firms to bid on a Turkish project to purchase 145 attack helicopters but did not guarantee that a sale would be approved. As a result, Turkey found the U.S. an increasingly less reliable source of arms, and as mentioned before, its rapprochement with Israel helped Ankara to avoid the human rights-related difficulties on defense purchases. The State Department's Human Rights Bureau

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Dağı, Ramazan Gözen, (eds.), *Türkiye'nin Dış Politika Gündemi: Kimlik, Demokrasi, Güvenlik, (Turkey's Foreign Policy Agenda: Identity, Democracy, Security)*, (Ankara: Liberte Yayınları, 2001), pp.106-107.

<sup>148</sup> For detailed information about the anti- and pro-Turkish lobbies, see Morton Abramowitz, "The Complexities of American Policymaking on Turkey", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), pp.153-184.

<sup>149</sup> Hasan Köni, "Yeni Uluslararası Düzendeki Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri", (Turkish-American Relations in the New International Order), *Yeni Türkiye*, No:3 (1995), p.427.

prepared annual reports criticizing Turkey's human rights infringements.<sup>150</sup> Additionally, U.S. military aid to Turkey was affected and there were considerable cuts in U.S. foreign assistance to Turkey during the mid-1990s and the transfer of remaining aid was conditioned on Turkey improving its human rights performance. Even if the human rights issue had some negative effects on Turkish-American relations, it never ruptured the bilateral relations. Washington's approach to the issue has been limited and less severe than the Europeans'. The reason for that was Turkey's strategic, military and political importance in the eyes of the U.S. policymakers.<sup>151</sup>

## 2.4. Conclusion

In the post-Cold War era, the United States largely realized the great importance of Turkey and its diverse strategic roles. Turkey is a unique country in various respects. It sits at the crossroads of the world and its importance comes from its geo-strategic location, its history, its size and strength. Turkey is a sole example of secularism, democracy and modernization with its predominantly Muslim population and it is a pro-Western state in an area of instability. From the U.S. point of view, Turkey has been a model, to some extent, for the Turkic Republics of the former Soviet Union, a bridge and line of communication between the region and the West, a barrier against possible Russian aggression toward the south, a rival against Russia for having an

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<sup>150</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices", prepared and released annually by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; U.S. Department of State, <http://www.usis.usemb.se/human>

<sup>151</sup> Ramazan Gözen, "Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri ve Türk Demokrasisi: 'Realist' Bağlantı", (Turkish-American Relations and Turkish Democracy: 'Realist' Connection), in Şaban H. Çalış, İhsan D. Dağı, Ramazan Gözen, (eds.), *Türkiye'nin Dış Politika Gündemi: Kimlik, Demokrasi, Güvenlik, (Turkey's Foreign Policy Agenda: Identity, Democracy, Security)*, (Ankara: Liberte Yayınları, 2001), p.108

influence over Caucasus and Central Asia, an ideological counterweight against fundamentalist Iran, an alternative to Russia and Iran as a possible gateway for Caspian energy resources. Moreover, Turkey has participated in peacekeeping efforts, as the only Muslim majority NATO ally, in the Balkans, and has been a peaceful and influential supporter of besieged Muslims in its area, namely Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Bosnia and Kosovo. In addition, Turkey has been a supporter of Arab-Israeli peace process, an important contributor to a possible normalization of Israeli-Muslim world relations, a key element of Washington's Iraq strategy, and a base for Operation Northern Watch. Shortly, Turkey has been a direct contributor to American power projection in adjacent regions.

But the two countries had different approaches to some matters and had conflicting interests on some issues. From Turkey's point of view, U.S. policy toward Moscow was too soft and even Washington had 'Russia-first' attitudes. The revision of CFE treaty, restrictions created by the U.S. on Turkey's reaction about the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute and its relations with Armenia, and some conflicting ideas about the energy corridors in the Caucasus and Central Asia were also sources of concerns. Although Ankara and Washington closely cooperated in the Balkans, Turkey criticized limited responses of the Western powers to the Bosnian conflict in the early phases and its desire for military intervention created a short term disagreement with the U.S. On Greece, the ending of foreign assistance to Turkey and Greece, the 7:10 ratio issue, and the *détente*, following the earthquakes, between the two countries had positive impact on Turkish-U.S. relations. But the prominent place that Washington gave the Cyprus problem in the framework of Turkish-U.S. relations has irritated Turkey. The Middle East became the region on which the most conflicting views

came out. The Iraqi question and the status of northern Iraq generated the most serious source of tension between Turkey and the United States. Both countries differ in their objectives and priorities, sometimes in important respects. Turkey's main policy goals in Iraq were; ending, or at least easing, the U.N. sanctions on that country because of its economic concerns, reassertion of full Iraqi sovereignty in the north, prevention of the emergence of a *de facto* Kurdish state or an autonomous Kurdish entity, and expulsion of PKK from northern Iraq. Washington, on the other hand, did not oppose Kurdish autonomy or a Kurdish component within a federated Iraq and Saddam Hussein was the primary threat to stability and peace in the region. Additionally, Washington's relations with leaders of the two rival Iraqi Kurdish parties created Turkish mistrust of American actions. About Iran, Turkey did not want to bear the economic burden of what it considered as mostly a U.S. foreign policy problem. Ankara favored a policy of engagement with Iran while Washington generally sought to isolate that country. Turkish policymakers want the U.S. to apply more pressure on Syria, particularly regarding its support for the PKK while U.S. policymakers were more concerned about getting Syria's support for the peace process which might give Damascus more confidence about its demands toward Turkey by shifting its troops from the Golan Heights cease-fire line to the Turkish border, in case an agreement was reached. U.S. critics about Turkey's human rights records, although not so severe, and anti-Turkish lobbies in the Congress, affecting U.S. arms exports to Turkey, also created serious concerns in the minds of the Turkish leaders.

Despite many conflicting interests of Turkey and the United States, the two countries were mostly harmonious on various subjects. It was obvious that

the United States was a better friend for Turkey than other Western powers. Washington showed more willingness than European countries to accept the PKK as a terrorist organization. It supported Ankara's energy politics, to some extent, concerning Central Asia. It was less insistent than the E.U. on the Cyprus issue, not to disappoint Ankara. It also tried to convince the E.U. to give Turkey a candidate status.<sup>152</sup>

But, although the two countries were mostly congruent, it has always been a possibility that Turkish-American relations would be badly influenced by some conflicting views. In the words of George Harris; "...it is not sufficient to assume that close ties in the past will assure smooth relations in the future."<sup>153</sup>

The evolution of American defense policy in general and security strategy towards the Middle East, Caucasus and Balkans in particular; Turkey's autonomous regional policies which could seriously clash with American interests; and Turkey's economic and political stability would be expected to affect the relations between the two countries. The United States, indeed, does not want a stronger Turkey capable of enforcing common bilateral interests as a regional power. Reasons for this are domestic political considerations, mostly relating to Greek and Armenian origin Americans; doubts about Turkey's regional image, regarding its imperial past; and a certain suspicion concerning whether a strong Turkey, which is able to act as an independent regional force, would not behave in ways that enhance U.S. interests. "Some U.S. policymakers wonder if a stronger and therefore more independent Turkey would be more or

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<sup>152</sup> Ekavi Athanassopoulou, "American-Turkish Relations Since the end of the Cold War", *Middle East Policy*, 8:3, (September 2001), p.158.

<sup>153</sup> George Haris, "U.S.-Turkish Relations", in Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p.199.

less confrontational with Greece, more or less forthcoming on Cyprus policy, and more or less inclined to support U.S. policy toward the Kurds of northern Iraq.”<sup>154</sup>

No matter what U.S. attitudes on these questions, a stronger, more activist and more confident Turkey emerged in the post-Cold war era. And to remind, as it was proved in the past, it is difficult to pressure Turkey on issues of major national interests.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Alan Makovsky, “The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy”, *SAIS Review*, (Winter-Spring1999), p.108.

<sup>155</sup> Alan Makovsky, “US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems”, in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), p.262.

## CHAPTER 3

### TURKISH-ISRAELI RAPPROCHEMENT

#### 3.1. The History of Turkish-Israeli Relations:

The Turkish-Jewish relations date back to 15<sup>th</sup> century and the relations have never been violent in history. The Turks had no traditional enmity towards the Jews who has been one of the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. For centuries, the Ottoman Empire was the most important source of refuge and prosperity for Jews fleeing from persecution in Europe. In the wake of his conquest of Istanbul in 1453, Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror invited many Jewish families from Europe to Istanbul. When Sephardic Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, they were welcomed by Sultan Beyazid II. They found protection in the Ottoman Empire, and this remains a bright memory. Jews made important contributions to the Ottoman administration, economy, science, and culture.<sup>156</sup> In the new Turkish Republic, Atatürk strongly rejected racism or anti-Semitism and Turkey has been treating its Jews on an equal footing with other citizens. Later, Turkey admitted a large number of Jewish professors escaping from Nazi Germany, during World War II, and provided a safe haven for Jews fleeing from Nazi Europe.<sup>157</sup>

The State of Israel was established on May 14, 1948.<sup>158</sup> After the Western powers' recognition, Turkey, as the first Muslim country, recognized

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<sup>156</sup> Steven Bowman, "Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees: Aspects of the Balkan Jewish Experience from Byzantine to Post-Ottoman Times", in David F. Atabé, Erhan Atay, Israel J. Katz, (eds.), *Studies on Turkish-Jewish History: Political and Social Relations, Literature and Linguistics*, (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1996), pp.1-11.

<sup>157</sup> Kemal Karpat, *Turkey's Politics: The Transition to a Multi-Party System*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p.268.

<sup>158</sup> For detailed information about the establishment of the State of Israel, See Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1998), pp.186-208.

Israel on March 28, 1949, and established formal ties with that state. It might be surprising that Ankara sided with Arabs at the United Nations and voted against the partition resolution, on November 29, 1947, which divided Palestine into two states, a Jewish and an Arab state. The reason was that Turkey initially thought of Israel as a potential communist Soviet ally. But Western support for the new state convinced Ankara that Tel Aviv was pro-Western and in the 1948 war between Israel and the Arab states, Turkey officially remained neutral.<sup>159</sup>

For much of the Cold War period, Turkey designed its foreign policy behavior so as to give priority to relations with the West rather than the Middle East, and Turkish foreign policy toward the region has always been considered as oriented by the West.<sup>160</sup> Its Western-oriented foreign policy pattern was one of the reasons why Turkey was interested in developing ties with Israel. The changes in the global situation with the emergence of the United States as the power in the Middle East in place of Britain, convinced Ankara that Israel could act as an advocate for Turkey's interests in Washington. Moreover, in an era in which Turkish foreign policy was shaped by security concerns, Israel's influence on the U.S. media to facilitate Turkey's admittance to NATO also increased Ankara's interest in relations with Israel. From Israel's viewpoint, it was an achievement to have official ties with a Muslim country bordering the Arab states. Besides, Turkey's geographical position and its international connections were of great value in the eyes of Israelis.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Süha Bölükbaşı, "Türkiye ve İsrail: Mesafeli Yakınlıktan Stratejik Ortaklığa", (Turkey and Israel: From Distant Intimacy to Strategic Partnership), *Liberal Düşünce*, 4:13 (Kış/Winter 1999), pp.138-139.

<sup>160</sup> Bilge Criss, Pınar Bilgin, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East.", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 1:1, (January 1997).

<sup>161</sup> Amikam Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1987), pp.50-56.

Turkey's relations with the Arab World and to a great extent with Israel can be defined in four phases: Western-oriented foreign policy (1947-1964), Cyprus Question and aftermath (1964-1973), 'petro-dollar' oriented policy (1974-1989), and the Post-Cold War era.<sup>162</sup> From 1945 to 1964, Ankara formulated its main policy objectives according to the Soviet threat.<sup>163</sup> Turkey tried to show its eagerness to be closer to the West but as a result of Turkey's recognition of Israel, Turkish-Arab relations appeared to get worse.<sup>164</sup> To lessen the strong reactions from Arab nations, Ankara abstained from voting on Israel's membership to the United Nations, on May 11, 1949, but Arab reactions did not change and they blamed Turkey for acting with the West. The formation of the Baghdad Pact, in 1955, with the only Arab member Iraq, did not ease Arab criticism of Turkey.<sup>165</sup> Turkish-Israeli relations showed significant progress but Turkey recalled its ambassador, on November 26, 1956, from Tel Aviv because of the Suez crisis.<sup>166</sup> However, Turkey made clear that this political act was taken to save the Baghdad Pact, and was not a hostile attempt against the State of Israel. Then, a series of events declined Turkey's credibility in the eyes of the

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<sup>162</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, Mujeeb R. Khan. "Turkish Foreign Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Duality and the Development (1950-1991)", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 14:4, (Fall 1992), p.73.

<sup>163</sup> In 1945, Moscow abrogated the Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Neutrality and Nonaggression of 1925 and demanded the return of Kars and Ardahan provinces, as well as military bases along the İstanbul (Bosphorus) and Çanakkale (Dardanelles) Straits. Unsurprisingly, this crisis led Turkish politicians to realize the seriousness of the threat coming from the Soviets, and pushed Ankara toward alliance with the West to be able to prevent Moscow's demands. Turkey became a NATO member in 1952.

<sup>164</sup> On March 28, 1949, Turkey recognized Israel *de facto* and appointed a *chargé d'affaires* to Tel Aviv. Later, on March 9, 1950, Ankara upgraded its representational level to a rank of 'minister plenipotentiary', and this time recognized Israel *de jure*.

<sup>165</sup> The *Baghdad Pact*, also referred to as 'Middle East Treaty Organization', was signed on February 24, 1955 between Turkey and Iraq, later UK, Pakistan, and Iran joined, finally with Iranian signature in November 1955. This involved cooperation for security and defense and refraining from any form of interference in one another's internal affairs. It took the name Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), in 1959, after Iraq withdrew.

<sup>166</sup> *Suez Crisis* was an armed conflict between Israel, France, UK and Egypt which was supported by the USSR, following the Egyptian President Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal. As a result of continued US pressure, French, British and Israeli forces withdrew.

Arab states which were; Ankara's support of the Eisenhower Doctrine,<sup>167</sup> and its decision to let the U.S. to use the NATO base during the 1958 Lebanon crisis.<sup>168</sup> Turkish-Israeli relations may have seemed distant from the outside, but in reality, cooperation has been continuous. After the overthrow of the regime in Iraq, in July 1958, Turkey and Israel agreed on a secret pact, known as the 'Peripheral Pact', which was concluded during an unannounced visit of Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion, to Ankara, on August 29-30, 1958. The pact was for cooperation in the diplomatic, military, and intelligence areas along with in commercial and scientific fields with the aim of embracing Turkey, Israel, Iran and Ethiopia. But this pact did not have a long-lasting effect.<sup>169</sup>

Following the 1960 military coup, Turkish leaders began to question their Western-dominated foreign policy. Turkey's relations with the West were deteriorated, to some extent, after the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, in which Washington decided to remove nuclear-capable Jupiter missiles based in Turkey in return for the U.S.S.R. withdrawal of Soviet missiles in Cuba and U.S. president Lyndon Johnson's famous letter of 1964, warning Ankara to stop preparations for an intervention and threatening Turkey not to trust NATO protection if Soviets were involved in the conflict. These events led to a search for foreign policy modifications less dependent on the U.S. and NATO for Turkey. As a consequence, Ankara decided to adopt a multidimensional foreign policy; abandoned its traditional policy of cool relations with the Soviet Union,

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<sup>167</sup> The *Eisenhower Doctrine* was initiated on March 9, 1957, and asserted the right of the United States to employ force, if necessary, to assist any nation or group of nations in the general region of the Middle East requesting assistance against armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism. It resulted from the apparent increase in Soviet influence in Syria and Egypt and the threat of Soviet assistance to Egypt during the Suez Crisis.

<sup>168</sup> Bülent Aras, *Palestinian Israeli Peace Process and Turkey*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1998), pp.115-117.

<sup>169</sup> Amikam Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1987), pp.74-76.

revised its security policy (relating to the Cyprus problem), tried to strengthen its ties with the Arab states and emerging Third World, and carried out a more balanced attitude toward the Arab-Israeli dispute. This new foreign policy did not aim to shift Turkey's relations with the West, but rather to broaden friendship and provide more alternative sources of security and welfare support. This inevitably led to the steady reduction of ties with Israel. During the 1967 Arab-Israeli War (the Six Day War), Turkey did not allow the U.S. to use military bases to provide logistical support to Israel and opposed the Israeli occupation of Arab territories. In 1973, Turkey distanced itself from Israel in relation to the oil crisis and refused to allow the Americans to use Turkish bases during the October war of 1973 (Yom Kippur).<sup>170</sup>

Turkey, especially after the end of the Six Day War, generally supported the Arab resolutions at the U.N. General Assembly, including the 1975 resolution labeling Zionism as a form of racism. In October 1979, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was given permission, by Turkey, to open an office in Ankara. From 1964 to 1979, Turkey maintained its neutral policy despite the rapprochement with the Arab states. It should be kept in mind that this rapprochement was a consequence of Turkey's worsening economic conditions and its need for support in the Cyprus conflict.<sup>171</sup>

Three important developments happened in the beginning of the 1980s; Islamic revolution in Iran, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Iran-Iraq war. In March 1980, Turkey signed a defense and economic cooperation agreement

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<sup>170</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, Mujeeb R. Khan. "Turkish Foreign Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Duality and the Development (1950-1991)", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 14:4, (Fall 1992), pp.75-77.

<sup>171</sup> Bülent Aras, *Palestinian Israeli Peace Process and Turkey*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1998), pp.121-122.

with the United States.<sup>172</sup> On July 30 of the same year, Knesset enacted a law declaring Jerusalem as the immutable capital of the state of Israel. Ankara condemned the decision and responded with the closure of its Jerusalem consulate on August 28, 1980. Later, on December 2, 1980, Turkey formally downgraded its relations with Israel to the second secretary level. The seeming reason for Ankara's move was budgetary crisis. In order to reduce the foreign trade deficit in a period of second oil shock at the time of Khomeini, Turkey had to seek assistance from Arab countries to get necessary oil for the approaching winter and to expand economic ties with these countries.<sup>173</sup> Although Turkish-Arab relations flourished and its bilateral trade with the regional countries increased, Turkey's relations with Israel were never severed. Turkey continued its neutral attitude during the 1982 Lebanon Crisis, letting the use of its bases to Americans for humanitarian purposes only. Despite Ankara's recognition of Palestine as an independent state after its declaration of independence on November 14, 1988, Turkish leaders had scrutinized their policies through the 1980s. Turkey's hope for Arab support on the Cyprus issue proved false when most of the Arabs sided with Greece. Furthermore, during Bulgaria's brutal campaign of forced assimilation of its Turkish minority, Ankara could not find Arab support. On the other hand, Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors Iraq and Syria, as well as Iran, were deteriorating due to the control over water resources and Turkey's Southern Anatolian Project (GAP). Additionally, Syria's support of violent anti-Turkish groups, such as the Armenian

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<sup>172</sup> Turkey and the U.S. signed a *Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA)* on March 29, 1980 that established a new framework for U.S. military activities in Turkey and committed the U.S. to best efforts in providing defense support to the Turkish armed forces.

<sup>173</sup> George E. Gruen, "Turkey's Relations with Israel: From Ambivalence to Open Cooperation", in David F. Atabé, Erhan Atay, Israel J. Katz, (eds.), *Studies on Turkish-Jewish History: Political and Social Relations, Literature and Linguistics*, (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1996), pp.112-129.

Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) and the Kurdish insurgency group (PKK), ongoing contentious issue of Hatay (*sancak* of Alexandretta), and Iran's efforts to undermine the secular nature of Turkey were the factors that contributed to worsening of relations. By the late 1980s, Turkish-Israeli relations were glowing again. In September 1986, Turkey made an attempt to upgrade relations with Israel by sending a senior diplomat to Tel Aviv as *chargé d'affaires* and Israel responded in the same way. During the Intifada (1987-1993), Turkey plainly condemned the cruel actions by the Israeli military but did nothing else diplomatically.<sup>174</sup>

Although there were some alterations in behavior, one of the major points of Turkish foreign policy, during much of the Cold War era, was to keep itself from getting involved in the turbulent affairs of the Middle East. Ankara sustained a steady and cautious foreign policy toward the region. Turkish-Israeli relations, in particular, were strongly affected by Turkey's relations with Arabs, and its partiality to look to the West rather than the Middle East for allies. But the changes in the international system, as a result of the end of the Cold War, encouraged Turkey to establish a greater presence in the region than that it had before.<sup>175</sup>

### **3.2. Developments in the Post Cold War Era**

With the beginning of the 1990s, significant developments and changes in the international structure began to take place. The end of the Cold War and

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<sup>174</sup> Süha Bölükbaşı, "Türkiye ve İsrail: Mesafeli Yakınlıktan Stratejik Ortaklığa", (Turkey and Israel: From Distant Intimacy to Strategic Partnership), *Liberal Düşünce*, 4:13 (Kış/Winter 1999), pp.144-146.

<sup>175</sup> Yasemin Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, (London: Praeger, 1999), p.142.

the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War, and the Arab-Israeli peace process were important events of the early 1990s which effected and shaped the future of Turkey's relations with the Middle East in general and with Israel in particular. These developments caused fundamental changes in the foreign policy orientations of most of the states, including Turkey.

### **3.2.1. Important Changes in the 1990s**

Undoubtedly, one of the most important developments in the world was the collapse of the Cold War system of international relations. Turkey, as most other countries, redefined its geo-strategic position and adopted itself to the new circumstances of the new environment. As a result of the disappearance of the Soviet Union, and the establishment of new states like Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia, the threat from the north for Turkey weakened.<sup>176</sup> But, despite the removal of the Soviet threat, Turkey, contrary to most Western countries, emerged from the Cold War with a sense of high threat perception, especially regarding the Middle East. Ankara considered itself surrounded by many areas of instability and threatened by dangerous neighbors. Accordingly, Turkey started to consider itself to be a more important actor in global politics, and began to pursue a more activist foreign policy course which was most strongly seen in the Middle East region, as a result of changes in its geo-strategic situation, as mentioned earlier in this study.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Ester Ruben, *Türkiye İsrail Yakınlaşması: Nedenler, Parametreler ve Gelecek için Perspektifler*, (Turkey Israel Rapprochement: Reasons, Parameters, and Future Perspectives), (İstanbul: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1999), p.19.

<sup>177</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Turkey's New Strategic Partner: Israel", in Michael Radu (ed.), *Dangerous Neighborhood: Contemporary Issues in Turkey's Foreign Relations*, (New Brunswick and London:

The Gulf War was another important event whose influence was intense in the Middle East. In an environment where Turkish political elite had serious concerns about their country's strategic importance for the West after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Gulf Crisis provided an opportunity for Turkey to overcome its concerns. After years of pursuing a non-intervention policy in the Middle East, Turkey became one of the key players and one of the first countries to ally with the U.S. against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Though Turkey did not receive the expected benefits from the Gulf War, its direct involvement gave Turkey a chance to secure its strategic position in the new international environment, and to reassert its role and importance in the new era.<sup>178</sup> The Gulf War also divided the Arab countries between USA and Iraq which can be understood as the breaking of the pan-Arab solidarity. As a result Turkey found the opportunity to shape its Middle East policy freely.<sup>179</sup>

Another important change in the 1990s, related to the Middle East, was the peace process that started between Israel and the Palestinians. The peace process that began in October 1991 in Madrid, opened up a new foreign policy opportunity for Turkey. This process freed Turkey from the difficulty of balancing between Arab countries and Israel. The peace process also "removed the last barrier to the betterment of the relations [between Turkey and Israel]."<sup>180</sup> Additionally, seeing that the Arab states were normalizing relations

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Transaction Publishers, 2002), pp.165-190, and in Efraim Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Publication, 2003) pp.165-190.

<sup>178</sup> Meliha Altunısık, "The Turkish-Israeli Rapprochement in the Post-Cold War Era", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36:2, (April 2000), p.173.

<sup>179</sup> David Pryce-Jones, "Turkey's New Day: Power Politics Changes in the Middle East." *National Review*, 51:4, (03.08.1999), pp.33-35.

<sup>180</sup> Meliha Benli Altunısık, "Turkish Policy toward Israel", in Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p.60.

with Israel, the process made such relations publicly acceptable.<sup>181</sup> The Oslo Agreement in September 1993 (Israel-PLO recognition and peace) and Israeli-Jordanian Peace in October 1994 were significant agreements on the peace process in the region.<sup>182</sup>

### **3.2.2. Improving Relations between Turkey and Israel:**

In the light of the developments mentioned above, Turkey and Israel have improved their relations especially after 1993. But even before, the rapprochement between the two countries had begun by Turkey's decision to raise the level of the representation of both Israel and PLO to embassy status on 19 December 1991. Along with the 1991 Madrid Peace Process, the Soviet Union's and the Eastern Europeans' decisions to restore full relations with Israel, and even China's plans to establish relations with that state, facilitated Turkey's move.<sup>183</sup>

In the first half of the 1990s, high-level Turkish and Israeli visits took place. On July 1, 1992, the Turkish Minister of Tourism went to Israel and concluded a tourism cooperation agreement, which was one of the first agreements between the two countries.<sup>184</sup> Later, on November 14, 1993, Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin, as the first Turkish Foreign Minister visiting Israel, went to that country and signed a series of agreements on economic

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<sup>181</sup> Raphael Israeli, "The Turkish-Israeli Odd Couple", *Orbis*, 45:1, (Winter 2001), pp.69-70.

<sup>182</sup> Gencer Özcan, "50. Yılı Biterken Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri", (Turkey-Israel Relations at the end of the 50th Year), in İsmail Soysal, *Çağdaş Türk Diplomasisi: 200 Yıllık Süreç, (Contemporary Turkish Diplomacy: 200 Year Process)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınevi, 1999), pp.546-547. See also Alptekin Dursunoğlu, *Stratejik İttifak: Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinin Öyküsü, (Strategic Alliance: The Story of Turkey-Israel Relations)*, (İstanbul: Anka Yayınları, 2000), pp.49-50.

<sup>183</sup> Süha Bölükbaşı, "Türkiye ve İsrail: Mesafeli Yakınlıktan Stratejik Ortaklığa", (Turkey and Israel: From Distant Intimacy to Strategic Partnership), *Liberal Düşünce*, 4:13 (Kış/Winter 1999), p.146.

<sup>184</sup> Alptekin Dursunoğlu, *Stratejik İttifak: Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinin Öyküsü, (Strategic Alliance: The Story of Turkey-Israel Relations)*, (İstanbul: Anka Yayınları, 2000), p.50.

cooperation and cultural exchange. It was the beginning of the blossoming relationship for the restructuring the Middle East.<sup>185</sup> Top level visits intensified in 1994. In January, Israeli President Ezer Weizman, and in April, then-Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres visited Turkey.<sup>186</sup> Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller, in 1994, and Turkish President Süleyman Demirel, in 1996, reciprocated these visits. Çiller's visit to Israel was the first-ever by a Turkish Prime Minister. This was politically important because for the first time Turkey showed its tilt toward Israel and the trip was the symbol of changing character of the relations between the two countries.<sup>187</sup>

Until early 1996, Ankara seemed to favor economic, technical, and cultural ties with Israel rather than military cooperation.<sup>188</sup> But, during the February 1996 visit of the deputy of the Turkish Chief of Staff, Gen. Çevik Bir, the two countries signed a Military Training and Cooperation Agreement. Then some others including Free Trade Agreement in March 1996, and an agreement concerning the defense industry, in August 1996, were signed between Turkey and Israel.<sup>189</sup> The 1996 accords were followed by an outbreak of mutual visits and declarations as to the great importance each country attached to the relationship. The Turkish army's Chief of Staff İsmail Hakkı Karadayı's visit, in

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<sup>185</sup> Meliha Benli Altunısık, "Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri", (Turkey-Israel Relations in the Post-Cold War Era), in Meliha Benli Altunısık (ed.), *Türkiye ve Ortadoğu: Tarih, Kimlik, Güvenlik*, (Turkey and the Middle East: History, Identity, Security), (İstanbul: Boyut Yayınları, 1999), p.192.

<sup>186</sup> Kamer Kasım, "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri: İki Bölgesel Gücün Stratejik Ortaklığı", (Turkey-Israel Relations: Strategic Relationship of Two Regional Powers), in İdris Bal (ed.), *21. Yüzyılın Eşiğinde Türk Dış Politikası*, (Turkish Foreign Policy on the verge of 21st Century), (İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2001), p.571.

<sup>187</sup> Meliha Benli Altunısık, "Turkish Policy toward Israel", in Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p.63.

<sup>188</sup> Ayşegül Sever, "Turkey and the Syrian-Israeli Peace Talks in the 1990s", *Middle Eastern Review of International Affairs*, 5:3, (September 2001).

<sup>189</sup> Ester Ruben, *Türkiye İsrail Yakınlaşması: Nedenler, Parametreler ve Gelecek için Perspektifler*, (Turkey Israel Rapprochement: Reasons, Parameters, and Future Perspectives), (İstanbul: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1999), pp.6-10.

February 1997, was followed by several senior military and civilian staff.<sup>190</sup> Turkish Defense Minister, Turan Tayan, in May 1997, Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz, and shortly after Foreign Minister İsmail Cem, in July 1998, and President Süleyman Demirel, in July 1999 visited Israel.<sup>191</sup>

Besides, both countries had changed some of their policies regarding each other. Jerusalem had long refused to take sides against Kurdish terrorism, despite Turkish requests. This policy was caused by the fear of opening a new terrorist front in relation to the PKK; also a constant pro-Kurdish sentiment exists in Israel, lingering from the countries support for the Kurdish struggle in northern Iraq in the 1960s and 1970s. But Prime Minister Netanyahu changed this traditional behavior, in May 1997, and clearly supported Turkey in its conflict with the PKK by both condemning Kurdish terrorism, and warning Syria that there would be no peace unless it stopped its support for PKK terrorism. In addition, while some of Israeli academics had a pro-Armenian position on the Turkish-Armenian issue, officials and army officers firmly rejected charges of genocide against Armenians. Israelis also became aware of Turkey's discomfort about the Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations and the sudden end of the peace talks did not create disappointment in Turkey. And, Israelis gave up their long-time policy of neutrality in Greco-Turkish relations and rejected to expand military ties with Greece.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente", *National Interest*, 50, (Winter97/98), p.33.

<sup>191</sup> Efraim Inbar, *Türk-İsrail Stratejik Ortaklığı, (Turkish-Israeli Strategic Partnership)*, (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 2001), p.23.

<sup>192</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie", *Middle East Quarterly*, 5:2, (June 1998), also in Amikam Nachmani, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (Ramat Gan: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 1999), pp.19-20.

Turkey, on the other hand, changed some of its traditional foreign policy behaviors. Ankara had long refrained from promoting relations with Israel and even refused to acknowledge its ties with that country for fear of harming its ties with the Arab and Communist worlds. Although Turkey remained sensitive primarily about two topics, the Palestinian and Armenian issues, Ankara opened the way for better relations with Israel.<sup>193</sup>

### **3.3. Core of the Relations**

#### **3.3.2. Civilian Domains:**

Turkey and Israel are the only two democratic countries in the region and share western moral values. There has been a widespread civilian interaction between the two countries. Bilateral relations have developed remarkably in the domains of culture, education and science; environment and nature protection; mail and telecommunications; efforts to stop the smuggling of drugs and narcotic substances; health and agriculture; regulation of trade free of custom duties; encouragement of protection of financial investments; avoidance of dual taxation; and technical and economic cooperation.<sup>194</sup>

The Turkish-Israeli Free Trade Area Agreement was signed in March 1996, and became effective on May 1, 1997 after being ratified by both parliaments. This agreement opened new possibilities for economic relations between the two countries, not only in the commercial sphere but also in

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<sup>193</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie", *Middle East Quarterly*, 5:2, (June 1998), also in Amikam Nachmani, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (Ramat Gan: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 1999), pp.21-22.

<sup>194</sup> As indicated by Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie", *Middle East Quarterly*, 5:2, (June 1998), also in Amikam Nachmani, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (Ramat Gan: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 1999), p.26.

investments, industrial and agricultural cooperation. The agreement was seen, in Turkey, as important, not only because it provided access to the Israeli market, but was also a stepping-stone to other markets, namely those in the U.S., Jordan and Palestinian areas. Turks sell textiles and other commodities duty-free to Israel, which adds its labor to the product and re-exports then to the US duty-free. Another agreement on the prevention of double taxation was signed in March 1996, and entered into force on May 1998. Finally, an agreement for mutual encouragement of protection of financial investments was signed in March 1996, and entered into force in August 1998.<sup>195</sup> Trade between the two countries increased with much of the increase in Turkey's favour. (See Table-I)<sup>196</sup> Turkey finds a new area for its exports of textiles, industrial products, food products electronics, raw materials and grains. Also both countries have looked for implementing joint Turkish-Israeli projects in the countries of Central Asia. Israeli companies have proposed, to their Turkish counterparts, job opportunities in Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.<sup>197</sup> Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meetings have been held at the ministerial level between two countries.<sup>198</sup>

**Table-I: Israel's Civilian Trade with Turkey (million \$)**

	<b>1990</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Export</b>	88.7	121.8	197.2	256.7	287.2	334.2	430.5
<b>Import</b>	36.2	80.3	252.1	355.4	443.1	556.8	586.6

<sup>195</sup> Meliha Benli Altunısık, "Turkish Policy toward Israel", in Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), pp.67-68.

<sup>196</sup> Taken from, Efraim Inbar, *Türk-İsrail Stratejik Ortaklığı, (Turkish-Israeli Strategic Partnership)*, (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 2001), p.26.

<sup>197</sup> *Turkish Daily News*, 25 May 1999.

<sup>198</sup> Ahmet Üzümcü, Ambassador, "Turkish-Israeli Relations in 2000" [Online]. Available: <http://www.turkishembassy-telaviv.org>

Tourism has become one of the most prominent components of the bilateral economic relations, as well as indication of the friendly atmosphere prevailing between Turkey and Israel. With some 2 million Israelis touring the world each year, the number of Israelis visiting Turkey has increased progressively, especially following a cooperation agreement on tourism signed in June 1992. For instance, an estimated 400,000 Israeli tourists visited Turkey in 1997, spending about \$400 million.<sup>199</sup> However, a slight drop in the number of Israeli tourists to Turkey was experienced due to the closing of casinos in Turkey in early 1998, while the number of Turkish tourists to Israel has been growing.<sup>200</sup>

Turkey has become an important source of water for Israel, and showed an interest in selling fresh water to that state since the 1990s. This became, once more, a main topic of discussion in the July 1999 visit of President Süleyman Demirel to Israel. Ankara offered to supply Israel with 180 million cubic meters of its Manavgat water a year, in huge plastic balloons hauled by tugboats. In the past, Israel had repeatedly refused Turkish proposals. Both countries decided to establish a joint committee of technicians to discuss the feasibility of the project.<sup>201</sup> Reasons for Israel's repeated refusals were ongoing arguments in Israel that the overall cost of importing water would be higher than desalination of seawater or producing water from other sources.<sup>202</sup> After settling the details of the project, Turkey and Israel finally sealed an agreement

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<sup>199</sup> *Turkish Daily News*, February 7, 1998, information given by the chairman of the Turkish-Israel Business Council, Ekrem Esat Güvendiren.

<sup>200</sup> Information acquired from the Turkish Undersecretary of Foreign Trade, Ankara, quoted in Meliha Benli Altunışık, "Turkish Policy toward Israel", in Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p.68.

<sup>201</sup> *Turkish Daily News*, "Turkey, Israel to Establish Water Commission", July 16, 1999.

<sup>202</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, David Rudge, "PM calls for urgent meeting on water crisis", Jun 23, 2000.

in April 2001 to start the transportation of 50 million cubic meters of water per year from Manavgat River to the Israeli port of Ashkelon via super-tankers which has never happened in the world before.<sup>203</sup>

The Israeli government seemed especially interested in initiating Turkish-Israeli joint projects in agriculture and other sectors in the newly independent Transcaucasian and Central Asian Republics where a Turkish 'entrance card' may assist Israel's desire to expand its ties to that region.<sup>204</sup> Israel's advanced agriculture technology, such as its improved irrigation systems, has also created possibilities for cooperation in Turkey itself, especially in the southeast. Israeli firms have shown a significant interest in getting involved in the Southeastern Anatolian Project (GAP).<sup>205</sup> Israel was one of the first countries to respond to Turkey's earthquake in August 1999 by sending a rescue team, establishing a large field hospital, and collecting and sending goods to Turkey. Moreover, Israeli firms were interested in the construction projects in the region after the earthquake.<sup>206</sup>

Finally, Israel and its friends lobbied on behalf of Turkey, the Israel lobby helped with the U.S. Congress, reducing criticism of Turkey over various human

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<sup>203</sup> *Turkish Daily News*, Selcuk Gultasli, "At Last, Water Deal with Israel in Late April", March 30, 2001, also see Efraim Inbar, *Türk-İsrail Stratejik Ortaklığı*, (*Turkish-Israeli Strategic Partnership*), (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 2001), p.26.

<sup>204</sup> Meliha Benli Altunısık, "Turkish Policy toward Israel", in Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p.68.

<sup>205</sup> *Turkish Daily News*, Saadet Oruc, "Turkish-Israeli Ties on the Eve of the 21st Century", December 3, 1997.

<sup>206</sup> Efraim Inbar, *Türk-İsrail Stratejik Ortaklığı*, (*Turkish-Israeli Strategic Partnership*), (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 2001), p.26.

rights issues, and helping Turkey's campaign against the stationing of Russian-made S-300 missiles on Cyprus, as will be examined elsewhere in this study.<sup>207</sup>

### **3.3.1. Military Domains**

Israeli-Turkish military cooperation formally dates to the signing of two defense cooperation agreements in February and August 1996. First was the Military Training and Cooperation Agreement (MTCA), signed on February 23, 1996, between Turkish deputy chief of staff, General Çevik Bir, and Israeli defense ministry director-general, David Ivry.<sup>208</sup> The second key agreement, the framework agreement concerning defense industrial cooperation, was signed on August 26, 1996.<sup>209</sup> Although the contents of the agreements remained secret, they were believed to include protocols regarding joint air and naval training, sharing of training information, officer exchanges, visits by military delegations, observation of one another's training exercises, naval port visits, cooperation in the areas of counter-terrorism and border security, and defense industrial cooperation.<sup>210</sup>

*Training and Exercises:* Since 1996, each country's pilots have exercised in the other's airspace for one week eight times a year, with four deployments in each country. Turkish F-16 pilots have trained at the Nevatim airfield and at Israel's computerized firing range, learned about electronic war, benefited from

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<sup>207</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie", *Middle East Quarterly*, 5:2, (June 1998), also in Amikam Nachmani, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (Ramat Gan: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 1999), p.27.

<sup>208</sup> For the unofficial text of this agreement see *Aksiyon*, No:76 (18-24 May 1996).

<sup>209</sup> *Yeni Yüzyıl*, August 29, 1996.

<sup>210</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, "Turkish-Israeli Military Cooperation: An Assessment", *Policywatch*, No:262, (24 July 1997).

Israel's systems of training in advanced technology warfare.<sup>211</sup> Even, when some press reports claimed that Turkish pilots had been trained for an air-strike against Greek-Cypriot airbase where the Russian S-300 missiles were supposed to be deployed, Turkish defense sources stated, concerning the maneuvers, that the Turkish jets had not been trained in Israel to destroy Russian-made anti-aircraft missiles, but on how to evade them.<sup>212</sup> These exercises enable Israeli pilots to have access to the vast land mass of Anatolia to practice long-range flying over mountainous areas, which is very different from flying over water. This also facilitates Israelis' potential preparation for possible missions against Iran. Overland exercises were unique for Israeli pilots, where they could generally train over the Mediterranean Sea as a consequence of the very small size of their country.<sup>213</sup>

The two sides held joint naval and air maneuvers in the Mediterranean Sea in June 1997, with the apparent purpose of coordinating search-and-rescue procedures. These took place in the international waters, in the eastern Mediterranean, close to the Syrian coast.<sup>214</sup> Moreover, the two countries announced plans for trilateral Turkey-Israel-U.S., five-day naval search-and-rescue exercise later the same year, called 'Reliant Mermaid'. It was originally scheduled to take place in mid-November 1997, but after being twice postponed, and six months later than planned, Turkey, Israel, and the U.S. held

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<sup>211</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie", *Middle East Quarterly*, 5:2, (June 1998), also in Amikam Nachmani, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (Ramat Gan: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 1999), p.24, also see *Al-Broub*, (a Turkish weekly in English), May 24, 1999.

<sup>212</sup> *Turkish Daily News*, July 15, 1998, and *Jerusalem Post*, July 17, 1998.

<sup>213</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, December 12, 1997, "Israeli fighter jets have carried out 120 sorties in Turkey this year; many of them practice for long-range missions, since Israeli airspace is so limited".

<sup>214</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, "Turkish-Israeli Military Cooperation: An Assessment", *Policywatch*, No:262, (24 July 1997).

Operation Reliant Mermaid in January 1998.<sup>215</sup> Two frigates (*TCG Yavuz* and *TCG Zafer*) and a helicopter from Turkey, a destroyer (*USS John Rogers*) and a helicopter from the U.S. and two missile boats (*INS La Hav* and *INS Nitzahon*) and air elements from Israel conducted the exercise, along with observers from Jordan.<sup>216</sup> This trilateral exercise has been held every year, with the participation of a Jordanian military observer, and has become the symbol of U.S. support for Turkish-Israeli cooperation.<sup>217</sup>

*Defense Industrial Cooperation:* Turkey and Israel signed a number of contracts that could make Israel the major arms and technology supplier of Turkey. This allowed Ankara to avoid sanctions by its traditional arms suppliers in Western Europe and the United States, because of the efforts of anti-Turkish lobbies and claimed human rights violations during the course of Turkey's struggle with the PKK. The defense industrial cooperation between the two countries can be categorized as weaponry upgrade, hardware purchase and joint production. Israeli aircraft industries have been modernizing fifty-four of Turkey's F-4E fighter jets, upgrading them with improved firepower and better vision and electronics, and equipping them with Popeye-I air-to-ground missiles. The project was started in Israel and will be finished in Turkey. Later, a second upgrade contract was awarded to Israel for Turkey's forty-eight F-5 aircraft. Israelis also sought to upgrade Turkey's aging U.S.-made M-60 tanks.<sup>218</sup> The deal continued with the purchase of 200 Popeye-I standoff missiles; some come

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<sup>215</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, January 7, 1998.

<sup>216</sup> Alptekin Dursunoğlu, *Stratejik İttifak: Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinin Öyküsü*, (*Strategic Alliance: The Story of Turkey-Israel Relations*), (İstanbul: Anka Yayınları, 2000), p.265.

<sup>217</sup> Reliant Mermaid-I (RM-I) was held on January 7, 1998; RM-II on December 16, 1999; RM-III on January 17, 2001; RM-IV on December 3-7, 2001; and RM-V on December 30, 2002-January 3, 2003. For detailed information see Jewish Virtual Library [Online] <http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/US-Israel/turktoc.html>

<sup>218</sup> Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente", *National Interest*, 50, (Winter97/98), pp.33-34, for F-5 deal see *Jerusalem Post*, September 27, 1997.

along with the transformed F-4 Phantom 2000s. In addition, Turkey has been interested in Israel's Falcon early-warning aircraft systems, unmanned air vehicles, a radar system for detecting plastic and conventional mines, and special fence systems to block the Turkish borders with Syria and Iraq to prevent PKK infiltration, and Galil infantry rifle to replace the Turkish G-3 infantry rifles. Moreover, Israel's Merkava Mark-III main battle tank was among the bidders of Turkey's project of co-producing modern battle tanks to replace the aging ones. While Turkey was planning to expand and modernize its fleet of attack and transport helicopters and its navy, Israeli firms are positioned to get additional major contracts. Israeli-Russian Ka-52 helicopter was one of the bidders in Turkey's co-production of attack helicopters project, which is not fully concluded yet. Turkey and Israel also agreed to co-produce Popeye-II air-to-ground missiles which has the range of 150kms and can be used in F-16s, and talked about a project to produce Arrow and long-range Delilah missiles.<sup>219</sup>

*Intelligence and Security:* Intelligence cooperation has been another major area of Turkish-Israeli relations, including exchange of information, routine briefings, and analysis of data collected by Israeli satellites. Both countries have shared information relating to terrorism and the military capabilities of Syria, Iraq and Iran. Turkey's location next to these three countries, plus Israel's border with Syria, pointed to their mutual value.<sup>220</sup>

Although the officials have denied it, a newspaper claimed that Israel has shared

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<sup>219</sup>Efraim Inbar, *Türk-İsrail Stratejik Ortaklığı, (Turkish-Israeli Strategic Partnership)*, (Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 2001), pp.29-34, for Popeye-I deal see *Defense News*, December 9, 1996, for Attack Helicopter deal see *Defense News*, January 11, 1999, for Popeye-II deal see *Turkish Daily News*, December 4, 1997, and Alptekin Dursunoğlu, *Stratejik İttifak: Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinin Öyküsü, (Strategic Alliance: The Story of Turkey-Israel Relations)*, (İstanbul: Anka Yayınları, 2000), pp.251-264.

<sup>220</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie", *Middle East Quarterly*, 5:2, (June 1998), also in Amikam Nachmani, *Turkey and the Middle East*, (Ramat Gan: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 1999), p.25.

secret information with Turkey about MIG-29 warplanes, the type used by Syria's air force. It is also widely believed that the Israelis take advantage of flying in Anatolia, close to Syria, Iraq, and Iran, to gather information about those hostile states.<sup>221</sup>

### **3.4. Motives, Common Interests, and Implications**

#### **3.4.1. Why A Chance?**

Israelis, since David Ben-Gurion's time, have always looked for better relations with Turkey which would help breaking the hostile ring of Arab neighbors, dilute the religious element of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and provide Israel with an important strategic ally and trading partner. But why did Turks, after long years of showing little interest, seek such a tight bond with Israel, rather than the Muslim world? And why did such an impressive relationship develop between the two countries? Here the reply, to some extent, lies in the nature of Turkish-Arab relations. Turks have had no problems with Israel and the Jewish nation throughout history, and both countries have shared, what Alan Makovsky called, "a common sense of otherness" in a region dominated by non-democratic Arab regimes.<sup>222</sup> But, in contrast, Turks have long had poor relations with Arabs, distinguished by discord and friction. While Ankara strongly associated with the West, and saw communism and the Soviet Union as a threat, the Arabs regarded the West as the most serious threat to their independence and prosperity. Furthermore, they have often blamed the

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<sup>221</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, May 4, 1997.

<sup>222</sup> Alan Makovsky, "Israeli-Turkish Relations: A Turkish 'Periphery Strategy'?", in Henry J. Barkey, (ed.), *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East*, (Washington, D.C.: USIP Press, 1996), p.169.

Ottoman Empire, which controlled much of the Middle East through four centuries, for their current plight.<sup>223</sup>

### **3.4.2. Motives behind the Rapprochement:**

Turkey's resentment with Arabs on Cyprus and Bulgaria issues, together with the developments in the Post Cold War era, namely the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War, and the Israel-PLO agreement, as mentioned earlier, were among the factors that shaped Turkey's Israel initiative. In addition, Turkey's increased concerns about NATO's security guarantees against the threats emanating from the Middle East, Ankara's search for a reliable ally in the region in a new environment, and noticeable sense of self confidence that prevailed among the Turkish elites were other reasons influencing Turkey's course. Ankara has had lack of confidence on the full support of NATO in the protection of Turkey's interests in the Middle East. Even Şükrü Elekdağ, former Turkish ambassador to Washington, D.C., argued that "With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, NATO has totally lost its function of providing support for Turkey's defense".<sup>224</sup> NATO was never united on including the 'out of area' intervention in its contingency plans and Ankara could never be certain if NATO would invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty in case Turkey was attacked by any of its Middle Eastern neighbors. So, Turkey tried to find regional solutions to its Middle Eastern problems and in Mustafa Kibaroglu's words "As the Middle East lurches into the twenty-first century, spinning out new threats in all

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<sup>223</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "A Triangular Relationship: Turkish Israeli Cooperation and its Implications for Greece", *Cashiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No:28, (Juin-Décembre 1999).

<sup>224</sup> Şükrü Elekdağ, "2 1/2 War Strategy", *Perceptions*, 3:4, (March-May 1996), p.54.

directions, there is no room for doubt: a *de facto* military alliance with Israel is in the Turkish national interest".<sup>225</sup>

### **3.4.3. Common Interests**

Turkey and Israel share a number of common strategic interests, making them natural allies. Both are non-Arab, largely secular, and also democratic states. They are Western-oriented, have important allied relationships with the United States, with military inventories based mainly on U.S. equipment. They are also moderate and *status quo* oriented in their foreign policies. Both want to be close to Europe but are often held at arm's-length by the Europeans. Both are deeply concerned about terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. They are both medium-sized powers with significant defense needs and they see themselves primarily as nation-states.<sup>226</sup>

As for their mutual interests, both countries wish for a stable region and are concerned about radical forces which might destabilize the region. While their priorities are different, Turkey and Israel are close enough in their concerns to have a largely general set of interests, one of the most important of which is an attempt to deter radical forces. Both countries had antagonistic relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran, as well as distant relations with most Arab countries. Syria is considered by the Turks to be the most efficient neighboring state that caused serious troubles in Turkey. Syrian government has steadily claimed an entire Turkish province of Hatay (formerly known as Alexandretta), as its own. Official Syrian maps have showed the area as part of Syria.

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<sup>225</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Turkey and Israel Strategize", *Middle East Quarterly*, (Winter 2002), p.61.

<sup>226</sup> Barry Rubin, "Article on Turkey-Israel Relations", *MERIA News*, No:7, (July 1997).

Moreover, Damascus has alleged rights to large flows of Euphrates (Dicle) River waters, protested the Turkish hydroelectric plants and dams, and has seen the massive GAP project as a threat to itself. Syria has also supported PKK, hosted for years its headquarters along with its leader Abdullah Öcalan, and allowed the organization to train in Lebanon, despite repeated promises to stop aiding it. At the same time, Syria has been the neighbor most likely to attack Israel, has threatened Israel's territorial integrity, and has supported terrorist groups of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Palestinian rejectionist groups, and Hizbullah opposed to Israel.<sup>227</sup>

To remind, economic growth, due to the major reforms which were undertaken in 1980, and the growing prosperity have differentiated Turkey from many of its neighbors and created a sense of self-confidence. In addition, by increasing its defense expenditures, Ankara upgraded its military equipment to have a more efficient military and the increase in military capacity gave Turkey the ability for power projection into adjacent regions. In contrast, its neighbors have experienced severe weaknesses in military strength in the 1990s. Syria has not been receiving advanced weaponry free of charge from Moscow, and has not been able to modernize its equipment. Similarly, Iraq's military was badly damaged in the Gulf War, and sanctions imposed on the country reduced its ability to get new equipment. And Iran has been isolated internationally after

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<sup>227</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Turkey's New Strategic Partner: Israel", in Michael Radu (ed.), *Dangerous Neighborhood: Contemporary Issues in Turkey's Foreign Relations*, (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2002), pp.177-179, and in Efraim Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Publication, 2003), pp.177-179.

the Islamic revolution and had a troubled economy after the eight-year war with Iraq.<sup>228</sup>

So, Damascus, Baghdad, and Tehran do not constitute very serious threats to Turkey militarily. Turkey and Israel supported the anti-Iraq coalition during the Gulf war. For Turkey, disputes with Iraq have included the question of northern Iraq, the protection of the Turkoman minority in Iraq, and the politics of water. Iraq, during the Gulf War, opened a second front by sending its Scud missiles into Israeli territory. The main source of tension between Turkey and Iran has regarded Tehran's relentless support for Islamic fundamentalist movements in Turkey. Israel was more concerned about Iran as a threat in strategic, political and terrorist terms. If there is a potential military risk to Turkish security in the region, it is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and tactical ballistic missiles (TBMs). Turkey has no known WMD capability, while Syria, Iraq and Iran all have WMD programs. And Iran is widely believed to be pursuing a nuclear weapons program and Turkey and Israel have had a permanent interest in preventing other Middle Eastern nations from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.<sup>229</sup>

Related to the topics mentioned above, the maintenance of a politically and militarily fragmented Middle East has been a primary strategic interest for Israel and Turkey and both states have sought to prevent the rise of a regional hegemon. Indeed, as a result of the Gulf war, pan-Arab solidarity had been totally set aside, and this eased the two countries' courses. Additionally, Turkey and Israel shared a common interest in curbing the influence of radical Islam.

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<sup>228</sup> Alan Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy", *SAIS Review*, (Winter-Spring 1999), pp.94-100.

<sup>229</sup> Dietrich Jung, Wolfgang Piccoli, "The Turkish-Israeli Alignment: Paranoia or Pragmatism?", *Security Dialogue*, 31:1, (March 2000), pp.98-101.

While secular Turkey has seen Islamist Iran as a rival, Israel has had a similar interest in restraining the weight of radical Islam, because Muslim extremists oppose the very existence of the Jewish State.<sup>230</sup> Both countries have also aimed to combat terrorism that emanate from local and Iranian or Syrian-sponsored groups, such as the PKK, Hizbullah, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas and they want to prevent Syria from protecting these groups. Combating terrorism jointly has been a powerful justification for extensive Turkish-Israeli military cooperation and is often cited by Turkey when confronted by Arab opposition to its cooperation with Israel.<sup>231</sup>

#### **3.4.4. Regional Implications and Gains:**

The entente between the two capitals has not been clearly a military alliance in the traditional sense. Officials from both sides declared that it was not an alliance, and neither promised to go to the other's defense. However, the relationship between Turkey and Israel can be called a strategic partnership since it reflects a convergence of views on a wide range of global and regional issues. The Turkish-Israeli entente strengthened each state separately, and enhanced their regional status. Moreover, their combined power and its potential use influenced the strategic calculus in various capitals of the region. The entente provided both states with deterrence capability, and states which considered the use of force against Turkey and Israel had to bear in mind their combined power. Most of the regional capitals, especially Damascus, Cairo,

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<sup>230</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Turkey's New Strategic Partner: Israel", in Michael Radu (ed.), *Dangerous Neighborhood: Contemporary Issues in Turkey's Foreign Relations*, (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2002), pp.179-181.

<sup>231</sup> Anat Lewin, "Turkey and Israel: Reciprocal and Mutual Imagery in the Media, 1994-1999", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1, (Fall 2000), p.246.

Baghdad, and Tehran, condemned this military cooperation and accepted it as directed against the Arab nations. The relationship also prompted especially Syria to seek counter-balancing alliances with other Middle Eastern states, such as Iran.<sup>232</sup>

Regarding Turkey's gains, as a consequence of its relations with Israel, Ankara acted determinedly on taking military action in protecting its vital interests. A striking example was Turkey's decision to send a strong and decisive signal to Syria in 1998. Ankara showed its determination to follow its own policy on the Kurdish problem and threatened Syria to use military force if the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, were not extradited from his longtime refuge in Damascus. The Turkish military buildup along the border in early October 1998 convinced Syria about Ankara's seriousness. Having positioned most of its troops near the Israeli border, Syria would not have been able to resist a Turkish invasion. With the fear of engaging in a two-front war between Turkey and Israel, Damascus accepted the Turkish proposal. Another example was Turkey's strong reaction against Greek Cypriot plans to acquire Soviet made S-300 missile system, and to deploy them in Cyprus. In both cases, Turkey's demands had been met by means of Turkey's deterrence policy which has been strengthened by its close relations with Israel.<sup>233</sup>

It has been widely believed, by many Turks, that friendship with Israel means support from America. This belief derived partly from the fact that Israel has had intimate relationship with the United States, and partly from the might

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<sup>232</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership", *Turkish Studies*, 3:2, (Autumn 2002), pp.21-43, and in Efraim Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Publication, 2003), pp.21-43.

<sup>233</sup> David Pryce-Jones, "Turkey's New Day: Power Politics Changes in the Middle East", *National Review*, 51:4, (03.08.1999), p.35.

of the Jewish lobby in Washington. Turkey has been pleased to have the support of the powerful Jewish lobby in the United States, especially on the so called Armenian 'genocide' issue and on maintaining the flow of US arms, and have seen the lobby as a balancing force against the Greek and the Armenian lobbies.<sup>234</sup> In addition to the increased U.S. support for Turkey, and Jewish lobbying on Turkey's behalf, Israeli diplomats spent much time in support of Turkey's bid to join the European Customs Union.<sup>235</sup>

Ankara faced periodic difficulties in the transfer of arms and military technology from the United States and Europe. Whereas Western governments remained committed to the support of a strategic ally, the U.S. Congress and European parliaments related the issue to Turkey's human rights performance, the PKK, and disputes with Greece. One of the incentives for Ankara's efforts to expand defense ties with Israel has been its desire to avoid human rights-related difficulties on defense purchases, and its need for a reliable source of high-technology military equipment. Because both states' military inventories were based on U.S. equipment, Israel could play the role of an alternative, sometimes cheaper, source of military arms, technology and hardware without any prerequisites.<sup>236</sup>

The supply of field-tested counter-terrorism products from Israel, a regular seller of such equipment, and the sharing of intelligence with experienced Israeli counter-terrorism officers were perceived to be in Turkey's national interest. Plus, it was widely assumed that Israel helped the Turkish

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<sup>234</sup> Raphael Israeli, "The Turkish-Israeli Odd Couple", *Orbis*, 45:1, (Winter 2001), p.70.

<sup>235</sup> Alan Makovsky, "Israeli-Turkish Relations: A Turkish 'Periphery Strategy'?", in Henry J. Barkey, (ed.), *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East*, (Washington, D.C.: USIP Press, 1996), p.154.

<sup>236</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership", *Turkish Studies*, 3:2, (Autumn 2002), p.39.

government in locating PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan when Turks captured him in early 1999.<sup>237</sup>

Moreover, the economic cooperation between Turkey and Israel affected Turkish economy in a positive way. The cooperation compensated, at least partly, the losses of the Turkish economy that it faced in its trade with the Middle East and North Africa after the Gulf war.<sup>238</sup>

Concerning Israel's gains, as a result of its rapprochement with Turkey, Israel found a priceless ally in the Middle East. The combination of Turkey's military power, its strategic location bordering Iran, Iraq and Syria and its close ideological affinity with Israel, make Turkey an invaluable ally in the region. Israel might gain access to extremely important Turkish intelligence on Iran, Iraq and Syria.<sup>239</sup> The Israeli air force has passage rights to Turkey's airspace, benefited from training over that geography, and has been granted shelter in case of an emergency, which let them to be more assertive and take greater risks.<sup>240</sup> And Israel found a valuable market, Turkey, for its military equipment, since it depends on foreign markets to sustain its military industry.<sup>241</sup>

Undoubtedly, the two countries differ in some issues, such as a belief on Turkey's side that improved relations with Israel would damage Turkish-Arab relations, Turkey's desire to see the peace process succeed, including a satisfactory solution for the Palestinians, Turkish concerns about Israel's attitude

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<sup>237</sup> Anat Lewin, "Turkey and Israel: Reciprocal and Mutual Imagery in the Media, 1994-1999", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1, (Fall 2000), pp.239-261.

<sup>238</sup> Dietrich Jung, Wolfgang Piccoli, "The Turkish-Israeli Alignment: Paranoia or Pragmatism?", *Security Dialogue*, 31:1, (March 2000), p.101.

<sup>239</sup> Amikam Nachmani, "A Triangular Relationship: Turkish Israeli Cooperation and its Implications for Greece", *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No:28, (Juin-Décembre 1999).

<sup>240</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, "Turkish-Israeli Military Cooperation: An Assessment", *Policywatch*, No:262, (24 July 1997).

<sup>241</sup> Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente", *National Interest*, 50, (Winter97/98), p.36.

in the Kurdish issue, and Turkey's internal politics and public opinion to some extent. But positive results of this strategic partnership have been more outstanding.<sup>242</sup>

For Turkey, in the Middle Eastern context, reason for the alignment with Israel was to put pressure on regional states that were accused of supporting Islamist groups and the PKK. In the global context, on the other hand, "...Turkey's alignment with Israel has fundamentally a Western rather than a Middle Eastern target".<sup>243</sup>

### **3.5. Conclusion**

After continuously pursuing cautious and modest policies toward the Middle East during the Cold War era, with the exception of a brief period in the mid-1950s, Turkey has taken some actions in accordance with its new, assertive, and active foreign policy posture to meet the challenges of the Post Cold War environment. Changes in this new period, such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War, and the Arab-Israeli peace process, as well as Turkey's increased concerns about NATO's security guarantees against threats emanating from the Middle East, Ankara's search for a reliable ally in the region in a new environment, and noticeable sense of self confidence prevailed among the Turkish elites influenced Turkey's course significantly.

Developing close relations with Israel was among the most prominent foreign policy orientations of Turkey. Both countries have benefited from their

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<sup>242</sup> Barry Rubin, "Article on Turkey-Israel Relations", *MERIA News*, No:7, (July 1997).

<sup>243</sup> Dietrich Jung, Wolfgang Piccoli, "The Turkish-Israeli Alignment: Paranoia or Pragmatism?", *Security Dialogue*, 31:1, (March 2000), p.101.

bilateral ties. As mentioned before, Turkey acquired a strengthened deterrence capability in protecting its vital interests, had the support of the powerful Jewish lobby in Washington as well as increased U.S. support, found an alternative source of high-tech military equipment, without facing human rights-related difficulties, compensated at least partly the losses the Turkish economy faced in its trade with the Middle East and North Africa after the Gulf war, and continued its pro-Western orientation.

Both countries also had some differences but, in sum, positive outcomes of this strategic partnership have been more prominent. In the longer term, the strong Turkish-Israeli ties would enhance the region's stability by serving as a powerful military deterrent against would-be enemies. Aggressive states have been obliged to watch their step in the face of a formidable combination of the Middle East's largest and most advanced military forces, and this would weaken the likelihood of war.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente", *National Interest*, 50, (Winter97/98), p.38.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE TRIANGLE: U.S. SUPPORT TO THE TURKISH-ISRAELI RAPPROCHEMENT

#### 4.1. Background

During much of the Cold War period, Turkey maintained a cautious but consistent foreign policy toward the Middle East and tried to stay out of the unstable affairs and politics of the region. Although there were some alterations in behavior, such as the Baghdad Pact of 1955, one of the main pillars of Turkish foreign policy was nonintervention in regional affairs in this period.<sup>245</sup> The end of the Cold War has had important effects on global and regional politics and Turkey was among the countries most deeply affected by this event. Unlike most of its NATO allies, Turkey faced new threats to security in its surrounding environment, such as ethnic nationalism, irredentism, religious fundamentalism and international terrorism, causing regional instability and conflicts.<sup>246</sup> In other words, Turkey has not come out from the Cold War with a sense of increased security.<sup>247</sup> To meet the challenges of this period, Turkey altered some of its established foreign policy principles, assumed new initiatives,

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<sup>245</sup> Yasemin Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), pp.140-142.

<sup>246</sup> Sabri Sayarı, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: the Challenges of Multi-Regionalism", *Journal of International Affairs*, 54:1, (Fall 2000), p.169.

<sup>247</sup> Malik Mufti, "Daring and Caution in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle East Journal*, 52:1, (Winter 1998), p.33.

and Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s was considerably more activist and self-confident especially in the Middle East.<sup>248</sup>

The Middle East peace process that effectively began with the Madrid Peace Conference of October 1991, had a profound effect on the nature of Middle Eastern politics, and opened up a new foreign policy opportunity for Turkey. The process continued with the conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement of September 1993, namely the Oslo Agreement, and Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement of October 1994. Although caused by the requirements created by the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War, this was the first time that Arabs and Israelis have really attempted to solve their conflict through diplomacy. Moreover, since these negotiations have given fruits in the form of the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Jordanian agreements, this new period became a turning point in the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. On the other hand, the birth of this new era did not denote the end of the regional conflicts. For Turkey, the most beneficial result of the Middle East Peace process, with an optimistic perception, would be that the emerging regional stability would lessen the external threats against the security of the Turkish Republic.<sup>249</sup>

In the light of the developments in this new era, as mentioned earlier in this study, Turkey and Israel have improved their relations especially after 1993. High-level Turkish and Israeli visits resulted in several agreements on various subjects, where the most significant ones were Military Training and Cooperation Agreement, Free Trade Agreement, and an Agreement on defense industrial

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<sup>248</sup> Alan Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy", *SAIS Review*, (Winter-Spring 1999), pp.100-101.

<sup>249</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkey-U.S.-Israel Triangle: Continuity, Change and Implications for Turkey's Post-Cold War Middle East Policy", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 22:4, (Summer 1999), p.2.

cooperation in 1996.<sup>250</sup> In addition to numerous interests and gains of Turkey and Israel from the rapprochement between the two, peace and stability in the Middle East has been the most prominent interest to not only Turkey and Israel but also the United States. Turkey's basic aim which appeared to guide its foreign policy actions toward the Middle East was to tackle the post-Soviet regional challenges, such as various religious, ethnic, and border conflicts that have caused tensions and crises threatening regional stability, as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). From the Turkish point of view, increased cooperation between Turkey, the United States and Israel was considered as a product of Turkey's post-Cold War Middle East policy and one of the important ways to which Turkey has turned to achieve its post-Cold war aims in the region.<sup>251</sup>

#### **4.2. U.S. Approach to the Turkish-Israeli Rapprochement**

Close political-military coordination is exceptionally important in the Middle East, where security issues have a high profile. There are few if any areas of the world that combine such strategic importance to the United States with such chronic instability. In the words of an American official, "Instability in the Middle East carries profound dangers. It can threaten the security of close friends and partners... It can threaten our NATO partners in Europe. It can threaten our ability to protect vital oil supplies from the Gulf. It can bring new

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<sup>250</sup> Süha Bölükbaşı, "Türkiye ve İsrail: Mesafeli Yakınlıktan Stratejik Ortaklığa", (Turkey and Israel: From Distant Intimacy to Strategic Partnership), *Liberal Düşünce*, 4:13, (Kış/Winter 1999), pp.138-152.

<sup>251</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkey-U.S.-Israel Triangle: Continuity, Change and Implications for Turkey's Post-Cold War Middle East Policy", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 22:4, (Summer 1999), p.2.

outbreaks of terrorism to our shores. And it can fuel a race to acquire weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>252</sup>

Turkish-Israeli cooperation was possibly the most important development in the Middle East in this new era that had a direct link to U.S. security. The U.S. did not initiate increasing cooperation between its two allies. As General Çevik Bir (ret.) noted, “These were initiatives of the Turkish leadership”<sup>253</sup> However, U.S. policymakers found the rapprochement pleasing and Washington welcomed the February 1996 bilateral military accord as supportive for stability in the region and as useful to enforce security in the area while the Arab world stated concern.<sup>254</sup>

The emerging Turkish-Israeli rapprochement has the capacity to serve the Americans’ interests in the Middle East for several reasons. The Middle East has had a great value in the eyes of the American policymakers because of its economic and strategic importance. Plus, the demise of the Soviet Union has increased the strategic importance of the Middle East by shifting the American administration's attention to the well-armed rogue states, such as Iran, Iraq, and Syria that represent new threats to Western security. The Turkish-Israeli rapprochement might act as a counterbalance against these rogue states as part of the American ‘dual containment policy’.<sup>255</sup> “The United States needs regional allies to take upon themselves such tasks as regional crisis management and

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<sup>252</sup> Robert H. Pelletreau, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, “American Objectives in the Middle East”, a lecture given before the CENTCOM Annual Southwest Asia Symposium, U.S. Department of State Dispatch, 7:286-290, (June 3, 1996)

<sup>253</sup> Çevik Bir, “Reflections on Turkish-Israeli Relations and Turkish Security”, *Policywatch*, no:422, (November 5, 1999), p.1.

<sup>254</sup> “Turkey Clarifies Content of Accord”, *Turkish Daily News*, April 11, 1996.

<sup>255</sup> *Dual Containment Policy* has been pursued by the United States in the Persian Gulf since 1993. This policy aims to isolate Iraq and Iran from the other countries of the region, as well as from the international political arena as a whole. The U.N. sanctions regime, the imposition of no-fly zones and the periodic display of air power became the tools of this policy against Iraq, whereas the imposition of U.S. embargo to contain Iran was the tool against that country.

peace-keeping, which would then leave the US free to focus on problems of larger magnitude.”<sup>256</sup>

From Washington’s perspective, the Turkish-Israeli cooperation advanced U.S. security interests by serving as a model of regional normalization between Israel and Turkey, a Muslim-majority state; an opportunity for deeper trilateral cooperation, enhancing Israeli and Turkish security and increasing weapons interoperability for US forces at times of regional crisis; a source of pressure on Syria’s peace process policies; a potential way for the executive branch to bypass Congress in supporting Turkey; a potential nucleus for pulling together other pro-US states, such as Jordan, into a wider Middle Eastern regional security regime; and an improvement of Israel’s legitimacy in the eyes of the Turkic states of the former Soviet Union that will open the prospect of new avenues of Israeli cooperation among states friendly to the United States.<sup>257</sup> Persistent U.S. support for two such reliable, democratic allies has been vital to the protection of U.S. interests. Similarly, as American policymakers recognized, promoting cooperation among these allies would enhance regional stability and US leverage in the area.<sup>258</sup>

In some ways, the Turkish-Israeli entente may also encourage the liberalization of the economies and democratization in the region, two goals the United States has been advocating, unless the democratization process weaken

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<sup>256</sup> Meltem Müftüleri Bac, “Turkey and Israel: An Evolving Partnership”, *Policy Paper*, no:47, (1998), <http://www.acpr.org.il/publications/policy-papers/pp047-xs.html>.

<sup>257</sup> Alan Makovsky, “US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems”, in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey’s Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), pp.236-237.

<sup>258</sup> “The Region: Turkey is Israel’s Best Neighbor”, *Jerusalem Post*, July 11, 2001.

friendly regimes of America's major allies.<sup>259</sup> Both Turkey and Israel are not prepared to play the role of the regional policeman, even if supported by Washington, and the U.S. has been similarly reluctant to adopt such a strategy not to aggravate anti-American feelings in the Arab world.<sup>260</sup>

The United States had some concerns about this relationship. Initially, the addition of a military dimension to the Turkish-Israeli relationship created uneasiness in the minds of some American policymakers because of its negative effect on Israeli-Syrian peace talks. The U.S. also objected to certain aspects of Turkish-Israeli military cooperation particularly in the area of anti-missile technology. Moreover, Washington did not want this relationship to damage other key regional objectives, namely, Arab-Israeli peace and Turkish-Greek stability.<sup>261</sup>

### **4.3. Origins of the Turkey-U.S.-Israel Triangle**

Regarding the Middle East, three main objectives of the United States, in the post-World War II period, were; containing Soviet communism, accessing to oil, and supporting Israel. In the post Cold War era, the U.S. administration appeared to believe that there was an opportunity to reshape the region, owing to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the defeat of Iraq in the Gulf War, and the acceptance of the Madrid/Oslo peace process by the PLO. This "new Middle East" would supercede the old Arab state system with a web of regional

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<sup>259</sup> Michael C. Hudson, "To Play the Hegemon: Fifty Years of U.S. Policy toward the Middle East", *The Middle East Journal*, 50:3, (Summer 1996), p.339, 341-342.

<sup>260</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership", *Turkish Studies*, 3:2, (Autumn 2002), pp.21-43, p.39, and in Efraim Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Publication, 2003), pp.21-43.

<sup>261</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), p.21.

economic integration projects involving Israel, Turkey, and some other states. In addition, new regional security agreements would be concluded whereas Israel would play a key role in protecting the vulnerable Arab Gulf states from Iraqi or Iranian threats. And, regimes, labeled by the U.S. as 'rogue' would be actively opposed through economic boycotts, diplomatic isolation, subversion and even the threat or application of military force.<sup>262</sup>

As stated by a Turkish press report, the origins of the Turkish-U.S.-Israeli triangle for strategic cooperation in the post Cold War Middle East went back to 1995 when then-Prime Minister Shimon Peres pointed out Israel's acceptance of a U.S. offer to conclude a defense "pact" between the two countries.<sup>263</sup> But here the title "pact" was used only in reference to a "Defense Agreement" to be concluded between the U.S. and Israel. As Peres stated, in reply to a question about a possible U.S.-Israel defense treaty, there were two different paths; one was on anti-terror combat, and the other on a defense pact.<sup>264</sup> As President Clinton announced, the anti-terror path was about United States' transfer of additional equipment and training, development of new anti-terror methods and technologies, and efforts to enhance communications and coordination between the U.S. and Israel as well as other governments who have joined with the U.S. in the war against terror.<sup>265</sup> Concerning a defense pact between the two countries, there were certain advantages and some problems for Israel and the

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<sup>262</sup> Michael C. Hudson, "To Play the Hegemon: Fifty Years of U.S. Policy toward the Middle East", *The Middle East Journal*, 50:3, (Summer 1996), pp.329-343.

<sup>263</sup> See *Milliyet*, May 9, 1996, and May 21, 1996, quoted in Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkey-U.S.-Israel Triangle: Continuity, Change and Implications for Turkey's Post-Cold War Middle East Policy", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 22:4, (Summer 1999), p.6.

<sup>264</sup> Address by Prime Minister Shimon Peres to the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy, April 29, 1996, available at <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il>

<sup>265</sup> Press Conference with Prime Minister Peres and President Clinton in Jerusalem, March 14, 1996, available at <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il>

U.S., as well as arguments for and against it. Yet, there is no known overall treaty of alliance between the two countries.<sup>266</sup>

The main motivation of the "pact" was the common sense of a security threat originating from the rogue states, namely Iran, Iraq, and Syria, as the state supporters of international terrorism in the Middle East and the terrorist organizations that these states support. Efforts of the United States and Israel were supposed to pursue two separate tracks. The plan for the first track contained measures such as immediate arms transfer, mutual cooperation on intelligence gathering and international terrorism. The second track included plans to establish "the chain of regional alliances for defense of the Middle East". So, the Turkish-Israeli military cooperation was to be situated at the center of the chain which also included plans of cooperation between the U.S. and some other regional states like Jordan, Oman and Qatar. Following the signing of the Military Training and Cooperation Agreement between Turkey and Israel in February 1996, the U.S. and Israel concluded an anti-terrorism agreement in April which paved the way for developing a "multidimensional regional security framework".<sup>267</sup>

It was also reported that the United States actively encouraged Turkey, Israel, Jordan and Egypt to form a new regional alliance in the Middle East. Iran, Iraq, and Syria, countries on the U.S. list of "state sponsors of terrorism," were perceived as the targets of this new restructuring and the alliance was decided

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<sup>266</sup> For detailed information about U.S.-Israeli special relationship see Samuel W. Lewis, "The United States and Israel: Evolution of an Unwritten Alliance", *The Middle East Journal*, 53:3, (Summer 1999), pp.364-378, and Yair Evron, "An Israel-United States Defense Pact?", *Strategic Assessment*, 1:3, (October 1998).

<sup>267</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkey-U.S.-Israel Triangle: Continuity, Change and Implications for Turkey's Post-Cold War Middle East Policy", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 22:4, (Summer 1999), pp.6-8.

during a meeting at a downtown hotel in Jerusalem in November 1995, where President Bill Clinton, Turkey's Prime Minister Tansu Çiller, Israeli acting Prime Minister Simon Peres, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and King Hussein of Jordan got together after attending the funeral service of the assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. But Cairo's discomfort of this development, since it threatened Egypt's aspiration to lead the Arab world, was also stated.<sup>268</sup>

From another point of view, after the Gulf War, it became clear that American public opinion would not tolerate U.S. troops staying in the Middle East a day longer than strictly necessary and the declining economic capability of the U.S. added to this formula. As the necessity of regional order and peace in the Middle East came up, Israel was seen as the most outstanding actor for providing this order and peace in cooperation with the United States. So, Turkey regarded cooperation with Israel to be harmonious with its national interests.<sup>269</sup>

#### **4.4. Turkish-U.S.-Israeli Approaches to the Challenges of Iran, Iraq, and Syria**

While the ultimate aim of Turkey, the U.S., and Israel was to preserve peace and stability in the Middle East, the three countries differed in some of their approaches to the challenges of Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Turkey and the U.S. appeared to have different priorities of interest as well as different foreign policy methods to achieve these interests. Israel, on the other hand, was more

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<sup>268</sup> *Turkish Daily News*, June 1, 1996.

<sup>269</sup> Bülent Aras, "The Impact of the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Process in Turkish Foreign Policy", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 20:2, (Winter 1997), p.71.

compatible for Turkey. In other words, Turkish-Israeli approaches seemed more similar, regarding the region in which the two are situated.<sup>270</sup>

Concerning Iran, Turkey had an important place in U.S. strategy toward that country as an active participant in the policy of containment. In addition, Ankara had its own sources of friction with the Islamic Republic of Iran, including worries about Iranian support for Turkish Islamist fundamentalists and the PKK, and some terrorist attacks on outstanding Turkish secularists were thought to have an Iranian connection.<sup>271</sup> Despite these considerations, Turkey favored a policy of engagement with Iran and tended to oppose sanctions on that country, because of the fact that Turkey is a neighbor of Iran and needs Iranian oil and gas.<sup>272</sup> The United States followed a course of action in which it sought to isolate and punish Iran, as well as Iraq, through economic and military coercion within the context of the 'Dual Containment' policy. Turkey was against interference in the internal affairs of the country and favored relying first on the virtues of diplomacy.<sup>273</sup> Israel was more concerned about Iran as a threat in strategic, political and terrorist terms. Israelis thought that Iran was against the Middle East peace process, sponsoring terrorism and was attempting to get weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons.<sup>274</sup>

On Iraq, the United States pursued the same strategy, namely imposing sanctions on that country. Along with backing the U.S. efforts in the Gulf War,

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<sup>270</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkey-U.S.-Israel Triangle: Continuity, Change and Implications for Turkey's Post-Cold War Middle East Policy", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 22:4, (Summer 1999), pp.11, 14.

<sup>271</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), p.233.

<sup>272</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), pp.24-25.

<sup>273</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "Turkish Perspectives on Turkish-U.S. Relations Concerning Persian Gulf Security in the Post-Cold War Era: 1989-1995", *Middle East Journal*, 50:3, (Summer 1996), p.352.

<sup>274</sup> Barry Rubin, "Turkish-Israeli Relations", *Insight Turkey*, 1:3, (July-September 1999), p.60.

Turkey, closed the Kirkuk-Yumurtalik oil pipeline and participated in the U.N. sanctions against Iraq. This made Turkey a key element in the economic isolation of Baghdad, but created a massive economic cost to Ankara. Its support for Operation Provide Comfort/Operation Northern Watch (OPC/ONW) gave Turkey a vital role in Washington's Iraq policy. Formally, Ankara and Washington agreed on the main principles of Iraq policy by stating that Iraq should comply with the related Security Council resolutions. But Turkey's main policy goals in Iraq were; ending, or at least easing, the U.N. sanctions on that country, reassertion of full Iraqi sovereignty in the north, prevention of the emergence of a *de facto* Kurdish state or an autonomous Kurdish entity, and expulsion of PKK from northern Iraq. Also, Ankara feared that the U.S. efforts to topple Saddam Hussein might further destabilize the region.<sup>275</sup> Israel's concerns over Iraq were related to the weapons of mass destruction. To remind, during the Gulf War Iraq sent its Scud missiles into Israeli territory. Israelis believe that Saddam would begin rebuilding his arsenals and his WMD if the sanctions were off. So, Israel wanted to see the sanctions remain.<sup>276</sup>

Both Turkey's and Israel's relations with the United States contained some dilemmas. Turkey was extremely displeased with being left out of the negotiations when leaders of the two rival Iraqi Kurdish parties met with the officials of the State Department in Washington in September 1998. On the other hand, Israel, with its improved technology, became a rival for the U.S. to some extent, on some areas such as defense industry. And, according to a Turkish scholar, Israel did not fully agree with the U.S. regarding American

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<sup>275</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), pp. 230-233.

<sup>276</sup> Barry Rubin, "Turkish-Israeli Relations", *Insight Turkey*, 1:3, (July-September 1999), p.61.

efforts for a comprehensive Israeli-PLO peace, and it was open to discussion whether the peace process serves Israel's interests.<sup>277</sup>

Syria was another country on which Turkey and the United States seemed to have differing opinions, but this time with the roles changed. The perceived Syrian challenge to the regional stability above all was that differences of approach between Turkey and the U.S. proved most annoying to the Turkish policymakers as a consequence of the intimate Syrian linkage to PKK terrorism. It seemed that the Turkish policymakers felt strongly that the United States was abstaining from applying enough pressure on Syria to force that country to stop its support for the PKK in order to keep Damascus involved in the Peace Process. As a scholar stated, Turks were concerned that the end of a Syrian-Israeli conflict might give Damascus more confidence about its demands toward Turkey by shifting its troops from the Golan Heights cease-fire line to the Turkish border.<sup>278</sup> Furthermore, according to a Turkish scholar, there has always been a concern that the United States might pressure Turkey to provide Syria with additional amounts of water so that Syria can leave the water resources of the Golan Heights to Israel, and therefore the failure of the peace negotiations, then, provided some satisfaction to Turkish leaders.<sup>279</sup> For Turkey, the water issue and the peace process were two separate issues.<sup>280</sup> However, the United States seemed more supportive of Turkey versus Syria in the October 1998 crisis when Turkey compelled Syria to expel PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan from

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<sup>277</sup> Osman Metin Öztürk, "Türkiye-İsrail Askeri İşbirliği Üzerine", (On the Turkey-Israel Military Cooperation), *Avrasya Dosyası*, 5:1, (İlkbahar/Spring 1999), p.253.

<sup>278</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), p.25.

<sup>279</sup> Ayşegül Sever, "Turkey and the Syrian-Israeli Peace Talks in the 1990s", *MERIA*, 5:3 (September 2001).

<sup>280</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, February 15, 1996.

Damascus and to stop its support for the organization officially or risk a Turkish invasion of its territory.<sup>281</sup>

From the Israeli point of view, the problem regarding Syria was that Damascus has supported Hizbullah in its war against Israel, as well as supporting the PKK in the north. So this pointed to Syrian efforts to use terrorism to destabilize and weaken its neighbors. According to an Israeli scholar, one of the reasons for the end of the peace talks between the two countries was that structurally Syria was not ready to make peace. If Israel's situation in the region normalized, Syria would be reduced to a third-rate power and a peace treaty would be the beginning of the end of a very profitable Syrian control over Lebanon.<sup>282</sup> The same scholar also asserted that the U.S. policy toward Syria has been "We will be very nice to you in the hope that once you are convinced that we are friendly that you will move toward peace" but the policy was not "We will put tremendous pressure on you and change your interests in order to force you to stop sponsoring terrorism and to move toward peace with Israel". He added that the Turkish method of coping with Syria in this regard was far more successful than the U.S. method of dealing with it.<sup>283</sup>

It is not surprising that Turkey, the United States and Israel have differing priorities and approaches to the regional matters. Despite the abovementioned differences, the definite aim of the three countries was to have a stable and peaceful Middle East. When the Syrian-Israeli peace talks restarted in 1999, Ankara's perception was quite different from the earlier period due to the fact that its relations with the negotiating parties had changed for the better

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<sup>281</sup> Heinz Kramer, *A Changing Turkey: The Challenge to Europe and the United States* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p.228.

<sup>282</sup> Barry Rubin, "Turkish-Israeli Relations", *Insight Turkey*, 1:3, (July-September 1999), p.59.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

since the sudden end of 1995-1996 talks. No agreement was reached between Syria and Israel and the process stalled. On the other hand, Israeli-PLO negotiations, with the backing of the U.S., gained speed in July 2000, but again no agreement was reached and soon the Al-Aqsa Intifada erupted. The breakdown of the peace process and concerns about the future of Iraq posed serious challenges to regional stability. It was in Turkey's interest to see the termination of hostilities for strategic as well as political and economic reasons.<sup>284</sup> Israel has also had security concerns with its new perception that the principal threat became the use of weapons of mass destruction by a country not necessarily bordering Israel, where it was an attack from a bordering Arab country.<sup>285</sup>

Indeed, as will be noted in the following paragraphs of this study, the cooperation between Turkey, the U.S. and Israel has been beneficial in deterring rogue states which all border Turkey. The cooperation was also useful on the subject of weapons of mass destruction programs of these states. And, working together in the intelligence area became valuable in fighting international terror, which the rogue states encouraged.<sup>286</sup>

#### **4.5. Triple Exercises**

As the symbol of the growing three-way strategic cooperation between Turkey, the United States, and Israel the three countries held trilateral joint drills including both naval and aerial exercises. Despite several complaints and

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<sup>284</sup> Meliha Benli Altunışık, "The Breakdown of the Post-Gulf War Middle East Order?", *Perceptions*, 6:2, (June-July 2001).

<sup>285</sup> Barry Rubin, "Turkish-Israeli Relations", *Insight Turkey*, 1:3, (July-September 1999), p.61.

<sup>286</sup> Efraim Inbar, "The Israeli-Turkish Entente", *Jerusalem Post*, July 9, 2001.

condemnations from the Arab world, the first trilateral naval search-and-rescue exercise finally took place on January 7, 1998, after months of delay.<sup>287</sup> Later these naval exercises code-named "Reliant Mermaid", continued to be taken on an annual basis. Although it had apparently a peaceful nature, the exercise was a watershed in Middle Eastern geopolitics, as evidenced by the involvement of senior officials.<sup>288</sup> In addition, strategic cooperation between the three countries reached new heights when jet fighters from each nation's air force began a major joint aerial training exercise, dubbed "Anatolian Eagle", in the skies over southern Turkey, in June 2001.<sup>289</sup>

#### **4.5.1. "Reliant Mermaid":<sup>290</sup>**

*Reliant Mermaid I*, the five-hour trilateral humanitarian search and rescue (SAR) exercise involving naval ships and aircraft from Turkey, the United States, and Israel, took place on January 7, 1998 in international waters off the coast of Israel in the Mediterranean Sea. It was originally scheduled to take place in mid-November 1997, but the exercise was held after being twice postponed and six months later than planned.<sup>291</sup> Two frigates (*TCG Yavuz* and *TCG Zafer*) and a helicopter from Turkey, a destroyer (*USS John Rogers*) and a helicopter from the United States, and two missile boats (*INS La Hav* and *INS Nitzahon*) and air elements from Israel conducted the exercise, along with observers from

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<sup>287</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, January 7, 1998.

<sup>288</sup> Gil Dibner, "My Enemy's Enemy: Turkey, Israel, and the Middle East Balance of Power", *Harvard International Review*, 21:1, (Winter 1998-1999), p.38.

<sup>289</sup> *Near East Report*, June 25, 2001.

<sup>290</sup> For detailed information see Jewish Virtual Library [Online]

<http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/US-Israel/turktoc.html>, Reliant Mermaid-I (RM-I) was held on January 7, 1998; RM-II on December 16, 1999; RM-III on January 17, 2001; RM-IV on December 3-7, 2001; and RM-V on December 30, 2002-January 3, 2003.

<sup>291</sup> "Turkish-Israeli-US Sea Drills Begin", *Jerusalem Post*, January 7, 1998.

Jordan.<sup>292</sup> The objective of the exercise was to practice coordinated emergency SAR procedures. By familiarizing themselves with each other's capabilities and working together, elements of the three naval forces which regularly operated in the Mediterranean would be able to respond more effectively in the event of an actual emergency rescue operation. The scenario of the exercise simulated three sinking civilian sailboats. Jordan was invited to send an observer and responded by sending Rear Admiral Hussein Khassawneh, commander of the Jordanian Navy.<sup>293</sup>

*Reliant mermaid II* was staged by the three countries' warships this time off the Mediterranean coast of Turkey. The two-day exercise took place on December 15-16, 1999. Two Turkish frigates, two Israeli Navy corvettes, and a U.S. frigate joined the maneuver. It was designed to improve coordination among the navies for a rapid humanitarian response to maritime emergencies. The exercise scenario was based on a scripted search-and-rescue situation for training purposes and had no connection with any real world condition. Jordan, again, sent an observer, commander of its Navy. Other nations had been invited, such as Egypt and Greece, but they declined to send observers.<sup>294</sup>

*Reliant Mermaid III* was held on January 17, 2001, off the coast of Haifa/Israel. Turkish, the United States, and Israeli navies combined in their third annual joint naval operation. This cooperative exercise consisted of search-and-rescue drills, and involved both warships and planes. Objectives of the exercise for Turkey and Israel were to strengthen their military relationship with

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<sup>292</sup> Alptekin Dursunoğlu, *Stratejik İttifak: Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinin Öyküsü*, (*Strategic Alliance: The Story of Turkey-Israel Relations*), (İstanbul: Anka Yayınları, 2000), p.265.

<sup>293</sup> Gil Dibner, "My Enemy's Enemy: Turkey, Israel, and the Middle East Balance of Power", *Harvard International Review*, 21:1, (Winter 1998-1999), p.38.

<sup>294</sup> "Israel, US, Turkey Hold Navy Exercise", *Jerusalem Post*, December 15, 1999.

each other and to advance their naval field training with the support of the United States. Due to scheduling errors, Jordan was unable to observe the exercises, as they had in previous years. Much of the Arab world, such as Syria, protested, saying the naval cooperation between the three countries was directed against them.<sup>295</sup>

First held in 1998, the Reliant Mermaid exercises became one of the most visible symbols of the developing strategic partnership between Turkey, the United States, and Israel.

#### **4.5.2. Anatolian Eagle:<sup>296</sup>**

The air forces of Turkey and Israel have flown together over each other's territory from the time when the two countries signed the Military Training and Cooperation Agreement in 1996. Likewise, Turkish and American forces have regularly practiced as NATO allies. And, U.S. and Israeli air units have in recent years begun to exchange tactics and techniques during exercises over the Negev desert designed to test their planes and pilots against those of other countries.<sup>297</sup>

As a part of the burgeoning trilateral relationship, which has come to be one of the most formidable ties in the region, Turkish, American, and Israeli pilots engaged in simulated air battles over southern Turkey. Dubbed "Anatolian Eagle", the aerial maneuvers, represented the first time the three militaries have come together for such mock-combat drills. During the two-week air exercises

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<sup>295</sup> "Israel to update Turkey on Middle East", *Turkish Daily News*, January 18, 2001.

<sup>296</sup> For detailed information see Jewish Virtual Library [Online] <http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/US-Israel/turktoc.html>, Anatolian Eagle lasted 13 days and ended on June 29, 2001; following Anatolian Eagle air drills were held in 2002.

<sup>297</sup> "US, Israel, and Turkey to Hold Joint Air Maneuvers", *Jerusalem Post*, May 25, 2001.

ending June 29, 2001, the three forces focused on joint operations and command procedures, taking advantage of the similar aircraft flown by each nation to prepare for the possibility of combined missions during future regional crises. Furthermore, the participating aircraft staged attacks on ground-based air-defense missile sites and conducted mid-air refueling in an area near the Turkish city of Konya. The U.S. Air Force contributed F-16s normally deployed on patrol over northern Iraq, from Turkey's Incirlik airbase, Israel arrived with a team of F-16 fighters, helicopters and refueling tanker aircraft, and Turkish Air Force contributed the largest number of aircraft to the maneuvers. According to Efraim Inbar regarding Anatolian Eagle, "the militaries of the three countries upgraded their military cooperation by adding an important air element to past trilateral naval search and rescue exercises".<sup>298</sup> And, Barry Rubin stated that this aerial exercise "...went beyond the limited, rescue oriented activities of the past".<sup>299</sup>

The exceptional tri-nation combination of combat forces represented by Anatolian Eagle, however, amounted to more than the sum of its parts. It served to not only improve the fighting capabilities of each side, but represented a unique symbol of regional stability and each party's support for its partner's security.

#### **4.6. Implications of Turkey-U.S.-Israel Triangle**

The closer Turkish-American-Israeli military cooperation had a positive effect on the peace process, which added up to a reluctant acceptance of Israel

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<sup>298</sup> Efraim Inbar, "The Israeli-Turkish Entente", *Jerusalem Post*, July 9, 2001.

<sup>299</sup> Barry Rubin, "The Region: Turkey is Israel's Best Neighbor", *Jerusalem Post*, July 11, 2001.

as a regional player by most Arab states. The cooperation between the three capitals has been beneficial in deterring rogue states such as Iran, Iraq, and Syria, all bordering Turkey. And, working together in the intelligence area became valuable in fighting international terror, which the rogue states encouraged. The cooperation between the United States and its two most reliable allies in the Middle East also provided partial deterrence for Jordan if Syria or Iraq attempted to invade it, and let Jordan deal with domestic challenges from Palestinian nationalists or Islamic radicals more easily. Iran, Iraq, and Syria, who have all been engaged in subversion against the Hashemite rule, confronted a stronger Jordan backed by the Turkish-American-Israeli triangle. Some Gulf States, such as Qatar and Oman, did not object to a Turkish and Israeli presence to counter the weight of Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia.<sup>300</sup>

Turkey and Israel refrained from getting involved in the domestic affairs of their neighbors, knowing that the necessary conditions for the emergence of democratic regimes takes some time. But the two countries themselves became "...a constant reminder that democracy is not a feature found exclusively in Western Europe and North America", which increased the expectation that such an experience could be followed by their neighbors.<sup>301</sup>

Aside from the abovementioned repercussions, given the strategic importance of the Middle East and the desire of the U.S. for an uninterrupted flow of oil, Turkish-American-Israeli cooperation with its stabilizing and balancing capabilities might become a tool for the United States in its post-Cold

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<sup>300</sup> Efraim Inbar, "The Israeli-Turkish Entente", *Jerusalem Post*, July 9, 2001.

<sup>301</sup> Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership", in Efraim Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Publications, 2003), p.39.

War Middle Eastern foreign policy.<sup>302</sup> Containing Islamic fundamentalism was also in the long list of common interests between Turkey, Israel, and the United States.<sup>303</sup>

Unsurprisingly, this cooperation created uneasiness among the Arab countries as well as in Iran. Despite the Turkish and Israeli standard response that their relations were not directed against any third party, especially Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Iran complained, i.e. a Syrian official described the Turkish-U.S.-Israeli nexus as the most dangerous alliance witnessed since World War II.<sup>304</sup> Iran, Iraq, and Syria increased their cooperation with one another. This seemed to be motivated by a concern to pose a counterbalance to the perceived threatening posture of the combined powers of the triangle.<sup>305</sup> However, as Barry Rubin asserted "...Arab complaints were not reasons to limit the [Turkish-Israeli] coalition, but proofs of its effectiveness".<sup>306</sup>

But, it should be noted that there was no credible evidence to suggest uniform perception of Turkey as constituting a threat to the Arab world. At the Arab Summit meeting held in Cairo on June 21-23 , 1996, the Syrian proposal that the Turkish-Israeli military cooperation agreement be condemned and that Turkey be severely criticized for its firm attitude on the water issue and its resorting to military threat against Syria was not uniformly accepted by the

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<sup>302</sup> Meltem Müftüler Bac, "Turkey and Israel: An Evolving Partnership", *Policy Paper*, no:47, (1998).

<sup>303</sup> David Ivry, "Concluding Remarks on the U.S.-Turkish-Israeli Cooperation", Speech delivered at a meeting "Turkey-Israel-US Trialogue", held at BESA Center for Strategic Studies, Ramat Gan, December 10, 2002.

<sup>304</sup> Quoted in Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership", in Efraim Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Publications, 2003), p.29.

<sup>305</sup> For detailed information on attempts at forming a counter alliance, See Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership", in Efraim Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Publications, 2003), pp.30-33.

<sup>306</sup> Barry Rubin, "The Region: Turkey is Israel's Best Neighbor", *Jerusalem Post*, July 11, 2001.

other Arab states. The Final Communiqué called upon Turkey to reconsider the agreement but no condemnation or criticism was included in it. And none of the regional states inclined to cut off diplomatic relations with Ankara.<sup>307</sup>

Regarding American involvement, the Turkish-Israeli partnership presented many advantages to the United States. It could provide the center of an American-oriented regional partnership consisting of democratic allies, as opposed to the authoritarian rulers upon which Washington relied on for five decades. U.S. involvement was a positive contribution for the Turkish-Israeli partnership which became a historical opportunity for the U.S. to maintain a strong block in the region of pro-American and pro-Western allies.<sup>308</sup> According to Barry Rubin, both Turkey and Israel wanted the United States to remain active and strong in the Middle East, supporting their concerns.<sup>309</sup>

In contrast, Don Waxman argued that an increasing American assistance to this relationship was not necessary and it might even debilitate Turkish-Israeli relations. A stronger U.S. role would also boost suspicion in the Arab world that the Turkish-Israeli connection was a part of an American plan to encircle them.<sup>310</sup> Washington had important interests in countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which were highly suspicious of the Turkish-Israeli entente and did not want to aggravate anti-American feelings in the Arab world.<sup>311</sup> And, according to Alan Makovsky, the United States should pay attention not to let

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<sup>307</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkey-U.S.-Israel Triangle: Continuity, Change and Implications for Turkey's Post-Cold War Middle East Policy", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 22:4, (Summer 1999), pp.24-26.

<sup>308</sup> Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente", *National Interest*, 50, (Winter97/98), p.39.

<sup>309</sup> Barry Rubin, "Article on Turkey-Israel Relations", *MERIA News*, No: 7, (July 1997).

<sup>310</sup> Don Waxman, "Turkey and Israel: A New Balance of Power in the Middle East", *Washington Quarterly*, 22:1, (Winter 1999), p.32.

<sup>311</sup> See Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership", in Efraim Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Publications, 2003), pp.30-33

trilateral Turkish-U.S.-Israeli ties to surpass the bilateral Turkish-Israeli relationship in order to preserve the latter's image of authenticity. He added that "The United States can more easily reap benefits if Turkish-Israeli relations do not carry a 'made in the USA' label".<sup>312</sup>

#### **4.7. Conclusion**

Turkish-Israeli cooperation was probably the most important development in the Middle East that had a direct linkage to U.S. security. The cooperation had a potential to act as a counterbalance against the rogue states namely Iran, Iraq, and Syria. It advanced U.S. security interests by serving as a model of regional normalization between Israel and Turkey, a Muslim-majority state; an opportunity for deeper trilateral cooperation, enhancing Israeli and Turkish security; a source of pressure on Syria's peace process policies; a potential way for the executive branch to bypass Congress in supporting Turkey; a potential nucleus for pulling together other pro-US states, such as Jordan, into a wider Middle Eastern regional security regime.<sup>313</sup> As well, the United States had some concerns about this relationship, such as its negative effect on Israeli-Syrian peace talks and some of its aspects particularly in the area of anti-missile technology.<sup>314</sup>

Israeli and the U.S. efforts included plans to establish "the chain of regional alliances for defense of the Middle East". And the Turkish-Israeli military

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<sup>312</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), p.237.

<sup>313</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), pp.236-237.

<sup>314</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), p.21.

cooperation was to be situated at the center of the chain which also included plans of cooperation between the U.S. and some other regional states like Jordan, Oman and Qatar. While the ultimate aim of Turkey, the U.S., and Israel was to preserve peace and stability in the Middle East, the three countries differed in some of their approaches to the challenges of Iran, Iraq, and Syria. But Turkish-Israeli approaches seemed more similar.<sup>315</sup>

As the symbol of the growing three-way strategic cooperation between Turkey, the United States, and Israel the three countries held trilateral joint drills including both naval and aerial exercises. The closer Turkish-American-Israeli military cooperation had a positive effect on the peace process, has been beneficial in deterring rogue states and on the subject of weapons of mass destruction programs of them as well as in fighting international terror, which these states encouraged. The cooperation also provided partial deterrence for Jordan, backed by the Turkish-American-Israeli triangle, if Syria or Iraq attempted to invade it. Common interests between the three countries continued containing Islamic fundamentalism, and encouraging democratization and liberalization of economies in the region.<sup>316</sup>

While U.S. involvement was a positive contribution for the Turkish-Israeli partnership, an over-involvement would boost suspicion in the Arab world and aggravate anti-American feelings.<sup>317</sup> As Don Waxman asserted, "[t]he United

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<sup>315</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkey-U.S.-Israel Triangle: Continuity, Change and Implications for Turkey's Post-Cold War Middle East Policy", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 22:4, (Summer 1999), pp.6-8.

<sup>316</sup> Efraim Inbar, "The Israeli-Turkish Entente", *Jerusalem Post*, July 9, 2001, and David Ivry, "Concluding Remarks on the U.S.-Turkish-Israeli Cooperation", Speech delivered at a meeting "Turkey-Israel-US Dialogue", held at BESA Center for Strategic Studies, Ramat Gan, December 10, 2002.

<sup>317</sup> See Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership", in Efraim Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Publications, 2003), pp.30-33

States can sit back on the sidelines and watch its regional allies develop an alliance that may at last ensure some peace in that most troubled region in the world.”<sup>318</sup>

Regarding the strategic relations between Turkey, the United States, and Israel, one must keep in mind that the term ‘strategic partnership’ signifies a close relationship between states searching for mutual gains but whose interests may be competitive rather than shared.<sup>319</sup> To sum up, even the three states had some conflicting views, cooperation between Turkey, the United States, and Israel, and some other countries, has been a very important force for maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East for a while.<sup>320</sup> Strategic relations mean sharing plans, but this did not turn out to be the case for the triangular relationship in the long-run.

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<sup>318</sup> Don Waxman, “Turkey and Israel: A New Balance of Power in the Middle East”, *Washington Quarterly*, 22:1, (Winter 1999), p.32.

<sup>319</sup> Sean Kay, “What is a Strategic Partnership?”, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 47:3 (May-June 2000), pp.15-24.

<sup>320</sup> Barry Rubin, “Turkish-Israeli Relations”, *Insight Turkey*, 1:3, (July-September 1999), p.63.

## **CONCLUSION**

During the Atatürk era, Turkey's international course was neutrality and non-alignment which appeared to fit its objectives in the conjuncture. Following the Second World War and the development of a bipolar international system, where neutrality could no longer guarantee the security and integrity of the Turkish state, the policymakers realized the potential serious threat coming from the Soviets, and shifted their foreign policy pattern toward an alliance with the West. Later, in the mid-1960s, Turkish foreign policy experienced another change and Turkish policymakers started to reorient their foreign policy away from excessive dependence on the United States.

In the 1990s Turkey pursued an activist foreign policy course, which was encouraged by a variety of factors. The upsurge of political instability, war and ethnic conflict in the vicinity of Turkey, in the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Balkans stimulated Ankara to become involved in these regions. Also, Turkish policymakers' efforts to show their country's geo-strategic importance to the West in the new era were effective in this course. Furthermore, some internal and external factors facilitated Turkey's efforts to expand its regional involvement. The economic progress of Turkey together with the modernization of its military, while its neighboring states experienced severe weaknesses in military power have been important factors in Turkey's ability to follow proactive and assertive policies on issues of vital national interest. The changing dynamics of the country's foreign policy making, namely the increased influence of the President and public opinion, were also effectual. At the same time, post-Cold War developments such as the emergence of the Turkic republics in Central Asia, the Gulf War, and Caspian energy developments have created new

opportunities for Turkey to play a larger role in several areas, while also giving Turkish policymakers self-confidence.

The main objectives of Turkey have been to preserve its geo-strategic importance on the international scene, maintain stability in its neighboring regions, prevent ethnic conflicts from spreading to its territory, and gain new markets for its economic growth. But Turkish policymakers, while trying to reach their goals, carried out balanced policies between activism and caution.

Although Turkish foreign policy in the 1990s was considerably more activist and self-confident in the surrounding regions; this did not mean to give up the traditional Turkish approach to international and regional affairs that can be described as moderate and cautious. Especially the Middle East has become the region that Turkey's active and assertive foreign policy practices are most profoundly seen. As Criss and Bilgin stated, Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East has always been regarded as an extension of its pro-Western foreign policy. But, when compared to the major turning points of Turkish foreign policy, namely Turkey's participation in NATO in 1952 and its new course of developing multilateral relations after the mid-1960s, Turkey's assertive and active policy in the new era has to be regarded as the continuation of its traditional orientation, rather than a change. Whether it will stay on this course remains to be seen.<sup>321</sup>

Turkey and the U.S. raised their relations to the level of alliance with Turkey's membership to NATO and maintained their political and military relations in the NATO framework. In the post-Cold War era, the U.S. largely

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<sup>321</sup> Nur Bilge Criss, Pinar Bilgin, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East.", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 1:1, (January 1997)

realized the great importance of Turkey and its diverse strategic roles. Turkey is a unique country in various respects. It sits at the crossroads of the world and its importance comes from its geo-strategic location, its history, its size and strength. Turkey is the sole example of secularism, democracy and modernization with its predominantly Muslim population and it is a pro-Western state in an area of instability. From the U.S. point of view, Turkey has been a model, to some extent, for the Turkic Republics of the former Soviet Union, a bridge and line of communication between the region and the West, a barrier against possible Russian aggression toward the south, a rival against Russia for having influence over the Caucasus and Central Asia, an ideological counterweight against fundamentalist Iran, an alternative to Russia and Iran as a possible gateway for Caspian energy resources. Moreover, Turkey has participated in peacekeeping efforts, as the only Muslim majority NATO ally, in the Balkans, and has been a peaceful and influential supporter of besieged Muslims in its area, namely Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Bosnia and Kosovo. In addition, Turkey has been a supporter of Arab-Israeli peace process, an important contributor to a possible normalization of Israeli-Muslim world relations, a key element of Washington's Iraq strategy, and a base for Operation Northern Watch. Shortly, Turkey has been a direct contributor to American power projection in adjacent regions.

But the two countries had different approaches to some matters and had conflicting interests on some issues. The Middle East became the region on which the most conflicting views came out. The Iraqi question and the status of northern Iraq generated the most serious source of tension between Turkey and the U.S. Both countries differ in their objectives and priorities, sometimes in

important respects. Turkey's main policy goals in Iraq were; ending, or at least easing, the U.N. sanctions on that country because of its economic concerns, reassertion of full Iraqi sovereignty in the north, prevention of the emergence of a *de facto* Kurdish state or an autonomous Kurdish entity, and expulsion of PKK from northern Iraq. Washington, on the other hand, did not oppose Kurdish autonomy or a Kurdish component within a federated Iraq since, according to them, Saddam Hussein was the primary threat to stability and peace in the region. About Iran, Turkey did not want to bear the economic burden of what it considered as mostly a U.S. foreign policy problem. Ankara favored a policy of engagement with Iran while Washington generally sought to isolate that country. Turkish policymakers want the U.S. to apply more pressure on Syria, particularly regarding its support for the PKK while U.S. policymakers were more concerned about getting Syria's support for the peace process. U.S. critics about Turkey's human rights records, although not so severe, and anti-Turkish lobbies in the Congress, affecting U.S. arms exports to Turkey, also created serious concerns in the minds of the Turkish leaders.

Despite many conflicting interests of Turkey and the United States, the two countries were mostly harmonious on various subjects. It was obvious that the United States was a better friend for Turkey than other Western powers. Washington showed more willingness than European countries to accept the PKK as a terrorist organization. It supported Ankara's energy politics, to some extent, concerning Central Asia. It was less insistent than the E.U. on the Cyprus issue, not to disappoint Ankara. It also tried to convince the E.U. to give Turkey a candidate status. But, although the two countries were mostly congruent, there was always a possibility that Turkish-American relations would be

negatively influenced by some conflicting views. In the words of George Harris; "...it is not sufficient to assume that close ties in the past will assure smooth relations in the future."<sup>322</sup>

The evolution of American defense policy in general and security strategy towards the Middle East, Caucasus and Balkans in particular; Turkey's autonomous regional policies which could seriously clash with American interests; and Turkey's economic and political stability would be expected to affect the relations between the two countries. The United States, indeed, does not want a stronger Turkey capable of enforcing its own interests as a regional power. Reasons for this are domestic political considerations, mostly relating to Greek and Armenian origin Americans; doubts about Turkey's regional image, regarding its imperial past; and a certain suspicion concerning whether a strong Turkey, which is able to act as an independent regional force, would behave in ways that enhance U.S. interests. "Some U.S. policymakers wonder if a stronger and therefore more independent Turkey would be more or less confrontational with Greece, more or less forthcoming on Cyprus policy, and more or less inclined to support U.S. policy toward the Kurds of northern Iraq."<sup>323</sup>

No matter what U.S. attitudes on these questions are, a stronger, more activist and more confident Turkey emerged in the post-Cold war era. And to remind, as it was proved in the past, it is difficult to pressure Turkey on issues of major national interests.

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<sup>322</sup> George Haris, "U.S.-Turkish Relations", in Alan Makovsky, Sabri Sayari, (eds.), *Turkey's New World: Changing Dynamics in Turkish Foreign Policy*, (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), p.199.

<sup>323</sup> Alan Makovsky, "The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy", *SAIS Review*, (Winter-Spring1999), p.108.

After continuously pursuing cautious and modest policies toward the Middle East during the Cold War era, with the exception of a brief period in the mid-1950s, Turkey has taken some actions in accordance with its new, assertive, and active foreign policy posture to meet the challenges of the Post Cold War environment. Changes in this new period, such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War, and the Arab-Israeli peace process, as well as Turkey's increased concerns about NATO's security guarantees against threats emanating from the Middle East, Ankara's search for a reliable ally in the region in a new environment, and noticeable sense of self confidence prevailed among the Turkish elites influenced Turkey's course significantly.

Turkey and Israel are unique in the Middle East as the only countries with democratic regimes and democratic culture with multi-party systems. Both share western moral values. Developing close relations with Israel was among the most prominent foreign policy orientations of Turkey. Both countries have benefited from their bilateral ties. Turkey acquired a strengthened deterrence capability in protecting its vital interests, had the support of the powerful Jewish lobby in Washington as well as increased U.S. support, found an alternative source of high-tech military equipment, without facing human rights-related difficulties, compensated at least partly the losses the Turkish economy faced in its trade with the Middle East after the Gulf war, and continued its pro-Western orientation.

Both countries also had some differences but, in sum, positive outcomes of this strategic partnership have been more prominent. In the longer term, the strong Turkish-Israeli ties would enhance the region's stability by serving as a powerful military deterrent against would-be enemies. Aggressive states have

been obliged to watch their step in the face of a formidable combination of the Middle East's largest and most advanced military forces, and this should weaken the likelihood of war.<sup>324</sup> But, aside from the security-related issues, civilian domains of the relations between these two democratic countries of the Middle East are worthy to study. To remind, the continuity of this strategic partnership depends on civilian fields as well as the security or military domains.

Turkish-Israeli cooperation was probably the most important development in the Middle East that had a direct linkage to U.S. security. The cooperation had a potential to act as a counterbalance against the rogue states namely Iran, Iraq, and Syria. It advanced U.S. security interests by serving as a model of regional normalization between Israel and Turkey, a Muslim-majority state; an opportunity for deeper trilateral cooperation, enhancing Israeli and Turkish security; a source of pressure on Syria's peace process policies; a potential way for the executive branch to bypass Congress in supporting Turkey; a potential nucleus for pulling together other pro-US states, such as Jordan, into a wider Middle Eastern regional security regime.<sup>325</sup> As well, the U.S. had some concerns about this relationship, such as its negative effect on Israeli-Syrian peace talks and some of its aspects particularly in the area of anti-missile technology.<sup>326</sup>

Israeli and the U.S. efforts included plans to establish "the chain of regional alliances for defense of the Middle East". And the Turkish-Israeli military

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<sup>324</sup> Daniel Pipes, "A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente", *National Interest*, 50, (Winter97/98), p.38.

<sup>325</sup> Alan Makovsky, "US Policy toward Turkey: Progress and Problems", in Morton Abramowitz (ed.), *Turkey's Transformation and American Policy*, (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2000), pp.236-237.

<sup>326</sup> Kemal Kirişçi, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies", *MERIA*, 2:4 (November 1998), p.21.

cooperation was to be situated at the center of the chain which also included plans of cooperation between the U.S. and some other regional states like Jordan. While the ultimate aim of Turkey, the U.S., and Israel was to preserve peace and stability in the Middle East, the three countries differed in some of their approaches to the challenges of Iran, Iraq, and Syria. But Turkish-Israeli approaches seemed more similar.<sup>327</sup>

As the symbol of the growing three-way strategic cooperation between Turkey, the United States, and Israel the three countries held trilateral joint drills including both naval and aerial exercises. The closer Turkish-American-Israeli military cooperation had a positive effect on the peace process, has been beneficial in deterring rogue states and on the subject of weapons of mass destruction programs as well as in fighting international terrorism, which these states encouraged. The cooperation also provided partial deterrence for Jordan, backed by the Turkish-American-Israeli triangle, if Syria or Iraq attempted to invade it. Common interests between the three countries continued to be containing Islamic fundamentalism, and encouraging democratization and liberalization of economies in the region.<sup>328</sup>

While U.S. involvement was a positive contribution for the Turkish-Israeli partnership, an over-involvement would boost suspicion in the Arab world and aggravate anti-American feelings.<sup>329</sup> As Don Waxman asserted, "[t]he United

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<sup>327</sup> Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkey-U.S.-Israel Triangle: Continuity, Change and Implications for Turkey's Post-Cold War Middle East Policy", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, 22:4, (Summer 1999), pp.6-8.

<sup>328</sup> Efraim Inbar, "The Israeli-Turkish Entente", *Jerusalem Post*, July 9, 2001, and David Ivry, "Concluding Remarks on the U.S.-Turkish-Israeli Cooperation", Speech delivered at a meeting "Turkey-Israel-US Dialogue", held at BESA Center for Strategic Studies, Ramat Gan, December 10, 2002.

<sup>329</sup> See Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership", in Efraim Inbar, *The Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership*, (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Publications, 2003), pp.30-33.

States can sit back on the sidelines and watch its regional allies develop an alliance that may at last ensure some peace in that most troubled region in the world.”<sup>330</sup>

Regarding the strategic relations between Turkey, the United States, and Israel, one must keep in mind that the term ‘strategic partnership’ signifies a close relationship between states searching for mutual gains but whose interests may be competitive rather than shared.<sup>331</sup> To sum up, even the three states had some conflicting views, cooperation between Turkey, the United States, and Israel, and some other countries, has been a very important force for maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East for a while.<sup>332</sup> Strategic relations also mean sharing plans, but this did not turn out to be the case for the triangular relationship in the long-run, competition has penetrated the relations.

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<sup>330</sup> Don Waxman, “Turkey and Israel: A New Balance of Power in the Middle East”, *Washington Quarterly*, 22:1, (Winter 1999), p.32.

<sup>331</sup> Sean Kay, “What is a Strategic Partnership?”, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 47:3 (May-June 2000), pp.15-24.

<sup>332</sup> Barry Rubin, “Turkish-Israeli Relations”, *Insight Turkey*, 1:3, (July-September 1999), p.63.

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