

Behind the Turkish-Israeli Alliance: A Greek Perception

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RÉSUMÉ

Face aux changements perçus au niveau régional et sur le plan intérieur dans la période de l'après-guerre froide, la Turquie a adopté une politique étrangère révisionniste. Cette politique cherche non seulement à changer le rapport des forces en sa faveur, mais aussi à lui assurer un rôle hégémonique en Méditerranée Orientale et de façon plus globale au Proche Orient.

Dans ce cadre, cet article tente de cerner la perception grecque de l'alliance turco-israélienne. À cette fin, les auteurs mettent l'accent sur le contexte des événements et la version moderne de cette alliance. Ils insistent également sur les mobiles qui ont favorisé une telle relation. Enfin sont présentées et analysées les inquiétudes de Chypre et de Grèce face à cette alliance.

ABSTRACT

Turkey has adopted a revisionist foreign policy in response to perceived post-Cold War changes in its regional and domestic scene. This policy seeks not only to alter the regional balance of power in its favor but also to ensure a hegemonic role for Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider Middle East.

This article attempts to capture the Greek perception of the Turkish-Israeli alliance. To this end, the article explicitly focuses on the background as well as on the modern version of the Turkish-Israeli alliance as well as the motives behind it. Finally, the Greek and Cypriot concerns and responses to this partnership will be also discussed.

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The Background of the Israeli-Turkish Alliance

Relations between Israel and Turkey flourished during the 1950s. Turkey was the first Muslim country to recognize the State of Israel in March 28, 1949, and the first to establish diplomatic relations in 1950. By the mid-fifties the two countries commenced a multi-level relationship that included military and intelligence cooperation. The strategic military co-operation climaxed in 1958 with the signing of a secret military pact by Prime Minister Ben Gurion and his Turkish counterpart Menderes, August 29-30 during a secret visit by Ben Gurion to Ankara.¹ The 1958 pact provided for joint military planning, intelligence cooperation, exchange of technological and technical know-how in industry and agriculture, secure of financial credits for Turkey, construction of airports,² and utilization of Israel's worldwide connections to counter Greece on the Cyprus issue.³ It was Israel that initiated this partnership as Tel Aviv in a hostile environment approached Turkey in the context of its strategy of survival, a key ingredient of its peripheral strategy of forging alliances with non-Arab states like Iran, Ethiopia and the Christian Lebanon.⁴

In specific, Israel viewed Turkey as a listening and intelligence post, a window to the Middle East, and set up an active diplomatic mission in Ankara. The complementarity of both countries' economies was also emphasized on the combination of the Israeli know-how with the Turkish economic potential.

Equally important was the role of Washington in promoting the Turkish-Israeli partnership, which acted as a catalyst. The Kassemite anti-Western coup that occurred in 1958 wrecked the pro-Western Baghdad Pact. Indeed, at that moment Israel and Turkey concluded their secret pact and agreed to act as proxies of the West in case Aden succumbed to Egyptian subversion, because such a development would have endangered not only the oil tanker routes but also Israel's vital sea lanes.

Turkey for its part, approached Israel for a number of interrelated reasons, among which, the most prominent were the utilization of the Israeli influence with Western centers of power to further promote its

policy to join NATO⁵, and court with its Western allies with special emphasis on the US. The above geostrategic and political reasons are just as relevant today as they were then.

The Revitalization of the Alliance

The Israeli-Turkish relationship emerged revitalized because of significant developments in the mid-1990s. The end of the Cold War, emergence of the US as the world's preponderant power, Middle East peace process and normalization of relations between Israel and key Arab states, namely Egypt and Jordan, provided the appropriate context for both Israel and Turkey to proceed with their relationship. In fact, the US has provided the links in the chain linking Israel, Turkey and the US in a special triangular strategic nexus. Officials in Washington, especially in the Pentagon, during the Reagan Administration and afterwards, pushed the two countries together. As also did influential Jewish-American groups working with the Turkish delegation in the American capital as well as a number of prominent Turkish-American businessmen with Turkish-Jews in Istanbul and settled in Israel.⁶

A military accord, entitled "The Agreement on Military Training Co-operation" was signed in Tel Aviv on February 23, 1996.⁷ This agreement was complementary to an earlier one signed secretly the previous year, entitled "Memorandum on Military Aircraft and Training".⁸ The content of the accords revolves around mutual access to the airspace and bases of both countries' respective forces for separate or joint air force and naval training exercises, and for mutually agreed electronic surveillance flights.

The most controversial aspect of the accords concerns the utilization of the Turkish airspace bordering with Syria, Iran and Iraq by Israeli pilots for training. In fact, by mid-April 1996, Israelis were training in the NATO-built training center of Konya and at the base of Akinci near Ankara, a special area unobserved from the perimeter had been sealed off for their exclusive use.¹⁰ It also includes intelligence cooper-

ation to counter common threats, border security and exchanges of military know-how. It provides for exchanges between the military academies, and the establishment of a security forum for a strategic dialogue between Israel and Turkey. The security forum is the most crucial aspect of this relationship as it establishes a network of institutions, research centres and personal contacts among the military, political and academic elites of both states.¹¹

An agreement on military industrial cooperation was also concluded in April 1996. The closer relations between the two countries led to an increase in Turkey's purchases of defense equipment from Israel. This "love affair" involved a few deals, namely the upgrade of Turkish air force F-4, Phantom fighters worth of \$640 million signed in 1997, the upgrade of F-5 planes worth of \$73 million signed in 1999, and the sale of air-to-ground Popeye missiles manufactured by Rafael worth of \$54 million, signed in 2000. However, Israeli defense industries have experienced numerous broken defense deals and losses in their bids to sell Turkey arms systems. An outstanding example is the postponement by the Turkish government in 2000¹² of the sale of fighters worth one billion dollars. In an attempt to neutralize the negative climate, Israeli defense minister Eliahu Ben-Eliezer met with his Turkish counterpart Sabahattin Cakmakoglu, the Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, the President Necdet Sezer and the Chief of the General Staff, Huseyin Kivrikoglu¹³ during his one-day visit to Ankara in July 9, 2001, and tried to promote — among other issues¹⁴ — Israeli defense offers. Of course he had taken into account the fact that Turkey plans to spend \$150 billion over the next 30 years to modernize its military.

In parallel, high level military visits take place frequently. One of the most recent was that of the Israeli Chief of Staff, Shaul Mofaz, in Ankara, July 28, 2001. The importance of this military visit was demonstrated by a press ban on reports which might refer to the content of the talks. According to leaked reports,¹⁵ the defense officials of both countries reached an agreement on the modernization of the Turkish M-60 tanks to be carried out by the Israelis. The possibility of a joint missile shield to protect Turkey and Israel from potential ene-

mies was also discussed. There were also reports that the two countries had concluded strategic agreements which could affect the fate of the Middle East and Caucasus. These alleged agreements permit, for example, the strike on Iran from Turkey along the lines of the "Operation Babylon" in the course of which the Iraqi nuclear power plant of Osiraq was hit in 1981. Israel can use military bases in Turkey to destroy Iranian nuclear missile bases.¹⁶

Turkey's Motivations and Regional Implications

On the geopolitical chessboard of the greater Middle East, two kinds of states are identified: active geo-strategic players and geopolitical pivots.¹⁷ Turkey has tried to capitalize on its prominent place in US strategy¹⁸ in the aftermath of the Cold War as a pivotal country in the Middle East, the Balkans and the Central Asia region. The Turkish-Israeli alliance is embodied in the American rationale for Turkey to play a special role in either defining access to these important areas or acting as a defense shield. The concrete motivations behind the Turkish-Israeli alliance are defined as follows:

(a) Proper a wider security system that will pose Central Asia and the Caucasus under the sphere of influence of Turkey, Israel and the US, and will limit drastically the role of Russia and Iran as security guarantors of this critical area.

(b) Additionally, the enhancement of Turkish-Israeli cooperation on oil and gas supplies of the Caspian region, under the US supervision, also demonstrates that an attempt is on the way to inactivate the present Russo-Iranian *modus vivendi* on energy issues.¹⁹ The Russo-Iranian understanding focuses on Russian development of Iranian energy reserves and offer of advanced weapons and technology, in exchange for Tehran's agreement to serve as a route for any proposed energy pipeline from the Caspian. Israel is interested in access to oil and gas from Turkey should Turkey's ambition to become a major pipeline route for energy resources from the Caucasus and Central Asia is realized.

(c) Promotion of a regional project as part of a wider missile defense that will place Turkey, surrounded by the majority of the so-called rogue states at the crossroads of the Middle East and Central Asia, at the center of a major strategic environment. The initial step toward this end was made during the first ever tri-party air-to-air and air-to-ground exercises code-named "Anatolian Eagle" that were staged jointly between Turkey, Israel and the US in the Central Anatolian town of Konya during the period June 18-29, 2001.⁴⁰ The air operations demonstrated not only the readiness of the parties involved to work together on defense matters but also Ankara's ambitious goal, under the auspices of the US, to convert the town of Konya into a regional as well as an international ground simulation training center.⁴¹

It is worth noting that the scenario of the air operations,⁴² based on the alleged Kurdish rebels' attacks of April 15, 2001, predicted the Turkish air force bombardment of rebels' positions within the Iranian territory. The Iranian side responded and its air force stroke two Turkish fighters whose pilots were arrested as a proof of invasion. The Turks demanded for their immediate release and special military forces intruded in Iran and Syria as an ally of Tehran. At the same time, the Turkish side asked for help and reinforcement from Israel and the United States. Both nations responded. A missile launch from Turkey's southern and southeastern neighbors, namely Iran, Iraq and Syria took place and a radar system deployed on the mountain of Karadagh detected the incoming missile launches. The anti-missile Arrow system with its powerful Green Pine radar as well as the anti-ballistic Patriot Systems were utilized in mock combat that intercepted the rockets at their boost phase. Additionally, the joint exercises involved destruction tactics against the missile launchers. A "preventive" attack of a 40-joint-aircraft group against missile launchers in Iran, Syria and Iraq took place, while the three countries' aforementioned fighters were destroyed.

The Anatolian Eagle exercises presented the initial test of the theoretical model upon which the American NMD program is based. The US, along with Israel, focuses on shifts from strategic nuclear to

a long-range ballistic missile deterrent in order to halt the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) which, according to Washington and Tel Aviv, is growing around the NATO member-states. In this sense, should the US missile defense strategy²⁴ become a reality, Turkey, surrounded by what the American administration perceives as "rogue states", will be a NATO ally located in the center of a new strategic environment.

(d) Breakthrough for lucrative defense deals that will cement the increasingly close military cooperation between Israel and Turkey. The most promising is an offer to upgrade Turkish M-60 tanks and co-produce the advanced Gil anti-tank rocket.²⁴ Equally important is the take-over of major deals such as a military intelligence satellite²⁵ based on the Israeli *Ofek 3* and attack helicopters. However, it should be noted that because Turkey is undergoing a severe economic crisis, the billion-dollar defense deals that Israel hopes to sign appear frozen, at least in the immediate future. On another level, the purchase of Israeli arms enables Turkey to avoid the structures of politically conditioned EU and US sales, and to mitigate the anti-Turkish policies of governments competing with Israel to sell arms to Turkey.

(e) A clear message to regional countries such as Syria, Lebanon and Jordan either for their gradual or their full integration in the Israeli-Turkish partnership, which is projected as a multi-fold relationship of the State of Israel with a Muslim country. Egypt and Jordan saw no reason to be alarmed from the Israeli defense minister's statements about potential regional dangers, after the assurances given by the Turkish Foreign Ministry that the threat perception of Turkey differs from the threat perception of the Israeli government.²⁶

In the case of Jordan, the kingdom has already joined the Turkish-Israeli alliance, albeit not formally. Jordan's strategic location, which serves as a buffer zone for Israel at the crossroads of the State of Israel and, in extension, Turkey with the Gulf and major Arab states namely Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, prompted Tel Aviv and Ankara to engage the kingdom in the process of establishing a new regional security arrangement under US supervision. Amman has main-

tained a pragmatic approach to relations with Turkey, an ally of Israel. Turkish forces carried out exercises under the terms of the military cooperation agreement, originally signed in 1984 but vigorous moves to implement it began in the late 1990s. The agreement includes provision of Turkish military aircraft to exercise in Jordanian space, and for land forces of each country to exercise in the other's territory. Growing military ties, cooperation between Turkey and Israel also intensified with regular high level military visits, hot line telecommunications between military commanders, exchanging of troops for training, and the use of each other's air-space for training and joint maneuvers.²⁷ Jordanian pilots flying with US-made F-16 receive partial training in Turkey. In 1998, the two armies staged a ground force exercise in Jordan and the late King Hussein awarded the Medal of Merit to Gen. Bir for his contribution in developing these links.²⁸

Turkey and Jordan also exchange intelligence information on terrorist activities. The former head of the General Intelligence Department (*aka* *dairat al-muhabarat*), Samih Battihi, visited Turkey in July 1998 and met with the then under-secretary and now chief of the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT), Senkal Atasagun.²⁹ Trilateral military contacts have been initiated. In January 1998 and December 1999, Jordan sent an observer to the Israeli-US-Turkish naval exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, Amman participates in the biannual strategic discussions that take place among Israel and Turkey, under the US auspices. Jordanian sources have revealed³⁰ that the biannual talks between Israel and Turkey revolve around potential regional dangers such as terrorism. Jordan participates in the talks as the strategic dialogue would not have been as important if the country were absent. According to the Jordanian perspective, Turkey wants to take advantage of Israeli influence in Western circles to either in gaining membership in the EU or dealing with human rights and the problem of Cyprus.

(f) The looming threat of Islamic radicalism in Turkey and the region is yet another cementing factor in the Turkish-Israeli rela-

tionship. For Israel, an Islamic as opposed to a Kemalist Turkey would be a strategic disaster equivalent if not actually more dangerous than Islamic Iran. Thus, Turkey's alliance with Israel is hoped that it will lead to a diminishing of its deference to US views on issues such as the Cyprus issue, correcting Ankara's human rights record and promoting Turkish democratization. All of this because Ankara believes that the Arabs and Iran have not reciprocated on issues that Turkey considers of vital national importance like Cyprus and the Muslims in the Greek region of Thrace.³¹

(g) By cementing relations with Israel, Turkey hopes to affect the evolution of relations between Israel and Syria and especially preempt any developments that can affect the regional balance of power at her expense. Turkey is especially concerned about a possible Syrian-Israeli peace agreement that may lead to a re-deployment of Syrian troops from the vicinity of the Golan Heights, which may cause a Syrian military built-up along the Turkish border³², and wants to be consulted. Towards this end, Turkish and Syrian officials have been working on concluding a joint memorandum on general principles since 2000. The memorandum calls for respect of the mutual interests of the two states, the avoidance of hostile actions and respect of UN principles.³³ In the beginning of June 2001, Ankara hosted a Syrian military delegation³⁴, the second one in less than six months, with the aim to discuss details of a draft military training scheme and, a Technical and Scientific Cooperation Agreement.³⁵ A Declaration of Principles Agreement developed between Syria and Turkey is to be signed before a military agreement is concluded.³⁶

(h) Turkey is using this special relationship in order to win battles in the US Congress on a number of issues of national importance such as Cyprus, Greece, Armenia, political and democratic rights. Lobbying organizations such as the American-Israeli Political Action Committee (AIPAC), the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), prominent Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Committee that has 32 chapters around the US, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League

often promote the Turkish agenda in the US Congress and the media. An identical case is the wording of the paid advertisement "Congratulations! Mazel Tov! Tebrikler!" in the Op.-Ed. page of the *New York Times* of November 1998, on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Kemalist state, paid by the three aforementioned Jewish organizations.³⁷ The B'nai B'rith International Center for Public Policy³⁸ is also among a significant number of US organizations³⁹ that have US-Turkish and Israeli-Turkish relations high on their agenda. A special reference should be made to the scientific cooperation that is growing, in a wide range of issues without a lot of noise, between Israeli and Turkish universities and research centers such as the Begin Sadat and the Bosphorus University, the Moshe Dayan Center and the Foreign Policy Institute.

The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University in particular, conducts a wide variety of academic activities related to Turkish-Israeli relations. These include the dispatch of visiting faculty and guest lecturers to the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, an annual joint seminar with the Turkish Foreign Policy Institute in Ankara, scholarships for Israeli students studying at Turkish universities, sponsorship of Turkish students at Tel Aviv University and invitation of guest lecturers from Turkey. In 1999, Tel Aviv university inaugurated the Suleiman Demirel Program for Contemporary Turkish Studies,⁴⁰ a program within the Moshe Dayan conducted in partnership with the Council of Higher Education of Turkey. The Suleiman Demirel program⁴¹ has a budget of half a million dollars. In parallel, the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University has developed close contacts with Turkish universities such as the Bosphorus University, while its scientific journal MERIA has included a great number of Turkish studies.⁴²

Implications for Greece and the Cyprus Issue

The long-term interest of the West remains the strengthening of Western-oriented states in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle

East. Turkey and Greece are important blocks in any defense architecture. Preserving such an outlook in Turkey and Greece and minimizing differences between these two states constitute important elements for the security of Israel, a state surrounded by countries which only recently have come to terms with its existence.

Cypriot and Greek Concerns

The extension of the EU to Israel's closest non-Arab neighbor, Cyprus, would amount to a greater European commitment to security in a region very close to Israel. Israel's relations with Greece and Cyprus become important, as Greece is a member of both the EU and NATO. The consensual decision-making system in both organizations allows small states great influence. Consequently, it would be in Israel's interest to nurture good relations with Greece without being burdened by Greek objections to its relations with Turkey.

Cyprus upgraded its relations with Israel by sending an ambassador in 1994. A number of economic and cultural agreements were signed in the mid-1990s and Nicosia concluded several deals purchasing military equipment⁴⁴ from Tel Aviv. The improved relationship was marked by the first exchange of presidential visits. Israeli president Weitzman visited Cyprus in November 1998, and Cypriot president Clerides reciprocated in March 2000.

The course of bilateral relations, however, presented a black chapter due to several incidents that caused Cypriot and Greek concerns over the consequences of the Turkish-Israeli partnership. Identically, the Cyprus government captured two Israeli Mossad agents who, as it was suspected and despite the given explanations,⁴⁵ took part in an operation allegedly intended to collect information about the operational plan to deploy in Cyprus the Russian S-300 missiles and to convey the plan to Turkey. Additionally, it has been revealed that Turkish pilots have been trained in a specially designed Israeli training range in the Negev desert.⁴⁶ The training included how to specifically attack the Russian-made S-300 anti-aircraft missile system that the Cyprus gov-

ernment had purchased from Moscow in September 1998 and whose deployment in the island has been canceled under US pressure.⁶⁶ According to a NATO source quoted by the Texas-based Global Intelligence Update of September 10, 1998, the Israeli air force was training Turkish pilots to strike at Cyprus using a mock up of the area where the S-300 were likely to be deployed and by utilizing Israeli reconnaissance photos of Cyprus. Obviously, the Israeli combat experience against Soviet-made weapons systems with which regional countries such as Syria are equipped, made the training of critical importance to Turkey's military.

In another incident, the "I.C.T.S. Global Security" of Ra'anana signed in 1997, a \$10-million agreement with the Cyprus Telecommunications Authority (CYTA) for securing the communications in Cyprus. However, when CYTA administrators and executives found out that some of the heads of the Israeli company were former Israeli intelligence members and maintained connections with the defense establishment, they considered this fact a danger to the interests of the island and cancelled the agreement. Of course, they had the relationship between Israel and Turkey uppermost in their mind.

It is worth noting that Israel has traditionally refrained from taking sides to the Cyprus problem since the 1974 Turkish invasion and has maintained a position of neutrality, expressing the hope that the dispute would be solved by peaceful means. Due to geo-strategic reasons maintaining close links with Turkey are of extreme importance to Israel for the latter wants to establish good relations with Muslim countries. From this "regional" point of view, Greece and Cyprus have a secondary importance to Israel. Athens and Nicosia, however, possess their own strategic importance as countries at the crossroads of the European Union and the Eastern Mediterranean as well as the wider Middle East.

Greek Response and Perceptions

In terms of Greek-Israeli relations, a bilateral military agreement was concluded as early as December 1994, thus predating the Turkish-

Israeli agreement of February 1996. It was signed by the Greek defense minister, Gerasimos Arsenis, and late Israeli Defense Minister and Premier, Yizhak Rabin.

Both sides, however, refrained from activating the agreement for a number of reasons. The most prominent was the Greek unwillingness to disturb the very good relations that Athens maintains with most of the Arab states and Iran, which have traditionally reciprocated on issues considered by Greece to be vital national interests, notably the problem of Cyprus.¹⁷ Another equally important factor was the postponement of the joint naval maneuvers scheduled for the summer 1997.¹⁸ The Greek-Israeli military agreement of 1994¹⁹ provided for joint naval exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean, training in each other's airspace and cooperation between the military industries, arms sales and intelligence exchange.

It should be pointed out that at the time Israel concluded its first military agreement with a neighboring country, Greece, with the objectives of breaking its isolation from the wider region, upgrading its diplomatic relations with Athens, selling high-tech weapons systems to the Greek market, and promoting joint military industrial ventures in order to penetrate European and various other markets, e.g., the Balkans. The Greek-Israeli *rapprochement* was highlighted when an Israeli rescue team participated in the rescue operations⁵⁰ that were carried out after the Athens earthquake in September 1999, and also when Greece headed mediation efforts with the Islamic Republic of Iran for the release of Israelis captured by pro-Iranian Islamic organizations and the release of the 13 Israelis captured by Iranian authorities on charges of conspiracy against Tehran.⁵¹ Parenthetically, according to IRNA, the visit of the late Greek Deputy Foreign Minister, Yiannos Kranidiotis, in Tel Aviv in April 4, 1999, during which he met with the then Israeli Foreign Minister, David Levy, and the Minister for Premier's Office, Chaim Ramon, laid the ground for discussions revolved around joint business prospects and bilateral military cooperation.

The official visit of defence minister Akis Tsohatzopoulos to Tel Aviv in October 13-15, 1999, undoubtedly contributed to strengthening

the two countries' defense ties. The Greek defence minister's visit concluded with the signing of the "Complementary Agreement on Military and Technical Cooperation Between the Ministry of Defense of the Hellenic Republic and the Defense Ministry of the State of Israel". Tsohatzopoulos met in Tel Aviv with the head of the Foreign Relations and Defense Committee of the Israeli parliament (Knesset) Meriodor, and the defense and prime minister Ehud Barak.³² The complementary agreement aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation between the two countries in various military fields, with special emphasis on training, joint maneuvers as well as common projects for military industrialization.

Obviously Greek-Israeli relations have experienced an apparent reversal of the previous historic coolness. A security partnership to maintain regional stability remains among the priorities of both states. In fact, Greece has invited Israel to participate in a new era of cooperation in order to counter-balance and neutralize possible negative consequences of the Turkish-Israeli alliance on the Greek and Cypriot national interests. Many of the past Greek suspicions entailed in the Turkish-Israeli ties seem to have been replaced by an understanding of the real motivations behind the partnership. Similarly, Israel should understand the special Greek relationship with the Arab states. In an interview to the Israeli *Jerusalem Post* newspaper during his official visit to Tel Aviv in October 1999, Greek defense minister Tsohatzopoulos stated that Greek worries about a sinister dimension to Turkish-Israeli ties have been replaced by a greater understanding of the motivations behind this relationship. In May 2000, the first ever Greek official presidential visit to Israel took place, and President Stefanopoulos expressed willingness for a boost in the military as well as the economic cooperation between the two states.

Moreover, it has been realized that the geographic location of Greece at the intersection of the Middle East, the Balkans and Europe along with the country's stable macro-economic environment are important features that necessitate cooperation between the Israeli defense industry and the Greek Defense Industry in order to promote the export of weapons systems to the Balkans as well as to Europe.³³

The normalization of Greek-Israeli relations in combination with the ongoing military bilateral approach may create regional dynamics that limit the negative effects of Greek national interests emanating from the Israeli-Turkish partnership. Greece has repeatedly sought to serve as a factor of stability and peace in the Eastern Mediterranean as well as the wider Middle East and, accordingly, it pursues its regional policies. In this context, a joint program of action between Greece and Israel that would include the coordination of policies, the strengthening of relations between Israel and the EU, as well as the establishment of a structural dialogue on security issues that will pave the way for a Greek-Israeli security cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean, possibly with the involvement of other countries of the region,⁵¹ can be materialized.

The militaristic logic of the Israeli-Turkish relation is expected to be downgraded in the case of an Israeli-Syrian rapprochement, the enhancement of the Middle East peace process and the gradual embodiment of Iran in the international system. Even Tehran⁵⁵ in the case of a wider peace process, while it is unlikely to sign a formal peace treaty with Tel Aviv, could facilitate substantial decrease in tension with Israel and collaborate in containing Iraq, and thus, reduce Israel's involvement in Eastern Turkey. In the short-term, a Syrian peace plan along with an improvement in military ties with Greece is a strategic option for Israel. But it will not close doors with Ankara. Bet hedging is one thing and balance of power politics is another.⁵⁶

By Way of Conclusion

This article has endeavoured to demonstrate that the Turkish-Israeli alliance forged with US guidance during the 1950s was never in effect broken despite being downgraded by Ankara during the late sixties and seventies. The majority of the motives behind this alliance today differ only in degree from those in the 1950s. The alliance's objectives are not solely based on military cooperation; however, the most prominent ones extend to the fields of intelligence, control over oil

and gas supplies, promotion of the missile defense strategy and establishment of a new regional security arrangement.

The Turkish-Israeli alliance had a decidedly strong impact on the psychological climate of the region. Countries like Greece include this partnership in their foreign policy calculations. The exchange of intelligence information between Israel and Turkey is considered by Greek security analysts as having an anti-Hellenic orientation and thus remains high up on Greece's security agenda. Athens pursues its regional policies as it is a factor of cooperation, peace and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider Middle East. Accordingly it seeks to improve its bilateral relations with both Tel Aviv and Ankara. In any case, each partner of the Turkish-Israeli alliance has to bear in mind the history of the region, which reveals that any attempt by a state or groups of states at hegemony is doomed to failure.

NOTES

1. Amican Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean*, London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1987.
 2. An offer was discussed to help finance and construct an oil pipeline from then friendly Iran to Turkey. Ultimately, the Shah vetoed in order to avoid that Iran become dependent on Turkey. Marios Evriviades, "The Turkish-Israeli Axis: Alliances and Alignments in the Middle East", *Orient*, No.4, December 1998.
 3. A. Nachmani, op.cit., p.p.43-82.
 4. A. Nachmani, Ibid.
 5. It should be mentioned that most NATO members, including the US, were initially opposed to Turkey's accession in the organization. Furthermore, at Turkey's request the Israeli government was mobilized to help Ankara obtain financial credits from international financial institutions at a time when Turkey was facing serious economic difficulties.
- A. Nachamani. Ibid.

6. On the pro-Turkey lobbying activities in Washington, See, P. Vryonis, *The Turkish State and History*, Thessaloniki: The Institute of Balkan Studies, 1991.

7. It was signed by the then Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and currently ambassador of the State of Israel in Washington D.C., Maj. Gen. David Ivry and the then deputy Chief of the Turkish General Staff Cevik Bir.

8. The latter agreement was signed on September 18, 1995, in Tel Aviv. Both agreements are subject to the provisions of secrecy of yet another agreement that governs the confidentiality of these and subsequent agreements entitled "Security Confidentiality Pact" signed in March, 31, 1994.

G. Mourtos, *Greece-Israel and the Eclipse of Greece from Its Natural Boundaries*, Athens: Epikoinonies, 1999.

9. The military agreement provides the Israeli Air Force to fly 4 training missions in Turkish air space per year giving pilots experience of flying over unknown terrain. Training flights began on 16 April 1996 with 8 IDF/AF F-16s flying out of Akinci Air Base, West of Ankara. J. Bruce, "Alliance With Turkey Inflames Old Foes", *James Defense Weekly*, June 19, 1996.

10. M. Evrviades, op.cit., p.569.

11. M. Evrviades, *ibid.*

12. Arie Egozi, "Turkey Changed Its Mind with Regard to Giving the IAI 1000 Tanks to be Upgraded at a Cost of 2,5 Billion Dollars", *Yediot Aharonot*, July 12, 2000, and

A. Egozi, "Is the End of Honeymoon With Turkey?", *Yediot Aharonot*, July 9, 2000.

13. "Ben-Eliezer to Turkey Today", *The Jerusalem Post*, July 9, 2001.

14. It was announced by the Israeli defense minister that land forces from Israel and Turkey would soon hold joint maneuvers.

"Turkey Welcomes Joint Missile-Defense Offer", *The Jerusalem Post*, July 10, 2001.

15. The reports were made by the leading Israeli newspapers Haaretz and Jerusalem Post. The ban decision was taken due to the highly critical nature of the talks that pertain Israel's national security.

Turkish Press Scanner, from the Sabah newspaper, July 31, 2001

16. *Turkish Press Scanner*, from *Ortadogu*, August 1, 2001.

17. Active geostrategic players are the states that have the capacity to exercise power or influence beyond their borders in order to alter the geopolitical state of affairs. Geopolitical pivots are the states whose significance emanates from their sensitive geographic location and from the consequences of their potential vulnerable condition for the behaviour of geostrategic players.

18. A 1995 Pentagon Report sums Turkey's importance as follows: "Turkey in particular is now at the crossroads of almost every issue of importance to the US on the Eurasian continent including NATO, the Balkans, the Aegean, Iraq sanctions, relations with the Newly Independent States (NIS), the Middle East peace, and transit routes for Central Asian oil and gas".

Department of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, "United States Security Strategy for Europe and NATO", Washington DC: The Pentagon, 1005, p.25.

19. Yasemin Dobra-Manco, "Strategic Alliance in Central Asia Creates New Eurasian Power Center", *Turkish Daily News*, July 17, 2001, and

"Ilnur Cevik Interviews Israeli Ambassador to Turkey", *Turkish Daily News*, June 15, 1998.

20. It is notable that while US and Israeli sources in Ankara confirmed the date of the exercises, the Turkish Air Forces Command (HKK) had refrained from making any comment on the matter.

Turkish Daily News, June 7, 2001.

21. The center in Konya, established in a 200 square kilometer area, is expected to be fully operational in 2004 once the installation of surface-to-air (SAM) systems, threat generators and tactical firing areas are completed. The military hopes to earn annually about 35 million

dollars on an annual basis from the center, charging NATO allies as well as friendly countries interested in joint exercises. See Manos Iliades, "In the Firing Area of Konya, the First Exercise with NMD", *Ependitis* (Greek Daily), June 30 - July 1, 2001, p.45.

22. Some 78 aircraft - 10 F-16s, 2 tanker planes and several helicopters from Israel, 50 F-16s from Turkey as well as 6 F-16s and 2 C-130 from the US bases in Germany - participated in the exercises. The war-games included live bombing and strafing. Simulated surface-to-air missiles (SAM) confronted the aggressors. The attack aspect of the Anatolian Eagle exercise lasted five days, but since its fist phase, code-named *Anatolian Breeze*, the victory was total. In the next two phases, code-named *Anatolian Sunrise* and *Anatolian Sun*, the Turkish-Israeli-US air forces in a demonstration of power, carried low height flights in the airspace of Iran, Syria and Iraq. An operations center set up *ad hoc* in Konya commanded the exercises through computers. The command center sent missile signals that it detected on ground, and warned the jets in the air about the threat on real time basis.

23. The missile defense strategy adopts a regional dimension that Washington, Ankara and Tel Aviv are engaged in, especially since the US secretary of State Colin Powell failed at a Budapest NATO meeting in May 29 to break through NATO's sharp opposition to the missile defense proposal. Despite the existent divergence of views concerning the Israeli proposal to set up a regional early-warning center based on the Green Pine radar system, which incorporated by the Arrow Anti-ballistic system between the Turkish ministries of defense and foreign affairs, Ankara is an integral part of the Theater Missile Defense (TMD) Meetings. These meetings aim to find ways so that a regional defense system to counter the threat of ballistic missiles can be established. The first meeting between Israel, Turkey and the US was held in Washington on December 2000, while the second gathering was scheduled to be hosted some time this summer.

"Our Preference for the Missile Shield Within NATO, But Not the Israeli Offer", *Turkish Daily News*, July 11, 2001.

"Ben Eliczer Leaves for Lightning Visit to Turkey", *Haaretz*, July 9, 2001.

Hurriyet, June 22, 2001, and *Haaretz*, June 26, 2001.

24. In a gesture to make its offer more attractive, Israel has proposed to Ankara that it will have the right to sell the Gil rocket to any third country.

"Turkey Welcomes Missile-Defense Offer", *Haaretz*, July 10, 2001.

25. France won the deal last year but it was cancelled in retaliation for Paris' accusations that Turkey committed Genocide against the Armenians. The Israeli Aircraft Industries (IAI) is expected to submit its offer. See, Antonia Dimou, "Turkish Cancellation of Defense Deals", *Geopolitiki* (Greek monthly magazine), September 2000.

26. See statements of the Jordanian ambassador in Ankara, Musa Breizat, that "We look into the issue in the light of the assurance given by Ankara that its relations with Israel will not harm any Arab country. We have no reason not to be hopeful that Turkey will use its relations to prevail upon the Israeli leadership to be more flexible particularly on the issue of Palestinian and Arab rights...". Also the statement of the Egyptian ambassador Mohammad Fathy al-Shazly that "I understand that the threat perception of the Israeli government is not identical to the Turkish perception of threat". See Saadet Oruc, "No Reason to Be Alarmed", *Turkish Daily News*, July 13, 2001.

27. *Turkish Daily News*, September 15, 1998.

28. *Turkish Probe*, April 26, 1998.

29. An. Dimou, "Jordan: The Arab Extension of the Turkish-Israeli Military Alliance", *Geopolitiki*, No.12, November, 2000.

30. "Jordan to Hold Military Manoeuvres", *Star*, 9/8/1998.

31. "Turco-Israeli Ties: Most Portentous Development in the Middle East", *Turkish Daily News*, August 20, 1998.

32. G. Mourtos, op. cit., p.145.

33. *Milliyet*, March 10, 2000.

34. The delegation was headed by General Ahmed el-Ali from Syria's training department.

35. Drafts of both proposed agreements were submitted by Lt. Gen. Resat Turgut, head of the Plans and Principles Department of the Turkish General Staff to his Syrian counterpart, Gen. Mahmoud Ammar, during the latter's visit to Ankara on January 18, 2001.

36. Lale Sariibrahimoglu, "Turkey Moves to Balance Ties with Israel and Syria", *Turkish Daily News*, June 7, 2001

37. M. Evriviades, *Orient*, op. cit., p. 579.

38. The 156-year-old B'nai B'rith organization is an international broad-based organization that works together with other ones.

39. An increasing number of Jewish-American organisations have sent delegations to Turkey and Central Asia during the last 5 years, such as the delegation that came to Ankara in the event of a conference organized by the Ari Movement in Istanbul in the summer of 1999, that comprised of two well-known Jewish-American organisations; The American-Jewish Committee represented by Barry Jacobs assistant director, and the Washington-based B'nai B'rith represented by its director, Daniel Mariaschin. See "Jewish-American Organizations Lobby for Silk Road Initiative (Part 1)", *Turkish Daily News*, July 28, 1999.

40. A conference entitled "Contemporary Turkey: Challenges of Change" was organized by the Moshe Dayan Center in co-operation with the Middle East Technical University of Ankara on June 20-21, 1999.

41. The inauguration of the program took place in June 1998. Marios L. Evriviades, "The Other Axis: What is Hidden Behind the Israeli-Turkish Academic Cooperation", *Eleftherotypia* (Greek Daily), October 17, 1999.

42. M. Evriviades, *Ibid.*

43. Israel's official policy is not to sell Cyprus "shooting equipment".

Israeli companies sell Cypriots a variety of security equipment such as a guard ship, communications and night vision equipment and battle suits. Experts from Israel give advise to the civil defense system on the island.

44. The head of the Mossad at that time, Efraim Halevy, visited Nicosia and reported to the Cypriot authorities that the two agents belonged to a unit of the surveillance division of the Mossad that is identified as "Neviot". Their mission was to tap the police and National Guard networks in order to warn other operational Mossad units that followed a Hezbollah or Iranian intelligence target. "Compensation Is On the Way", *Haaretz*, 14 September 1999.

45. Marios Leonidas, "Israel and Turkey: An Eye-Popping Relationship", *The Greek American*, July 25, 1998.

46. S. Rodan, "Cyprus, Russia Ask Israel to Keep Out of S-300 Deal", *Defense News*, February 23-March 1, 1998, and M. Evriviades, "Israel, Turkey and Greece", *The Cyprus Weekly*, September 18-24, 1998.

47. Zacharia Mihas, "Nicosia Wants a New Strengthen of Ties Between Greece and Israel", *Imerisia* (Greek Daily), August 19-20, 2000.

48. The reason for the postponement was that the Greek navy was busy preventing infiltrations from Albania and could not spare a frigate for the exercises. See John Nomikos, "Greek-Israel Relations", The Jewish Student Online Research Center (JSOURCE), The American-Israeli Co-operative Enterprise (AICE), 1998.

49. Y. Melman, "Like Sirtki: One Step Forward and Two On the Side", *Haaretz*, October 5, 1997.

50. Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, See <http://www.mfa.co.il>.

51. The mediating role was demonstrated after American officials submitted a relevant request to the Greek defense minister Tsohatzopoulos during his official visit in Washington on September 1999.

Dimitri Apokis, "Greek Opening to Israel", *To Vima* (Greek Daily), September 26, 1999.

52. The Israeli Prime Minister stated during the meeting with the Greek delegation that Athens plays a major role in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans and in the NATO organisation.

53. Future defense deals between Israel and Greece revolve around the purchase of the electronic warfare system (ASPS) of Elisra for the Greek F-16s' C/D Block-52 Plus, of a Radar System and a Battle Management Center of Tadiran as well as unmanned aerial vehicles planes (UAN's), and of sophisticated weapons systems such as "Cruise" type missiles. Cooperation in security matters in the event of the 2004 Olympic games is equally important. On the military cooperation field and in accordance with the Greek-Israeli Cooperation Agreement on Military Affairs, the Greek General Staff made a Program of Military Cooperation (PMC) for the year 2000 that was submitted to the Israeli side. A joint Greek-Israeli Committee convened on March 11-16 and concluded the two countries' final PMC. See Z. Mihas, "American-Israeli Marriage for the F-16's Warfare Electronic System", *Imerisia*, December 16-17, 2000, and, L. Blaveris, "Greek-Israeli Relations: The Melt of Ice", *Stratigiki* (Greek monthly Defense magazine), November 1999.

54. This proposal was initially made to the Greek defense minister during his official visit to Tel Aviv in September 1999, and it was repeated in March 2000 by the then Minister for Regional Cooperation, Shimon Peres, to the Greek Foreign Minister, Papandreou, in Athens.

55. It is notable that Iran has curiously toned down its evaluation of border incursions by Turkey calling them accidents and emphasized improvements in Iranian-Turkish relations. For the re-establishment of US-Iranian relations which would also mean that the supreme religious authorities in Tehran may put hostility against Israel on ice, See *COSMOS* newsletter, "Possible Washington-Tehran Dialogue?", Vol.II, No.4, Athens: Institute of International Relations, Nov./Dec.1997.

56. "Israel Plays Both Sides in the Greek-Turkish Dispute", *Stratfor*, Global Intelligence Update, August 6, 1999.