

**What are the convergences and divergences of the European Union's
(EU) and Turkey's policies towards Israel within the context of the
Israeli-Palestinian conflict?**

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August 2005

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts in Political Science

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This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of “Elif Çetin” and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Context

Since the foundation of the Republic in 1923, Turkey has put an arms length distance between itself and its Middle Eastern neighbors. The principle of ‘Westernization’ (Yavuz 1997: 23) was identified among the basic principles upon which the Republic was built during the legacy of Kemal Ataturk and progress was equated with a secular Western identity. As a result, in Turkish foreign policy the priority has always been given to the relations with the West rather than any other region. The political and diplomatic ties with the Arab regimes, Iran and Israel were developed as an extension of the pro-Western policies.

On the other side of the coin, Turkey did not appear as an actor with the same amount of influential power over the policy formulations of its Western allies. In its relations with the US, Turkey sometimes suffered from being a small ally whose concerns can be overlooked when the regional interests of the bigger power are at stake. When it comes to the Turkish-EU relations, Turkey’s application for the EU membership appears as an essential factor that shapes the dynamics of the bilateral relations. There exist questions and concerns related to Turkey’s EU membership on the EU side which revolve around Turkey’s internal policy, the level of its economic development, and the sheer size of its population, as well as doubts about its Europeanness (Müftüler-Baç 2000: 490). As an extension of concerns about Turkey’s Europeanness, the EU raised certain criticisms targeting issues related with Turkey’s human rights records, respect for the rule of law, and democracy in Turkey. The EU criticism in those areas acted as a factor which led Turkey to take an unexpected initiative in its relations with Israel during the 1990s. As a result, Turkey had to define its policy towards Israel under the impact of what Hill calls as the ‘political constraint and political interdependence at the global level’ (2003: 33).

As some scholars underline (Gresh 1998; Makovsky and Sayarı 2000; Jung and Piccoli 2000), the Western factor and the straining relations between Turkey and its

Western allies acted as an important catalyst for Turkish-Israeli rapprochement, besides other factors which came as a result of the change in the politico-strategic environment in the post-Cold War era. Both the EU and the US were criticizing Turkey's poor human rights records and terminating their arms sales. The EU was also referring to Turkey's human rights records as a reason that might at the end led to the refusal of Turkish application for membership. Therefore, a partnership with Israel, another country in the Arab Middle East which shares the identity of an 'outsider' together with Turkey and has the same feeling of being isolated and marginalized by the EU during the 1990s, became a 'convenient fallback' (Bir, and Sherman 2002: 3) for Turkey.

When Turkish-Israeli relations gained a momentum during the 1990s, this was interpreted as the autonomous policy move of Turkey which caused its long-standing, low-key and cooperative relations with Israel to have a 'more overt and substantive character' (Larrabee, and Lesser 2003: 244). The two countries came closer to each other in terms of military, intelligence, economic and civilian matters. The 'normalization' process in Turkish-Israeli relations took a start with the upgrading of the diplomatic relations in the early 1990s and continued with a number of agreements signed in economic, cultural and military fields. The most remarkable ones came in 1996 with the Military Training and Cooperation Agreement (MTCA) and the framework agreement allowing technology transfer; training of technicians and researchers; intelligence sharing; and regular biannual 'strategic dialogue' meetings (Makovsky, and Sayarı 2000: 67).

While Turkey was adjusting itself to the pressures of the post-Cold War for change by assigning greater importance to the Middle East and improving its ties with Israel, Turkey's strategic partnership with Israel led to uproarious criticisms and suspicion in the Middle East. On the other hand, Turkey's Western allies took it as a positive development which could change the dynamics in the region in a positive way. The US appraised the rapprochement between its two close allies which could serve as a supportive block with respect to its policies in the region. For the EU, another remarkable actor in the Middle East, the importance of Turkey's extensive cooperation with Israel rooted from the fact that both Turkey and Israel were the participant countries of the

Union's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership project which is known as the Barcelona process. The EU initiated the process out of an ambition to equate its political weight with its economic influence in the region as the biggest trading partner of the Mediterranean countries (Peterson, and Sjursen 1998: 133). One of the goals to be achieved through the Partnership was the promotion of peace in the Middle East between Israelis and Arabs, and Turkey appeared with a potential to play an important role in the fulfillment of this goal as it both had a considerable Muslim population and close ties with Israel.

1.2. Research Objective

In this research paper, the convergences and the divergences of the European Union's (EU) and Turkey's policy towards Israel within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be questioned. The reason that I have identified the EU and Turkey as the two actors to study in this research paper is that, at the very first place, both are geographically in close contact with the Middle-East region. Besides geography, they have vested interests related with 'strategic, economic, cultural and human factors' (De la Gorce 1997: 6) in the region. The EU, for instance, is both the main trading partner for the countries of the region and also a key player in the Middle East Peace Process. It puts effort to foster the political dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians especially through its high representative and special envoy (Dieckhoff, Naumkin and Cordesman 2003: 3). In addition, through its three facet policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which are 'economic and financial aid for the peace process, participation in multilateral frameworks and support for the creation of effective, democratic Palestinian institutions' (Ortega 2003: 11), the EU has showed its willingness to have a role in settling down the crisis in the Middle East.

Analyzing Turkey's and the European Union's relations with Israel in isolation from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would not provide an appropriate picture. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict plays a pivotal role with respect to the stability in the region which influences the policy dynamics within the neighborhood including those of Turkey and the EU. Both Turkey and the EU had to consider the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict while specifying their Israeli policies due to the fact that those policies have had impacts on the two actors' relations with other Middle Eastern countries. As a result, it appears that studying the EU's and Turkey's policies towards Israel within the 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict' would be a convenient endeavor.

The objective of this research project will be to conduct the policy analysis by comparing the policy views and positions of the two actors towards Israel with a special emphasis on the 1990s. The reason to give a special emphasis to the 1990s lies in the decade's significance to remark the end of the Cold War era and the beginning of the Middle East Peace Process. For the European Community (EC), during the Cold War, the relations with the Middle Eastern countries including Israel were focusing more on the economic and social aspects. The Gulf War which took place in 1991 led to an increased EC involvement in the region both on the political and economic fronts. The EC realized it had a vital interest in securing stability in the region to ensure an uninterrupted access to oil supplies for itself.

From Turkey's point of view, the end of the Cold War surfaced the risk for the country to vanish as a security partner for the West as there was no Soviet threat anymore. Along the 1990s, Turkey has been so worried about the Western, especially European, reluctance to Turkish desire of getting full security support from the NATO, in full participation within the Western European Union in the framework of European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) (Kirişçi 1997). Thus, Turkey tried to find new foreign policy tools to secure its position in the Western world. In so doing, it turned towards the East with the Gulf War. Turkey, basically, felt the need to make certain shifts in its foreign policy behavior and strategies without changing its Western foreign policy orientation. Therefore, the 1990s witnessed Turkey's more activist foreign policy in the Middle East and its strategic partnership with Israel partly due to Turkey's concerns about its strategic value to the West in the post-Cold war era.

I will focus on the EU's and Turkey's Israeli policies by clarifying the interests and the perceptions of the EU and the Turkish sides with respect to their relations with Israel. While elaborating on the similarities and differences in the EU's and Turkey's policies targeting Israel, I will also identify how the parties form their interests and perceptions which at the end lead to the formulation of their foreign policies with certain

points of convergence and divergence. In the ‘methodology’ section of this proposal, it can be found in more detail that how the research regarding the interests and perceptions of the parties will be done.

1.3. Research Question

What are the convergences and divergences of the European Union’s (EU) and Turkey’s policy towards Israel within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

1.4. Relevance of Research

In the literature, although it is possible to find works concentrating either on the EU-Israeli relations or the Turkish-Israeli relations, the research which compares the course and the nature of the policies followed by the EU and Turkey towards Israel is rare. In addition, although there exist a number of works which are dealing with how Turkey would fit into the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) framework, not much studies have been conducted that aims to clarify to what extent Turkish foreign policy is in conformity with the EU foreign policies, with a special focus on their Israeli policies. Therefore, I wish to contribute to the existing literature where comparative studies focusing on the mentioned areas are few.

Apart from the academic relevance, this research possesses certain political relevance due to the recent developments regarding Turkey’s future EU membership. As the date for starting with the accession negotiations that will be conducted between Turkey and the EU is approaching, the compatibility of Turkey to the EU framework is being more fiercely discussed. Among the economic and structural concerns, it is also being questioned whether Turkey can fit into the institutional framework of the EU with its current national identity and the strategic culture. Turkey borders various different regions which are very different from each other and pose different security challenges. The way Turkey shares neighborhoods in different geographies led to the debates that whether Turkey can be an asset in the Middle East Peace Process with its warm relations with both sides of the conflict and whether it can play the role of a bridge between the EU

and the Middle East. The extension of these debates is that whether Turkey can smooth the form of the relations between the EU and Israel which cannot get rid of the strain of the Holocaust memories that yields Israel to regard the EU as an untrustworthy player to in the peace process. Therefore, with this research, I also wish to reflect a perspective on the issue.

1.5. Methodology: Foreign Policy Analysis

In this paper, foreign policy analysis (FPA) will be employed while clarifying the foreign policy visions of the EU and Turkey and also comparing them. Foreign policy analysis can be defined simply as ‘the study of policy-making with attention paid to the relationship between decision making process and policy outcome’ (Peterson, and Sjursen 1998: 14). While foreign policy analysis is a subfield of international relations (IR), a better understanding of it can be achieved through locating it within a general development of the international relations discipline.

All perspectives on the subject of international relations (e.g. political economy, international society, Marxism) contain statements about foreign policy as they all take ‘state as the central actor’ (Smith 1986: 13). However, FPA appears as a theoretical perspective within the study of international relations (IR) which examines ‘how policy decisions are made’ and assumes that human beings who act either individually or collectively ‘are the source of much behavior and most change in international politics’ (Hudson, and Vore 1995). It is organized and studied by Valerie Hudson and Christopher Vore (1995: 209-38) under three major categories: comparative foreign policy (CFP) analysis, foreign policy decision making and foreign policy context.

The CFP researches strived for creating a general unified theory ‘of all foreign policy behavior for all nations for all time’ (Hudson 2005: 9) through multilevel, cross national empirical works with the rise of behavioralism. The CFP faced with the two interrelated problems of the comparative method which can be summarized as many variables and small number of cases (Lijphart 1971: 685). The study of foreign policy decision making focuses on small group dynamics, organizational process and bureaucratic politics. The third kind of study in foreign policy analysis emphasizes the

salience of the context within the objects and subjects of the foreign policy constructed. The foreign policy context involves individual characteristics, perceptions, society and culture, the domestic polity and the international system.

Out of such insights, in this paper, before making a comparison of the EU's and Turkey's policies towards Israel, the necessity is felt to identify official policies by making use of certain primary sources. In order to identify the official policy position of the European Union regarding Israel, I will refer to the official web sites of the European Commission, European Council and the European Parliament. The official EU documents I will be referring will constitute the common declarations of the EU member states, and the official statements of the EU foreign policy representatives (e.g. the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security policy of the European Union, the European Union Special Envoy to the Middle East) which are reflected from the official EU related web pages pre-mentioned.

For Turkey, I will make use of the official web site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Besides the views reflected from the official site of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I will also refer the official periodical of the Office of the Prime Minister, Directorate General of Press and Information, the 'Newspot', which serves as the official news organ reflecting the activities and briefings from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By analyzing the rhetoric of the parties reflected in those documents, I am planning to define certain dimensions of their policies towards Israel and then make a comparison of those elements in order to find out the points which are overlapping and diverging.

1.6. Contents

Following the introduction, the second chapter provides the historical background of the European Community-Israeli relations. The chapter mainly focuses on the 1990s as the time frame. However, taking into account the fact that the backbone of the EU policy objectives took its shape even before the 1990s, with a concern to provide a more complete picture of the EU-Israeli relations, the starting point was identified as the European Political Co-operation mechanism which goes back to 1970s. The chapter also

introduces the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU that appears as the 'decision regime' (Soetendorp 1999: 68) within the EU and contributed it to appear as an 'external policy actor' (Vogler, and Bretherton 1999: 3) with a visible international identity. The CFSP is taken in its relevance to the European Union's willingness to play a role in the Middle East Peace Process and how the EU tried to claim a mediatory position in the Middle East conflict by trying to strengthen its CFSP mechanism. The selective chronology of developments in the EC/EU relations with Israel are revealed and evaluated up until the late 2004.

The third chapter reveals the background of the Turkish-Israeli relations by covering a period which starts from the Cold War till the death of Yasser Arafat. Although the developments during the 1990s are mainly focused, again with a concern to provide the changing tide of developments in bilateral relations, it is found necessary to extend the selective chronology both before and after the 1990s. While studying the background of the Turkish-Israeli relations, Turkey's relations with Middle East, the European Community/ European Union and the United States are all taken into account as the factors which defined the dynamics of the bilateral relations between Turkey and Israel. The reason is Turkey is a middle sized actor in the international arena and it has always felt the necessity to follow a balanced approach in the region under the influence of its relations with its Western allies and other Middle Eastern countries.

In addition, Turkey's relations with the Middle East, the US and the EU all had an influence on it to (re)define its foreign policy formulations both before and after the end of the Cold War. Therefore, the time frame in Turkish-Israeli relations is divided as during and after the Cold War both of which had significant impacts upon the Turkish foreign policy in general and its relations with Israel in particular, as factors setting the dynamics of the international structure.

The forth chapter is dedicated to a comparative analysis of the European Union's and Turkey's relations with Israel with a special emphasis on the 1990s. The analysis is conducted on the basis of two dimensions that have (re)defined both Turkey's and the European Union's Israeli policies. These two dimensions consist of the relations with the United States and the relations with the Middle East. Within the frame of those two common dimensions that are present in both Turkish-Israeli and the EU-Israeli relations,

the policy reflections of Turkey and the EU are pointed out by referring to certain moments (e.g. the Gulf War, Madrid Conference, Barcelona Process).



2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE EC/EU-ISRAELI RELATIONS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

2.1. The Path towards European Political Cooperation

The relationship between European Union and the State of Israel represents the complex interaction of different factors. From an economic perspective, the EU is Israel's major trading partner where about 40% of Israeli imports come from the EU, and about 30% of Israeli exports are directed to the EU¹. Within the frame of the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement, the parties enjoy mutual trade concessions. Apart from the trade concessions, the EU and Israel co-operate in scientific and technical fields since Israel became associated to the European Community's Framework Programme for Research and Technical Development (RTD) in 1996.

Besides the ties in economic, scientific and technical areas, there are also elements which bring a moral dimension to the relations between the European Union and Israel. The memories of the Holocaust and the Arab-Israeli conflict constitute the important historical shadows on the relationship although the former one is quite intangible in the current foreign policy making structure. Due to the strains of the Holocaust, Israelis developed a feeling of mistrust towards Europe. In addition, on the Israeli side, it led to the development of the feeling that Europe owes a 'moral debt' to Israel (Greilsammer, and Weiler 1988: 2) and it should provide Israel a privileged position.

The Arab-Israeli conflict whose core is constituted by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict inescapably appears as another factor with a moral extent and which shapes the dynamics of the Euro-Israeli relations. As Greilsammer and Weiler points out, 'to talk about Euro-Israel relations is inevitably to talk also about Euro-Arab relations...' (1988: 3). The reason is multi-folded and related with the strategic, economic, cultural and human factors that would affect the Union's well-being.

¹ Information accessed from European Commission's web site on 20 May 2005 which is available at http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/israel/intro/index.htm.

The EU, due to its geographical proximity to the Middle East, would get immediately influenced by any sort of turbulence that might occur in the region. The ‘millions of Arab, Turkish and Iranian immigrants in Europe, and reverse links with Israel, does give the European Union much cause for concern about peace and stability in the region’ (Hollis 1997: 16). Apart from the risk of containment of conflict and uneasiness among the immigrants, the EU would inevitably face with problems in its daily oil transfer from the region which reaches to ‘5.5 million’ barrel (Hollis 1997: 16). The volume of trade between the parties would shrink and the level of the Middle East investment capital in Europe would go down.

Apart from the economic and strategic concerns, the necessity of EU’s involvement in the Middle East is framed by some circles in Europe as a way of protecting the basic values of the Union over which its institutional structure was based, such as, human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law².

While the EU interests attached to the Middle East region can be summarized with the above list, the greatest source of instability which threatens these vested EU interests surfaces as the conflict between Arab countries and Israel whose focus is constituted by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As an outcome, the European Union has always had an ‘ambition to play a central role in the Arab-Israeli peace process’ (Soetendorp 2002: 283). In this frame, the good management of the relations with Israel has been both a necessity and a priority for the EU. However, until the Hague Summit of 1969, the European Community failed to implement any common decision regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. The meeting of the six members of the European Community after the Six Day War was a clear reflection of the lack of a common position. For instance, France reflected strong pro-Arab views and condemned Israel while the Netherlands, on the contrary, supported Israel. Germany claimed to have a neutral position but it was in fact favoring Israeli foreign policy decision (Allen and Pijpers 1984: 131). Italy was not able to stand up with a clear position on the issue while facing with the friction between

² The idea is reflected in the working paper *The European Union-Israel Association Agreement: an Introduction* prepared by the Aprovev Group on Middle East. Available at <http://www.palestinagrupperna.a.se/Aprovev020318.pdf#search='aprodev%20working%20group>. Accessed 23 May 2005.

those who were favoring Arabs (Fanfanis) and those who were favoring Israelis (Saragat faction) (Allen, and Pijpers 1984: 131). Belgium was pointing the reliance to the UN institutions as a solution of the crisis situation (Allen, and Pijpers 1984: 131).

After the revealed diversity of policy positions among the Community members, the Six decided to create the machinery of European Political Cooperation (EPC) at the Hague Summit (1969). European Political Cooperation was embodied ‘to provide a collective response mechanism in the form of common positions and political declarations’ (Peterson, and Sjursen 1998: 136). During the EPC era, for the members having different historical and ideological backgrounds, oil acted as the ‘element of urgency’ (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 13) and helped them to convert their views with relative easiness and speed. Within the framework of the European Political Cooperation, the Community was able to adopt its first three common positions on the Middle East. Those common positions were reflected through the Schumann Paper, Brussels Declaration and the London Statement.

2.2. The Schumann Paper

In 1971, with the French efforts to persuade the Community members to adopt a common position on the Middle East, the process of forming a united European view on the Arab-Israeli conflict began. However, a concrete document reflecting the EC position was not realized until the approval of the Schumann Paper on 13 May 1971. The paper was approving the UN Security Council Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967 which contemplated ‘land for peace’ formula for the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict³.

In addition, its substance was including the ‘need for an overall Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, the internationalization of Jerusalem, and the choice for the Arab refugees of either returning to their homes or being indemnified’ (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999:14). Although the content of the Paper ‘did not indicate a perceptible change of the Community position regarding the

³ The SecCo Resolution 242 was on the MiddleEast situation-Acquisition of territory by war/withdrawal of Israel/Refugee problem/Special Representative. It was adopted unanimously at the 1382nd meeting of the UN Security Council. Available at <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/d744b47860e5c97e85256c40005d01d6/59210ce6d04aef61852560c3005da209!OpenDocument>. Accessed 26 May 2005.

Palestinian problem' (Allen, and Pijpers 1984: 133), it led Israeli side to get anxious with a thought that the EC would use EPC to make policy decisions as at the expense of its security and well-being. From the perspective of the EC, the Paper was an application of the new EPC framework instead of activating or reactivating a foreign policy goal (Allen, and Pijpers 1984: 133). Although the Paper was the outcome of the approval of all the Community members, the members who had a pro-Israeli stance like Germany, the Netherlands and Italy, 'had serious reservations and prevented the paper from being made public' (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 14).

2.3. The Community Reactions after the Yom Kippur War

The break down of the Yom Kippur war in 1973 disclosed both 'the ultimate fragility of Israel's painstakingly negotiated relationship with Europe' and the dependence of the European industrial economies on the 'goodwill of the Arab world to allow a policy of tacit forbearance' (Sachar 1999: 283). After the oil crisis and the oil embargo applied to the Netherlands, the Community adopted its second common position which resulted in the Declaration of 6 November 1973 (Brussels). An important feature of the Brussels Declaration was, for the first time the Nine 'adopted a declaration clearly establishing their position with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict' (Allen, and Pijpers 1984: 4).

While the Declaration underlined 'the role of the Security Council and the necessity of international guarantees for any peace settlement' (Allen, and Pijpers 1984: 4) it also called for withdrawal from 'all the occupied territories' and for the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. By emphasizing the necessity to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, the Community put aside the view which treats the Palestinian question only as a refugee problem.

Brussels Declaration was welcomed among the Arab circles. On the other hand, Israelis interpreted the Declaration as the outcome of the Europe's desperate need for oil, rather than a reflection of the European concerns about the peace in the Middle East (Allen, and Pijpers 1984: 135). Following the adaptation of the Brussels Declaration, in

the Copenhagen Summit (December 1973), some of the EC members' voiced out their initiatives for establishing a special relationship with the Arab countries.

In addition to the demands for approaching the Arab states in a closer manner, the Nine also issued that the 'requirements of security and sovereignty can be met through the conclusion of the peace agreements including, among the other arrangements, international guarantees and the establishment of demilitarized zones' (Allen, and Pijpers 1984: 167). Such a statement was pointing out the EC members' desire to achieve a balanced policy towards the parties in the conflict. While the pressure over Israel to withdraw from the occupied areas was sustained, the statement also brought the issue of recognition of Israel's security and its right to exist in front of the Arab states.

After the Copenhagen Summit, 'on 6 March 1974, the Europeans announced that they were prepared to launch the Dialogue (*the Euro-Arab Dialogue*) and the Arab countries gave their agreement at the meeting in Tunis on 28 April 1974' (Allen, and Pijpers 1984: 168).

2.4. The Euro-Arab Dialogue (EAD)

The Dialogue was organized 'as a form of associative diplomacy' (Greilsammer and Weiler 1988: 255). However, it later became clear that the parties had different perceptions of and expectations from the EAD. The Nine was motivated by assuring the flow of oil with moderate prices. On the other side, their 'Arab interlocutors were mainly concerned to achieve a political breakthrough, particularly on the Palestinian issue'⁴. Arabs were hoping to use oil as a political leverage to gain the support of the EC for their cause against Israel. However, the Community was not willing to define the Arab demands as a foreign policy objective for itself as taking clear sides would be damaging its interests related with the region. As an extension of its avoidance of taking clear sides in the conflict, the Community signed a free trade agreement with Israel in 1975 shortly after it developed its Global Mediterranean Policy (GMP) at the Paris Summit of European Heads of State and Government (1972).

⁴ The quote is taken from Le Monde Diplomatique. The article is available at <http://mondediplo.com/focus/mideast/r1276%20Le%20Monde%20diplomatique%20report%20on%20EU>. Accessed 26 May 2005.

After several rounds of meetings between 1975 and 1977, EAD came to a stalemate in 1978 after the signing of the Camp David agreement and the subsequent exclusion of Egypt from the League of Arab States (Greilsammer, and Weiler 1988: 255). Until 1981, no more meetings were held within the frame of EAD. After 1981, EAD was revitalized however it lost its prior significance and pace. Thus, 'the cooperation of the EC states in the Euro-Arab Dialogue has had little influence on shaping the Community's attitudes about central questions of the Middle East conflict' (Greilsammer, and Weiler 1988: 307).

2.5. The London Statement

After Brussels Declaration, following the elections in Israel, in 1977, the EC members issued the London Statement. With the Statement, for the first time the need for the participation of the Palestinian people's representatives in the negotiations was mentioned. In addition, the Europeans also recognized the right of the Palestinians to a homeland and expressed that this would be the 'only' solution to the conflict. Such a statement put the border security of Israel into a secondary position while it converted the Palestinian issue into a core matter of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The significance of London Declaration lies in the fact that it reflected a further step in the evolution of the Community members' common stance on the Middle East question. Due to the fact that the Community did not recognize Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, Arab countries had certain disappointment. However, although the Europeans reflected a political will to play a mediating role in the resolution of the Middle East conflict, negotiations between Israel and Egypt were conducted in the United Nations frame which made European efforts to appear obsolete. When the negotiations which were being conducted in the Camp David context faced with a deadlock, the Community took the remarkable step of issuing Venice Declaration in 1980 to strengthen its policy position and to have a stronger say in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

2.6. Venice Declaration

The Venice Declaration (1980) marked the emergence of a more concrete common position among the Community members on the Middle East question. In point 2 of the Declaration, the Member States underlined that ‘... the traditional ties and common interests which link Europe to the Middle East oblige them to play a special role and now require them to work in a more concrete way towards peace’ (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 15).

In the Declaration, the Ten reflected a position in line with the Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 both of which were favoring the ‘land for peace’ formula for the resolution of the conflict. However, the Declaration was issued without negotiating with the relevant parties of the conflict. The EC’s ignorance of taking the views of the concerned parties became a handicap of the Venice Declaration and the ‘Community gave the impression of trying to impose definitive solutions to the conflict’ (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 15) without consulting all the parties.

In addition, the member states also argued that the ‘Palestinian issue is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict’ (Soetendorp 2002: 285). In accordance with their efforts to put the Palestinian issue at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the member states also underlined the necessity of the involvement of the PLO in the peace negotiations without recognizing the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

The Venice Declaration was a bold step of the EC and it formed the ‘point of reference’ for the member states with respect to their statements on the Middle East. Despite of this, the Declaration was far from giving birth to a new initiative in terms of settling down the Arab-Israeli conflict and it failed to persuade the parties of the conflict to accept a ‘formula of mutual and simultaneous recognition’ (Nuttall 1992: 168).

On the Israeli side, the Declaration was received with a great resentment as it was calling Israel to negotiate with the PLO, an organization which Israel considered as performing ‘terrorist’ activities. Therefore, although the Community pointed out the right of Israel to have existence and security once again in the Declaration, it could not escape from being seen by the Israelis as ‘self serving mediator’ (Soetendorp 2002: 285) which

was more concerned about its own interests, rather than the Israeli security or the peace in the Middle East region.

Furthermore, the Venice Declaration gave the impression to the Israelis that the EC was trying to shift the crux of the conflict from the recognition of Israel by the Arab states to the Palestinian problem. Israelis thought that further EC efforts for the resolution of the conflict may lead to an agreement on Arab terms. This perception at the end led Israel to insist on the avoidance of the European involvement into the peace process for a decade. Likewise, the US reacted in a negative way after the Community approved the Venice Declaration, on the grounds that the PLO was a 'terrorist' organization and could not be included to the peace negotiations. Another source of resentment for the US was that the EC did not seek for the US consultation before issuing the Declaration. This fact caused the US to interpret the European initiative as a 'threat to its monopoly of crisis management' (Greilsammer, and Weiler 1988: 28).

Besides Israel and the US, some Arab governments and the PLO were not satisfied with the Venice Declaration either as the EC prolonged with its non-recognition of the PLO as a legitimate representative for the Palestinian people. The way that the EC avoided to recognize the PLO was interpreted by the Arabs as the Europeans bent down in the face of American pressures. Moreover, the EC could not provide concrete proposals to put the ideas reflected in the Declaration into effect. Therefore, in addition to Israel, in the eyes of the Arab countries, the EC also lost its credibility to play the role of the honest and powerful broker in the peace process.

2.7. From Venice to Madrid

Following the Venice Declaration, the EC issued a number of declarations and statements which added up to the Israeli frustrations over the Community's position on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The most remarkable ones were the EC reactions after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 and the start of the Palestinian Intifada at the end of 1987. The EC began to criticize the Israeli policies towards the Palestinians more openly while it strengthened its endorsement of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and of the Palestinians' right to self-determination. The EC also

became more aware of the interaction between the politics and economics and ‘narrowed the gap between EPC and the Community’ (Greilsammer, and Weiler 1988: 277). For instance, the EC refused to convene the EEC- Israel Council of Cooperation and postponed the signing of a financial aid agreement with Israel.

The EC continued with its criticism of Israel and tried to follow an autonomous foreign policy in the Middle East during the 1980s. In 1986, the EC granted a ‘preferential trade regime’ to products originating in the Occupied Territories. The EC decision had to be issued as a unilateral policy because there was no authority with which the Community would sign an agreement. The Palestinian Chambers of Commerce in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were ‘the authorities chosen to issue the necessary certificates of origin’ (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 22).

The tough measures taken by Israel against the Palestinian Intifada (1987) also gave rise to further discussion of the Israel’s violation of human rights and its ‘illegal’ settlements by the Europeans at both official and public levels. In 1988, the European Parliament voted to deny the finalization of the new trade protocol with Israel. The EC also stood firm against Israel in the issue of the Palestinian farmers’ rights in the occupied territories to ‘export their products directly to the EC without the intervention of the Israeli agricultural export authority’ (Soetendorp 1999: 110).

In November 1988, at the Algiers session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), Yasser Arafat proclaimed ‘the establishment of the State of Palestine on our Palestinian territory with its capital Jerusalem (Al-Quds Ash-Sharif)’⁵. The PNC accepted the principle of partition and a two-state solution based on all relevant UN resolutions going back to November 1947. The EC issued a declaration which stated that the PNC decision in Algiers reflected the Palestinian people’s will to assert their national identity and it possesses positive elements for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Hatuqa 2003: 22).

The Gulf War, which broke out with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1991, and its aftermath had certain implications on the role of the EC in the Middle East, thus, on its relations with Israel. Although during the War, the EC declared that it would

⁵ The text of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence is available at <http://www.mideastweb.org/plc1988.htm>. Accessed 30 May 2005.

launch a European initiative for the Arab-Israeli conflict when the War came to an end, due to the internal divisions among the EC members about the nature of the proposed initiative, no independent European policy could be formulated. While 'France favored an initiative based on the principles of Venice, Britain and Germany preferred to support the emerging American initiative' (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 26). Besides the EC's internal divisions, the emergence of a dominant US role in the 'New World Order' also led the EC to be marginalized in the peace process by diminishing the significance of its alignment with the US against Iraq. The US, with a heightened ability of exerting political influence in the Middle East, went for a more comprehensive approach that would have a multilateral nature and would involve both the 'wider Arab world and other interested parties such as the EU, Japan and Canada into the peace process' (Soetendorp 2002: 286).

2.8. Madrid Conference

The long desired European goal of convening an international Middle East Conference was being realized with the US efforts. In 1991, the Madrid Peace Conference began with delegations from Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Palestine. However, as neither the US nor the Israelis were willing to grant the EU the position of a full participant, the EU stayed at the sidelines while the US choused the SU as its partner for organizing the Conference. The EC was invited 'only to attend, not to participate' (Hollis 1997: 21). Thus it had a more limited role than what it had been assuming for itself.

The separate bilateral talks between Israel, Syria, Lebanon and the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation were 'managed' by the US. In multilateral talks, the EU enjoyed a greater role by chairing Regional Economic Development Working Group (REDWG) and the working groups which were focusing on issues related with environment, water and refugees. The EU was allowed to have more significance in the multilateral track of the Madrid Conference because 'American policy-makers expected the EU to contribute a substantial share to the funding of the peace process' (Soetendorp 2002: 286). Although Israel first clashed with the EC's desire of including the

Palestinians outside of the occupied areas to the REDWG meeting, later, Israel ‘urged the Europeans to take an active part in various multilateral committees that had been organized under the Madrid guidelines for developing Middle Eastern security and prosperity’ (Sachar 1999: 343).

During the Conference, while the US and the SU avoided making statements that might raise the tension in any of the parties, the EU came up with the suggestion that Israel ‘should halt its settlement activities in the Occupied Territories and...remove its forces from southern Lebanon’ (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999, 28). The EU statements led to certain irritation on the Israeli side and highlighted the incompatibility between the EU and Israeli approaches towards the region.

2.9. Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

The Treaty of European Union (TEU) which was signed in 1992 in Maastricht had a stimulating impact over the EU in terms of achieving common positions in foreign policy matters. The TEU established the frame of Common Foreign and Security Policy through which the member states expected to have an assertive international identity. In the TEU, the more concrete objectives to be achieved through the CFSP were specified as: deciding on common strategies; adopting joint actions; adopting common positions; and strengthening systematic cooperation between member states in the conduct of the policy (Treaty on European Union, Title V, Article J.2)⁶.

The Amsterdam Treaty, which entered into force in 1999, amended certain provisions of the TEU further and set out the following goals to be achieved through the CFSP: to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests, independence and integrity of the Union; to strengthen the security of the Union in all ways; to preserve peace and strengthen international security; to promote international cooperation; and to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (Title V, Article J. 1, Treaty of Amsterdam)⁷.

⁶ Available at <http://europa.eu.int/en/record/mt/title5.html> and accessed 5 June 2005.

⁷ The full text of the Treaty of Amsterdam is available at <http://www.eurotreaties.com/amsterdamtreaty.pdf>. Accessed 5 June 2005.

The EU also specified a number of regions which demanded the implementation of the EU joint action. The EU criteria for defining those regions were including the geographical proximity of the region, the extend of the EU interests in the political and economic stability of the region or a specific country in a particular region, and the presence of any threatening factor against the security of the Union (Soetendorp 1999: 81). The Middle East was among those regions with priority for the EU.

In addition to the joint actions, with the Amsterdam Treaty, a High Representative for the CFSP was appointed which contributed further to achieve the coordination of positions among the fifteen diverse countries and to raise the political visibility of the EU. The High Representative for the CFSP fostered a phase of close cooperation among the European Council, the Council of Ministers and the rotating Presidencies. For the member states, the role of the High Representative put an end to their practice of carrying out their individual diplomacy in the Middle East region ‘when their national views reached beyond the common positions of the EU’ (Soetendorp 2002: 294).

Furthermore, the European Council agreed to appoint an EU special envoy to the Middle East peace process in November 1996. The aim to be realized by appointing such a special envoy was to improve coordination of the policies of the member states further and to develop European initiatives to promote progress in the peace negotiations. An important point is that the EU special envoy ‘...made clear that he does not intend to compete with the United States, but to support American efforts, since the United States is best placed to broker a deal that will provide a firm basis for a resumption of negotiations’ (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 43).

The Treaty of Nice which entered into force on 1 February 2003 introduced new CFSP provisions. It notably extended the scope of co-decision by increasing the number of areas which fall under the qualified majority voting. Qualified majority voting has significance in terms of speeding up the decision making process, thus, providing the opportunity to conduct the CFSP mechanism with relative effectiveness. In addition, the Nice Treaty⁸ enhanced the role of the Political and Security Committee by attaching it the role of ‘strategic leadership’ during the crisis management operations.

⁸ Full text of the Nice Treaty can be found at http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/en/treaties/dat/12001C/pdf/12001C_EN.pdf. Accessed 30 May 2005.

All those attempts associated with the CFSP reveal that although in the Madrid Peace Process the EU was left aside and given a minor role, it did not shift from what it has defined as its 'general political guidelines'. The Middle East continued to be among the EU's 'five priority areas for CFSP joint actions' where the EU revealed its willingness to give 'support for the peace process through political, economic and financial means' (Bretherton, and Vogler 1999: 183).

2.10. Oslo Accords

When the peace talks within the Madrid framework came to a halt, the secret negotiations between Israel and the PLO had already taken a start in Norway away from the public attention. At the end, the officials from the PLO and the Israeli government managed to compose an Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles in September 1993. The two sides recognized each other's legitimate and political rights, and agreed that there should be negotiations leading to a 'Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338'⁹.

The Declaration of Principles, the so-called Oslo I, was signed in the presence of the US. For its implementation three stages were specified as the following: the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip and Jericho area, the interim arrangement for the Palestinian self-government, and the final status of the Palestinian territories (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 31). Sensitive issues such as Jerusalem, refugees and illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories were left out to be discussed later on for negotiation of a permanent status agreement to be agreed during the five year transitional period.

The breakthrough of the Oslo I also introduced some positive dynamism into the EU-Israeli relations by increasing the level of economic cooperation between them. Although the talks were continuing between the EU and the Israeli officials after the election of the Labor government in Israel (1992), it was after the Oslo that in 1993 'the

⁹ The official name of the document is *Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements*. The full text is available at <http://www.bitterlemons.org/docs/dop.html>. Accessed 8 June 2005.

Foreign Affairs Council of the EU finally approved the Commission's draft mandate for negotiating a new trade agreement with Israel' (Hollis 1997: 20).

In September 1995, after further negotiations, the Interim Agreement (the Taba Agreement/Oslo II) was signed between the PLO and the Israeli state which particularly dealt with the division of the control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between the parties¹⁰. Following this, the Palestinian National Council amended the Palestinian Charter and removed the clause which was denying Israel's right to exist.

With the parties' mutual recognition of '(their) legitimate and political rights', what the EU had tailored in the Venice Declaration as the basic condition for achieving a peace settlement was finally realized. However, those constructive steps were taken without any considerable US or the EU diplomacy on the stage. The process was facilitated with the non-EU European countries (i.e. Norway, Sweden and Austria) which were not seen by the Israelis as pro-Palestinian.

Although the EU did not have a strong political role in the Oslo peace process, it exploited its economic power to increase its influence in the peace process through concrete financial contributions (Soetendorp 2002: 288). After the signing of the Declaration of Principles, the EU adopted the suggestion that the Israeli-PLO accords would not be successful unless they would result in the practical improvement of the day-to-day life of the people in the region (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 32). At the Washington Donor Conference (1993), the EU established a special program according to which it committed ECU 700 million by the end of 1997 (ECU 444 m in grants from the EC budget, ECU 100m worth of European Investment Bank loans, and ECU 156 m made available to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees) (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 32).

¹⁰ The official name of the agreement is *Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip*. In the agreement the West Bank was divided into three areas as Area A, Area B and Area C. Area A was including the six of the eight biggest Palestinian cities (Yenin, Nabluz, Tulkaren, Kalkilia, Ramallah and Bethlehem). Area B was including 450 Palestinian villages and settlements. Area C was referring to the areas of the West Bank outside Areas A and B, which, except for the issues that will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations, will be gradually transferred to Palestinian jurisdiction in accordance with the Agreement. The full text of the Agreement including its annexes is available at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/THE+ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN+INTERIM+AGREEMENT.htm>. Accessed 5 June 2005

In total, the EU contributed to the peace process over ECU 1.68 for the period between 1994 and 1997 by exceeding its prior commitment.

The EU financial aid was meant to support the PLO authority in providing certain basic services to the Palestinian people which, from the EU perspective was a way of ensuring the continuation of the Palestinian administration that would form the basis for the future Palestinian state. In addition, the EU always highlights that it ‘strongly condemns all terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians and recognizes Israel’s right to protect its citizens from these attacks, in accordance with international law’¹¹. Therefore, making contributions to the existence and the strengthening of the Palestinian administration appeared for the EU as a way of increasing the Palestinian administration’s determination to set back the groups and/or individuals planning terrorist attacks that might constitute serious security threats against Israel.

2.11. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Program

In 1995, the first EU-Mediterranean summit was organized in Barcelona with the initiatives taken by the Spanish EU Presidency. The Summit gave the opportunity to specify further the needs of the region and at the end of it, Barcelona Declaration was issued. The Declaration called for ‘a regular political dialogue amongst the signatories, greater EU aid for the southern Mediterranean states..., and the control of migration, crime and drugs’ (Marsh, and Mackenstein 2005: 187). It also touched upon the issues of nuclear non-proliferation, anti-terrorism and self determination.

Another important outcome of the Summit was that, it led to the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Programme. The Partnership Programme was a development which came out due to the EU’s concerns about economically liberating the Mediterranean region and achieving the security of its southern flank through a project that would integrate objectives ‘for political, cultural and environmental as well as economic development across the Mediterranean’ (Hollis 1997: 24).

¹¹ The quote is taken from European Commission’s official webpage on the EU’s role in the Middle East Peace Process which is available at the address http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/mepp/. Accessed 26 May 2005.

The Barcelona Process acted as a forum which brought Israel, Palestinians and the Arab states together during a period where the peace talks came to stagnation with the election of Benyamin Netanyahu as the Israeli Prime Minister on 31 May 1996. However, with the Barcelona initiative, the parties continued to meet. . However, the impact of the Process on the peace talks has been limited because ‘having insisted on keeping a distinction between the partnership programme and the Arab-Israeli peace process, the Europeans have not, however , drawn the line at using this framework to apply some pressure on Israel’ (Hollis 1997: 25).

2.12. EU-Israeli Association Agreement

The EU-Israel Association Agreement which was signed in Brussels, on 20 November 1995, is the ‘main agreement governing relations between Israel and the EU’¹². It introduced a phase of improvement in the bilateral relations of Israel and the EU in economic, political, scientific and cultural fields. The Association Agreement established the EU-Israel Association Council (held at ministerial level) and the EU-Israel Association Committee (held at the level of Senior officials) as the two main bodies for the EU-Israel dialogue which meet at regular intervals to discuss political and economic issues as well as bilateral or regional co-operation¹³.

While the EU issued the association agreement with Israel, it also continued with its commitments towards the PLO. As a part of them, the EU tried to keep the negotiation process between Israel and the Palestinians alive after the election of Netanyahu whose term remarked a period of increased violence and further deterioration of the Palestinian economy after the Israeli closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In February 1997, the EU signed the Euro-Mediterranean Interim Association Agreement on Trade and Cooperation with PNA. The agreement had the objectives of supporting the development of the Palestinian industries, creating suitable environment for economic exchange and contributing to the development of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

¹² The EU-Israel Association agreement replaced the earlier cooperation agreement of 1975 which was signed between the European Community and Israel. The quote is from http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/israel/intro/index.htm. Accessed 5 June 2005.

¹³ Information sourced from http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/israel/intro/index.htm. Accessed 5 June 2005.

During the period between 1996 and 1999, the EU assumed a more active role in the Middle East Peace Process where some of its common declarations targeting Israel led to political frictions between the EU and Israel. Following the election of Benjamin Netanyahu, the peace process between Israel and the PLO came to a halt. In addition, Israel took a number of steps which attracted further EU criticism such as attempting to open a tunnel near the Arab holy sites in Jerusalem, the re-establishment of financial incentives for illegal settlements and the decision to build new settlements in Occupied East Jerusalem.

Apart from the actions that were considered as 'proactive' by the EU, the election of Jacques Chirac in May 1995 also stimulated the EU's more active involvement in the peace process as France started to assume a more assertive policy in the Middle East region with a pro-Palestinian stance which often clashed with the US policies.

The EU member states' concerns about turning the Common Foreign and Security Policy into a more effective foreign policy tool that would enhance the role of the EU in foreign policy matters was another factor that led to the EU activism in the Middle East. The region which has already been identified with priority for the EU appeared as a good trial zone for achieving the pursuit of cooperation.

The EU statement which was issued after the Israeli attempts of tunnel extension towards the Arab holy sites, the restoration of financial incentives for Israeli settlements in December and building new settlements in an East Jerusalem location, was one of the signals for the renewed EU activism (Gordon 1998: 21). The EU was willing to support the US action as long as it was 'constructive' but when the US appeared to lack the willingness to encourage parties for progress, Europe decided to get more involved (Gordon 1998: 21).

The Luxembourg Council Declaration which was issued on 1 October 1996 was another clear EU criticism of Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the Declaration it was underlined that 'East Jerusalem is subject to the principles set out in UN Security Council Resolution 242, notably the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and is therefore not under Israeli sovereignty. The Union

asserted that the Fourth Geneva Convention is fully applicable to East Jerusalem, as it is to other territories under occupation' (Hollis 1996: 18).

In addition, during the Amsterdam European Council (June 1996), the EU called the parties to the conflict to recommence with the peace negotiations by underlining the 'foundations of peace' as 'the right of all States and peoples in the region to live in peace within safe, recognized borders; respect for the legitimate aspiration of the Palestinian people to decide their own future; the exchange of land for peace; the non-acceptability of the annexation of territory by force; respect for human rights; the rejection of terrorism of all kinds; good relations between neighbors; compliance with existing agreements; and compliance with existing agreements and the rejection of counterproductive unilateral initiatives' (Amsterdam European Council 1997, Annex III)¹⁴.

The Presidency Conclusions which were issued after the Council of Ministers meeting at Cardiff (June 1998) was another document where the EU reflected its concerns about the peace and stability in the Middle East region. The EU called on parties '...to show courage and vision in the search for peace, based on the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the principles agreed at Madrid and Oslo, including full implementation of existing commitments under the Israeli/Palestinian Interim Agreements and the Hebron Protocol'¹⁵.

Following the Cardiff Summit, in the Berlin meeting of the Council of Ministers, the EU further affirmed its support for a Palestinian state by promising '...to recognize a Palestinian state in the near future, preferably one achieved through negotiations rather than following a unilateral declaration of independence' (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 104). The Berlin statement was a diplomatic success for the EU as joint efforts of the EU special envoy and the US avoided the unilateral declaration a Palestinian State which President Arafat scheduled for 4 May 1999.

The efforts of the EU to reactivate its role in the Middle East were halted during the issuing of the Wye River Memorandum which was signed between Israel and the PLO in 1998. It was a step for paving the way to unlock the diplomatic stalemate in the

¹⁴ See http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/032a0006.htm. Accessed 28 June 2005.

¹⁵ See http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/54315.pdf. Accessed 28 June 2005.

peace process. The Memorandum phased Israeli redeployment in the West Bank in parallel with Palestinian achievement of security objectives and approved the opening of the Palestinian Airport in Gaza. The EU was not invited to be involved in the negotiation process of the Memorandum. However, still some role was foreseen for the EU in terms contributing to the projects in the security and economic spheres. Following the signing of the Wye Memorandum, the US became 'the arbiter between Israel and the PNA on security issues through the monitoring role of the CIA' (European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 48).

Following the Wye Memorandum, Israel faced with domestic political changes where Netanyahu was replaced by the Barak from the Labour Party. During Barak's term Camp David summit with the Palestinians were held between 11 and 25 July 2000 under the supervision of the US which once again pointed out that the US had the credibility in the eyes of the conflicting parties instead of the EU. At the end Camp David summit appeared as one of the 'great missed opportunities of the Arab-Israeli conflict' (Fraser 2004: 154) with the lack of compromise between Israel and the Palestinian authority. After it was made public that the right wing Likud party leader Ariel Sharon was planning to make a visit to Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount which has been considered as the holy site for both Jewish and the Muslim population, tensions between Israel and the Palestinians raised again. Following Sharon's visit in September 2000, there were unarmed mass demonstrations on the Palestinian sign protesting Sharon's visit. After the Israeli police's tough measures during the protest which resulted in 4 death and 200 injured Palestinians, the Al Aqsa Intifada (Second Intifada) started where suicide bombing attacks were used as the weapon of Palestinian resistance (Fraser 2004: 155). With the US initiative, the so-called Mitchell Committee was organized in 2000 as an international fact finding committee where Israeli and Palestinian Authority Governments, as well as the US, Egyptian, Jordanian delegations together with the United Nations and the European Union were included.

The September 11 attacks which targeted the US worsened the existing chaotic situation in the Middle East and gave rise to the US unilateral approach under the name of 'war against terrorism'. The US rhetoric led divisions among the EU member states where the US secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld even started to make a classification

of 'old Europe' which was constituted by the anti-war states of France, Germany and Belgium and the 'new Europe' which was referring to those former Soviet block states supportive of the US approach of the Middle East. According to the Bush, the necessary step to make a difference in Israeli-Palestinian conflict was to change the Palestinian leadership which was encouraging rather than opposing terrorism. After the US military intervention in Iraq, its agenda was to be mainly occupied by the war in Iraq. However, the quartet where the UN, the EU and Russia were included together with the US was still able to come up with the road map for establishing peace in the region. The road map for peace failed to create any concrete positive change in the turbulent conflict. The appointment of Mahmud Abbas as the Prime Minister by the Central Council of the PLO confirmed that Arafat would no longer be the sole voice of the Palestinian authority (Fraser 2004: 169). Although, the appointment of Abbas gave the impression there might be chances for a fresh beginning, when Israel started to build the 'security fence' the hopes for finding a compromise between parties faded once again.

After Arafat's passing away in November 2004 in a French military hospital, besides the condolences of the individual EU member states¹⁶, Romano Prodi, as the president of the European Commission, stated that 'The Palestinians have lost a leader who symbolized their aspirations of a Palestinian state' and added that 'the European Commission wishes to express its continued commitment to a resolution of the Middle East conflict' through working with the Palestinian Authority for the achievement of this goal both with the peaceful and democratic transition¹⁷. Prodi's message revealed the official EU position with respect to the Palestinian Authority and the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict once again. The EU continues with dedication to have a role in the resolution of the conflict by being a part of the multilateral approach and through the use

¹⁶ While German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder credited Arafat with striving to lead the Palestinians to independence and regretting that 'it was not granted to Yasser Arafat to complete his life's work' French President Jacques Chirac called Arafat a 'man of courage and conviction who, for 40 years, has incarnated the Palestinians' combat for recognition of their national rights'. In addition, (quotes are taken from ABC News International Online which is available at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=244415>. Accessed 28 July 2005).

¹⁷ The quotes are taken from the message of Romano Prodi to Ahmad Qurai, Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority and Rawhi Fatouh Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council on the death of President Yasser Arafat which is available at http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/gaza/news/ip_111104.htm and accessed 28 July 2005.

of its various foreign policy instruments such as the development and the trade assistance, and its diplomatic skills.



3 DIFFERENT PHASES IN TURKISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS: FROM THE STALEMATE OF THE COLD WAR TO THE STRATEGIC ALLIANCE AND ONWARDS

3.1. Turkey and the Middle East during the Cold War

Since the establishment of the Republic in 1923, Turkey's relationship with its Middle Eastern neighbors has been awkward, if not overtly hostile. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire left a legacy of territorial grievances, historic resentments, and mutual suspicions which formed a psychological barrier neither the Turks nor the Arabs have so far overcome (Rouleau 1993: 72). Despite its geographical position Turkey decided to isolate itself from developments in the Middle East and adopted a very cautious and hands-off approach to the region. In addition to the Ottoman legacy, Turkey's separation of itself from the Middle East was also the result of Ataturk's determination to turn the Turkish republic into a modern and Westernized state, which could become an equal member of the Western world of nations.

In its policy towards Middle East, Turkey has strictly adhered to the principles of non-interference in the disputes between states and the development of bilateral relations with all states in the region. Turkish foreign policy objectives from the 1940s on can be summarized in order of priority as accomplishing national security, economic aid, and expanding influence in the area. Turkey's objectives did not come out due to an aim to develop relations with the states of the region but in order to 'prove itself to the West as a cooperative partner in regional affairs' (Criss, and Bilgin 1997: 4) The structure of Turkey's alliance with the West led Turkey to pursue a Middle East policy as an extension of its pro-Western policy. The relations with the Middle East were perceived as the continuation of a policy in which Turkey dealt with the problems of the region through Western powers (Jung, and Piccoli 2001).

The ultimate aim of Turkey's foreign policy behavior towards the Middle East since World War II has been to minimize any danger to its security and independence and to its Western focused agenda. As an extension of this policy formulation, Turkey tried to find a balance between its relations with Israel and its relations with the Arab states till

the early 1970s. The 1967 Arab-Israeli war, a growing sense of isolation over Cyprus, and a desire to build support among Islamic countries-plus the rise of the pro-Islamist National Salvation Party led Turkey to seek closer relations with the Arab countries and increase its support for the Palestinian cause (Kirişçi 2000: 39). However, in general, Turkey continued with its reactive, non-interventionist and pragmatic approach toward the Middle East.

The 1980s were remarked with Prime Minister Turgut Ozal's 'activist and internationalist approach to relations with the Middle East' (Kirişçi 2000: 40). During Ozal's era, the economic relations were fostered due to the prime minister's efforts to attract Arab capital to Turkey and to encourage Turkish firms to enter into business with the region. He also introduced the idea of developing a 'peace pipeline', however, it could not be realized because of Arab countries' fears about becoming dependent on Turkish water and goodwill. Despite Turkey's role in expelling Iraq from Kuwait during the Gulf crisis in 1990 and Ozal's efforts afterwards for the creation of safe heavens for the Iraqi Kurds in the Northern Iraq, Turkey could not claim a place in the Arab-Israeli peace process. The relatively more activist stance of Turkey during the Ozal era and the Gulf crisis was not nevertheless a deviation from its traditional approach towards the Middle East. Ozal 'had moved Turkey closer Western stands than it had been done before' (Criss, and Bilgin 1997: 2).

3.2. Turkish-Israeli Relations in Focus during the Cold War Era

The character and the development of Turkish-Israeli relations in the Cold War period have been closely related with Turkey's relations with the West and Turkey's relations with the Arab world. A remarkable feature of the relations between the two countries has been that even Turkey adopted pro- Arab policies from time to time, it never break off its relations with Israel completely. On the contrary, as both were a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a US ally, Turkey developed positive perceptions of Israel. The political elite in Turkey was especially concerned about getting the support of the 'pro-Israel lobby and Jewish-American organizations in the US' (Altunışık 2000: 60).

During the Cold War years The Soviet threat was the outmost concern for Turkey, thus, Turkey formulated its policy also by taking into account the presence of the Soviet threat. When Turkey opposed the UN partition plan in 1947 which would lead to the establishment of a Jewish state, it was out of a concern to avoid the spread of the Soviet influence in the region through Israel.

As a remedy against the Soviet threat, assuring the Western bloc's support became more important for Turkey. In order to develop its strategic relations with the West, Turkey softened its opposition for the establishment of a Jewish state later on. In 1949, Ankara granted de-facto recognition to the State of Israel which was formalized in 1950 with the appointment of a 'minister plenipotentiary' from Turkey to Tel Aviv (Robins 2003, 241). Turkish government explained its decision through a legalistic perspective by arguing that recognition of a state which had already been admitted to the United Nations (UN) was a requirement of international law.

On the other hand, besides the concerns related with international law, it is also possible to interpret Turkey's policy move as motivated by the perception of Israel as a potential ally who share the feeling of an outsider in the region and who defines itself with the West. Moreover, Israel's military victory in 1948 which demonstrated its strength also led Turkey's admiration and fostered its desire to be on good terms with Israel.

The Israeli reaction towards Turkish government's recognition was to show an eagerness to develop the bilateral relations. However, Israeli attempts faced with ambivalence of the Turkish side. Turkey's hesitation stemmed from Ankara's ties with the Arab states as Turkey was inducing Arab states to join regional defense pacts against the Soviet Union. While encouraging Arab states to join pro-Western defense treaties, Turkey was using its distant position towards Israel as a means to gain the trust of the Arab states.

3.3. The Turkish-Israeli Peripheral Pact of 1958

The 'Periphery Doctrine' in Israeli foreign policy was initiated from the mid-1950s and it was referring to the establishment of good relations with the 'friendly

Middle Eastern states beyond the Arab fence', namely Turkey, Iran and Ethiopia. When Turkey overcame its hesitation to improve its relations with Israel due to certain new regional and international circumstances the doctrine found a chance to have policy significance between the two states. There were three main factors which gave rise to Turkey's willingness to accept the Israeli proposal of forming such a secret alliance. These were 'Iraq vote against Turkey over Cyprus at the U.N. in December, 1957, the establishment of the United Arab Republic between Egypt and Syria in February, 1958, and the fall of the pro-Western Hashemite regime in Iraq in July, 1958'¹⁸.

In addition to the international developments mentioned above, the sense of commonality between the two countries linked to their being non-Arab in the predominantly Arab Middle East and their positive historical heritage which goes back to peaceful relations between Turks and Jews during the Ottoman Empire era also contributed to the formation of such an alignment.

The 1958 Israeli-Turkish pact committed the two countries to cooperate in the military and intelligence fields, including the joint planning for mutual aid in emergencies, and Turkish support in the Pentagon and at NATO for an improved Israeli military. In addition, the exchange technological and technical know-how was also foreseen, with the Israelis helping the Turks in agriculture, industry, the building of airports.

When the factors which once acted as a catalyst for the peripheral alliance started to disappear, the 1958 agreements started to lose their significance without being fully materialized. Turkey's commercial relations with Israel decreased to negligible levels and diplomatic relations were downgraded.

3.4. 60s, 70s and 80s: Turkey with a Pro-Arab Tilt

In the early 1960s, due to the Cuban and Cyprus crises pushed Turkey felt the need to search for new strategies to lessen its dependence to the US and NATO. The Cuban missile crises (1962) revealed that neither the US not the SU were willing to wage

¹⁸ The quote is taken from <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/documents/42cec7d328673.pdf>. Accessed 20 June 2005.

war against each other. The superpowers bowed to the demands of each other and bargained from the back of their smaller allies. In 1963, the US removed the Jupiter missiles in Turkey in turn for the removal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba without informing Turkey about its bargain with the SU. In case of a limited nuclear warfare Turkey would have been totally unprepared and its losses would be huge. The missile crisis depicted how a superpower can overlook the interests and concerns of a small ally when its own interests are at stake. For Turkey, the crisis revealed the necessity to engage in developing multi-faceted policy-making instead of focusing totally on the West.

In addition, after the Cyprus crisis of 1964 Turkey received the letter of the US President Lyndon Johnson which was threatening Turkey of being deprived of the NATO protection in the event of a Soviet intervention precipitated by a Turkish intervention to Cyprus. Following the US letter, Turkey's international isolation became so clear in December 1965 with the UN vote on Cypriot sovereignty and against "outside" intervention. Ankara, facing with isolation in the UN, started to seek for a multi-dimensional foreign policy which meant improving relations with the Soviet Union and the Arab states. Turkey started to take a pro-Arab stance with increased support for the Palestinians. The way Turkey tried to develop a multidimensional foreign policy eventually cooled down the Turkish-Israeli relations.

The 1973 oil price hikes were another event which led Turkey further to seek for closer cooperation with the Arab countries. Besides the worsening economic conditions, the need for diplomatic support for the military operation in Cyprus in July 1974 were the motivations for Turkey to look for better political and economic relations with the Arab states. As an extension of these concerns, during the 1970s, Turkey gave support to the Arab resolutions in the UN General Assembly, including the 1975 resolution labeling Zionism as a form of racism. Furthermore, Turkey developed closer relations with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) despite the fact that the organization had 'intimate relations with Armenian and left-wing terrorist organizations operating against Turkish interests' (Kirişçi 2000: 40).

When Israeli parliament Knesset declared Jerusalem 'united in its entirety and is the capital of Israel' on July 1980, the diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel got complicated. Süleyman Demirel, Turkish Prime Minister at the time, 'found it necessary,

even before the bill became law, to issue a statement strongly denouncing the move and calling for “political action” to thwart it’ (Liel 2001: 208). Turkey protested Israel by announcing the closure of its consulate general in Jerusalem.

The military regime which took power on 12 September 1980 redefined Turkey’s political agenda where domestic matters gained priority over the issue of bilateral relations with Israel. On November 1980, Turkey decided to downgrade its relations with Israel to the level of second secretary and it asked from Israel to do the same. Turkey was fully aware of the fact that its decision would affront the United States. However, ensuring good relations with the Arab states in order to cure the deteriorating economic situation and decrease the vulnerability for fluctuating oil supplies appeared worth taking risk. Thus, the downgrading of the diplomatic relations with Israel was more of an attempt to have internal and external Islamic credibility to assure Arab sympathy, rather than an intention to break off the relations with Israel.

The decline of the Middle Eastern markets in Turkey’s trade profile and the oil price falls of the mid-1980s eroded significantly the economic and political leverage of the Arab states vis-à-vis Turkey. The collapse of oil prices in 1986, led to a decline in the value of Turkish exports to Arab countries from 47% of its total exports in 1982 to 12 % in 1994 (Yavuz 1997: 27).

Moreover, following the signing of the Camp David Accords, the Israeli-Arab relations entered into a positive phase. As a result, the Arab pressure on Turkey to follow a distant foreign policy towards Israel began to decrease. Turkey started to enjoy more space to improve its relations with Israel. In 1986, there emerged a new momentum in Turkis-Israeli relations. Erdem Esat Güvendiren, a senior diplomat, was appointed as the head of Turkish delegation to Tel-Aviv. Israel responded positively to Ankara’s attempt of upgrading relations by sending Yehuda Milo who also had a ‘higher personal rank than the perfunctory second secretary level retained by both diplomats’ (Liel 2001: 211).

Despite of these positive steps, when the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli occupied areas in 1986 broke out (First Intifada), Ankara issued statements which were denouncing the oppressive measures taken by Israel and supporting Palestinians’ right of self-determination. Ankara’s statements inevitably led to Israel’s fury and protests of the Turkish representative in Israel.

3.5. The End of Cold War and Its Impacts on Turkish Foreign Policy

The change of international system following the end of Cold War had both positive and negative implications for Turkey which at the end forced it to redefine its foreign policy objectives and interests. Turkey's Middle Eastern policy got positively influenced from the post- Cold War context as the level of restraint decreased. The demise of the Soviet Union brought the shrink of the size of the Soviet military and economic aid to Turkey's close neighbors in the Middle East such as Syria and Iraq.

In addition, the end of two-block system of international relations introduced flexible policy formulations of the parties which once used to be in different blocs. The Middle East Peace Process led to a phase of normalization of the Arab-Israeli relations which in turn took away the constant constraint of Arab criticism over Turkey's Israeli policies. Besides Arab criticisms, the peace process also eased the potentially significant challenges for public diplomacy in Turkey where the public is sensitive about the Palestinian problem (Larrabee, and Lesser 2003: 140).

Apart from these developments which had contributory remarks over Turkey's relations with the Middle East, the post-Cold War period also introduced certain difficulties for Turkey in realizing its basic foreign policy goals which were preservation of territorial integrity and sovereignty. Those challenges at the end led Turkey to reconsider its foreign policy formulations and allies.

Since the post-World War II, Turkey depended on NATO as an organization that would provide security to Turkey for the protection and defense of its territorial unity and sovereignty. During the Cold War period, as the Western bloc countries saw Turkey as a buffer zone against the Soviet threat, Turkey was able to enjoy the political and economic support of the Western world.

When the East-West conflict came to an end with the demise of the Cold War era, Turkey's strategic and military role as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism became less important for the West. Turkey was worried that its defense requirements would be only a marginal concern for the US, which was its main ally. Turkey's fears emanated from the perception that the US policy toward Turkey had been derived as a by-product of the US concerns about the surrounding areas such as Russia, Greece, the Balkans, the

Caspian and the Middle East (Larrabee, and Lesser 2003: 165), instead of focusing on Turkey's worries.

Apart from the decrease of its strategic importance for the Western allies, the concerns about Turkey's 'Europeanness' came to be overtly discussed. While the imperatives of fighting against Communism required some incompatibilities between Turkey and Europe left aside, when Europe's concerns shifted from deferring communism to creating a working political and economic union with an effective common foreign and defense policy, Turkey's 'distinctiveness' started to be underlined. After the end of the Cold War, the West defined its priority as the assistance to be given to the former Eastern European Communist countries for the successful completion of their economic and political transition. The issue literally paralyzed Turkey's relations with its Western partners.

3.6. Turkish-US Relations under the Imminent Challenges of the Post-Cold War Era

During the Cold war era, Turkey played an important role for the US both because of its being a 'model' for the Middle Eastern countries in the eyes of the US and with its NATO membership with a potential to deter the Soviet threat. However, after 1991, the differences of approaches between Turkey and the US considering the issues about the Middle East region began to surface. Those issues were related with the different perceptions of the 'Kurdish Question' and the "dual containment" policy of the US which was intending to 'isolate or even precipitate regime changes in Iran and Iraq' (Kirişçi 2000: 53).

Turkey started to show some signs of putting limitations on the US plans and projects over the region. The Gulf War constituted a turning point in that sense. While Turkey was favoring Iraq's territorial integrity and it was against the formation of a separate Kurdish state in the northern part of the country, the US had inclinations for a federal Iraq. The US nevertheless showed supportive attitude towards Turkey's fight against PKK¹⁹, and claimed 'human rights violations are not systematic' (Roleau 1996:

¹⁹ Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers Party)

85). However, when Turkey started with its counterinsurgency operations in the southeast and northern parts of Iraq, the US started to put more emphasis on Turkey's 'human right abuses and the lack of progress on political solutions to the Kurdish problem' (Larrabee, and Lesser 2003: 168).

In addition, Turkey signed an economic agreement with Iran including a 23-year natural gas agreement in August 1996 which was criticized by the United States due to Iran's links to terrorism. The agreement between Turkey and Iran was signed during the coalition government era where Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist Welfare Party partnered itself with the center-right True Path Party. The agreement with Tehran in 1996 was an extension of Erbakan's rhetoric of aligning Turkey with the Islamic countries and creating a Muslim alliance at the end.

The steps Turkey had taken to follow its own course of foreign policy in the region led to certain tensions between Turkey and the US. One implication of the rise of tension was the partly suspension of the US foreign military aid to Turkey. Following the postponement due to the US Congress decision, Turkey canceled the purchase of 10 Cobra helicopters, for which it had already paid (Khalilzad, Lesser and Larrabee 2000: 47). The reasons that were put forward by the US Congress for this suspension were the dissatisfaction with Turkey's progress on the human rights and on becoming a more fully democratic country.

3.7. Changes in the Turkish-EU Relations after the Cold War

In the post-Cold War era Turkey in an attempt to secure its position in the Western world, strived for gaining the status of membership in the European Union (EU). It applied for full EC membership in 1987, however, the timing was bad as the EC was just coming over the difficult process of integrating Spain, Greece and Portuguese. The rejection of Turkey's application for the EC membership in December 1989 marked the beginning of the detrimental relations of Turkey with the Western Europe. Turkey's exclusion from being a full participant in both the EC and the Western European Union (WEU) was interpreted by Ankara as a sign of Europe's unwillingness to grant Turkey a legitimate security and political role (Jung and Piccoli 2000: 99).

Turkey's exclusion from the list of candidates for membership to the EU in the Luxembourg Summit (1997), led to the great disappointment of both the Turkish political elite and the public. The reason for Turkey's great dissatisfaction emanated basically from the misperception that the basic drives of the integration project with the EU would be 'economic and strategic interests dominating over other possible considerations' (Öniş 2000: 465). Turkey froze its political dialogue with the EU as it considered its candidacy rejection biased and unfair. For Turkey, the EU's priority objective of integration with the Eastern European and the Baltic countries became clearer.

After two years following the Luxembourg Summit, Turkey emerged as a candidate for the full EU membership at the Helsinki Summit of 1998. However, European reluctance to Turkish involvement in the new security architecture of Europe through its full-participation in the framework of European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) and the WEU again led to a sense of isolation and unease on the side of Turkey. Ankara was anxious that if the EU started to make its autonomous decisions about security and defense related issues and acted independent from NATO, Turkey might face with the conduct of military operations around its neighborhood without being able to participate in the decision making process. The Turkish Foreign Minister İsmail Cem's statement in November 1999 which follows as "...our contribution to the ESDI will be proportionate to our authority and position in the decision-making mechanisms' was reflecting the Turkish concerns about the ESDI (Park 2000: 321).

The EU's hesitation to include Turkey to the decision making mechanisms of its newly developing security structure was due to its concerns that Turkey would be more of a 'consumer' of security instead of its 'producer', as in the Cold War years (Eralp 2000: 25). Turkey's increasing security problems both within Turkey and its neighborhood was also another source of worry for the EU as it did not want to be exposed to unnecessary 'security risks'(Eralp 2000: 25).

Another reason which set back the relations between Turkey and Europe was the EU's criticism of Turkey's shortcomings in the field of democracy and human rights, especially associated with the counterinsurgency methods used against the PKK terrorism and the restriction of the rights given to the Kurdish population. The growing Kurdish Diaspora in European states increased the level of attention and involvement of the

European governments in the Kurdish question. The European attempts to get involved in the issue, triggered the so-called Serves Syndrome of losing territorial integrity and sovereignty, among the Turkish elites, especially among the military.

After the customs union agreement was initiated in January 1996, the EU did not activate the financial package which was an integral part of the original customs union agreement again by pointing out Turkey's democratic deficits (Öniş 2000: 469). Furthermore, Germany, Norway, Belgium and other European countries abandoned to sell arms as a reaction to Turkey's intervention into Northern Iraq whose aim was to root out the PKK camps. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe also threatened Turkey with the suspension of its membership application if it could not realize any reforms targeting the 'Kurdish problem'.

In addition to the strain of the membership discussions, the worsening Turkish-Greek relations in the mid-1990s also increased the uneasiness between the EU and Turkey. For Turkey, Greece already had a bad record of being a state still having claims over Turkish territory. When the Greek Parliament ratified the international Law of the Sea Treaty on 1 June 1995, it paved the way for an extension of its territorial waters from 6 to 12 miles that would turn the Aegean Sea into a Greek lake (Mufti 1998: 34). The Greek Parliament's decision led to a great discomfort among the Turkish politicians which started to employ a threatening rhetoric regarding a unilateral Greek decision to issue an act of such. Another crisis between Greece and Turkey was broke in January 1996 with the dispute over the sovereignty of Kardak (Imia) islet in the Aegean. The conflict could be resolved after the US mediation. In late 1996, once again Turkish-Greek relations were deteriorated after the Greek Cypriot government's purchase of S-300 air defense missile systems from Russia (Mufti 1998: 36). The event brought Turkey and Greece at the brink of a war as the Foreign Minister Tansu Çiller was threatening that Turkey would 'do what is necessary, even if that means strikes' to prevent the deployment of the missiles²⁰. Luckily, the Greek Cypriot government did not deploy the missiles in to the island, so, it that a likely hot conflict between Turkey and Greece was avoided.

²⁰ Open Media Research Institute (OMRI) Daily Digest, no. 8, part 1, 13 January 1997 quoted by Malik Mufti (1998: 36).

3.8. Turkey's New Involvement in the Middle East in the Post-Cold War

When the 'Soviet threat', ceased to exist with the end of the Cold War, Turkish governing elites started to point out the security threats emanating from the Middle East. The potential threats were especially emanating from Syria, Iran and Iraq. The issues of conflict were related with the questions of PKK terrorism, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), water and Islamic fundamentalism. First one of these, namely the PKK terrorism and the support provided to that organization by Syria, Iran and Iraq, led to tensions in each state's bilateral relations with Turkey. While the PKK leader Öcalan had taken refuge in Syria in the early 1980s, the organization was initiating attacks against Turkey from Syria. Iraqi leader did not hesitate to support PKK as a belligerence against Turkey's support for the US and the UK to use its territory to bomb Iraq during the Gulf War of 1991. The PKK was also able to open an office in Baghdad. Throughout the 1980s, there was an intensification of Kurdish insurrection against Turkey from Iranian territory. Turkey's military operations conducted near the Iranian border in the pursuit of PKK brought two countries at the edge of crisis many times.

WMD and the ballistic missiles that Iran, Iraq and Syria were holding were and still are another source of insecurity for Turkey. Apart from the neighboring states, the greater risk is posed by the possibility of the terrorist groups based in the region having those chemical and biological agents at their disposal (Kibaroglu 2002: 63). As Iran and Iraq hit each other with Scud missiles during the course of the eight-year war, Turkey cannot take a relief by thinking that those countries develop their WMD capabilities just to deter Israel. The presence of WMD's and ballistic missiles was among the factors which brought Turkey and Israel together for a strategic alliance.

Thirdly, the use of Euphrates-Tigris water basin was also a source of confrontation between Turkey and Syria and Iraq. Both rivers rise from Turkish territory and flow through or along Syrian territory before entering Iraq. Although the amount of water carried by the river system is sufficient enough for the riparian states, physical characteristics²¹ of the rivers coupled with the initiation of major development projects by

²¹ The flow of Euphrates and Tigris rivers varies at extreme rates due to seasonal and annual variations in precipitation levels.

the riparians (Turkey had Anatolia Project; Syria developed the Euphrates Valley Project) put pressure on the supply of the river system (Kibaroglu 2000: 312). The Arab states started to claim that Turkey was using water as a political weapon against them which exacerbated the tension in riparians relations with one another.

Finally, but not least importantly, the question of fundamental Islamic groups supported and financed mainly by Iran appeared to be another area of complication for Turkey. Turkey was suspicious of Iran's designs about Turkey's regime and its desire for the formation of an Islamic government (Müftüler-Baç 1998: 122). Although, the regime difference between Turkey and Iran used to be a source of tension also during the Cold War period, when Iran started to increase its support for the 'radical' Islamic groups/movements within Turkey, the bilateral relations were strained further.

Therefore, in addition to the frustration stemming from the European and American reluctance to Turkish involvement in the newly emerging Western security and defense structure, the above mentioned complications in relations with Middle Eastern neighbors increased Turkey's security concerns. In the face of immense threat constructions in the Middle East, Turkey realized the danger of isolating itself in the region. Israel appeared to the Turkish policy-making elite as a state which shares Turkey's security concerns and with a potential to become an appropriate strategic partner that would offset Turkey's precarious security environment.

3.9. Turkish-Israeli Relations during the 1990s: The Strategic Partnership

Turkey's troublesome relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors and the difficulties it started to face with its Western allies acted as the external catalysts for Turkey's new approach towards Israel during the 1990s.

Besides the external factors, there were also certain domestic motivations which brought Turkey closer to Israel. Those were related with the new "national military strategic concept" which was identifying political Islam and separatism (especially Kurdish separatism) as the internal security threats, a desire to improve economy and secure arms sales without facing with any sort of conditionality.

Following the end of the Gulf War, the developments in Iraq led to the ‘internalization of the Kurdish issue’ for Ankara. According to the Turkish officials, it was the power vacuum which was created in the Northern Iraq that was enabling PKK to launch cross border attacks against Turkey, thus, the territorial integrity must be reestablished in Iraq as soon as possible. On the other hand, with respect to the Kurdish issue, Turkey was well aware of the fact that Israel was favoring the Kurdish nationalism in Iraq for the purpose of weakening it. However, this factor did not act as an impediment for Turkey to pursue closer ties with Israel. Likewise, Syria was another neighboring country providing both open and clandestine support to the PKK. While Syria and Israel started to negotiate, Turkey hastened in its efforts to realize closer strategic and political ties with Israel.

Moreover, due to the Western allies’ concerns about Turkey’s human-rights records, Turkish military failed to update the quality and technology of the military ware. However, Israel was not pointing out certain political and human-rights issues for the availability of arms and technology.

As an additional factor, the positive perceptions of both Turkish and Israeli elites also facilitated the closer relations between the parties. According to the elites, Turkey and Israel were sharing similar state identities and facing with same kind of difficulties in a ‘hostile’ region. While the anti-secular and anti-Western Arab regimes were triggering the sense of otherness, the intensified European integration and criticism of both countries’ human rights records strengthened their feeling of being marginalized.

Beginning from 1991, there was an increase in high level inter-state visits and issuing of the cooperative schemes which were particularly focusing on military and economic fields. Following the upgrading of the diplomatic relations with Israel to the level of full ambassadorial level in January 1992, Turkish foreign minister Hikmet Çetin conducted a visit to Israel in 1993 where a 12-article memorandum was signed. The memorandum foresaw cooperation between the intelligence services of the two. In 1994, the Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller visited Israel which was the first visit ever conducted by a Turkish Prime Minister to Israel. During Çiller’s visits several agreements were signed where the most remarkable one was allowing ‘Israeli Aviation Industries to modernize Turkey’s F-4 Phantom aircraft’ (Altunışık 2000: 63).

Turkey affirmed its ‘right to have close ties with Israel’ without getting much concerned about the Arab and Muslim protests (Liel 2001: 212). In March 1996, both a Free Trade Agreement and an agreement on mutual investments and the prevention of double taxation were signed (Müftüler-Baç 1998: 122); the negotiations on the sale of surplus water from the Manavgat River to the Israeli coast took a start. Those agreements were followed by the signing of a trade agreement on industrial and agricultural technology in June 1996. Later in December 1996, another economic cooperation agreement was issued which lowered down the existing customs and tariffs. It can be argued that the election of Benjamin Netanyahu in May 1996 as the Israeli Prime Minister contributed to the Turkish-Israeli relations. Unlike Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, Netanyahu overtly declared PKK as a ‘terrorist organization and said Israel did not support the establishment of an independent Kurdish state’ (Altunışık 2000: 66).

The reflection of the positive tide on bilateral relations was also seen in the strategic field. In February 1996, Turkey and Israel signed a Military Education and Cooperation Agreement where parties agreed to exchange personnel and open their ports and air bases for the mutual use. In August 1996, this agreement was expanded to involve the provision of technology transfer; training of technicians and researchers (Altunışık 2000: 66); intelligence sharing; regular biannual “strategic dialogue” meetings of the two countries’ security and foreign policy officials (Altunışık 2000: 67) and joint military exercises. Therefore, ‘Turkey would benefit from Israeli expertise and experience’ while ‘Israel would have an opportunity to train in a large air space over land’ (Robins 2003: 259).

The Turkish-Israeli strategic partnership was realized as a result of the initiatives mainly taken by the Turkish military elite and it enhanced both countries’ defensive capabilities as well as offensive potentials. The prominent role played by the Turkish military led even the Islamist and pro-Arab Welfare Party to end up in supporting the newly emerging alliance with Israel. Thus, the alliance also acted as a case downgrading Erbakan’s decision-making prerogatives on the Middle East, and demonstrating that he did not have the real power (Bölükbaşı 1999: 33). As expected, the neighboring countries were not pleased with the new rapprochement taking place, although Turkey and Israel issued statements that the agreements they have signed were not against any third party.

While Syrian vice president declared that the partnership was “the most dangerous alliance we [have] witnessed since the Second World War” (Inbar 2001: 6), Egypt claimed that the military cooperation “would lead to instability and possibly war in the Middle East”. Likewise, Iran also underlined that the joint military exercise of Turkey and Israel ‘will increase the chances of a crisis in the region’ (Inbar 2001: 7).

The positive implications of the strategic partnership for Turkey in the short term became visible with Turkey’s use of its ties with Israel as an additional leverage against Greece and Syria. For Turkey, while Israeli leverage was an overt benefit for its strategic interests, Israel got a bit anxious about the risk of being pulled into the conflict which it does not consider as related enough with the protection of its own interests. This was the initial breeze over the Turkish-Israeli relations. Following the Justice and Development Party’s (AKP) coming to power in Turkey after the November 2002 elections, the Islamist sympathies of the AKP added to the cooling down of the relations. However, Ankara tried to pursue an active role in the resolution of the Palestinian problem, after the al-Aqsa intifada (Altunışık and Tür 2005: 127) of 2000. As a result of the Turkish governments efforts Yasser Arafat ‘welcomed the efforts of the Turkish government and the Turkish Foreign Minister (İsmail Cem) to revive the peace process and to support the Palestinian people in all levels by all means’²².

After the passing away of Arafat the Turkish government officials’ condolences revealed the sympathy over Arafat’s role for the Palestinians and the Palestinians cause once again. Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan stated that Arafat was a man who “determinedly defended the just cause of his people and who refrained from no sacrifice for that cause” while the Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullah Gül, reflected that Palestinian leaders and the Palestinian people will continue their struggle until two states live side by side in peace’²³. Although, the dynamism 1990s does not exist in the Turkish-Israeli relations in the current stage, Turkey still puts itself forwards as a party who is in favor of a balanced approached in the conflict and taking Israel’s support at its back with respect to certain policy goals such as its EU membership, increased influence

²² Information sourced from the website of the Palestinian National Information Service which is available at http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/quds/eng/reactions/2001/2001_9/e_reaction_21.html accessed 28 July 2005.

²³ Quotes are taken from Palestinian Media Center’s web site which is available at <http://www.palestine-pmc.com/details.asp?cat=1&id=730>. Accessed 27 July 2005.

in the US Congress through lobbying activities and having military equipment with high military technology.



4 A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EU AND TURKISH POLICIES TOWARDS ISRAEL

4.1. Oil Politics in the Cold War Era

During the Cold War years, a common element which shaped the EC and Turkish policies toward Middle East in general and toward Israel in particular was their concerns about oil. Once oil appeared as the political weapon of the Arab states, both the EC and Turkey realized how vulnerable they could be when swift changes occur in the structure of the international system. They became more inclined to support the Palestinian cause.

For the European Community members, the 1973 War and fluctuations in oil prices enforced them ‘for the first time, to reach a consensus and to produce joint policy statements under the pressure of a major international crisis, and the most serious threat to their economic prosperity since the Second World War’ (Soetendorp 1994: 113). In addition to the more unified foreign policy positions of the member states with respect to the Middle East conflict, the tone of their common declarations also became quite critical of Israel. Some scholars underline that after the oil price hikes, the EC members’ positions came closer to the French position on the issue of Arab-Israeli conflict which was always challenging the US policies²⁴. When it was 1974, the EC was making proposals for the establishment of a special relationship with the Arab countries in its Copenhagen Summit. The EC attempts to establish closer links with the Arab states strengthened the Israeli perceptions of the EC as ‘biased’ and ‘dishonest’.

On Turkey’s side, before the OPEC oil embargo, the distanced foreign policy approach towards Arab countries and Iran was followed. In addition to the reflections of Kemalist legacy, another reason which led Turkey to build an invisible wall in its relations with those countries was their close ties with the Soviet Union. Deterrence of

²⁴ Nuttall states that within the European Political Cooperation (EPC) frame, the Middle east was discussed because of the French desires as France was determined to bring its partners closer to the French position and thus strengthen European support for the Arab cause (1992:56). Soetendorp also notes that the French were not only the initiators of the EPC, they were also resolved to use the EPC framework to promote their own policy goals (1999: 99).

Soviet expansionism was one of the basic concerns of Turkey during the Cold War. While Turkey allied itself with the Western block for protection against the Soviet threat²⁵, contrarily, the Arab states 'showed a strong inclination to establish close relations with the Soviet Union, in order to balance American influence and to gain support against Israel' (Karaosmanoğlu 1996:12). Arab states alliance with what Turkey perceived as a vital security threat also avoided a closer approach of Turkey towards the states of the region.

However, when it came to 1970s, Turkey also felt the need to modify its foreign policy, like the European Community members did. Similar to the way that the EC got influenced, Turkey felt the detrimental effects of the oil crisis as well. Although Turkey did not face with an oil embargo, it was still purchasing oil with quite high prices. At the end, economic relations with the oil producing countries became the core element defining Turkey's attitudes towards the Middle East region. Turkey's seeking of good relations with the oil producing Arab states had important political and military implications for Turkey and its 'Western' allies such as the US and Israel. For instance, during the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, Moscow's overflights of Turkey were tolerated while on the other hand Ankara refused to allow the US to use the refueling and reconnaissance facilities during its airlifting of supplies to Israel (Karaosmanoğlu 1996:12).

Furthermore, certain Israeli actions caused Turkish-Israeli relations to get rough. The Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank in 1967, the unilateral change in the status of Jerusalem through its incorporation into Israel, and the harsh treatment of Palestinians in the occupied areas by the Israelis were among those Israeli actions which acted as a reason for Ankara to distance itself from Israel.

One remarkable difference between Turkey and the EC in terms of their relations with Israel during the Cold War years were that, Turkish-Israeli relations during the

²⁵ For that purpose Turkey sought to be included into a variety of Western institutions and to be integrated into the Western alliance. Although Turkey had already been receiving financial and military aid from the United States as part of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, becoming a part of the Western block appeared as a more sufficient way of assuring its security. As an extension of this policy objective, Turkey became a member of the Council of Europe in 1949 and a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952.

1950s were smooth with the exception of the 1956 Suez invasion. Turkey's recognition of the Israeli state as the first Muslim country in 1952 and the establishment of full diplomatic relations at the legation level without being much concerned about the Arab reactions were the cases revealing the friendly attitude that Turkey held for Israel. Moreover, in 1958, the relations between Turkey and Israel got close enough to issue a secret alliance. The alliance was realized due to initiatives taken by Israel and was rooted in the 'Periphery doctrine' of the Israeli policy elites. The doctrine was 'designed to create the image, in the region and in the world at large, that "the Middle East" is not exclusively Arab or even Islamic but rather a multi-religious, ethnic, cultural, and national area' (Brecher 1972: 278). It is also possible to state that the 1958 alliance based on such a doctrine was pointing out the shared sense of otherness by Turkey and Israel in the Middle East whose impacts were later observed in the 1990s rapprochement.

One other important difference between Turkey and the EC with respect to their relations with Israel surfaces with the logic behind issuing the Peripheral Alliance which was their differently perceived identities by Israel. The way parties interpreted each other's policy moves and decisions was influenced by the non-material factor of mutual perceptions of identities. For Turkey and Israel, it was the sense of otherness as both of them were the only democracies with Western orientations and secular regimes favoring the continuation of status quo in the Middle East region. This perception continued to exist on the minds of the Turkish and Israeli policy elites even after the Cold War and it led them to always pay attention to preserve their diplomatic relations. The diplomatic relations sometimes hit to the lowest point but there was never a total cut off. The shared identities between Turkey and Israel led Turkey to be perceived differently and perhaps more positively by Israel. Unlike in the EC, whose policy suggestions were immediately denied, Turkey was seen as a potential partner who could be allied against the 'hostile' Arab states and Iran through the Israeli lenses.

From the Israeli perspective, Europe presented 'low materialism' by being excessively concerned about the oil issue which was perhaps tinged with anti-Semitism (Greilsammer, and Weiler 1988: 30). The European attitudes before and after Suez crisis strengthened the Israeli perceptions. While Israel was not able to get much support from any of the European countries in 1948, it was able to enjoy the French and British support

in its war against Egypt in 1956. From the Israeli perspective, not much had changed in Israel and in its policies in between but it was the anger of both Britain and France against Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal (Greilsammer, and Weiler 1988: 36). Therefore, European countries' idealist rhetoric which put emphasis on Israel's violations of human rights, international law or democratic rules just reinforced the Israeli suspicions about Europe's honesty. Those suspicions have acted as the mindsets in bilateral relations of the EC and Israel.

Perceptions also played a role on the Community side while it was defining its Israeli policies. Until the 1967 war, the image of Israel on the European countries was 'an underdog fighting for life against Arabs who refused her the elementary right to exist' (Greilsammer, and Weiler 1988: 20). Due to such a perception, the EC had a positive approach for Israel's struggle. The rise of Arab radicalism during the Nasser era also contributed to the heightened sympathy of the Europeans. After the 1967, Israel appeared as an actor whose military superiority over the other countries of the region did not need to be questioned. While Israel gained the upper hand, from the European point of view, it did not use this superior position to make Arab states move towards a negotiation frame for a compromised peace where the Palestinians would also be included. From that point on, Israel started to appear with the negative image of an occupying power.

There have been moments of cooperation between the EC and Israel. For instance, the EC and Israel signed a free trade agreement in 1975 within the frame of EC's Global Mediterranean Policy. However the psychological barriers in addition to the concerns attached to material oil factor avoided parties to deepen the nature of their cooperative relations. Therefore, they could not to make use of the trade agreement as a launching pad to broaden the extent of their commitments in other fields (i.e. military-strategic, cultural, educational).

The 1980s signaled the beginning of different eras both for the EC and Turkey. On the EC side, the members achieved to reach a common position regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict and reflected this common position in its clearest form with the 1980 Venice Declaration. Although it was an important step for the EC which showed that the members could accommodate their different views after certain concessions from each

state, the Declaration nevertheless led to uneasiness and disappointment on the Israeli, American and the Arab sides. When the EC allied itself with the US in the Gulf war in 1991, it was also hoping to have a more distinguished role in the Middle East in the aftermath of the War. However, the internal divisions of the EC together with the emergence of the US in the post-Cold War era as an actor dedicated to play the major role in the Middle East, trivialized the EC's support during the Gulf War. The Madrid Conference reflected this fact as the EU could not literally go beyond assuming the role of the accountant of the peace process. Therefore, although the Venice Declaration reflected European Community's enthusiasm to follow an autonomous policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict, during the early 1990s it showed a tacit approval of deferring to the US initiative in the Middle East.

The change in Turkish foreign policy came when the world oil prices started to drop during the 1980s and the Arab countries' oil weapon declined in its significance. The 1980s brought both economic stability and growth to Turkey which took away the constraints of oil import. The oil revenues of countries such as Iraq, Iran and Libya started to shrink which also hit their ability to pay for Turkish exports and the work done or intended to be done by Turkish firms in their territories. Although the Iran-Iraq War which continued between 1981 and 1988 introduced new commercial opportunities for Turkey towards the end of the decade and created a sudden increase in the level Turkey's exports, the volume of trade between Turkey and the Muslim oil producing states gradually diminished. As the economic rationale of the relations between Turkey and its Arab neighbors weakened, Turkey gained some extra political space for a closer approach toward Israel.

4.2. The US as an Actor Defining European Union's and Turkey's Relations with Israel

4.2.1. Transatlantic Allies and Divergences in Their Attitudes towards Israel

The views of the held by the US and the EC were different regarding Israel's security needs, the Soviet role in the Middle East and relations with oil-producing Muslim states (Gordon 1998: 8). At certain moments such as the Suez crisis of 1956, the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the US bombing of Libya in April 1986 those differences in views led to certain disagreements. Nevertheless, the common enemy of Soviet threat was outweighing any concern over the differences of views and the Allies were able to come over those disagreements without further dispute that might weaken their Alliance.

Beginning from the 1960s, the US started to play a prominent diplomatic role in the Arab-Israeli conflict due to its superpower status, military strength, close ties with Israel and its ability to provide substantial amounts of economic and military aid (Gordon 1998: 15). After Israel won the 1967 War against its numerically advantageous opponents, the roots of its close alliance with the US began to flourish. From the US perspective, Israel appeared as a state with a potential to be a useful asset against the Soviet penetration into the Middle East.

The US alliance with Israel marked the difference of track through which the EU and the US got involved into the Arab-Israeli conflict. Europe, due to its higher dependence on oil and the increasing threat of Palestinian terrorism on European territories, opted to stand closer to the Palestinian cause and the Arab states. The EC position however created a gap between itself and the US position and worsened its already suspicious image on the Israeli eyes. Ironically, for the US and Israel, Europe turned into another actor after the Soviet Union whose influence had to be kept out of the region.

The Venice Declaration heightened the US and the Israeli dissatisfaction. The EC was pointing out the necessity to include the PLO into the negotiation process and it was

also voicing out its support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Israel found the Declaration as a sign that the EC could adopt overly pro-Arab policies at the expense of Israel's security. Thus, during the 1980s, EC was not able to show much significance due to the American and Israeli opposition against its involvement into the peace process.

In 1991, during the US designed and co-sponsored Madrid peace talks, certain difficulties that were related with the common decision making process prevailed once again. The European Commission and the Council disputed over whom should represent the Community at the talks, and France refused to be represented by the EC presidency (Gordon 1998: 18). However, when the secretly convened Oslo talks between Israelis and Palestinians became public with the announcement of the 'Declaration of Principles on Palestinian-self rule', European diplomacy showed itself back on the stage. Israel did not problematize the diplomacy conducted by Norway as it was not an EU member. Nevertheless, it was striking that both the PLO and Israel asserted to sign the document in Washington, although Norway offered its good offices and played the important role of honest-broker during the negotiations.

Following the Oslo process, the EU and the US positions on the Israeli-Palestinian issue entered into a more harmonious stage. Although, the EU was still in a secondary role, the process was continuing in the way that the EU had foreseen as the strategy for achieving peace. Israel took the positive steps of concluding the Cairo Agreements²⁶ and the Peace treaty with Jordan (1994) under the facilitator role of the US. Therefore, the EU continued with its clandestine approval of the US lead.

Unfortunately the Oslo peace process came to a halt in 1995, after the assassination of Yitzak Rabin in November 1995 and the suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Ashkelon in February and March 1996 (De la Gorce 1997: 14). Following these negative developments, the EU felt the need to intervene with a renewed activism. After Israel's 'Grapes of Wrath' operation in Lebanon in 1996, the EU issued its Luxembourg

²⁶ The first one of the Cairo Agreements was signed on 9 February 1994 between Israel and the Palestinian authority. It was agreed that the international borders between Gaza and Egypt, on the one hand, and Jericho and Jordan, on the other, would remain under Israel's exclusive control and that Israel would be able to bar the entry into the Palestinian enclaves. The second one which is known as 'Gaza and Jericho, First' was signed on 4 May 1994 and it marked the beginning of the self-government interim period (Information sourced from the European Parliament Directorate General for Research 1999: 33).

declaration which was highly critical of Israel. In October 1996, the newly elected French President Jacques Chirac visited the region. French diplomacy found support in some of the other EU members such as Greece, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Ireland, Britain and Germany. Following this diplomatic activism, Spain's ambassador to Israel, Miguel Angel Moratinos, was appointed as the EU Special Envoy to the Middle East. The appointment of a Spanish diplomat was remarkable as Spain has been a country which has enjoyed balanced relations with both Israel and Palestine. It is also possible to interpret the EU decision as its willingness to appear with an image of an honest broker in the eyes of the conflicting parties.

In March 1999, the EU issued Berlin Declaration and voiced out its long favored formula of two state solution by stating that 'the creation of a democratic, viable and peaceful sovereign Palestinian State on the basis of existing agreements and through negotiations would be the best guarantee of Israel's security and Israel's acceptance as an equal partner in the region'²⁷.

The new EU activism to play a remarkable role in the Middle East was partly triggered by dissatisfaction with the Netanyahu government's policies and Chirac's election to the French presidency that was in favor of autonomous French and the EU role in the region²⁸. The EU interference with such motivating factors made the differences between the EU and the US views and approaches more visible again. From the EU perspective, it was Israel and its policies which were blocking the way going to peace. On the other hand, from the US perspective, it was the Palestinian violence and the weakness of the Palestinian leadership to control and avoid this violence against Israel, which were standing on the way to a negotiated peace.

In the 2000s, the EU involvement in the Middle East peace process increased further. While the EU Special Envoy Javier Solana took part in drafting of the Mitchell Report in 2001, the EU also contributed to the definition of the contours of the road map which was a plan aimed to achieve compromise and a permanent peace between Israel and Palestine by 2005. Again, the EU is one of the four members of the International

²⁷ See http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/mepp/. Accessed 4 July 2005.

²⁸ While the Netanyahu government's decisions were interpreted as provocative by the EU, the difficulties that Chirac faced in domestic politics led him to underline France's role in the Middle East which also stimulated the Union's involvement in the peace process.

Quartet (together with the US, the United Nations and Russia) which is supposed to assist and facilitate the implementation of the road map. However, the election of Ariel Sharon as the Israeli Prime Minister in 2001 reduced the prospects for the success of realizing the road map. Sharon government started to carry out policies which value the security of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. The construction of a security fence took a start which would 'separate Palestinian population centers in the West Bank from Israeli-held territory and Jewish settlements' (Hollis 2004:193). The steps taken by Sharon government were obstructing the prospects for a 'viable' Palestinian state which, according to the European thinking was an indispensable factor for achieving a long-term peace²⁹.

Although the transatlantic allies have the basic similar interests in the Middle East region³⁰ and they both agree on a two state formula for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they still hold different views on how to achieve this goal. While the EU accuses Israel for its aggressive policies and the US for its passivity to hold Israel back, the US expects Palestinians to move towards the Israeli demands and continues to provide substantial amounts of economic and military aid to Israel annually³¹.

4.2.2. The US Factor in Turkish-Israeli Relations

²⁹ For Ariel Sharon's views on how to achieve peace and security in the region and how to solve the Palestinian 'problem' refer to the article 'Six Red Lines for Peace' written by Sharon himself for Jerusalem Post News, 21 July 2001, which is available at http://www.freeman.org/m_online/aug00/ariel.htm. Accessed 22 July 2005.

³⁰ Those similar interests of the US and the EU over the Middle East could be summarized as 'peace; regime stability; the free flow of oil, security for an independent Israeli state; a secure homeland for the Palestinians; as much political freedom as possible; and limitations on the spread of WMD' (Gordon 1998: 22).

³¹ Since 1985, the United States has provided \$3 billion dollars annually to Israel in the form of economic and military assistance. While providing aid, the US also offers certain special benefits to Israel such as 'loans with repayment waived', or 'a pledge to provide Israel with economic assistance equal to the amount Israel owes the United States for previous loans'. Israel also enjoys certain unique benefits provided by the US that no other country can have, such as 'the use of U.S. military assistance for research and development in the United States, the use of U.S. military assistance for military purchases in Israel, or receiving all its assistance in the first 30 days of the fiscal year rather than in 3 or 4 installments as other countries do. (Information sourced from the issue briefing of the Congressional Research Service available at <http://www.fas.org/man/crs/IB85066.pdf#search='us%20military%20and%20economic%20aid%20to%20israel%20in%202004'>. Accessed 20 July 2005)

During the Cold War period, the US was Turkey's main ally and the core of bilateral relations was based on cooperation over the containment of the Soviet danger. Starting from the early 1960s, certain moments (e.g. 1962 Cuban missile crisis, 1964 Cyprus case, and 1974 US oil embargo) led Turkey to look for ways to reduce its extensive dependence on the US. The desire to have a multi-dimensional foreign policy resulted in Turkey's warmer approach of Arab states. Turkey became less willing to support the US policies in the Middle East when compared with its eagerness to become an integral part of the US policy in the region during the 1950s.

Turkey's foreign policy, therefore, followed the similar path with that of the European Community which was critical of Israel and inclined towards the Arab countries. Another similarity was that, although both the EC and Turkey were loyal to their alliance with the US within the NATO framework against Soviet expansionism, there was no unity in the way they approach Middle East and Israel. For instance, throughout the Cold War years Turkish officials continuously declared that 'the US and NATO facilities in Turkey not available for non-NATO military actions in the Gulf or elsewhere in the Middle East without prior Turkish approval' (Altunışık, and Tür 2005: 108) with a desire not to lose the pace of normalization in its relations with the Arab World.

While Turkey issued statements critical of Israel from time to time or acted with the Arab states in the voting of certain UN resolutions which were disadvantageous for Israel, as Süleyman Demirel, the former Turkish president, pointed out Turkey on the whole 'has been careful not to hurt Israel' (Liel 2001: 212). Demirel's statement about Turkey's Israeli policy can also be extended as Turkey was careful not to twist the relations with the US by worsening its relations with Israel up to an incurable point. Therefore, when compared with the EC, it can be stated that Turkey followed a less autonomous policy towards Israel with a concern to keep the delicate balance in its relations with the US which had a vital importance for Turkey. Nevertheless, the way Turkey kept Israel away with an arms-length was not desirable for the US. Turkey's approach of Israel was hindering the US to strengthen its position in the Middle East by relying on the combined power of its two close allies in the region. However, there was

no clear reflection a US pressure over Turkey to make it seek to for an alliance or cooperation with Israel.

The 1980s witnessed closer ties between Turkey and the US. It was largely due to the developments in the Middle East. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979) and Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979) created a fear of instability in the region and led the US to develop strategies to increase its capabilities in the Middle East. Turkey's strategic importance for the US roused again. In addition, when Turkey's application for full membership to the EC was rejected in December 1989, Turkey had a great disappointment. For the first time, it started to make a difference between its Western allies instead of seeing them as a unified block. The rejection of Turkey's membership by the EC caused Turkey to strengthen its cooperative ties with the US and to become once again a pillar of the US to protect American interests in the Middle East.

The developments in Turkish-US relations during the 1980s also had positive repercussions on Turkish-Israeli relations. While Turkey was still keeping its diplomatic representation in Israel at low-levels, in 1986, it sent a senior diplomat to Tel-Aviv and then stated that its move was related with the 'new developments in the search for peace in the Middle East' (Liel 2001: 211). Trade relations with Israel also gradually improved, although Turkey did not hesitate to denounce Israel's policies towards Palestinians after the break up of the Intifada in 1987. Likewise, Turkey's immediate recognition of a Palestinian state in 1988 resulted in Israel's protests against Turkey. However, at the same time tourism and academic contacts were flourishing between the two.

In the second half of the 1980s, Turkish policy makers also started to realize the power of the Israeli lobby in Washington. During the years between 1987 and 1989, Israeli lobby came to support Turkey indirectly in terms of giving advices to Turkey on how to establish its own lobby activity. Moreover, the Jewish groups in the US assisted Turkey by not giving support to the Armenian lobby's draft resolution which was in pursuit of Turkey for the mass deaths of Armenians in Anatolia during the First World War (Robins 2003: 247).

After the demise of the Soviet Union, close relations between Turkey and the US continued within a modified context. In addition to the instability in its northern flank due to the dissolution of the former Soviet Republic, Turkey also 'became more exposed to

the internal factors of instability' (Aykan 1996: 346) in the Middle East, caused by the Arab-Israeli conflict, ethnic conflicts and terrorism which were already present also during the Cold War era. The US alliance was still quite important for Turkey within such a context. Turkey, in order to show to the US that even after the end of the Soviet threat, the US could benefit from its strategic position, allied with the US in the first Gulf War. The War paved the way for a new phase in Turkish-American relations. Turkey sent its troops to Iraq and allowed the US to use its soil. In return, the US acknowledged the important role played by Turkey by increasing the security assistance to Turkey and providing additional trade benefits³².

The end of the Gulf War remarked a new phase in Turkish-American relations. During the Cold War era, Turkey was quite in favor of an extensive role for the West in the Middle East. However, following the end of the Gulf War, Turkey underlined that 'the Western presence was not to be in the forefront of the regional security system; Western arms sales to the region were to be limited and carefully observed, and Western states were to establish egalitarian relations with the regional states based on cooperation' (Aykan 1996: 349). As an extension of the modified Turkish foreign policy perspective, Turkish political elites did not want to act in complete unison with the US but they rather sought to cooperate on case by case basis when Turkey's interests overlap with those of the United States.

While interpreting the motives of Turkey to seek for a rapprochement with Israel during the 1990s, its relations with the US should be taken into account as a factor which contributed to the embodiment of a strategic partnership between Turkey and Israel. Turkey wanted to be in good relations with the US and Israel appeared as an appropriate partner that would help Turkey to boost its value in the eyes of the US. In addition, while the US Congress gained additional weight in the US decision making process, the significance of getting the support of the Jewish lobbies in the Congress became more evident for Turkey. Furthermore, the US criticism of Turkey's human rights violations

³² The US doubled the value of Turkey's existing textile quota and granted 282 million dollar extra military and economic assistance for 1991. Besides, its direct contribution, with its support, the US enabled Turkey to receive aid both from the Gulf and the OECD countries to compensate for its losses during the Gulf War. The United States also encouraged the European Community to expand the value of the Turkish textile quota (Celik 1999: 78).

within the context of its fight against PKK moved Turkey closer to Israel which was not making any critical evaluations of Turkey on the issue.

However, it would be quite misleading to explain the formation of Turkish-Israeli partnership just as a reflection of the changing dynamics of the US-Turkish relations. The partnership was still an independent foreign policy decision, not imposed by any third party. Turkey's forging of closer ties with Israel was a sign of Turkey's willingness to enhance its role in the Middle East instead of sitting on the sidelines of such an important region in the changing international and regional context.

With the election of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002, Ankara started to slide away itself from Washington. When the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA), did not pass the motion that would allow the stationing of the US troops in Turkish territory and also would allow the sending of the Turkish troops at abroad, the distancing in relations became amply visible. Although the US officials made statements after the result of the voting that Turkish-American relations would remain resilient, certain undesirable moments occurred in the bilateral relations. The US forces detainment of 11 Turkish soldiers in Northern Iraq in July 2003 was example of such moments. Turkish officials started to make statements about the necessity of punishing those who 'who poison Turkish-US' relations³³. Likewise, Turkish-Israeli relations were cooled down under the impact of the domestic politics. While AKP tries to appear with strong commitments for making Turkey to meet with the EU membership criteria, on the other hand, it tries to satisfy its voters by seeking to stimulate relations with those states which have been traditionally perceived as the historical foes of Turkey such as Syria and Iran. Although, there was no sudden rupture of the Turkish-Israeli partnership, Ankara's slide away from Israel and the US eventually led to the fraying of the Turkish-Israeli relations with the AKP government's coming to power.

³³ The quote is taken from Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül's speech in the Turkish parliament which was issued after the outbreak of the news of US detention. In the same speech Gül stated that it 'it was the United States that lost, not Turkey, due to the detention of 11 Turkish soldiers by US forces' where he demanded that the matter must be explained. (Information sourced from the official webpage of the Office of the Prime Minister, Directorate General of Press and Information available at <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/YAYINLARIMIZ/CHR/ING2003/07/03x07x09.HTM#%201> accessed 26 July 2005.)

4.3. The Arab Dimension Influencing European Union's and Turkey's Israeli Policies

4.3.1. Euro-Arab Relations and Their Implications on Euro-Israeli Relations

For Europe, actively taking part in finding a solution to the Palestinian question has had significance due to the geopolitical importance of the Middle East region as a whole; the strategic importance of the Arab oil resources and their significance for the European economies; the relatively high public opinion and media sensitivity to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the historical and moral ties of the European countries with both Arabs and Israelis (Allen, and Pijpers 1984: 121).

While considering European interests in the Middle East and Europe's relations with the parties of the conflict, it is worth underlining that there existed divisions and differences among the Community members. The way a European state approached the Arab-Israeli conflict was defined by its geographical location, cultural, political and historical links with the disputing states. For instance some countries have had closer economic, cultural and historical relations with the Arab Middle East such as Britain, France, Spain and Italy. Therefore, those countries assumed more delicate relations with the Arab states. On the other hand Germany and the Netherlands usually pursued policies which were more in line with the US position and more pro-Israeli. Another group is composed of those smaller members, who lacked the influential power on their own, thus, preferred to see the EU as the institution leading the members' Middle East policy.

In addition, it is also possible to identify different phases in the approach of the same EU member state towards Israel depending on the time frame. An example of such can be the attitudes of Britain and France during decolonization which made them to treat Israel as an ally against Nasser who was dumping Arab nationalism into the region. When oil appeared as a strategically important asset of the oil producing Arab states, Europe realized the risks for itself if Israel emerged in an assertive way. Unlike the US did, the Community did not perceive Israel as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism, and it did not show the same supportive attitude towards Israel in its territorial expansion process. Contrary to the US view, for the EC, the clashes between Israel and its Arab

neighbors could provide the Soviet Union the pretext to increase its already existing influence in the region³⁴. Therefore, for the Community members, a negotiated peace would be the only solution to ensure Israel's survival and to avoid tension in the region.

It was during the 1970s that the Palestinian issue eventually became a part of the European Community's agenda. France and Britain, the former colonial powers in the region, acted as the two main pillars during this period which stimulated the Community's involvement into the matters of Middle East. The two were sharing the same policy visions with respect to the Palestinian issue. According to them, the Palestinian question had a political character and it was related with realizing the national identity through the establishment of a state as a means of self expression. Although there were remarkable differences between the views of the 'Channel' axis and the rest, the oil price explosion after the 1973 War led the Community members to redefine their national foreign policies more in line with the French and British views.

When the Community issued Venice Declaration in 1980, the shift in the formerly pro-Israeli members' (e.g. Benelux countries, Denmark, Germany) views towards French and British positions, became clearer where the member states were arguing that 'the Palestinian issue is the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and therefore should also be at the heart of the peace process' (Soetendorp 2002: 285).

The European efforts to have a common foreign policy position with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict and towards Israel in particular, gained an accelerated pace after the Maastricht Treaty (1991). In addition to the vital role played by oil during the process until 1990s, the EU felt the need to integrate the Arab political variable into its structure as the rise of Palestinian nationalism, the issue of occupied territories and the tough measures taken by Israel were not negligible. However, those steps taken by EU widened the gap between Israel and itself.

The EU issued declarations that it believed to have neutral tones emphasizing both Israel's right to exist in the region and Palestinian people's right to realize their desire to achieve statehood. Therefore, from the EU perspective, believing in Palestinian

³⁴ Beginning from the mid-1950s, throughout the Cold War, the Soviet Union played a key role in helping Arab States to improve their military capabilities by supplying advanced military equipment, training officers in its military schools and providing in-country military advisors to its regional allies such as Egypt (before 1972), Syria, Libya, Yemen, Algeria and Iraq (Antonenko 2001).

people's rights was not a denial of the rights and concerns of Israel but instead a 'mirror image' which finds its reflection in Europe's favoritism of Israel's survival in security in the region. Before the 1990s, the Community had a position which could be summarized as 'between Israel and the US on the one hand and the Arab rejectionists on the other, and ...closer to the pro-Western Arabs' (Greilsammer, and Weiler 1988: 28). The 1990s marked the emergence of the US with a prominent role in the Middle East. Within this context, the EU adopted a secondary role by giving up its former competition with the US on having bigger influence on the Middle Eastern issues, and on Arab-Israeli conflict in particular. As a reflection of this self-adjustment, when the EU nominated a special envoy to the Middle East in 1996 to reinforce its role, it was immediately clarified that the envoy would not compete with the US policies in the region.

In the current situation, despite of the fact that, the EU is the biggest financial contributor to the peace process, the US still enjoys the leading role in managing the Israeli-Palestinian relations and Israel still refuses to see the EU in the role of a mediator. Nevertheless, the EU has managed to 'made itself clearly visible on the Middle East stage, presenting a distinguished international identity' (Soetendorp 1999: 113).

4.3.2. Turkey: in Search for a Balance

Similar to the case of European Community, Turkey also shares a historical and cultural background together with political and economic relations with the Middle East. However, unlike the European Community who deliberately spent effort to get involved into the matters of the region and to have an influence over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular, Turkey tried to isolate itself from the region.

Besides Turkey's worries about being pulled into the matters of a turbulent region, the neighboring Arab and Muslim countries were not in favor of an active role played by Turkey in the region either. The negative perceptions of those states about Turkey were two folded. While one is related with Turkey's imperial past and the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, the other one emanates from the fact that the country has a secular political regime since 1924 which is interpreted by the Arab states as Turkey's

break with Islam. However, with the appearance of the strategic importance of oil, Turkey started to change its distant approach toward Arab states.

Just like the EC, the oil price hikes led Turkey to reinvestigate its position towards the Arab states. During the 1950s, Turkey was following pro-Israeli policies. The Arabs were quite unsatisfied with Turkey's policies and constantly applying pressure to bring it on their side to give support against Israel. On the other side, Israel was quite aware of keeping good relations with Turkey and it was applying counter pressure in a more subtle form, both through its diplomatic channels and through the US.

The 1960s were a period during which Turkey continued with its pro-Western stance, however, it was not always pro-Israeli especially after the second half of the era. During this period, Turkey started to look for diplomatic support to its Cyprus related policies. From Turkey's standpoint, Arab countries appeared as a channel that could be referred to obtain that support by putting emphasis on being a 'Muslim' state. During this period, the anti-Western attitudes of the Arab countries did not act as an obstacle for Turkey as it was taking steps with pragmatic concerns.

After 1973, the fluctuations in oil prices threatened to pull Turkish economy into a deep crisis which would also hit the social order. After the 1980 military coup, the country became even more vulnerable to the Arab pressures in economic, political, and religious-cultural fields. As a result, 'relations with Israel were downgraded, and Saudi Arabia and other Muslim nations were allowed to sponsor Islamic activities inside Turkey and among Turks abroad' (Liel 2001: 192). Turkey moved closer to the Arab countries and developed a pro-Arab position with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which persisted until the 1990s.

Nevertheless, while Turkey put a distance between itself and Israel in order to ensure the Arab diplomatic and economic support, it did not break up its ties with Israel completely. On the contrary, although Turkey faced with the Arab pressures to cut off all its relations with Israel, it refused to do so³⁵. Furthermore, Turkey found Arab demands

³⁵ Arab states directed their collective pressures over Turkey to make it end up its diplomatic relations with Israel, first during the Islamic summit convened in Rabat, Morocco in 1969. Turkey wanted to keep its foreign policy independent from its oil concerns and rejected Arab demands. In the Lahore Islamic Summit (1974), Turkey had to face with same sort of demands again. Following the Summit, Turkish Prime Minister Erbakan, who was well-known for his Islamist stance, conducted a visit to Saudi Arabia in April

unjust while they had entered into a negotiation process with Israel within the Camp David context and considering peace with Israel if it withdrew from the Occupied Territories.

In the 1990s, with the development of certain peace initiatives between Arabs and Israelis, the Arab pressures over Turkey decreased and Turkey found the maneuvering space in order to take the initiative for an unprecedented improvement in its relations with Israel. In addition to the Arab-Israeli peace process, the volume of trade between Arab countries and Turkey decreased as well which removed further the Arab constraint over Turkey. Thirdly, when Turkey realized that it was not able to get the Arab diplomatic support so far, it lost one other reason for being tilted toward the Arabs during the past decades.

These developments helped Turkey to have a more balanced approach to Arab-Israeli dispute. Turkey's balanced approach appeared in a number of cases. The former President Demirel's participation in the Mitchell Commission which was established to investigate the nature and handling of violence in Palestinian areas of the West Bank and Gaza, was a good example of Turkey's balanced posture (Larrabee, and Lesser 2003: 143-144). Secondly, while even Turkey established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1991, it continued to support the Arab resolutions regarding the issue of Arab-Israeli conflict in the UN. Thirdly, in the post-Madrid process, Turkey also played a role through its service as a mentor in Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) Talks which was part of the multilateral track of the process and which contributed to the establishment of a set of regional confidence-building measures related to the conventional forces (Larrabee, and Lesser 2003: 143).

After Turkey concluded economic and military cooperation agreements with Israel, its relations with the Arab world strained seriously. While both Turkish and Israeli political elites were underlining that the agreements were no different than the agreements with the same nature that they have signed with any other state and they were not targeting any third state, it was not enough to soothe the Arab and Iranian worries.

1974. Saudis urged Turkey to cut off its contacts with Israel, so, that Turkey could 'improve its economic situation and position in the Middle East' (Liel 2001:207).

However, Turkey was not as vulnerable for Arab criticism as before and Turkish officials did not hesitate to make statements in defense of Turkey's closer ties with Israel³⁶.

Despite of the bold and supportive comments of the Turkish elites about the new partnership, it would be deluding to think that there was complete unity among the elites. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs came to realize the risk of antagonizing those Middle Eastern neighbors with pro-Western tendencies if their concerns and sensitivities were not paid any attention. İsmail Cem, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, became more sensitive to the Arab/Iranian reactions and initiated the policy of 'Neighborhood Dialogue', as a way of establishing cooperative relations with them. (Altunışık 2000: 184-185). The aim of the Dialogue was to win over problematic neighbors such as Iran, Iraq and Syria, rather than to gang up against them³⁷. The attempts of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs were the sign that it did not want to increase the confrontation Turkey would face in the region. Unlike the military which was favoring more daring policies against the Arab/Iranian neighbors, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wanted to keep Turkey's 'balanced' approach in the Middle East.

After the Islamist Justice and Development Party's electoral victory, Ankara started to shift the balance once again in favor of the Palestinians. Besides the AKP's domestic political considerations in appearing with an anti-Israeli stance, as the government identified EU membership for Turkey with strong commitments, it is trying to adopt the diplomatic vision of the EU which is critical of Israel's policies. As an extension of the commitment for the EU membership, AKP seeks for limiting the role of the Turkish military in politics. While the Turkish-Israeli strategic partnership was realized mainly due to the initiatives taken by Turkish military, the minimized political role for the military took away part of the initial vitality of economic and military agreements issued with Israel. In May 2004, Turkey recalled its ambassador to Israel for 'consultations' while Israel's deputy prime minister was also snubbed in August 2004 when he attempted to meet with Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan (Maher 2004).

³⁶ Turkish ambassador in Israel, Barlas Özener, told the Jerusalem Post (1 May 1996): 'We do not want to deal with Israel behind closed doors anymore... We object to people whose governments made peace with Israel describing it as 'the Arab world's greatest enemy' or inferring that Turkey is engaged in nefarious 'plots' with Israel' (Liel 2001:214).

³⁷ Pulse of Turkey No: 38. 1998. Available at www.turkpulse.com/turkish2.htm. Accessed on 14 July 2005.

Furthermore, the reports which emerged in June 2004 stating that ‘Israel has been in league with Kurdish groups in northern Iraq and training Kurdish militias’ (Maher 2004) also added up to the chilling in Turkish-Israeli relations, although the reports accuracy were continuously denied by Israel. While both states still have so much common interests in the Middle East, it appears that the future of bilateral relations will be shaped under the influence of the dynamics of Turkey’s domestic politics.



5 CONCLUSION

This thesis set out an analysis of Turkey's and the European Union's policies towards Israel with an aim to identify those points of similarity and difference. The research appeared worthwhile of conducting during a period where discussions regarding Turkey's suitability for becoming an EU member gain fierceness especially after the rejection of the so-called EU constitution in the referenda in a couple of EU member states including France, which has long been regarded as one of the 'big' powers in the Union and the main engines of it.

While the Union was formerly putting forward the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria in front of Turkey for it to become a member, because of Europe's uncertain boundaries, historical, racial, ethnic, and cultural factors become more important as criteria for inclusion (Aybet, and Müftüler-Baç 2000: 570) and the opposition within the EU with respect to the issue of Turkey's membership started to gain strength. The voices which are pronouncing a 'special partnership' for Turkey instead of a full-membership became louder in the EU members. Ironically, the internal division of views became more visible on the EU side with respect to Turkey's membership. The European Commission has been underlining that the accession negotiations between Turkey and the EU would start in 3 September 2005, as predefined. On the other hand, politicians on the EU side and especially the ones from the opposition wing have started to underline boldly the alternatives of either postponing the negotiations with Turkey or considering a special partnership agreement.

The discussions regarding Turkey's becoming an EU member in the future are focusing on issues with both material nature such as the fulfillment of the economic criteria and also more intangible matters such as Turkey's fitting into the concept of Europeanness with its identity and culture. The analysis in this paper approaches the issue of Turkey's compatibility within the EU structure through a limited focus on its foreign policy formulations with respect to Israel within frame of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

From the very beginning of the analysis, it was not expected to find remarkable differences between the foreign policy formulations of the EU and Turkey since both have mutual dependencies. Firstly, both parties made a commitment for considering the

changes of becoming the part of the same Union. Turkey has identified becoming a member of the EU as its official foreign policy goal long ago and it does not have a desire to clash with the main policy objectives of an organization of which it has a desire to become a part. Likewise, for the EU, although it has certain concerns about the likely burdens that Turkey's membership would create for itself has once identified it as qualified enough to start with the accession negotiations. Apart from the concern related with becoming a part of the same Union, Turkey and the EU have also vested interests in cooperating with each other in a number of fields. Furthermore, the basic interests of the parties in the Middle East region are overlapping to a great extent which are the maintenance of peace and stability in the region through the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the prohibition of WMD's and fighting with terrorism.

During the Cold War period the containment of the Soviet threat and assuring the security of oil flow were the two important factors that defined the policies of the European Community and Turkey. Their concerns especially related with the oil flow triggered more supportive views about the Arab cause against Israel. Despite its emerging Arab tilt, Turkey still sought to follow a balanced approach in the Arab-Israeli conflict by pursuing an 'implicit and cooperative' relationship with Israel during the Cold War years. Israel's need for allies on the Middle Eastern periphery, and their shared interests during the Cold War helped to encourage quiet ties between the countries (Lesser 2000: 193). On the other hand, the Community was directing overt criticism against Israel's policies towards the Palestinians which inevitably acted as irritant to Israel and constrained their relations. Accordingly, Israel rejected to recognize the Community as an actor with credibility to play the role of mediator in the conflict.

Following the end of the Cold War, Turkey's pro-Arab tilt started to diminish which enabled it to develop an active and positive approach towards Israel. As a result the significant agreements between the two states were issued even during the Islamist Welfare Party's term. The differences in Turkey's and the EU relations with Israel also started to surface in the post-Cold War era. While Israel continued to claim that there was either no room or need for European peace mediation, it was positive about Turkey's playing the role of a mediator. Despite the Israeli rejection, the EU did not lose its motivation to be involved in the resolution of the conflict. The EU started to increase its

efforts to have a distinguished role in the process by showing consent to the frame developed by the US. It initiated certain renovations in its internal structure by assigning posts of High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and a special representative for the Middle East. The EU also increased its financial contribution to the peace process.

The divergences in Turkey's and the EU's policies towards Israel following the end of the Cold war did not only emanate from the unilateral approaches that the two sought with Israel but happened also due to Israel's different way of approaching the two. One of the reasons that paved the way for closer ties between Turkey and Israel was the similarity between their threat perceptions in the Middle East region and their way of prioritizing national security. During the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, Turkey was dictated by security considerations in the context of its armed conflict against the Kurdish separatist organization PKK (Öniş 2003: 4) which attracted the EU criticism. While the EU was critical about both Turkey's human rights records and using its criticisms as a stick in the case of Turkey, Israel did not attach any sort of preconditions while signing the military and economic cooperation agreements with Turkey.

It can be argued that the divergences in Turkey's and the Union's approaches against the security threats which are caused by different internal dynamics led to a difference in their relations with Israel as well. Although, Turkey has been a country with Western oriented policies with the liberal and internationalist elements in its foreign policy, its foreign and security policy behavior is defined under the impact of the military elites' influence. It has to be underlined that Turkish military's role in politics has always been a limited one and it has been diminishing gradually especially after the recent reform packages introduced in line with the fulfillment of becoming a candidate for the EU membership. However, the security agenda is still defined to a great extent by the military who assumes a guardian role responsible for the protection of the Kemalist principles over which the Republic was established.

The Turkish military's guardian ship role is not only limited to the external threats but also involves the defense of the state's territorial and political integrity as well as its secular character against internal enemies (Karaosmanoğlu 2000: 213) which are political Islam and Kurdish separatism. Although the prominent role played by military in politics

was not fitting into the European Union frame, Israel shared the same security culture based on *realpolitik* where politics were defined on the basis of practical considerations rather on the basis of moral or ideological ones. From the Israeli perspective, the *realpolitik* is the only means of assuring its survival in a dominantly hostile region. It could be stated that the shared logic of *realpolitik* as the strategic culture³⁸ was one of the factors which brought Turkey and Israel together during the 1990s and underlined a point of difference between Turkey and the EU with respect to their approach towards Israel. While Turkey was a part of the Cold War Western strategic culture, following the end of the Cold War the EU defined the protection and the promotion of the values such as democracy, human rights, free markets, liberalism over which it is based as the goal of the European security which led to the questioning of Turkey's 'Europeanness' and the extend it holds a Western identity. Different than its relation with the US which is largely strategic, in its relations with the EU Turkey faced with the difficulties emanating from the domestic differences (Buzan, and Diez 1999: 45).

In addition to the security interests that Turkey and Israel share in the region, another factor which had positive impact upon Turkish and Israeli perceptions about each other has been the historical background of the bilateral relations. During the Ottoman era, the Jews were a community who were free in conducting their own religious rituals and they were enjoying prosperity in economic sense as well. The Jewish community has been the most loyal minority group within the Empire which was partly due to the fact they were not facing with any sort of repression or hardship. Unlike the Arabs, which betrayed the Empire during the First World War by taking side with the British, the Jews had a quite positive image in the memories of the Turkish public which has certain amount of influence over the decision making of the elites through media and certain interest groups.

When compared with the historical perceptions that exist between Turkey and Israel, the perceptions of Israel with respect to Europe and the EU as an institution with

³⁸ Bradley Klein defines strategic culture as a political body between state and civil society which 'reserves the right and the ability to rely upon force and defence' (1988: 136). According to Gulnur Aybet and Meltem Müftüler-Baç 'security culture is defined in terms of defence and security provided by a military structure, which acquires legitimacy as the provider of a "way of life"' (2000: 575). They continue that culture is distinctly placed within a militarily maintained identity against the adversarial 'other', also defined in terms of a military threat (2000: 575).

its presumed European identity, is rather doubtful and strained by the intangible element of the World War II memories. The Israeli suspicions about the EU's role in the peace process eventually led the Union to assume a secondary role next to the US instead of insisting on pursuing an autonomous role. Therefore, it can be claimed that the Israeli perceptions of the EU led the EU to redefine its approach towards Israel within the context of the peace process. The EU approach became more indirect and referred to the US as a channel to reflect its policies. Furthermore, providing financial support to the Palestinian authority with an aim to strengthen it to cope with the terrorist groups that threaten Israel's security became another indirect means for the EU approach towards Israel. Apart from the lack of Israel's thrust in the Union's ability to become an honest broker, the EU perception of Israel as an 'occupying power' which has been voiced out from time to time by the individual member states have negative impact on Israel's imagery of the EU.

After the rapprochement with Israel in the 1990s, Turkey gained an additional leverage to contain certain security risks. The two most remarkable examples of this containment which resulted from the closer ties with Israel were avoiding Greek Cyprus to deploy S-300 surface-to-air missiles and the pressures over Syria to prevent its support to PKK which resulted in the flight of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of PKK, from Damascus (Lesser 2000: 192). However, those events revealed Israel that due to its links with Turkey, it could be involved into the conflicts where it does not consider its interests were at stake. After Israel realized this fact, the initial euphoria in bilateral relations created by the agreements diminished.

Another reason for the eroding significance of the 1990 agreements between Israel and Turkey was limitations in Turkish military's role towards the end of the 1990s in the political scene which once acted as one of the engines of the strategic partnership with Israel, together with the ministry of foreign affairs. The limitation of the military's role in politics was quite closely related with the increased pace of political reforms in Turkey for the future EU membership after it was declared as a candidate state in the 1999 Helsinki Summit. Turkish military was conducting its influence over civilians through constitutional mechanisms and within certain limits without assuming any permanent role for itself. However, the increased pace of reform packages as an

extension of the fulfillment of the membership commitments, led the military to go into a self-limitation process. It has long been the main agent of the Westernization project and it could not remain relentless to one of the requirements of further democratization for becoming integrated with the EU.

The election of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which profoundly described itself as a party with an 'Islamic background', led to a certain chill in Turkish-Israeli relations. However, the positive tide of the 1990s did not completely diminish from the bilateral relations. On the other hand, Israeli politicians make statements underlining that Turkey has been a historical safe haven for the Jews and has been the first Muslim state to recognize its statehood. In addition, they voice out that Israel is quite supportive of Turkey's future EU membership and ready to give the necessary support for that. As a result, AKP's victory did not cause the total disruption of the bilateral relations with Israel, due to the presence of numerous shared interests.

The electoral victory of AKP was interpreted as the success of the younger group of moderate Islamists who were critical of the old tradition's 'politicizing of religion and antagonizing the military' (Kasaba, and Bozdoğan 2000: 9). The development was taken as the product of an evolving Turkish Islamist tradition that has grown ever more moderate as it has moved closer to the realities of politics and the requirements of pragmatism, especially under the watchful eye of the militant secularism of the army and old elite structure (Fuller 2004: 53). The government ironically issued the remarkable adjustments in Turkish constitution and issued the long waiting reform packages for the EU membership³⁹. Turkey started to assume a position towards Israel closer to that of the EU rather than the US. The AKP government's activism in issuing those remarkable reforms was partly caused by the Islamists seeking for consolidation of their position in

³⁹ Since 2001 Turkey witnessed nine reforms packages, five of which were issued during the AKP government's era. The reforms that AKP government covers issues such as the abolishment of the State Security Courts which were once established to 'deal with security offenses against the indivisible integrity of the State', the abolishment of capital punishment, introduction of civilian provision over military expenditures, removal of military representatives from boards which inspect broadcasting and higher education. In addition, certain changes were introduced to the Turkish Penal Code in order to strengthen the fight against torture by broadening the scope of freedoms of association, demonstration and peaceful assembly and by expanding freedom to use Kurdish in broadcasting and election campaign periods (Gurkan, and Beris 2004).

Turkish society by using the EU mechanism together with the concepts of democracy and human rights (Öniş 2003: 6).

It is still too early to draw ultimate conclusions about the impact of AKP's electoral victory either on the future role of Turkey in the Middle East Peace Process or on Turkey's EU membership. However, it can still be stated that if AKP does not try to deteriorate the secular structure of the Republic, Turkey can increase its chances to appear as a model for the Middle East with its 'moderately' Islamist government, thus, can gain some additional space to play a constructive role in the region. Assuming that Turkey would be able to project itself as a role model in the Middle East with its increased commitment of becoming an EU member under an Islamist government will not be realistic unless the region cannot create its own dynamics of political liberalization. However, if the political liberalization can take a start in the region, then Turkey can assume the capacity to act as a benign regional power which would interact with its surrounding region by developing a network of economic and political relations involving both state and non-state actors, which would set itself as a model of economic development and democracy and would adopt a balanced approach to bilateral conflicts and would seek to contribute to the resolution of such conflicts through diplomatic pressures (Öniş 2003: 4). Turkey would be able to provide a bridge between the EU and the Middle East and Israel in particular if it can successfully develop and make use of such means. The future developments in Turkey's economy and democracy would play a decisive role in its ability to act as a benign regional actor. In that sense, its commitment of becoming an EU member and the reforms that it has been issuing for that reason can have a quite positive impact on Turkey while developing such a capacity. In addition to that, it can appear as a promising partner for the EU that would enhance the Union's role in the peace process and would contribute to the smoothening of its relations with Israel.

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