Dramatically increasing ties between Israel and Turkey have major implications not just for those two countries but for the Middle East as a whole. Although their relations are intensely controversial in much of the region, they are likely to foster long-range stability in the Middle East. As commerce, tourism, and military cooperation between the region’s only democracies expand, the pro-Western axis in the region also grows stronger.

Relations between the two countries divide into two periods. The first, from 1948 to the early 1980s, comprised generally covert links, fluctuating in volume, military and intelligence-oriented in nature. The second era, since the early 1980s, has included an astounding expansion of connections—military, economic and civilian. These ties then reached unknown heights in 1996. The newly-installed Netanyahu government in Israel suspended contacts with Syria (thereby meeting Turkish expectations), and Turkey’s secular and pro-Western military establishment used ties with Israel to step up pressure against the country’s Islamist prime minister Necmettin Erbakan who had taken steps that threatened the establishment.

What are the components of this relationship? What interests do the two sides pursue in it, more specifically, in its public nature? How far will Ankara and Jerusalem pursue their present ties?

**ISRAELI ATTITUDES**

A consensus exists in Israel about the value of a special relationship with Turkey, despite a wariness that it is narrowly based. Indeed, Israelis have in several ways undergone a profound change in policy regarding Turkey.

First, Jerusalem had long declined to take sides against Kurdish terrorism, despite Turkish pleas. The Israeli policy resulted principally from fears of opening a new terrorist front vis-à-vis the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkerana Kurdistan, or PKK); also, a persistent pro-Kurdish sentiment exists in Israel, lingering from the country’s extensive support for the Kurdish struggle in Northern Iraq in the 1960s and 1970s. Hence the Turkish–Israeli agreement on strategic cooperation excluded cooperation in this domain and agreements concluded in November 1994.
relegated anti-terrorist efforts to a bilateral police agreement. Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu in May 1997 broke with this tradition and unequivocally supported Turkey in its conflict with the PKK. He not only condemned Kurdish terrorism but ruled out the establishment of an independent Kurdish state and declared there would be no peace with Damascus unless it ended its support of PKK terrorism.³ The very next day, the PKK announced in Beirut that Israel would henceforth constitute a legitimate target for Kurdish terrorism (though so far it has not made good on this threat).

Second, Israelis increasingly accept the Turkish view on the question of an Armenian holocaust during World War I. While officials or army officers had long advocated a pro-Turkish position, an informal survey of Israeli academics would find that they generally believed that the Armenian massacres fit the definition of genocide and held Turkey responsible for them. This is changing. For example, the distinguished orientalist Yehoshua Porath categorically rejected charges of genocide against the Armenians, then spoke of his “suspicion . . . that there are circles in Israel who find the thrust of Turkish policy hard to swallow,” precisely because it is friendly to Israel and the United States. “I get the impression that Saddam Husayn’s Iraq and Hafiz al-Asad’s Syria get a warmer welcome in those circles, whose criticism of Turkey is highly over-done.”⁴

Third, Turks displayed growing unease as they watched Israeli-Syrian negotiations, and Israelis adopted Turkey’s view that it would be harmed by an Israeli-Syrian peace treaty. Ankara was perturbed by the possibility of Israel lobbying for Syria’s removal from the U.S. lists of states that support terrorism or trade in drugs. Turks worried about the prospect that, should a peace treaty be concluded, Israel’s demand for redeployment of the Syrian army would have it stationing its forces along the Turkish border. The freezing of Israel’s negotiations with Syria was thus not a cause for regret in Turkey.

Fourth, Israelis admit that, prior to their meetings with the Turks, they had no idea of the depth of Turkish feeling on the Greco-Syrian issue.⁵ Now that they understand this, they are responding by refusing to expand military ties with Greece. In view of the Israeli-Greek military cooperation agreement concluded in December 1994 and Greece’s plans to spend $16 billion in the next decade on its military,⁶ Israeli arms manufacturers might have been expected to display an interest. But Israel’s aircraft industry has ignored the tender to upgrade and modernize forty Greek air force F-4 Phantoms. Military exports to Greece are restricted to such minor items as flak jackets, patrol boats without armament, and detachable fuel tanks for planes. More broadly, Israel not only avoids imbuing its Greek ties with substance but has publicly abandoned the 45-year-old policy of (ostensible) neutrality in Greco-Turkish relations.

Fifth, Israelis have shown unusual self-control vis-à-vis Turkey. In January 1997, when members of the Turkish parliament visited Israel’s memorial to victims of the Holocaust, Yad Vashem, a member of the Islamist party, Ahmed Derin, concluded his visit to the shrine with the hope that no institution like Yad Vashem would ever have to be erected again in commemoration of anyone, the Palestinian people included; Israeli officialdom was silent in the face of this provocation.⁷ It also desists from criticizing Turkish ties with Iran and Iraq.

Even as the Israeli side is eager to foster this relationship to the utmost, it is concerned that something beyond Israel’s control could cause its collapse (as was the case in the French, Iranian, and South African cases). Thus did Alon Liel, an
Israeli diplomat who served in Turkey, call for great prudence in the relationship with Turkey, saying it could be destroyed by a rash move on Israel's part. This concern brings to mind the 1954 words of an earlier Israeli emissary to Turkey:

the only thing that disturbs me is the optimistic tone. . . . The splendid state of Turkish-Israeli relations is liable to deteriorate for a variety of reasons [of which] the principal one, in my opinion, is not the danger of expanded Arab influence. I shall list the dangers in their order of importance, as follows: (1) The danger of an unsuccessful outcome of Solel-Boneh's projects in Turkey, should such a thing happen, Heaven forbid. (2) Continuation of three-way deals in which Israel makes too great a profit, including the continued re-exportation from Israel of Turkish commodities without Turkish authorisation.

TURKISH ATTITUDES

In Turkey, some analysts characterize the relationship with Israel as the most significant change in their country's foreign policy in the past fifty years—and not always positively. For example, Aydin Menderes of the Refah party concluded that Turkey has no proper assessment of the drastic consequences and damage arising from this change: unrestricted Turko-Israeli friendship is unrealistic, he affirmed.

Two characteristics formerly featuring prominently in Israeli-Turkish relations have vanished from the scene of late: the complaint of Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, of a "mistress syndrome" (meaning that Turkey refused to acknowledge its ties with Israel) and the zero-sum-game policy that obliged Turkey to refrain from fostering relations with Israel, for fear of harming its ties with the Arab and Communist worlds. Israeli-Turkish relations are out in the open now; Ankara flaunts significant portions of them to the Turkish public (defying the Israeli inclination to secretiveness) undeterred by opposition coming from the Arab and Islamic worlds. Perversely, as Zvi Elpeleg, Israel's former ambassador in Ankara, notes, it is helpful that Turks believe in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and other conspiratorial antisemitism, for this leads them to think that Israel has vast powers.

Ilhan Selçuk, a left-wing Turkish intellectual not renowned for his pro-Israel sympathies, best depicts the changes in view about the Israeli-Turkish rapprochement. Finding that Saudi Arabia and Iran both view Turkey as a secular threat, he notes that the "pro-Shari`a [Islamic law]" groups, as he calls them, however much they detest each other, oppose Turkey. Indeed, he writes, all Muslim states would celebrate were the Kemalist order in Turkey to collapse and the Refah Party to take over. Selçuk notes that many of Turkey's foes support the PKK, including Armenia, Greece, their lobbies in the United States, Cypriot Greeks, Syria, and Iran. He concludes that Turkey has nobody but Israel (and here he adds: all we ask of Israel is discharge of all its obligations to the Palestinians!) and the Jewish lobby. Accordingly, with Turkey encircled by hostile parties, it is a vital Turkish national interest to cooperate with Israel. Israel relieves Turkey's isolation and fields an American lobby that counter-balances the Greek and Armenian lobbies.

The Israeli-Turkish rapprochement should be seen as an episode in the standoff between Turkey's military establishment and its religious elements. Turkey's military ostensibly dictates a public policy of rapprochement with Israel, disregarding complaints that in so doing it is flouting democratic procedures. Turkey's Islamic press links efforts to close down the Islamic schools (imam-hatip
lycées) to officers who support collaborating with Israel. Çevik Bir, Turkey's deputy commander-in-chief, a tough and extremely anti-religious general and the Turkish signatory on the military cooperation pact with Israel, arouses particular indignation. The attempt to assassinate President Demirel in May 1996 in İzmit fits this pattern; the would-be assassin justified his act as a response to the conclusion of the military agreement with Israel. The Islamic press accused Israel's outgoing ambassador to Ankara, Zvi Elpeleg, of being the "confidant" of the generals intent on toppling the Erbakan government.

Turkish sensitivity primarily concerns two emotional topics: the Palestinian and Armenian issues. On the Palestinians, Turkey's foreign minister Mümtaz Soysal insisted in late 1994 that what Israel calls terrorism is nothing but the Palestinians "trying to defend their rights." Elpeleg warned that a crisis in Israeli-Arab relations would not harm Israel's ties with Turkey, but a downturn in relation to the Palestinians would do just that. "Their sensitivity on that point is almost as great as on the Armenian issue... Many millions in Turkey are interested in nothing outside their own borders more than the Palestinian issue; no government in Turkey can withstand the pressure of those millions."

Accusations of genocide during the First World War rile the Turks extremely; Israelis who associate with this viewpoint make themselves unacceptable to Turks. When Ehud Toledano, a professor at Tel Aviv University and a distinguished scholar of Ottoman studies, was nominated in mid-1997 as Israel's ambassador to Ankara, a furious response occurred due to an absolutely false charge that in 1981 he had accused Turkey of massacring Armenians. The Turkish press used inflammatory terms and expressions in discussing Toledano, and Ankara turned down his nomination.

On other issues relating to Israel, however, Turks tend to absorb what they cannot change. When the Refah Party was declared illegal in January 1998, the speaker of the Israeli parliament told a group of foreign military attachés, including the Turkish one, "Until yesterday, I thought there are two democracies in the Middle East. Since yesterday, I'm not so sure, after what happened in Turkey." The speaker then apologized and the Turks said nothing.

**ISLAMISTS AND ISRAEL**

How does one explain the paradox of bilateral relations flourishing precisely during the prime ministry of Necmettin Erbakan, an Islamist with a long record of anti-Israel vitriol? How have the Islamist parties, first Refah and now (since February 1998) Fazilet, responded to enhanced relations with Israel?

Refah and its leaders held intransigent positions vis-à-vis Israel, both before and during Erbakan's elevation to prime minister. Its publications depicted Israel as "abnormal" because it is not merely the state of its inhabitants, but the state of all Jews; and because it possesses neither constitution nor recognized boundaries. Jews love no one but themselves, so anyone concluding an agreement with Israel must be on constant alert. Israel foments dissension between Turkey and its neighbors. Alcohol was consumed like water at parties the Israeli embassy held for Israel's 49th independence day, and toasts were drunk "to honour the massacre of Muslims. Every imaginable evil occurred at these independence day parties." The policy Turkey should adopt towards Israel is self-evident: stay as far away as possible. Close bilateral relations would detach Turkey from the Middle East and turn it into a confrontational state against Iraq, Syria, and Iran. Moreover,
rapprochement with Israel is at the expense of potential Turkish links with the Balkan states and the Turkic republics of Central Asia. All this would be a boon to Israel, but a burden on Turkey.²⁵

Many in Turkey found these anti-Israeli and antisemitic tones disturbing. Several months ahead of the formation of the Erbakan government, President Demirel offered the following comments in an address to the National Security Council:

Are the Turks, who did not engage in anti-Semitism five hundred years ago, now to become anti-Semites?... Was the Islam of five hundred years ago more progressive than the Islam of our time? Is that which was not done then to be done now? If Refah achieves office, it will have to display tolerance and equality, which were granted to Jews, Armenians and Greeks by the sultan 500 years ago.²⁶

Indeed, when Refah took office, a change did become evident. Refah representatives did not boycott Israel. On the contrary, at the governmental, parliamentary, and municipal levels, Refah ministers, members of parliament, and mayors acted to reassure the Jewish community; they also had open contacts with resident Israeli diplomats.²⁷ The Islamic press even underwent a process of soul-searching, concluding that Refah was to blame for the predicament wherein Israel was Turkey's sole friend; were it not for Refah's enmity towards the West, Europe and the European Union (EU), Turkey would not have been left with no ally but Israel.²⁸

Amazingly, when Erbakan's term of office came to an end, his government found itself praised for its policy of rapprochement with Israel. A writer in one of Refah's coalition partners' newspapers noted that Israel would miss Erbakan; his government's demise prompted Israelis to remark, "we were more comfortable and our relations were more mature during the Refah government."²⁹ Even Ambassador Elpeleg commented that

There are numerous advantages to Erbakan being in power—first and foremost from the viewpoint of the grave socio-economic difficulties afflicting Turkey. Erbakan's party is presently the only party to take heed of the tribulations of the millions deserting the villages in the East and streaming into the large cities, the only party attempting to combat retardation.³⁰

**MILITARY TIES**

Israeli-Turkish military cooperation touches upon many domains: air, sea, land (both infantry and armor), intelligence, and the manufacturing of aircraft, armaments, and missiles. It is close, institutionalized, and structured, involving steering committees, regular meetings, and strategic dialogues. It includes a hierarchy of deliberations that reaches up to defence ministers and even higher. Cooperation involves financial dealings in the hundreds of millions of dollars, if not more.

*Training.* A February 1996 agreement—concluded for a five-year term and subsequently to be extended annually—prepares the way for mutual military visits, training and exercises, dispatch of observers to oversee military exercises, staff exchanges, and acquisition of military know-how. It also prepares for the two air forces and navies to hold mutual visits and joint exercises. Concomitantly, the agreement stresses that when the soldiers of either signatory are on the territory
of the other, they will not be involved in conflicts between the host state and any third party.\textsuperscript{31}

The training exercises of the two air forces are held eight times annually, a week each time, four deployments in each country. The exercises in Turkey (without participation of Turkish planes, without armament and without electronic surveillance equipment) are held at the Konya firing range. Overland exercises are a novelty for the Israeli pilots; Israel's diminutive size means that its air force generally trains over the Mediterranean Sea. Turkish pilots train at Israel's computerized firing range and at the Nevatim airfield. Agreement was recently reached between the two air forces on joint exercises.\textsuperscript{32} The two navies also hold maritime exercises, including naval maneuvers in the summer of 1996 and Operation Reliant Mermaid, a naval rescue exercise of early January 1998 that also included U.S. forces.

\textbf{Armaments.} In August 1996, the munitions industries in the two countries concluded an agreement. The media report Israeli-Turkish collaboration in manufacture of Popeye surface-to-air missiles; sales of Israeli Python 4 air-to-air missiles to Turkey; Turkish manufacture of the Galil infantry rifle; formulation of defensive doctrines against ballistic missiles; eventual Turkish participation in production of Israel's Arrow anti-missile; and joint manufacture of the jet-propelled, 400-km.-range Delilah cruise missile. It was also reported that the Turks voiced great interest in intelligence and other data transmitted by the Ofek satellite Israel recently fired into space.\textsuperscript{33}

An Israeli firm has contracted to modernize Turkish planes (fifty-four F-4 Phantoms and forty-eight F-5s) at a cost, with interest, of $900 million,\textsuperscript{34} based on some creative financing.\textsuperscript{35} Turkish planes are to undergo structural improvements and be fitted with radar systems, computerized aeronautical systems, navigation systems, electronic warfare systems and armament to improve the planes' performance in bombing missions.\textsuperscript{36} In the upgrading of F-4s, the first plane will be returned to Turkey thirty-three months after its arrival in Israel and the process is to be completed by 2006-08.\textsuperscript{37}

The offer to sell Israel's Merkava Mark-3 tank and to modernize Turkey's Pattons (M60A3) marks the two countries' growing interaction in relation to ground forces. Turkey's tank units comprise 4,000 Patton tanks, and Israeli upgrading proposals include fitting the Patton with a 120 mm. Merkava cannon, endowing the aging tank with new artillery capabilities both in range and in penetrative power. The upgrading project also includes more effective armoring on the tank; more precision of its "tankonics" by installing advanced fire-control and command systems; day- and night-vision systems; and a 900-horsepower engine.

But the tank deal has wider importance: growing collaboration between the two defense establishments means that Israel increasingly shares its military secrets with Turkey. This is obvious with the offer to sell Turkey the Merkava tank, for as part of the agreement, Israel has agreed to set up Merkava production lines in Turkey. Mutual trust generates mutual dependency, combining to create collaboration in the most sensitive and secretive domains.\textsuperscript{38}

Israel's position as the world's fifth arms producer fits with Turkish plans for arms procurement, modernization and refitting. Europe's largest army and NATO's second biggest has plans to spend a stunning $150 billion for arms over the next
twenty-five years (of which $60 billion will go for the ground forces, $25 billion for the navy, and $65 billion for the air force). Of this, local production will cover a mere 21 percent of Turkey's needs. Approximately one third of Turkey's military budget is to be devoted to modernization and weapons upgrading (the defense allotment in 1996 reached $6 billion, or 3.6 percent of gross domestic product). Turkey is also considering manufacture of a helicopter suited to its needs and intends to produce 95 percent of its components. The sale of Israeli weapons systems to Turkey frequently includes Turkish manufacturers. The Tadiran Corporation produces systems for locating and rescuing pilots. These are manufactured in Israel and assembled in Turkey by a local munitions concern, Aselsan. Thus do Turkey's defense needs, Israel's arms production, and Israel's willingness to share with Turkey manufacturing units for joint production of weapons all combine to generate an expansive military cooperation.

Although Israeli military sales to Turkey are best known, the flow is not one-way: Israel, for example, pays for the use of sophisticated Turkish installations. In addition, the Israeli navy trains at Turkish diving facilities, where it benefits from prices lower than the equivalent cost of such special training in Germany or Britain.

Intelligence. Intelligence cooperation, another principal area of Israeli-Turkish relations, comprises the exchange of information, routine briefings, analysis of data (including that collected by Israeli satellites) and tripartite deliberations involving U.S. agencies. Turkey's location next to Syria, Iraq, and Iran—three states of special interest to Israel—plus Israel's border with Syria—a state of interest to Turkey—point to their mutual utility. The two governments watch for the development of weapons of mass destruction, for various forms of radicalism, for terrorism, for threats to energy sources, for developments in the Turkic republic, and for Iranian influence.

Miscellaneous. About ninety Turkish F-16 pilots have received training to prevent bird/plane collisions and learn Israeli safety regulations on this matter. The two air forces are considering a radar network to pinpoint and identify the migration routes of predatory birds in autumn and spring. Seven radar stations are to cover Turkish and Israeli airspace, providing updated information on bird migration along the Europe-Africa route. Turkey will give Israel a two-day warning of the autumn migration, while Israel will provide Turkey with a similar alert in advance of the spring migration.

CIVILIAN COOPERATION

To tamp down criticism about this military collaboration, Turkish authorities stress that the military element is just one element in a wider relationship. They have a point. Alongside close military ties, there is extensive non-military interaction between Turkey and Israel, with great potential for further expansion.

To begin with, Israeli-Turkish trade has steadily grown. One listing from October 1996 specifies thirteen spheres of Israeli-Turkish agreement and cooperation, eleven of which are non-military in nature. These include interaction in the domains of culture, education and science; the environment and nature protection; mail and telecommunications; efforts to stop the smuggling of drugs and narcotic substances; health and agriculture; regulation of trade free of customs duties; encouragement and protection of financial investments; avoidance of dual taxation; and technical and economic cooperation.
Trade between the two countries totaled just $54 million in 1987, $100 million in 1991, and over $440 million in 1995. At $750 million dollars a year, Israeli-Turkish bilateral trade is today the largest between any two countries in the Middle East. Thanks in part to a Turkish-Israeli free trade agreement ratified in April 1997, trade is expected to reach $2 billion by the year 2000. The Israeli Manufacturers' Association believes Israeli civilian exports to Turkey will reach $600 million annually, and that this is just 15 percent of potential Turkish imports from Israel, estimated at $4 billion. In light of such growth, real and potential, Turks and Israelis are unlikely to let politicians disrupt relations between them.

Until 1993, Israeli exports to Turkey exceeded Turkish exports to Israel; as of 1994, however, Turkey has steadily pulled ahead, with an annual surplus of $50 million in its favor. Turkish exports to Israel include textiles, industrial products, food products, electronics, raw materials, and grains. Turkey's hi-tech exports to Israel compete successfully with electronic firms from East Asia, as well as their Israeli counterparts: the average monthly wage of a Turkish production worker is $300-400; an engineer makes $1,000, while Israeli figures are three times higher. Israel's main exports are chemicals, plastics, computers, air conditioners, medical, telecommunications and irrigation equipment. While the monthly minimum wage in Turkey was $211 in 1992, the equivalent figure in Israel was $507.

Israeli-Turkish commerce is affected by Turkey's trade links with the European Union. As duties on goods traded between Turkey and the EU are phased out (70 percent of the reductions were completed by August 1993) and before the Turkish-Israeli free trade zone comes completely into effect, Israel finds it harder to export to Turkey.

Tourists signal a friendly, relaxed atmosphere; significantly, they are a prominent part of non-military relations. Israeli tourism to Turkey has grown enormously. Just 7,000 Israelis visited Turkey in 1986, a number that jumped to 160,000 in 1992, and some 350,000 annually (out of some 2 million Israelis touring the world each year) since 1994. These tourists each spend an average of $1,000; their casino losses alone came to $1.5 billion annually (which equalled the total amount bet in Israel). Thus the tourist industry, with an annual turnover of $1.85 billion, further tilts the bilateral trade balance in Turkey's favor.

Finally, Israel and its friends lobby on Turkey's behalf. Early in 1996, Shimon Peres convinced his contacts at the Council of Europe and the Socialist International to shelve their objections to a customs union between the European Union and Turkey. Israel and the Israel lobby helped with the U.S. Congress, toning down criticism of Turkey over various human rights issues (the treatment of Kurds, the right to political association, freedom of speech, etc.) and helping Turkey's campaign against the stationing of Russian S-300 missiles on Cyprus. Israel is aiding Azerbaijan to set aside U.S. Congressional Amendment 907, adopted during the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno Karabakh. Passed under pressure from the Armenian lobby in the United States, the amendment precludes U.S. aid to Azerbaijan. The present administration in Washington is eager to aid Azerbaijan, which borders on Iran and grants American corporations oil- and gas-prospecting concessions.

This state of affairs renders bilateral relations stable and enhances their potential to last. Many Turks and Israelis now have a direct interest in continued contacts, which is likely to tamp down upheavals in relations between Ankara and Jerusalem. The politicians of the two countries may be expected to do their best to maintain
ARAB AND ISLAMIC REACTION

Most Arabs dislike the Turkish-Israeli relationship. They regard the two countries as Middle Eastern subsidiaries of Western civilization. A troubled historical legacy (colonial in Turkey's case) leaves its mark on the Arab world's relations with both Turkey and Israel. The Arabs famously lost Palestine to Israel; less well known but also rankling is their loss in 1939 of Alexandretta to Turkey. In the Arab view, Israel's security zone in southern Lebanon and its Turkish counterpart in northern Iraq are outright conquests. Arabs see the Turkish-Israeli relations as a renewed Baghdad Pact in which they brandish the water weapon, advanced military technology, and key territories. At other times, Arab sources blame the Turkish-Israeli ties on Turkey's Jews, it being easier to take them on than the Turkish government.

The Arab response includes alienation, denial of legitimacy, and hostile coalitions. Trade reflects this outlook: the year 1982 marked the zenith in trade relations between Turkey and the Arab Middle East, involving 44 percent of Turkey's exports and 29 percent of its imports. By 1996, these figures had fallen to 11 percent and 8 percent, respectively. Arabs believe that if Ankara is not curbed, additional Arab territory—such as Mosul—could fall into Turkish hands, just as Alexandretta did in the past.

The Turkish-Israeli rapprochement thus heightened pre-existing Arab fears. Its announcement prompted swift and vehement reactions. A Beirut weekly dubbed what it called the Turkish-Israeli "treaty" as nothing less than "the most perilous milestone in the Middle East since the First World War." Likewise, the Syrian leadership often deplores it as the greatest mishap the Arab world has endured since 1948.

Khalid bin Sultan bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, a scion of the Saudi royal family, son of the Saudi defense minister, and also proprietor and publisher of al-Hayat newspaper, has an interesting diagnosis for what he calls the crisis in Turkish-Arab relations. Arabs should ask themselves what brought about the crisis. After criticizing Arab politics for an inability to "cope with rapid changes on the ground," he notes how they "assumed Turkey would be on their side forever, even if it gained no benefit thereby." The Arab side, he goes on, "did not comprehend the complexities of the internal situation in Turkey, or that country's regional and international considerations. This created a climate that could push Turkey ever further into the camp of unfriendly countries." Khalid bin Sultan then proposes improving Turkish-Arab ties "[s]olely by granting supreme importance to mutual economic interests. It is vital to find a form of economic integration between the Arabs and Turks, even if it is a gradual process." Khalid bin Sultan then proposes Turkish-Arab cultural collaboration, calling on Arabs and Turks to "start purging history books and textbooks of mutual insults." He also advocates military cooperation between Turkey, Pakistan, and the Gulf states.

The Israeli-Turkish rapprochement has generated new alliances in the Middle East, though it is too early to assess their importance. The Islamic Republic of Iran signed a series of trade agreements with Syria, and the two states signaled an intent to expand relations further. Syrian-Iraqi relations have improved, despite Damascus's professed concern about being tarnished by association with a leper state like Iraq. Iran's relations with Egypt, cold for nearly two decades, appear to be on the mend, though Cairo's apprehensions regarding Tehran's role behind
Islamist terrorism in Egypt and North Africa remains an obstacle.

Several military developments also need to be seen in the light of Turkish-Israeli relations. When Russian and Syrian anti-aircraft units held joint exercises at a Russian experimental site in late September 1997, drilling with Russian S-200 surface-to-air missiles designed for use against high-altitude planes, the exercises were explicitly presented in response to the joint maritime exercises of Turkey, Israel, and the United States in January 1998. Iran defends the expansion of its army with the need to defend itself against what it terms "the Israeli-Turkish conspiracy." Despite these steps, the Middle Eastern response to Israeli-Turkish relations until now features much verbosity but very little action. Counter-alliances have yet to emerge, and it is doubtful that they ever will, given the depth of existing rifts. This leaves opponents of the Israeli-Turkish rapprochement with much frustration but few options. Moreover, growing Syrian and Iraqi dependency on water from Turkish sources leaves little scope for muscular anti-Turkish démarches.

CONCLUSION

Motivated by a Kemalist outlook, Turkish governments for decades knocked on Western doors while trying to avoid taking sides in Middle Eastern conflicts. That is of the past: Turkey's repeated rejection by the West and Europe (culminating in the final blackballing by the EU in December 1997) provide the context for Turkey's interaction with Israel. If membership in the Baghdad Pact in the 1950s was a fleeting episode that Ankara swiftly abandoned, Turkey's involvement with the Middle East has now taken on greater permanence. In this light, the Kuwait war was a watershed, marking the renewal of Turkey's involvement in the Middle East. Turkey's close relations with Israel, and the inevitably pro-Israel position they project, offer a further expression of Turkey's growing involvement in the Middle East.

Israel and Turkey have been motivated by mutual interests, some of them existential, to weave their close ties. Both countries, in defiance of their geographical location, nurse Western aspirations and rule out integration into an Islamic Middle East. They find that their "Western" character and their usefulness to Western ends have both been placed in doubt by termination of the cold war; they collaborate so as to survive as Western societies.

With U.S. encouragement, Israel aids Turkey with arms and equipment denied by an indifferent Europe and a hostile American public opinion. Turkey's airspace, its ports and other installations are made available to Israel. Israeli training facilities are available to Turkey. Neither Turkey nor Israel expect the other country to fight its wars. It may be just as well: the might radiated by the links between the two states, and the American support they enjoy, exude a tone of status quo over the region. Players potentially able to upset that status quo must think twice before putting the alliance to the test.

Yet, if the Israeli-Turkish rapprochement has a strategic quality, it is because of its non-military dimensions. The economic element underlying the military ties between Ankara and Jerusalem renders their interaction more permanent, as a structure whose components have an interest in its survival over the length of time. Joint ventures the two countries have initiated in Central Asia, in commercial fields (as in production and delivery of energy, development of water sources,
development of all kinds of terra incognita, etc.—all have deeper implications. A confluence of various elements thus holds the potential for creating an economic and military axis in the region.

Accordingly, few public Israeli analyses have been published. By contrast, controversy about this issue in Turkey has prompted an extensive debate in the press that in turn has produced much information; for example, the purported text of the February 1996 Turkish-Israeli agreement on military cooperation appeared in Aksiyon Magazine (Istanbul), May 18-24, 1996. Accordingly, this study relies heavily on Turkish sources.

1 Ha'aretz, May 26, 1996.
2 Ha'aretz, May 27, 1997.
4 That said, Israeli officers believe Turkey could take on both Greece and Syria with one hand tied behind its back. When Ankara affected dread about Greek Cypriot plans to station Russian-made S-300 surface-to-air missiles on the island, IDF commander in chief Lipkin-Shahak remarked that "Turkey could annihilate Cyprus with its fishing fleet" (Ha'aretz, Dec. 8, 1997).
8 Solel-Boneh—one of Israel's largest construction corporations—built airfields in Turkey during the 1950s.
10 Yeni Şafak, May 8, 1997. The author's father, Adnan Menderes, was Turkey's prime minister in the 1950s and was executed by the military after its 1960 coup.
14 Philip Robins, "Turkish Foreign Policy Under Erbakan," Survival, vol. 39, no. 2, Summer 1997, p. 83. He notes that the agreements for military cooperation between Israel and Turkey were signed when there was no government in Turkey, i.e., during the transition between the December 1995 elections and the formation of the new government in 1996.
15 The religious schools were originally founded in 1951 to train imams for mosques, but the current number of graduates (53,000) very much exceeds the needs of the country's religious establishment (2,300). The army chiefs instructed Erbakan to close the religious Imam-Hatip Lycées and extend compulsory education from five to eight years, with the aim of containing the Islamic religious trend in the Turkish school system.
16 Ha'aretz, May 19, 1996.
18 Cumhuriyet, Nov. 5, 1994.
Modernization of the F-4s is to cost some $800 million. Modernization of the F-5s costs $75 million. Work on modernization will take from two to three years.

The Turks are to pay Israel 5 percent interest on the plane modernization, whereas contracts with other parties prescribe interest payments of 30 percent—ostensibly because of the high risk of default. During the first two years of the project, the company carrying out the upgrading is to get paid by the Israeli government in the form of a loan from Israel's finance ministry to its Turkish counterpart.

Turkish critics of the deal claimed that Turkey's F-4s will end their metal life in 2010, and that the entire package accordingly lacks any military or economic rationale, for the planes would have to be grounded shortly after their modernization.
protested this Israeli aid.


52 Lecture by Ofra Bengio, Tel Aviv University, The Dayan Center, Dec. 11, 1997.


54 Lecture by Paul Rivlin, "Israeli-Turkish Economic Relations," Table 4, Tel Aviv University, The Dayan Center, Dec. 11, 1997.


56 *Al-Usbu' Al-‘Arabi* (Beirut), Apr. 15, 1997.


60 Robins, "Turkish Foreign Policy under Erbakan," pp. 90–91; Cumhuriyet, Sept. 23, 1997.
Without a shift in Turkey's economic connections to Israel, Ankara's fiery words amount to very little, writes Joseph Dana. With more than 12 flights a day from Tel Aviv to Istanbul, divided between Turkish Airlines and the low-cost carrier Pegasus, Turkey is a dominant force in the Israeli aviation market. But this is only one aspect of a deep economic partnership between Turkey and Israel. Despite fiery rhetoric in support of Palestinians from Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the country stands alone in the Muslim world as one of Tel Aviv's dependable partners. In the fallout following US president Donald Trump's designation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel there have been condemnations across the Ar