

CHANGING TURKISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS
AFTER THE 2008 GAZA WAR

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Abstract¹

This thesis examines the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations after Israel's Operation Cast Lead against Gaza in 2008. It explains the changing Turkish-Israeli relationship in light of Jakob Gustavsson's model of foreign policy change, that is, by both considering the structural factors of the period and by analyzing the role of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the Prime Minister. This thesis argues that although a number of structural factors constituted a ground for the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations from the late 1990s and early 2000s onwards, relations were on a relatively positive track following the foundation of the Justice and Development Party (JDP), and there was no radical change in the relationship until 2008. However, Israel's Gaza operation in 2008 received a very harsh response from the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and brought the Turkish-Israeli relationship to a critical level. In the aftermath of the Operation Cast Lead, Erdoğan's ideology, which has its roots in the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) tradition, as well as his personality traits played an important role in bringing the Turkish-Israeli relations to the point of rupture.

Key Words: Turkish-Israeli Relations, Operation Cast Lead, Foreign Policy Change, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

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2008 YILI GAZZE SAVAŐI SONRASI TÜRKiYE-İSRAİL İLİŐKİLERİNDEKİ DEĐİŐİM

Özet

Bu tez, 2008 yılında İsrail'in Gazze'ye karşı yaptıĐı Dökme Kurşun Operasyonu sonrasında bozulan Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerini ele almaktadır. Tez, Jakob Gustavsson'un dış politika deĐişim modeli ışığında deĐişen Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerini dönemin yapısal faktörlerini ve Başbakan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın rolünü analiz ederek açıklamaktadır. 1990'ların sonlarından 2000'lerin başlarına kadar çeşitli yapısal faktörler Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerin bozulmasına bir zemin oluşturmaşsa da Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin (AKP) kurulmasını izleyen dönemde ilişkiler nispeten olumlu rotada ilerlemiş ve 2008 yılına kadar herhangi bir radikal deĐişim göstermemiştir. Ancak, İsrail'in 2008 yılındaki Gazze operasyonu Başbakan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan tarafından çok sert tepki almış ve bu durum Türk-İsrail ilişkilerini kritik bir seviyeye getirmiştir. Dökme Kurşun Operasyonu sonrasında Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinin kopma noktasına gelmesinde Erdoğan'ın kişisel özelliklerinin yanısıra Milli Görüş kökeninden gelen ideolojisi de önemli bir rol oynamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri, Dökme Kurşun Operasyonu , Dış Politika DeĐişimi, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

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List of Abbreviations

EU	: European Union
FP	: Felicity Party
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
GNAT	: The Grand National Assembly of Turkey
IHH	: Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
JDP	: Justice and Development Party
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
NSC	: National Security Council
NSP	: National Salvation Party
PLO	: Palestine Liberation Organization
TAF	: The Turkish Armed Forces
UN	: United Nations
US	: United States
VP	: Virtue Party
WP	: Welfare Party

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Research Design

1.1 Research Question and Argument in Brief

Since Turkey's official recognition of Israel in 1948, Turkish-Israeli relations have continued with ups and downs. Especially, from the late 1940s onwards, Turkish foreign policy towards Israel has been influenced by the developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict. And when we came to the 1990s, in line with the Arab-Israeli (Oslo) Peace Process, the Turkish-Israeli relationship reached its peak based on a strategic alliance between these two countries as well as several trade agreements. The period of the 1990s was even referred to as an era of "strategic cooperation" between Turkey and Israel.² However, this strategic cooperation came to an end from the late 1990s onwards. With the beginning of the second intifada (Palestinian uprising in Israel), Israel's use of disproportional force vis-à-vis the Palestinians and its assassination of several Palestinian leaders caused serious tension between Turkey and Israel.

This tense atmosphere continued after the Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power in Turkey with the 2002 national elections. However, it was not until Israel's 2008 Operation Cast Lead on the Gaza Strip that the Turkish-Israeli relationship reached an unprecedented low level. This operation, which started on December 27, 2008, significantly shaped the destiny of the current Turkish-Israeli bilateral relations. Furthermore, it constituted the first benchmark of the deteriorating

² İlker Aytürk, "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri," in Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.) *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, Der Publishing, No. 428, September 2012, p. 617.

relationship, which was followed by a number of additional incidents such as, the “One Minute”, “Low Seat” and “Mavi Marmara” crises.

In the past few years, several researchers have written about the changing nature of the Turkish-Israeli relationship and discussed various reasons which led to its breakdown from 2008 onwards. Many of these authors have mainly focused on the structural factors that gave way to this foreign policy change. They have discussed various factors, including Turkey’s changing relations with Syria and Iran from the late 1990s and early 2000s onwards (Erkmen 2005, Aytürk 2009, Oğuzlu 2010)³, the European Union’s (EU) declaration of Turkey as a candidate country at the 1999 Helsinki Summit (Oğuzlu 2010, Kuloğlu 2010)⁴, the American President George W. Bush’s policies towards the Middle East in the aftermath of 9/11 (Oğuzlu 2010, Erhan 2011)⁵, the Iraq War (Erkmen 2005, Ayman 2006)⁶, Turkey’s economic crisis in 2000/2001 (Erkmen 2005)⁷, the JDP’s new foreign policy vision from 2002 onwards (Davutoğlu 2001, Oğuzlu 2010)⁸, the Turkish military’s decreasing role in politics under the JDP’s rule (Eligür 2012)⁹ and the strengthening pro-Palestine public opinion in Turkey in the face of the second intifada (Oğuzlu 2010, Eligür

³ Serhat Erkmen, “1990’lardan Günümüze Türkiye-İsrail Stratejik İşbirliği,” *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 2, No. 7, 2005, pp.168-169, İlker Aytürk, “Between Crises and Cooperation: The Future of Turkish-Israeli Relations,” *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2009, pp. 57-74 and Tarık Oğuzlu, “The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A structural Account,” *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 29 June 2010, pp. 282-283.

⁴ Oğuzlu, “The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A Structural Account,” pp. 283-284, Armağan Kuloğlu, “Türkiye- İsrail İlişkilerindeki Gelişmeler,” *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol. 2, No. 17, May 2010, p. 90.

⁵ Oğuzlu, “The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A Structural Account,” p. 284, Çağrı Erhan, “Bush Doktrini Ölmedi; İsrail’de Yaşıyor,” *Türkiye Gazetesi*, 13 September 2011.

⁶ Erkmen, “1990’lardan Günümüze Türkiye-İsrail Stratejik İşbirliği,” pp. 178-180, S. Gülden Ayman, “Türkiye-İran İlişkilerinde Kimlik, Güvenlik, İşbirliği ve Rekabet,” in Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.) *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, Der Publishing, No. 428, September 2012, pp. 566-577.

⁷ Erkmen, “1990’lardan Günümüze Türkiye-İsrail Stratejik İşbirliği,” pp. 157-185.

⁸ Oğuzlu, “The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A structural Account,” p. 281, Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye’nin Uluslararası Konumu*, İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2001.

⁹ Banu Eligür, “Crisis in Turkish-Israeli Relations (December 2008-June 2011): From Partnership to Enmity,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 3, May 2012, p. 433.

2012, Erdoğan 2013)¹⁰. These studies have made the argument that one or more of these structural factors provided the context that brought about the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relationship.

However, in most of these studies, the role of individual decision makers, particularly that of Prime Minister (and then President) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has been overlooked. Thus, without disregarding the importance of structural factors in understanding the downturn in the Turkish-Israeli relationship, this thesis explores the role that Tayyip Erdoğan has played in this process. In other words, this thesis provides an answer to the questions of to what extent the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relationship since 2008 has been the result of structural factors and to what extent the individual leader, namely Tayyip Erdoğan, played a role in this process. In order to do this, the thesis takes advantage of Jakob Gustavsson's model of foreign policy change, which he presents in his article titled "*How Should We Study Foreign Policy Change?*" In his article, Gustavsson demonstrates that foreign policy change takes place as a result of a combination of changes in "*fundamental structural conditions, strategic political leadership, and the presence of a crisis of some kind*".¹¹ Thus, in light of Gustavsson's framework, the thesis shows that various international, domestic, and individual-level factors have come together to bring about the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations from the early 2000s onwards.

This is an important discussion not only for explaining a case of dramatic change in Turkish foreign policy that has been experienced in recent years, but also for understanding the broader topic of foreign policy change. With regard to the literature on Turkish foreign policy, this thesis provides a theoretical and systematic understanding of the changing Turkish-Israeli relations in the aftermath of the 2008 Gaza War. This is an important contribution to the scholarship, because existing studies either mainly focus on the structural factors that led to this change or make specifically leader-focused arguments. The number of scholars who take into account

¹⁰ Oğuzlu, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A Structural Account," p. 284, Eligür, "Crisis in Turkish-Israeli Relations (December 2008-June 2011): From Partnership to Enmity," pp. 432-448, Emre Erdoğan, "Dış Politikada Siyasallaşma: Türk Kamuoyunun 'Davos Krizi' ve Etkileri Hakkındaki Değerlendirmeleri," *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 10, No. 37, Spring 2013.

¹¹ Jakob Gustavsson "How Should We Study Foreign Policy Change," *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1999, pp. 73-95.

various factors to explain the worsening Turkish-Israeli relations is actually very few in the literature. This thesis provides a theoretical analysis that takes into account not only the structural factors, but also individual-level explanations. This thesis also contributes to the international literature on foreign policy change, because although the number of studies on foreign policy change has substantially increased throughout the world since the 1990s, especially the individual leader's role in these processes remains a neglected topic. With its emphasis on not only the structural international and domestic factors, but also Prime Minister (and then President) Tayyip Erdoğan's role in the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relationship, this thesis provides an important case study to the international scholarship on the role of individual leaders in foreign policy change.

1.2 Literature Review

Studies about foreign policy analysis first appeared in the 1950s. From the 1950s onwards, several studies, which explore the roles of different sub-state elements and foreign policy making processes, have been produced. In the 1950s and 1960s, three significant studies constituted the basis of the foreign policy analysis literature. The first one is "*Decision Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics*" by Synder, Bruck & Sapin (1954).¹² This study promotes the idea that foreign policy analysis should focus on the sub-state level in order to have a better understanding about the behaviors of states. Thus, it highlights the importance of foreign policy decision making processes rather than the foreign policy output itself, and it discusses what kind of factors affect the decision making process. The second one is "*Pre-theories and Theories of Foreign Policy*" by James Rosenau, which directs researchers' attention towards developing actor-oriented theories. In his study, Rosenau emphasizes the significance of gathering information on different levels of analysis to understand foreign policy better (1964).¹³ The third

¹² Richard C. Synder, Henry W. Bruck, and Burton M. Sapin, *The Decision Making Approach to the Study of International Politics*, Princeton University Press, 1954.

¹³ James Rosenau, "Pre-theories and Theories of Foreign Policy," *The Study of World Politics*, Vol. 1, 1964.

one is “*Man-Milieu Relationship: Hypothesis in the Context of International Politics*” by Sprout & Sprout (1956).¹⁴ In this work, Sprout and Sprout express that foreign policy could be understood only by taking the psychological environment of individuals and groups into account. The perceptions of decision makers about the international environment and their effects constitute a significant element of the foreign policy decision making process. These three key works make up the cornerstone of analytical studies on foreign policy, which emphasize the role of sub-state elements in decision making processes as well as underlining the key positions of individuals and groups.

In the following years, foreign policy studies began to diversify and gave way to the emergence of various foreign policy approaches. These different approaches included the study of small groups and decision making processes (Janis 1972, Hart 1990, Khong 1992)¹⁵, comparative foreign policy (Rosenau 1968)¹⁶, and psychological characteristics of the decision makers as well as their social environment (Jervis 1976, Hermann 1980, Byman & Pollack 2001).¹⁷ For example, Jervis focuses on the importance of psychology and underlines the leaders’ perceptions in his book “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*”. Jervis asserts that systemic and state-level explanations are inadequate in order to understand foreign policy decisions. Instead, he points out the significance of understanding how leaders take decisions through their perceptions and how psychological factors affect the attitudes of the leaders. Similarly, Margaret G.

¹⁴ Harold Sprout & Margaret Sprout, “Man-Milieu Relationship: Hypotheses in the Context of International Politics,” *Center of International Studies*, 1956.

¹⁵ Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972, Paul Hart, *Groupthink in Government: A Study of Small Groups and Policy Failure*, Amsterdam: Sweets & Zeitlinger, 1990 and Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

¹⁶ James N. Rosenau, “Comparative Foreign Policy: Fad, Fantasy, or Field?,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 3, September 1968, pp. 296-329.

¹⁷ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, Margaret G. Hermann, “Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using the Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 1, March 1980 and Daniel L. Byman, Kenneth M. Pollack, “Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesmen Back In,” *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 2001, pp. 107-146.

Hermann discusses the role of leaders' personalities as an important element in foreign policy decision making processes.¹⁸

Despite the rapid development of the foreign policy analysis literature since the 1950s, the subject of foreign policy change has remained as a neglected issue for a long time. An important reason for this is that foreign policy analysis studies constitute a young area within the political studies. Thus, the governments' attention mainly focused on continuity for quite some time along with willingness to protect the status quo instead of discussing issues regarding foreign policy change.¹⁹ Another reason why foreign policy change has remained as a neglected issue is that throughout the Cold War years, foreign policy analysis studies mainly focused on the consistent policies of the super powers, rather than the issue of policy change.²⁰

From the 1970s onwards, within the context of the Vietnam War and the period of détente, the subject of change in foreign policy began to attract increasing attention in the discipline. In this period, Rosenau's "*The Study of Political Adaptation (1981)*"²¹ presents an important example of this trend. In his work, Rosenau argues that foreign policy in fact constitutes a mechanism for nation states to adapt to the changes in their international environment.

Throughout the 1980s, research about foreign policy change increased tremendously. Holsti's "*Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World (1982)*", Goldmann's "*Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problem and Possibilities of Detente (1988)*" and Hermann's "*Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy (1990)*" constitute some of the important studies of this period. All of these studies have contributed to the

¹⁸ Hermann, "Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using the Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders."

¹⁹Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, Joe D. Hagan, *The Study of Change in Foreign Policy, Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Change*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1994.

²⁰ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981 and Kalevi J. Holsti, *Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982.

²¹James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Political Adaptation*, London: Frances Pinter, 1981.

foreign policy analysis literature by systematically and theoretically explaining the issue of foreign policy change. For example, Holsti primarily focuses on the cases in which foreign policy is completely restructured rather than slowly and gradually changed. Holsti discusses several factors such as external threats, economic conditions and colonial experiences as independent variables of foreign policy change. Likewise, he identifies policy makers' perceptions, personality traits and attitudes as well as the policy making process itself as intervening variables that bring about change. Goldmann, on the other hand, highlights the contradiction between continuity and change in foreign policy.²² He argues that governments feel obliged to keep up with the changing international conditions and adapt themselves to new realities, whereas they have a tendency to continue with their previously established policies. Thus, Goldmann presents a theoretical framework about the conditions under which foreign policies persist or change. Unlike others, Hermann emphasizes that foreign policy change can take four different forms: First, *adjustment changes* which do not involve any major changes in the foundations, objectives and instruments of foreign policy; second, *program changes* which imply a change in the instruments and methods of foreign policy; third, *problem changes* that refer to changes in the goals and objectives of foreign policy; and finally, *international orientation changes* which refer to fundamental changes in foreign policy.²³ According to Hermann, it is possible to identify four different agents of change, namely: leader-driven change, bureaucratic advocacy, domestic restructuring and external shocks.

In the 1990s, foreign policy analysis researchers produced several studies about the reasons of foreign policy change and the roles played by different actors in this process. Especially, after the Cold War, these studies increased rapidly. During this period, researchers such as Volgy and Schwarz (1990)²⁴, Carlsnaes (1993)²⁵,

²² Kjell Goldmann, *Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problems and Possibilities of Détente*, New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988.

²³ Charles F. Hermann, "Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1990, pp. 3-22.

²⁴ Thomas Volgy and John Schwarz, "Does Politics Start at the Water's Edge? Domestic Politics Factors and Foreign Policy Restructuring in Great Britain, France, and West Germany," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 1991, pp. 615-643.

Gustavsson (1999)²⁶, Kleistra and Mayer (2001)²⁷, Huxsoll (2003)²⁸, and Doeser (2011, 2013)²⁹ specifically focused on the issue of foreign policy change and developed new theoretical models on this subject. For example, Carlsnaes (1993) examines foreign policy change within the context of the ‘agency-structure’ problematique, while Gustavsson (1999) provides a more comprehensive framework on the foreign policy decision making process. Doeser, on the other hand, stresses the impact of domestic elements and individual leaders on foreign policy change.

Despite the improvements in the worldwide study of foreign policy change from the 1950s onwards, Turkish literature on foreign policy analysis has not paid sufficient attention to this subject. For a long time, foreign policy analysis studies in Turkey focused on historical analyses of foreign policy and failed to explore decision makers and decision making processes.³⁰

However, from the early 2000s onwards, the number of theoretical studies about Turkish foreign policy began to increase tremendously. Researchers such as Özcan (2001, 2009, 2010)³¹, Kesgin and Kaarbo (2010)³², Çarkoğlu (2003)³³,

²⁵ Walter Carlsnaes, “On Analyzing the Dynamics of Foreign Policy Change: A Critique and Reconceptualization,” *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1993, pp. 5-30.

²⁶ Gustavsson, “How Sould We Study Foreign Policy Change,” pp. 73-95.

²⁷ Yvonne Kleistra and Igor Mayer, “Stability and Flux in Foreign Affairs: Modelling Policy and Organizational Change,” *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 2001, pp. 381-414.

²⁸ David B. Huxsoll, *Regimes, Institutions and Foreign Policy Change*, PH.D Thesis, Lousiana State University, ABD, 2003.

²⁹ Fredrik Doeser, “Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Change in Small States: The Fall of the Danish Footnote Policy,” *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 2011, pp. 222-241 and Fredrik Doeser, “Leader-Driven Foreign-Policy Change: Denmark and the Persian Gulf War,” *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 34, No. 5, 2013, pp. 582-597.

³⁰ Ertan Efegil and Rıdvan Kalaycı, *Dış Politika Teorileri Bağlamında Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, Ankara: Nobel Yayınevi, Vol. 1, 2012.

³¹ Gencer Özcan, “The Military and the Making of Foreign Policy in Turkey, Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multiregional Power,” in Rubin, B., Kirişçi, K.(ed.) *Turkey in World Politics: An Emerging Multiregional Power*, London: Lynne Rienner, 2001, Gencer Özcan, “Facing Its Waterloo in Diplomacy: Turkey’s Military in Foreign Policy Making Process,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 40, 2009, pp. 85-104 and Gencer Özcan, “The Changing Role of Turkey’s Military in Turkish Foreign Policy Making,” *UNISCI discussion papers*, Vol. 23, 2010, pp. 23-45.

³² Barış Kesgin and Juliet Kaarbo, “When and How Parliaments Influence Foreign Policy: The Case of Turkey’s Iraq Decision,” *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 11, 2010, pp. 19-36.

Özkeçeci-Taner (2005)³⁴, Ak (2005)³⁵ and Taydaş and Özdamar (2012)³⁶ have examined the impact of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT), public opinion, coalition governments and individual leaders on Turkish foreign policy. Besides, scholars such as Tayfur and Göymen (2002)³⁷, Efegil (2002)³⁸, Çuhadar-Gürkaynak ve Özkeçeci-Taner³⁹ have analyzed decision making processes regarding the Caspian Oil Pipeline issue, the Gulf War (1990-1991), Turkey's intervention in Cyprus (1974) and the acceptance of Turkey's EU candidate status.

In recent years, the subject of change in Turkish foreign policy began to attract more and more attention among researchers in Turkey. In two different articles, namely "*Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Historical Framework and Traditional Inputs (1999)*" and "*Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Changing Patterns and Conjunctures During the Cold War (2000)*"⁴⁰, Mustafa Aydın discusses different factors of continuity and change in Turkish foreign policy in the aftermath of the Cold War. Especially from 2002 onwards, when the first JDP government

³³ Ali Çarkoğlu, "Who Wants the Full Membership? Characteristics of Public Opinion Support for EU Membership in Turkey," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 4 No. 1.

³⁴ Binnur Özkeçeci Taner, "The Impact of Institutionalized Ideas in Coalition Foreign Policy Making: Turkey as an Example, 1991-2002," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 1, 2005, pp. 249-278.

³⁵ Ömer Ak, *Dış Politika Analizi ve Liderlik: Süleymaniye Krizi Sürecinde R.T.Erdoğan Örneği*, M. S. Thesis, Ankara University, 2009, pp. 9-113.

³⁶ Zeynep Taydaş and Özgür Özdamar, "A Divided Government, an Ideological Parliament, and an Insecure Leader: Turkey's Indecision about Joining the Iraq War," *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No.1, 2013, pp. 217-241.

³⁷ Fatih Tayfur and Korel Göymen, "Decision Making in Turkish Foreign Policy: The Caspian Oil, Pipeline Issue," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 2002, pp. 101-122.

³⁸ Ertan Efegil, *Körfez Krizi ve Türk Dış Politikası Karar Verme Modeli*, İstanbul: Gündoğan Yayınları, 2002.

³⁹ Esra Çuhadar Gürkaynak and Binnur Özkeçeci Taner, "Decisionmaking Process Matters: Lessons Learned from Two Turkish Foreign Policy Cases," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2004, pp. 43-78.

⁴⁰ Mustafa Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Historical Framework and Traditional Inputs," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1999, pp. 152-186 and Mustafa Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Changing Patterns and Conjunctures During the Cold War," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2000, pp. 103-139.

came to office, several new studies were published in the area of foreign policy change. For example; while some authors focus on the economic causes of foreign policy change (Kirişçi 2009, Kutlay 2011)⁴¹, others examine the EU accession process (Öniş 2003, Özcan 2008, Aydın and Açıkmеше 2007).⁴² Furthermore, several authors explain the changes in Turkish foreign policy within the context of the constructivist approach by focusing on identity and culture (Bozdağlıođlu 2003, Cizre 2003, Bilgin 2005, Benli Altunışık and Tür 2006, Aras and Karakaya Polat 2008, Balcı and Kardaş 2012, Yeşiltaş 2013).⁴³

Despite increasing attention on the subject of foreign policy change in recent years both in national and international scholarship, the individual leader's role in this process still remains a neglected theme. In the existing literature, it is possible to observe three different perspectives regarding the role of leaders in foreign policy change. The first view explains foreign policy change only with structural and environmental factors and it does not take individuals into account at all.⁴⁴ According to the second view, individual leaders constitute only one of several causes of change

⁴¹ Kemal Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 40, 2009, pp. 29-59 and Mustafa Kutlay, "Economy as the 'Practical Hand' of 'New Turkish Foreign Policy': A Political Economy Explanation," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2011, pp. 67-88.

⁴² Ziya Öniş, "Turkey and the Middle East after September 11: The Importance of the EU Dimension," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 2003, Mesut Özcan, *Harmonizing Foreign Policy: Turkey, the EU, and the Middle East*, Burlington, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008 and Mustafa Aydın and Sinem Açıkmеше, "Europeanization through EU Conditionality: Understanding the New Era in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Journal of Southeast Europe and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2007, pp. 263-274.

⁴³ Yücel Bozdağlıođlu, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity: A Constructivist Approach*, London: Routledge, 2003, Ümit Cizre, "Demythologizing the National Security Concept: The Case of Turkey," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 2, 2003, pp. 213-229, Pinar Bilgin, "Turkey's Changing Security Discourse: The Challenges of Globalization," *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2005, Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür, "From Distant Neighbors to Partners? Changing Syrian-Turkish Relations," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2006, pp. 229-248, Bülent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, "From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Iran and Syria," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 39, No. 5, 2008, pp. 495-505, Ali Balcı and Tuncay Kardaş, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey's Relations with Israel: An Analysis of 'Securitization'," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2012, pp. 99-120 and Murat Yeşiltaş, "The Transformation of the Geopolitical Vision in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2013, pp. 661-687.

⁴⁴ Huxsoll, *Regimes, Institutions and Foreign Policy Change*, and Volgy and Schwarz, "Does Politics Start at the Water's Edge? Domestic Politics Factors and Foreign Policy Restructuring in Great Britain, France, and West Germany," pp. 615-643.

without any specific emphasis on them⁴⁵. The third perspective argues that national and international variables lead to foreign policy change only through the leaders in office.⁴⁶ And in addition to these perspectives, Doeser argues in his article “*Leader-driven Foreign Policy Change: Denmark and the Persian Gulf War*” that changes in foreign policy can be directly caused by the individual leader.⁴⁷

Discussions about Turkish domestic and foreign policy frequently refer to the importance of individual leaders. However, systematic studies that explore how leaders' personality traits, ideology and decision making style affect Turkish foreign policy⁴⁸, are relatively new in the literature. Hence, the role of individual leaders in the processes of change in Turkish foreign policy constitutes a new and interesting area of research. This issue is also an important point of discussion for Turkish-Israeli relations. The relationship between Turkey and Israel has significantly deteriorated since the Operation Cast Lead in 2008. While a number of researchers explain the worsening of this relationship with structural factors including, but not limited to, the improvements in Turkey's relations with Syria and Iran in the late 1990s, the impact of the 2003 Iraq War, and the JDP's new foreign policy vision, others account for this deterioration by focusing on the role of the individual leader, namely the Prime Minister (and then President) Tayyip Erdoğan.⁴⁹ Another group of researchers explain the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relationship with a combination of both individual and structural factors. For example, Hasan Kösebalaban in his article, “*The Crisis in Turkish-Israeli Relations: What is its Strategic Significance*” provides an analysis of individual-level variables, domestic

⁴⁵ Hermann, “Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy,” pp. 3-22 and Kleistra and Mayer, “Stability and Flux in Foreign Affairs: Modelling Policy and Organizational Change,” pp. 381-414.

⁴⁶ Gustavsson, “How Sould We Study Foreign Policy Change,” pp. 73-95 and Jonathan Renshon, “Stability and Change in Belief Systems: The Operational Code of George W. Bush,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 52, No. 6, 2008, pp. 820-849.

⁴⁷ Doeser, “Leader-Driven Foreign-Policy Change: Denmark and the Persian Gulf War,” pp. 582-597.

⁴⁸ Ali Faik Demir, *Türk Dış Politikasında Liderler*, İstanbul, Bağlam Yayınları, 2007, Barış Kesgin, “Tansu Çiller's Leadership Traits and Foreign Policy,” *Perceptions*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 2012, pp. 29-50 and Barış Kesgin, “Leadership Traits of Turkey's Islamist and Secular Prime Ministers,” *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2013, pp. 136-157.

⁴⁹ İlker Aytürk, “The Coming of an Ice Age? Turkish- Israeli Relations Since 2002,” *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2011, p. 683.

politics and the international system in order to make a more comprehensive explanation.⁵⁰ However, many studies either only focus on structural factors (e.g. Erkmen 2005, Aytürk 2009, Oğuzlu 2010)⁵¹ or present leader-focused arguments (e.g. Ak 2009, Kesgin 2011, Ersoy Öztürk 2014)⁵². Thus, the number of scholars who take into account various factors to explain the worsening Turkish-Israeli relations is actually very few in the literature (e.g. Tür 2012, Aytürk 2011).⁵³ Furthermore, the existing studies often do not examine the current changes in the Turkish-Israeli relations from a theoretical perspective and in a systematic manner.

This thesis examines the Turkish-Israeli relations which came to a breaking point after the Operation Cast Lead (2008) by taking into account both structural factors and Tayyip Erdoğan's ideology as well as his personality characteristics. My goal is to advance the literature on this subject and show how both structural factors and Erdoğan as an individual leader have shaped Turkey's foreign policy toward Israel in recent years. In doing this, Gustavsson's model of foreign policy change provides a useful analytical framework in order to demonstrate the process of deterioration in Turkish-Israeli relations from 2008 onwards. The reason why Gustavsson's model is considered useful in order to understand this case of foreign policy change is that although the previous models provide important contributions to the scholarship, they either make use of too many explanatory variables or present a complicated framework to work with.

⁵⁰ Hasan Kösebalaban, "The Crisis in Turkish-Israeli Relations: What is its Strategic Significance?," *Middle East Policy Council*, Vol. 18, No. 3, Fall 2010.

⁵¹ Erkmen, "1990'lardan Günümüze Türkiye-İsrail Stratejik İşbirliği," pp. 157-185, Aytürk, "Between Crises and Cooperation: The Future of Turkish-Israeli Relations," pp. 57-74 and Oğuzlu, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A structural Account," pp. 273-288.

⁵² Ak, *Dış Politika Analizi ve Liderlik: Süleymaniye Krizi Sürecinde R.T.Erdoğan Örneği*, pp. 9-113, Barış Kesgin, *Political Leadership and Foreign Policy in Post-Cold War Israel and Turkey*, PhD Thesis, University of Kansas, 2011 and Tuğçe Ersoy Öztürk, "Religion as a Factor in Israeli-Turkish Relations: A Constructivist Overlook," *Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 13, No. 1-2, Spring 2014, pp. 62-74.

⁵³ Ozlem Tür, "Turkey and Israel in the 2000s: From Cooperation to Conflict," *Israel Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Fall 2012, pp. 45-66 and Aytürk, "The Coming of an Ice Age? Turkish- Israeli Relations Since 2002," p. 683.

1.3 Causal Mechanism

This thesis explores how Turkish-Israeli relations have come to a breaking point after the Operation Cast Lead in 2008. What happened while the relations were moving around a cool line in the past? This thesis explores the causes of this deterioration by focusing on both Prime Minister (and then President) Tayyip Erdoğan's individual role and the structural factors in this process. At this point, Gustavsson's model provides a useful analytical framework in order to explain the specifics of the deterioration in Turkish-Israeli relations after 2008.

According to Gustavsson, foreign policy refers to “a set of goals, directives and intentions, formulated by persons in official or authoritative positions, directed at some actor or condition in the environment beyond the sovereign nation state, for the purpose of affecting the target in the manner desired by the policy makers.”⁵⁴ Although there are different perspectives in the foreign policy literature about how to define foreign policy change (for examples see Goldmann 1988, Hermann 1990, Rosati 1994, etc.) Gustavsson argues that in order to have a better understanding of foreign policy change, “*the simultaneous occurrence of changes in fundamental structural conditions, strategic political leadership, and the presence of a crisis of some kind*” [emphasis original] ⁵⁵ must be taken into account. Gustavsson's model implies a three-step procedure. The first step consists of a number of sources which are regarded as “fundamental structural conditions” and they are divided into two categories as international and domestic factors. He further divides these two categories into additional subcategories as political and economic factors. While international political factors refer to power relations and the traditional military issues, international economic factors refer to cross-border economic transactions and the institutional conditions that govern these transactions. The domestic political factors, on the other hand, involve the impact of political parties, support needed from voters as well as social actors while the domestic economic factors cover

⁵⁴ Cited in Gustavsson, “How Should We Study Foreign Policy Change,” p. 75.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 73.

broader economic indicators such as the Gross domestic product (GDP) growth, inflation rate and the level of unemployment.

The second step implies that changes in foreign policy can occur based on the individual decision makers' perception of structural factors and how they reflect on them. The final step is the decision making process. This step refers to the process in which the policy makers feel the necessity for change in foreign policy, and they work within formal and informal institutions to bring about the change in foreign policy.⁵⁶ Additionally, Gustavsson emphasizes the idea of a crisis in order to change the existing foreign policy. As a crisis situation involves the sense of fear and urgent situation, it provides an opportunity to remove the feeling of numbness for policy makers.⁵⁷

As mentioned above, Gustavsson's model provides a useful analytical framework to examine how Turkish-Israeli relations have dramatically changed after the Operation Cast Lead in 2008. There are a number of important structural factors that have provided the framework for the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations at the international level. The first major structural factor is Turkey's changing relations with regional actors like Syria and Iran. As Turkey improved its relations with Syria and Iran from the late 1990s and early 2000s onwards, it began to feel less need for a security cooperation with Israel in the region. Also, Israel's close ties with the Kurds in northern Iraq in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq War distressed Turkey, which has been concerned about the possible emergence of an independent Kurdish state in the region for a long time. Second, Turkey's improved relations with the EU in the early 2000s helped the country to leave aside its sense of isolation, which was the feeling in the 1990s and removed any urge to get closer to Israel. Third, the negative pace of the Turkey-US partnership under the Bush administration had negative implications for the Turkish-Israeli cooperation.⁵⁸ Fourth, the economic crisis in Turkey in 2000/2001 contributed negatively to the Turkish-Israeli economic cooperation. And finally, domestic factors such as the JDP government's foreign policy vision,

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 84.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 86.

⁵⁸ Oğuzlu, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A Structural Account," p. 284.

decreasing the role of the Turkish military in politics, and the increasing pro-Palestine stance of the Turkish public opinion in the face of the second intifada also have made the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relationship inevitable.⁵⁹

As the second step in Gustavsson's model, he touches upon the influence of the individual leader on the process of change in foreign policy. For Gustavsson, structural factors can bring about a change in foreign policy only when they are processed by the leaders and only when the leaders feel the necessity for a change. When the change in Turkish foreign policy towards Israel is examined in this context, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as the main political leader at the time, has had a significant place in this process. First, it should be stated that Prime Minister (and then President) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is a leader who has an Islamist background and was a member of the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) movement which is well-known for its anti-Israeli stance. That is why, Tayyip Erdoğan has stated several times that he would not be tolerant of Israel's inhumane practices and attitudes towards the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. This position had a significant impact on how Erdoğan perceived Israeli policies in the region.

The crisis situation, which acted as a trigger for a change in Turkish-Israeli relations according to Gustavsson's model involved the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip in 2008 during the negotiations between Syria and Israel. The Operation Cast Lead occupied a significant place on Turkey's agenda and Turkey developed a harsh response against this operation. In every statement about this incident, Tayyip Erdoğan rigorously posed his stance, and he defined Israeli attacks as "crimes against humanity".⁶⁰ During this process, Erdoğan's perception that Israel deceived Turkey about its willingness for peace in connection to the Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations also contributed to his harsh stance against Israel. After the 2008 Gaza Strip and Davos crises, many crises followed one after another, which carried the relations already on the eve of rupture to more severe points. The "Low Seat" crisis in 2009 and the subsequent "Mavi Marmara" crisis in 2010 put the Turkish-Israeli relations into an ice-age which lasted for several years.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 276.

⁶⁰ Fikret Bila, "Erdoğan'ın Verdiği Sert Tepkinin İki Nedeni," *Milliyet*, 30 December 2008.

1.4 Methodology

This thesis examines the process of deterioration in the relationship between Turkey and Israel in the aftermath of the 2008 Gaza War. The study mainly uses the process tracing method to establish the causal process through which the escalation of the Turkish-Israeli relationship reached to the point of rupture. Process tracing refers to “the effort to infer causality through the identification of causal mechanisms.” Especially, theory-oriented process tracing method is quite useful in interpreting complex facts and results influenced by many variables, and it is a method becoming more and more prevalent.⁶¹

In this thesis, the process tracing method is used in connection to the foreign policy decision making model developed by Jakob Gustavsson. Gustavsson explains the process of change in foreign policy in a three-step model, which focuses on the structural conditions, the individual leader’s perceptions and a crisis situation. Thus, this thesis traces the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relations through a step by step process in line with Gustavsson’s model. Throughout the analysis, a particular emphasis is placed on the extent to which the structural conditions and Tayyip Erdoğan’s individual perceptions contributed to the current state of the Turkish-Israeli relationship.

With respect to the analysis of Erdoğan as the individual leader, certain aspects of the method of discourse analysis is also utilized in this thesis. Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method which intends to reveal how social reality is built and sustained through texts.⁶² In line with the idea that state identities are political, relational and social, the discourse analysis in foreign policy is used to understand how identities and foreign policies associated with these identities are formed through the discourse.⁶³ Discourse analysis is especially useful here to systematically

⁶¹ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004, p. 206.

⁶² Cynthia Hardy, Bill Harley, and Nelson Philips, “Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis: Two Solitudes,” *Qualitative Methods: Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section on Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2004, p. 19.

⁶³ Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 5.

present and analyze the pre-and post-Gaza War statements of Tayyip Erdoğan. Thus, a brief analysis of discourse is used to demonstrate how Erdoğan's discourse about Israel changed with the 2008 Gaza War and contributed to the breakdown of the Turkish-Israeli relationship.

In order to trace the process in which Turkish-Israeli relations deteriorated, newspaper archives, especially those of national mainstream newspapers having circulation all around Turkey (e.g. Hürriyet, Milliyet) have been scanned between 2003 and 2010 to find material covering the relevant foreign policy changes. Secondary data sources also are utilized in this work for this purpose, including academic books and articles on Turkish foreign policy. For the analysis of Erdoğan's pre and post-Gaza discourse, all political speeches, interviews, and press meetings of Tayyip Erdoğan, as they were reflected in the mainstream national newspapers between the years 2003 and 2010 have been collected. For this analysis, Erdoğan's specific expressions, sentences and words on Israel have been identified.

1.5 Organization of the Chapters

The rest of the thesis proceeds as follows: Chapter Two gives historical background of Turkish-Israeli relations in three time periods: Turkish-Israeli Relations from 1948 to 1990; the Honeymoon Years in Turkish-Israeli Relations from 1990 to 2008; and the Breakdown of Turkish-Israeli Relations and the Recent Normalization Process from 2008 to present. Chapter Three explains what kind of structural factors have contributed to the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations. Chapter Four first discusses the role of Tayyip Erdoğan and his discourse in the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relationship from 2008 onwards, and then presents the decision making process through which other actors have contributed to this foreign policy change. Finally, Chapter Five, the conclusion section, summarizes the main arguments of the thesis and presents a number of conclusions .

CHAPTER 2

Historical Background

2.1 Turkish-Israeli Relations between 1948-1990

The diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel date back to March 28, 1949. Turkey was the first predominantly Muslim country that recognized Israel in 1949. The then president İsmet İnönü stated at the time of recognition that political relations began with the newly born Israeli government. İnönü expressed his hope that this state would become a factor of peace and stability in the Near East.⁶⁴ After this recognition, relations between Turkey and Israel gained momentum in the areas of commerce, military cooperation and intelligence. However, the relationship between Turkey and Israel has experienced ups and downs over the years.

In the 1950s, Turkish-Israeli diplomatic relations were established at the level of ambassadors and this relationship began to diversify due to three major structural reasons. First, during these years, both countries were in the process of reducing the role of religion in domestic politics and turning their faces towards the West in terms of building a parliamentary democracy and a Western style economic model. Second, Turkish policy makers were of the opinion that the emerging Cold War alliance between Turkey and the United States (US) could be more powerful with the support of the Israeli lobby in the US Congress. Thus, it was a good idea to improve relations with Israel. Furthermore, Turkey, which perceived supporting the US forces in Korea as a significant opportunity to become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty

⁶⁴ Kazım Öztürk, *Cumhurbaşkanlarının Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisini Açış Nutukları*, Ak Yayınları, İstanbul, 1969, p. 415.

Organization (NATO), was disturbed by the fact that the Arab states were involved in the dissident wing. During this period, Israel's support to send soldiers to Korea with the US increased Turkey's confidence in Israel. Thus, the then Prime Minister Adnan Menderes became the first Turkish political leader that took steps to deepen relations between the two countries in the 1950s.⁶⁵

During this period, it was important for Israel to improve relations with Turkey as well. The fact that Israel assigned one of the most skillful diplomats of the country, Elihu Sassan, for the diplomatic mission in Ankara and that Israel sent its fourth military attaché to Ankara after Washington, Paris and London is an indicator of this situation in these years. Israeli policy makers recognized the importance of the pro-western foreign policy of Turkey, which is the sole democratic and secular Muslim country in the region, and they thought that increasing cooperation with Turkey would be helpful for their relations with the West as well.⁶⁶ Thus, on July 4, 1950, trade agreements were signed between Turkey and Israel. These trade-related activities brought countries closer and also had a positive impact on political relations.

However, a number of issues in the 1950s raised concerns in Israel about Turkish foreign policy. For example, the Baghdad Pact (1955), the aim of which was to create a security zone among a number of regional countries, was not welcomed by Israel. Israel stressed that the Baghdad Pact targeted the existence of Israel because it encouraged the Arab solidarity and aimed at increasing Arab oppression against Israel. Another diplomatic strain was observed during the 1956 Suez Crisis. The Suez Crisis was the result of the Israeli invasion of Egypt in October 29, 1956 in response to the nationalization of the Suez Canal. The Israeli attack was followed by the British and French effort to take control of the Suez Canal. In response to this situation, although Turkey did not take a stance against Britain and France, which were allies in NATO, it condemned Israel and recalled its ambassador from Tel

⁶⁵ "İçimizdeki İsrail," *Oda TV*, 5 September 2010, <http://odatv.com/icimizdeki-israil-0509101200.html>.

⁶⁶ Çağrı Erhan, "Türk-İsrail İlişkileri (1948-2001)," *Türkler Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 17, 2002, pp. 251-259.

Aviv. Thus, Turkey began to maintain its bilateral relations with Israel at a minimum level after this incident.

In the 1960s, Turkey started to follow a more balanced and pro-Arab policy in its foreign relations mainly as a result of the 1964 Johnson letter.⁶⁷ With the Johnson letter, which Turkey received in response to the debates about a possible Turkish military intervention in Cyprus, the İnönü government was given the message that in case a Turkish intervention in Cyprus might trigger a Soviet response, Turkey might not receive NATO protection.⁶⁸ For example, in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Turkey took the side of the Arab countries and did not allow the US to use the İncirlik Air base to provide help and support for Israel. In addition to this, Turkey established close relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) which was perceived as a terrorist organization by the Israel.⁶⁹ During this period, Turkey also gave support for the United Nations (UN) resolution, which identified Zionism as racism. Thus, by the 1980s, there was a clear decline in relations between Turkey and Israel. In this time period, after Israel annexed East Jerusalem during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, it declared unified Jerusalem as Israel's eternal and unchanging capital city. In response, Turkey protested Israel and closed its Consulate General in East Jerusalem, and the relations were reduced to the level of the Second Secretary in August 1980.⁷⁰ Although the US policy makers were of the opinion that Turkey should improve relations with Israel, the deterioration in Turkish-Israeli relations lasted until the mid-1980s.

In the mid-1980s, relations entered into a softening period. Turgut Özal, who served first as the Prime Minister (1983-1989) and then the President (1989-1993) of the country, had a significant role in this process. After coming to power, Özal put priority on Turkey's national interests and emphasized the important role of the

⁶⁷ Türel Yılmaz, "Turkey-Israeli Relations: Past and Present," *Akademik Orta Doğu*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2010, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁸ Ayman, "Türkiye-İran İlişkilerinde Kimlik, Güvenlik, İşbirliği ve Rekabet," in Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.) *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, p. 577.

⁶⁹ Çağrı Erhan and Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "Arap Olmayan Ülkelerle İlişkiler," in Baskın Oran (ed.) *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar*, Vol. 1, (1980-2001), İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2001, p. 800.

⁷⁰ Türel Yılmaz, *Türkiye-İsrail Yakınlaşması*, İmaj Yayıncılık, Ankara, 2001, p. 14.

Israeli lobby in the US vis-à-vis the Arab countries that were demanding Turkey to cut relations with Israel.⁷¹ During this period, Turgut Özal made a great effort to establish a balanced policy towards the Israelis and the Palestinians.

The period starting from the mid-1980s onwards, but especially the 1990s, was described as the “honeymoon years” in Turkey’s relations with Israel. In addition to the then Prime Minister Turgut Özal’s initial active role as a leader, several structural factors also contributed to this change, which are discussed below.

2.2 The Honeymoon Years in Turkish-Israeli Relations (1990-2008)

In the 1990s, the Turkish-Israeli relationship began to thaw and even led to the formation of a strategic alliance between the two countries and signing of several trade agreements. In 1994, Prime Minister Tansu Çiller became the first Turkish Prime Minister who visited Israel. During this period, there were several structural factors which brought about a period of “*strategic cooperation*” between Turkey and Israel. The first one was Israel’s and Turkey’s common position towards Syria. In the 1990s, while Turkey was trying to cope with its southern neighbors’ support for the PKK, Syria and Greece signed a military training agreement in 1995. In response, Turkish policy makers thought that getting closer to Israel could balance this situation and create regional solidarity vis-à-vis common regional threats. On the other hand, Israel was also in search of a powerful partner against Iraq and Syria at the time regarding the Palestinian issue. Thus, in 1996, Süleyman Demirel became the first Turkish President who visited Israel. Demirel made an important effort to improve Turkey’s relations with Israel, especially in the areas of economic and military cooperation. Turkish President Süleyman Demirel together with the Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres played an important role in strengthening Turkish Israeli cooperation in counterterrorism and in signing a free-trade agreement between the two countries. During this period, although Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan from the Islamist Welfare Party was not ideologically in favor of close Turkish-Israeli relations, Demirel’s emphasis on the importance of Turkish-Israeli bilateral

⁷¹ Mustafa Üren, “AKP İktidarı Dönemi Türk-İsrail İlişkileri,” *IMPR Rapor*, No. 10, 2011.

cooperation as well as the Turkish military's strong preference for closer ties with Israel vis-à-vis the regional threats brought these two countries together.

A second factor that allowed Turkey and Israel to establish a close relationship in the 1990s was the broader international environment. The beginning of the Oslo peace process in the early 1990s between the Arab states and Israel allowed Turkey to establish closer ties with Israel without much criticism from the Arab countries. Furthermore, when Iraq occupied Kuwait in August 1990, Israel, Turkey and a number of Arab states joined the international coalition together against Iraq. During this period, the PLO took the Iraqi side and lost financial support provided by some Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia. In this environment, the PLO barrier preventing the development of Turkey's relations with Israel was removed. During this period, Turkish policy makers were especially disturbed by the power vacuum in Northern Iraq, which had negative implications for Turkey's struggle with the PKK. Thus, Turkey needed Israel as a security partner in its fight against the PKK. Israel was in a similar situation, too, because Arab countries were pursuing anti-Israel policies in this period. Especially, Israel was perceived Iran as a threat due to its nuclear program and nuclear weapons.⁷² In sum, the regional threats as well as the broader international environment played an important role in bringing these countries together in the 1990s. Additionally, Israel's being an economically and technologically advanced country also contributed to the improvement of trade relations between Turkey and Israel in the market of software, electronics, advanced technology, automation, defense industry and pharmaceuticals. As a result, Turkish-Israeli strategic partnership was formed and the relations reached their peak in the areas of political, military, and economic cooperation.

However, the honeymoon period in the Turkish-Israeli relationship came to an end in the late 1990s. In 1998, in the aftermath of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's expulsion from Syria, Turkey and Syria signed the Adana Accord, which provided an opportunity for Turkey to expand its foreign policy towards the Middle East, especially Syria. After this agreement, Syria ended its support for the PKK and closed the PKK camps in the country, which led to a quick improvement in the

⁷² Türel Yılmaz, "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri: Tarihten Günümüze," *Akademik Ortadoğu*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2010, p. 18

relationship between the two countries from the late 1990s onwards. The signing of the Adana Accord with Syria in 1998 and the rapid improvement in the relations opened up a new path for Turkey regarding its the Middle East policies. Accordingly, the Turkish-Israeli cooperation fell back into a troubled situation due to this rapid improvement taking place in Turkish-Arab relations.

Since the early 2000s, a number of structural factors have once again influenced Turkish-Israeli relations. Especially, Israel's disproportional use of force against the Palestinians during the second intifada and the assassination of several Palestinian leaders during this period increased the tension. Furthermore, the eruption of the Iraq War (2003) substantially affected Turkey's relations with Iran and Syria, which constituted the two significant threats for Turkey in the 1990s, and once led Turkey to cooperate with Israel. In the aftermath of the war, common interests among Turkey, Iran and Syria helped improve the relations among these countries.⁷³ One of these common interests has been the future of Iraq. In the 1990s, Turkey's concerns about the Kurdish question were not consistent with Syria and Iran's perceptions about the issue. During this period, Turkey frequently complained that Iran and especially Syria were providing help and support for the PKK. However, with the Iraq War, uncertainties about the future of Iraq, especially the rising possibility of the emergence of an independent Kurdish state began to also disturb Iran and Syria, which have their own Kurdish minorities. Thus, in the 2000s, Turkey, Iran and Syria felt the need to cooperate with regard to the Kurdish question and put emphasis on their common interests in promoting the territorial integrity of Iraq.⁷⁴

In fact, one can see the gradual deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations in the 2000s starting from the collapse of the Camp David talks and later followed by the second/Al-Aqsa intifada. These developments urged Turkey to take the Palestinian side, and as a result, from the early 2000s onwards, Turkey started to perceive its relations with Israel as a "burden rather than an asset".⁷⁵ The first major sign of the

⁷³ "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri," *SDE Analiz*, October 2011, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁴ Bülent Aras, "Türkiye-Suriye-İran İlişkileri," *TASAM*, 23 February 2005.

⁷⁵ Aytürk, "The Coming of an Ice Age? Turkish- Israeli Relations Since 2002," p. 676.

deterioration of relations between Turkey and Israel was given by Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit. When the Israeli troops had pulled to Palestinian cities and many Palestinians died in the Operation Defensive Shield on March 29, 2002, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit charged Israel with “genocide”⁷⁶. This stance was a significant example to show the level of Turkey’s reaction towards Israeli actions in 2001.

From the late 1990s and early 2000s onwards, several other factors contributed to the deterioration of Turkey’s relations with Israel, including George W. Bush’s policies towards the Middle East after the 9/11 attacks, Turkey’s improving relations with the EU after 1999 Helsinki Summit, and the 2000/2001 severe economic crisis in Turkey. The details of these structural developments and their consequences are discussed in the next chapter. Here, suffice it to say that these developments provided an unfavorable environment from the late 1990s onwards, which contributed to the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relationship.

When the JDP came to power in November 2002, it did not radically change Turkey’s policy towards Israel. The JDP government continued to criticize Israel in response to its use of force vis-à-vis the Palestinians as previous governments did. Thus, it is important to note that the close partnership between Turkey and Israel already had begun to deteriorate before the JDP came to power. As mentioned earlier, the former Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit even blamed Israel with “genocide” because of the Operation Defensive Shield in 2002. Similarly, Turkey cast an affirmative vote at the UN to condemn Israel’s separation wall in 2003, and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan denounced the killing of the Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yasin in 2004 as a “terrorist act” by also actively protesting Israeli military actions in Lebanon and in the Palestinian territories in 2006.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Barçın Yinanç, “Israel ‘Hit Flotilla Harder than Turkey Expected,’ Former Turkish Diplomat Says,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, 4 June 2002.

⁷⁷ Ufuk Ulutaş, “Turkey- Israel: A Fluctuating Alliance,” *SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research*, January 2010, No. 42, 2010, p. 5.

2.3 The Breakdown of Turkish-Israeli Relations and the Recent Normalization Process (2008 – present)

While Turkey's criticisms about Israel's policies in the region were increasing from the early 2000s onwards, Israel in fact tried to take its relations with Turkey to a more positive direction. Israel also wanted to diversify its relations with Turkey in different areas such as tourism, technology and architecture alongside the military and intelligence cooperation. Aytürk argued that by the 2000s the Turkish-Israeli relations transformed into a "big-little brother" interaction in which Israel surprisingly adopted and internalized the little brother role.⁷⁸ One major reason for this situation was that Israel needed international legitimacy, regional normalization and diplomatic recognition by its neighbors in the early 2000s. It was especially vital for Israel to construct strong relations with Turkey, which had a democratic regime along with a Muslim-majority population, because these relations could provide Israel with great advantage in international forums for its strategic goals. Second, military cooperation with Turkey could provide strong benefits and regional expansion to Israel, because, Israel could use the Konya Airbase to carry out training flights with the support of the US. Besides, Israel and Turkey carried out joint naval exercises every year in the Mediterranean. Considering the fact that Turkey is Iran's neighbor and thousands of Iranians come to Turkey every year, it is not difficult to understand how valuable Turkey is for Israel as a source of intelligence. Third, during the early and mid-2000s, Turkey's growing weight in the Middle East within the context of the JDP's new foreign policy vision made Turkey so special for Israel that Israel balanced traditional adversaries in the region. For instance, the alliance between the US, Turkey and Israel fulfilled this function until the mid-2000s and these countries established a considerable pressure on both Syria and Iran as well as Hamas and Hezbollah.⁷⁹ Turkey's mediation initiative between Israel and Syria was also welcomed by both sides. Furthermore, Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas were brought together before the Annapolis Convention in 2007. After this first meeting,

⁷⁸ Aytürk, "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri," in Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.) *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, p. 619.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 620-621.

Olmert visited Turkey to discuss the peace process between Israel and Syria on November 27, 2008.

Although Israel needed Turkey for the above-mentioned reasons in the early 2000s, Turkey's new foreign vision in fact changed this situation. The idea of departing from the Middle East as much as possible in order to be part of the West was a key aspect of Turkish foreign policy for many years; yet this fundamental idea began to change with the JDP. With Turkey's rising prestige among the Middle East countries, developing close relations with Israel began to constitute a great risk for the new Turkish foreign policy vision of the JDP. During the JDP's tenure, the Turkish military's decreasing influence in politics in the aftermath of the EU harmonization reforms, as well as Ergenekon and Balyoz trials, and the public's increasing critical stance against Israel also negatively influenced Turkish-Israeli relations. While these factors were gradually shaping the relationship between the two countries towards a negative direction, Israel's Operation Cast Lead on the Gaza Strip in 2008 caused a new crisis.

Turkey identified the Israeli attack on Gaza as unacceptable and did not welcome this action during the peace process between Israel and Syria. The then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stressed that the operation, which killed 1391 and injured more than 4000 people, was an example of state terrorism by Israel.⁸⁰ Turkey's reaction towards the Israeli operation was serious. Most importantly, Erdoğan perceived the Israeli behavior as an insult to Turkey and pointed out that he lost confidence in the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert since the latter did not give Turkey any prior notice about this operation. Erdoğan also stated that Ehud Olmert was not a reliable partner for the peace process. He accused the international press of being controlled by Israel and of not giving enough space for the news about the slaughter in the Gaza Strip. He asked how Israel could still keep its seat in the UN, and addressed Israelis in Hebrew reading the Sixth Commandment of the Decalogue, "*Lo tirtsach*" (Thou shall not kill). Tayyip Erdoğan perceived the issue as a personal

⁸⁰ Mensur Akgün, Sabiha Senyücel Gündoğar and Aybars Görgülü, "Politics in Troubled Times: Israel- Turkey Relations," *TESEV*, December 2014, p. 4.

affront and he was very irritated by the Israeli operation during the mediation process.⁸¹

Israel's Operation Cast Lead was the first sign of the breakdown of relations between Turkey and Israel. This operation caused a new crisis at the Davos Summit in January 2009. When Prime Minister Erdoğan and President Peres joined the same panel, Erdoğan first implied the questioning of Israel's UN membership and then they had an argument at the Davos Summit. A speech which started with Erdoğan's "*One Minute*" statement ended with him leaving the panel. This crisis was labelled as the "One Minute" crisis in history. In this same time period, the Anatolian Eagle military exercises were cancelled in 2009 by Turkey to prevent the participation of Israel, and this attitude was a sign of relations coming to an end.

Another crisis erupted between Turkey and Israel due to a Turkish TV series named "Ayrılık" (Separation). This TV series showed Israeli soldiers as savages who killed babies and included even some anti-Semitic discourse about the Israeli Ambassador Levy. Another Turkish TV series, which created problems in the Turkish-Israeli relationship was "Kurtlar Vadisi" (The Valley of the Wolves), in which MOSSAD agents were identified as children traffickers. In response to these TV shows, Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon called the Turkish Ambassador, Oğuz Çelikkol for a meeting in January 2010. During this meeting, Ayalon made insulting comments and he seated Çelikkol in a lower seat to humiliate him publicly on air. This incident almost triggered the total dissolution of the already deteriorated mutual trust between the two countries. This incident took its place as the "Low Seat" crisis in history, as well.

On May 31, 2010, another important incident, namely the "Mavi Marmara" crisis happened and this crisis turned out to be the breaking point for the bilateral relations between Turkey and Israel. Mavi Marmara was a ship which was purchased by a Turkish Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH). The Mavi Marmara flotilla which included citizens of Germany, the US and Arab countries was carrying humanitarian help for people who were affected by the Gaza incident. But, this

⁸¹ Aytürk, "The Coming of an Ice Age? Turkish- Israeli Relations Since 2002," pp. 677-678.

initiative resulted in the death of eight Turkish citizens and one US citizen because of the Israeli attack. Israeli governors claim that the Mavi Marmara flotilla was an act of provocation and thus it was attacked. In addition, Israeli press similarly denounced the aid convoy to Gaza as an act of provocation and emphasized that passengers in the Mavi Marmara ship attacked Israeli soldiers with knives and guns during the operation. On every occasion, as the cause of attacking the ship Israel stated that they acted with the aim of self-defense and preventing an existential threat.⁸² This last incident rebounded in Turkey, and it caused many protests among Turkish people and media for a long time. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmet Davutoğlu, identified this attack as “state terror” and he named the Mavi Marmara incident as “Our 9/11”. Furthermore, Ahmet Davutoğlu requested a meeting from the UN Security Council to remove the blockade on the Gaza Strip. Turkish Ambassador Oğuz Çelikkol was recalled and Davutoğlu stressed that unless four conditions were fulfilled by the Israeli government, the bilateral relationship could not be normalized.⁸³ These four conditions could be listed as follows:

- Israel had to apologize for the bloody attack on Mavi Marmara
- Israel had to pay compensation to the families of the dead and the injured.
- Israel had to accept an international commission of officials to investigate the incident.
- The blockade on Gaza Strip had to be removed.⁸⁴

In response to the Mavi Marmara incident, the Security Council agreed on a decision about condemning Israeli behaviours. However the US pressure made the expression of condemnation quite soft in the final text. It should be noted that the Mavi Marmara crisis was accepted as the biggest breaking point in Turkish-Israeli

⁸² Yasin Atlioğlu, “İsrail Basınında ‘Mavi Marmara’ Krizi,” *TASAM*, 2 June 2010.

⁸³ “İsrail’in Saldırısı Bizim 11 Eylül’ümüz,” *Milliyet*, 7 June 2010.

⁸⁴ Nuri Yeşilyurt, “Orta Doğu’yla İlişkiler,” in Baskın Oran (ed.) *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, Cilt I, (1980-2001)*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2001, p. 443.

relations. Because Mavi Marmara was the first incident in which Turkish soldiers were killed by foreign military personnel, it significantly changed the fate of the Turkish-Israeli relations.

The Mavi Marmara incident had two significant consequences. One of them was the fundamental change in the Turkish foreign policy perspective towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although Turkey has refrained from becoming an open side in the Arab-Israeli conflict since the foundation of the Israeli state, we could see that it began to act as an explicit party in favor of the Palestinians in the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara crisis. The second one was that the Turkish public opinion towards Israel got tremendously worse after Mavi Marmara. Public opinion polls during this period showed that Israel had a negative impact on Turkey.⁸⁵ As a result, the Mavi Marmara incident damaged the interests of both Turkey and Israel.

The wave of Arab uprisings, which began on December 10, 2010 in Tunisia, and which was named as the Arab Spring changed the balance of power in the Middle East and also influenced Turkey's relations with the countries in the region. The spread of the popular uprising into Syria in March 2011 deeply influenced Turkish-Syrian relations as well. The Ankara government, which expressed its support for the public movements since the first day of the Arab Spring, carefully followed the developments in Syria. While making a direct call to Bashar al-Assad to listen to the voice of his people, Erdoğan stated that Turkey would not stay silent to what was happening in Syria. However, the fact that the Turkish authorities' calls for reform did not lead to any change in Syria and that the violence increased tremendously in the country brought Turkey and Syria face to face.⁸⁶ The Turkish government supported the dissidents against the Assad regime, and hundreds of thousands of Syrians fleeing the Syrian civil war took refuge in Turkey. This created a serious refugee crisis in the country, which involved approximately 3 million Syrians in Turkey.

⁸⁵ Erdoğan, "Dış Politikada Siyasallaşma: Türk Kamuoyunun 'Davos Krizi' ve Etkileri Hakkındaki Değerlendirmeleri," p. 54.

⁸⁶ Yeşilyurt, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler," in Baskın Oran (ed.) *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, Cilt I, (1980-2001)*, p. 421.

At first, Iran interpreted the popular uprisings in the Arab world as “Islamic Awakening”, which was a continuation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. However, the spread of the uprisings to Iran’s ally, Syria, caused a deep separation between Turkey and Iran. For, unlike Turkey, Iran took the side of the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war and expressed its support for Bashar al-Assad at every instance. Thus, the JDP government’s close relations with Iran began to face problems within the context of the Syrian civil war. While Turkey supported the dissidents against the Assad regime, Iran preferred to maintain its alliance with Syria. Contradictory policies followed by the two countries opened way for the deterioration of the Turkish-Iranian relationship.

The uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt also turned the regional balance of power upside down for Israel. Especially the regime change in Egypt, with which Israel had a close relationship, thanks to the Camp David Agreement of 1979, caused dead ends for Israel’s regional policies.⁸⁷ Additionally, the spread of uprisings to Jordan constituted an important problem for Israel since Israel had signed a peace agreement in 1994 with Jordan and secured its eastern border with this agreement. Thus, the Arab uprisings caused a serious risk for Israel by both its southern and eastern borders. Besides, Israel assessed the potential democratization of Arab countries as a threat to itself. Israeli policy makers thought that the increase in the public’s involvement in the political decision making processes in Arab countries could cause the deterioration of the Arab-Israeli relations.⁸⁸ In this context, it became essential for Israel to get closer with Turkey once again. The energy issue between the two countries also created a positive environment for the Turkish-Israeli relationship. The possibility of Israel exporting its natural gas resources to Europe through Turkey with a marine pipeline project created an important potential to build effective cooperation between Turkey and Israel.⁸⁹ In addition to this, re-building close relations with a Muslim country like Turkey constituted a hope for Israel to break the international pressure about the Palestinian issue. During this periods, it

⁸⁷ Özlem Tür “İsrail’in Özür Dilemesi Sonrası Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri,” *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol. 5, No. 54, July 2013, p. 30.

⁸⁸ “Arap Baharı ve Türkiye-İsrail Uzlaşması,” *Al-Jazeera*, 19 April 2013.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

was important that Turkey had good relations with Hamas. It was seen that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan got involved as a leader to the negotiation process between Turkey and Israel. Erdoğan has become the will to conduct the recent phases of the process to normalize the relations.⁹⁰ As part of the Turkish-Israeli negotiations to normalize relations, Israel apologized in March 2013 by fulfilling the first condition of Turkey. Then, Israel agreed to pay 20 million dollars of compensation to the families of the people who were killed by the Israeli soldiers in Mavi Marmara. The issue of removing the blockade on Gaza as the last condition was softened in a way to allow Turkey to send humanitarian relief to the Palestinians in Gaza through the Ashdod port of Israel. Erdoğan emphasized that “In this way, economic relations will start to flourish significantly as well”⁹¹

In sum, Turkey was the first Muslim country to recognize Israel in 1949 and since then the Turkish-Israeli relationship has continued with ups and downs. After the relationship reached an unprecedented low as a result of a number of crises starting with the 2008 Gaza War, the Arab uprisings once again provided a favorable environment to restore the relationship between the two countries. In line with the main argument of this thesis, the historical background of Turkish-Israeli relations shows that it is the combination of the impact of a number of structural and individual-level factors that have shaped this interaction throughout the years.

⁹⁰ Abdulkadir Selvi, “Erdoğan-Putin Görüşmesinden Ne Bekleniyor?,” *Hürriyet*, 29 June 2016.

⁹¹ “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan’dan İsrail ve Rusya Açıklaması,” *Hürriyet*, 27 June 2016.

CHAPTER 3

The Impact of Structural Factors on the Deterioration of Turkish-Israeli Relations

As discussed in Chapter 1, Jakob Gustavsson's model of foreign policy change provides a useful analytical framework to examine how Turkish-Israeli relations have dramatically changed after Operation Cast Lead in 2008. According to his model, it is first necessary to look at the fundamental structural conditions, which can be divided into political and economic factors, that give way to a change in foreign policy. For the Turkish case, I argue that there are four major structural factors that have caused the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations at the international and domestic level.

3.1 Regional Dynamics

Changing regional dynamics constitute the first and most important structural factor having influence on the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations. As one of the regional dynamics, Turkish-Syrian relations were quite tense for many years. Within the historical context of Turkish-Syrian relations, issues such as Turkey's annexation of Hatay in 1939, as well as the water conflict and the Syrian support for the PKK from the 1980s onwards, have led to a distant relationship between these two countries.⁹² First, according to the dominant view in Syria, Hatay which became a part of Turkish territory on June 23, 1939, was left to Turkey by the French in an

⁹² "Geçmişten Günümüze Türkiye-Suriye İlişkileri," *Akademik Perspektif*, 2013, <http://akademikperspektif.com/2013/06/16/gecmisten-gunumuze-turkiye-suriye-iliskileri/>.

unjust manner. As Syria could not comply with this decision easily, Hatay was perceived as a stolen national land and it was included within Syrian borders in their maps. This situation constituted a problem between the two countries and caused tense relations. Second, the water conflict emerged towards the end of the 1980s. When Turkey started building dams on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers within the framework of the Southeastern Anatolia Project, Syria got disturbed by the decreasing quality and quantity of water coming from these rivers. Throughout the 1990s the water conflict continued to constitute an important place in the relations. A third problem was the Syrian support for the terrorist organization PKK against Turkey throughout the 1980s and 1990s. This support took several forms. Syria provided support for the PKK to dwell on, get trained and encamp both in its own lands and within the Lebanese borders, which was under Syrian control then. In addition to this, assistance in the forms of money, armament, intelligence and border trafficking was also provided. The PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, had stayed in Damascus until he was expelled from Syria as a result of substantial Turkish pressure in 1998. In sum, Turkish-Syrian relations were based on a mutual perception of threat for many years, especially throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

During this period, the conflictual relationship between Turkey and Syria was one of the reasons that drove Turkey closer to Israel. In response to the Syrian support for the PKK, Turkey took advantage of its security and intelligence cooperation with Israel. In other words, Turkey balanced against Syria and its support for the PKK with a security alliance with Israel. The importance of this alliance lasted until Öcalan was expelled from Syria as a result of substantial Turkish military and diplomatic pressure in 1998, which eventually led to Öcalan's capture in Kenya and his subsequent trial and imprisonment in Turkey. Öcalan's removal from Syria provided a favorable atmosphere in which Turkey and Syria began to improve their relations. Syria cut down its support for the PKK and closed down the PKK camps in its territory. With the Adana Accord signed on October 20, 1998, Turkish-Syrian relations got into a rapid process of rapprochement on the grounds of mutual respect and good neighborly relations. This process was further enhanced from 2002 onwards, when the JDP government came to office and developed a foreign policy

vision that emphasized Turkey's historical and cultural connections with the regional countries.

An additional factor that brought Turkey and Syria closer in the early 2000s was the United States War in Iraq, which started in 2003. Turkey and Syria's common security concerns that emerged because of the Iraq War became the main driving force strengthening the relationship. At the center of these concerns lied the anxiety about the fact that the US began to perceive the Kurds as their new regional allies in the Iraq War⁹³ and the possibility that an independent Kurdish state might be established within the uncertain political environment created by the war.

In this context, Turkey and Syria frequently emphasized the indivisibility of Iraq in every occasion throughout the war and they stated that they were against the idea of a sovereign Kurdish state to be formed in northern Iraq. In 2007, two countries reached an agreement on several issues such as signing of a free trade agreement, Syria's support for Turkey's EU accession process, sharing of the waters of the Euphrates River, and the status of Hatay. Furthermore, the Damascus regime requested Turkey to play the role of a facilitator in its problems with Israel.⁹⁴ As a result, starting from the late 1990s onwards, Turkey did not feel a major threat from Syria any longer. Thus, the improvement of Turkish-Syrian relations removed one of the main reasons for the presence of a close Turkish-Israeli security alliance.⁹⁵

Turkey's improving relations with Iran in the early 2000s was another regional factor that contributed to the worsening Turkish-Israeli partnership. In fact, Turkey and Iran had many ups and downs in their relations throughout history. Both of these countries' claim to become a regional power often brought them face to face. In other words, struggle and rivalry largely dominated their relationship. Especially after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Turkey and Iran experienced problems in several issue areas, including criticisms about the Iranian regime in the Turkish public opinion as

⁹³ "This was partly because of the fact that Turkey did not allow the American troops to be stationed on Turkish territory and to open a northern front in the war with the March 1st motion."

⁹⁴ Oğuzlu, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A Structural Account," p. 278.

⁹⁵ Aytürk, "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri," in Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.) *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, p. 618.

well as the Turkish policy makers' concerns about the Iranian willingness to export the revolution to the region, and the Iranian policy to provide help and support for the PKK. In the wake of the revolution, the anti-Moscow stance of the new government in Iran was perceived positively by both Turkey and the US. Turkey stated its recognition of the Islamic Republic of Iran on February 13, 1979. Furthermore, Iran was isolated in the international arena in the early days of the revolution and in order not to get much external reaction while forming its internal order, it attempted to build close relations with its neighbors, particularly with Turkey. However, according to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey's secular state model was a threat to his own regime.⁹⁶ Thus, Iran was prudent towards Turkey from its foundation onwards.

Throughout the 1990s, Iran's connections with the Islamist groups in Turkey as well as its help and support for the PKK were the main points of discussion regarding the Turkish-Iranian relationship. In fact, in addition to the threat Turkey perceived from Syria, the negative nature of the Turkish-Iranian relations constituted another reason why Turkey established a close partnership with Israel in the 1990s. During this period, the Military Training and Cooperation Agreement signed between Israel and Turkey, and the successive operation by Israel against pro-Iranian Hezbollah in Lebanon highly disturbed Iran. Especially, in the late 1990s, Iran's becoming a passage way for the PKK militants following the closure of the Syrian borders to the PKK caused a serious crisis between Turkey and Iran.

However, the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the US gave way to an increase in cooperation in the area of military security and intelligence in a large scale between Turkey and Iran. On the one hand, Iran felt surrounded by the US after the latter's invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and this coincided with increasing feelings of anti-Americanism in Turkey because of the Iraq War. On the other hand, just like the case with Syria, Iran also perceived the possibility of the emergence of a Kurdish state in the region against its interests in the wake of the Iraq War. Iran was concerned about the loss of its influence in Iraq as a result of possible cooperation of an independent Kurdish state with the US and Israel. This would undoubtedly cause an existential

⁹⁶ "Geçmişten Günümüze Türkiye-İran İlişkileri", *Al Jazeera*, 6 January 2014.

threat for Iran. Thus, increasing concerns regarding the uncertainty about the future of Iraq helped improve relations between Turkey and Iran. In other words, Turkish-Iranian cooperation became possible in the early 2000s mainly due to the Iraq War and its consequences.⁹⁷ During this period, political cultural, and economic relations between these two countries improved. Especially, Turkey's natural gas imports from Iran increased significantly. Turkey even supported Iran's right to develop its nuclear program for peaceful purposes.⁹⁸

Without a doubt, Turkey's improving relations with Iran had negative implications on the Turkish-Israeli relations. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's support for a Palestinian state on Israeli lands instead of a two-state solution, his military support for Hezbollah and Hamas, questioning of the Holocaust discourse, emphasis on wiping Israel off the map, and Iran's influence on the post-Saddam Iraq turned Iran into a threat against Israel. This context caused difficulties for Turkey to stand with Israel.⁹⁹ Thus, while developing its relations with Iran, Turkey started to distance itself from Israel.

In addition to bringing Turkey, Syria, and Iran together and thus indirectly affecting the Turkish-Israeli relations, concerns about the future of Iraq also had more direct implications on the Turkish-Israeli relationship in the early 2000s. The Israeli State has always tried to break the Arab circle with several strategies in the region where it has felt an existential threat from the Arab countries since its foundation. Sometimes Israel tried to divide the Arab bloc with bilateral agreements as in the case of Egypt, and other times it depended on the US existence and support. Israel also often made use of the multi-layered ethnic structure of the region in order to balance Arab countries with non-Arab ones. Thus, within the context of the ongoing discussions about the future of Iraq, Turkey and Israel developed different preferences about the possibility of the establishment of an independent Kurdish State in northern Iraq. For Israel, a sovereign Kurdish state, which would be in

⁹⁷ Ayman, "Türkiye-İran İlişkilerinde Kimlik, Güvenlik, İşbirliği ve Rekabet," in Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.) *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, p. 567.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 577.

⁹⁹ Oğuzlu, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A Structural Account," p. 282.

conflict with its neighbors, would constitute an important asset. During this period, Israel was in search of opening an operational space and gaining an ally by using its Kurdish card in the region in which it felt isolated.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Israel perceived the formation of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq consistent with its own interests: a state in whose internal affairs it could intervene, which would be so weak as not to cause any trouble for it but so strong as to remain out of Iran's control.¹⁰¹ However, unlike Israel, Turkey did not want a sovereign Kurdish state or a federal Kurdish region next to its border. Turkish policy makers thought that the formation of a robust state mechanism in Iraq with a strong central administration, could provide the territorial integrity of the state, and prevent possible Kurdish separatism. In light of this context, to Turkey's dismay, Israel advanced its relations with the Kurds in northern Iraq to the top level.

In a 2004 article, titled "Plan B," in *the New Yorker*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh discussed Israeli policies in northern Iraq. The article especially argued that Kurds were trained to organize missions as effectively as the most special commando troops, Mistaravim of Israel. The aim of this training was presented as disguise-intelligence gathering and murdering Shia and Sunni insurgent leaders.¹⁰² Since Israeli policy makers knew that such a policy would constitute a problem for Turkey, Israel did not openly express its support for the northern Iraqi Kurds. However, in September 2006, in the Newsnight program broadcast on BBC, videos of Israeli specialists conducting target practice with Kurdish militants in northern Iraq were presented. While Kurdish officials did not make any statement on the issue, Israel denied having any affiliation.¹⁰³ As a result, it can be argued that an important regional factor leading to the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations in the early 2000s was the conflict of interests between Turkey and Israel regarding the future of the Kurds in northern Iraq.

¹⁰⁰ Selin M. Bölme, "İsrail'in Kuzey Irak Politikası ve Türkiye," *SETA Eski Yeni*, No. 9, Spring 2008.

¹⁰¹ Erkmen, "1990'lardan Günümüze Türkiye-İsrail Stratejik İşbirliği," p. 172.

¹⁰² Seymour Hersh, "Plan B," *The New Yorker*, 28 June 2004, http://newyorker.com/printable/?fact/040628fa_fact and "İsraililer Kuzey Irak'ta Faaliyette," *Radikal*, 22 June 2004.

¹⁰³ Bölme, "İsrail'in Kuzey Irak Politikası ve Türkiye."

3.2 Changing Turkey-EU Relations

In addition to the changing regional dynamics, a second factor at the international level that contributed to the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations was the decrease in Turkey's feeling of isolation regarding its relations with the EU compared to the 1990s.¹⁰⁴ The 1990s were the years in which Turkey hoped to join the EU but could not find itself in the list of candidate countries, and the relations got tense. In such an atmosphere, Turkish policy makers thought that developing relations with the US and Israel could be helpful for Turkey to ease its isolation in Europe. During this period, for the US who defended the idea that the EU could not be a global actor without recognizing the geopolitical importance of Turkey, close Turkish-Israeli relations were consistent with its interests. However, this situation changed over time; Turkey's EU candidacy was officially approved in the EU's Helsinki Summit on December 10-11, 1999. Following this decision, Turkey carried out a number of reforms in the early 2000s which enlarged the scope of fundamental rights and freedoms in areas such as freedom of expression and human rights, which urged the EU to start accession negotiations with Ankara on October 3, 2005. As a result, the feeling of isolation Turkey felt in its relations with the EU in the 1990s decreased and Turkey started to define its foreign and security policies in compliance with the EU. The idea of getting closer to the US and Israel in order to get rid of the feeling of isolation experienced in the 1990s became a distant thought for Turkey who began to feel like an EU member.¹⁰⁵

3.3 The US Global War on Terror

The third structural factor preparing ground for the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations was the negative nature of the Turkish-American relations during the presidency of George W. Bush in the early to mid-2000s. When the US was hit by the attacks of Al-Qaeda on the World Trade Center (Twin Towers) and the Pentagon on

¹⁰⁴Oğuzlu, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A Structural Account," p. 279.

¹⁰⁵Kuloğlu, "Türkiye- İsrail İlişkilerindeki Gelişmeler," p. 90.

September 11, 2001, President Bush initiated a new direction in the country's foreign and security policy, which he identified as "the Global War on Terror". In line with this understanding, in 2001, the US first attacked Afghanistan, in which he thought the Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was living, followed by the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Among the countries supporting the Bush policies, Israel took the first place. In this context, Israel did not only support the US policies, but it also reshaped them in compliance with its own interests in the Middle East. Israel attacked Lebanon in 2006, then it organized Operation Cast Lead on the Gaza Strip in 2008. Israel imposed a blockade of Gaza, and carried out military interventions against the Palestinians.¹⁰⁶ Israeli attacks on Palestine were deemed as legitimate by the US, where President Bush stated that Israel had used its right of self defense.¹⁰⁷ The US support for and justification of Israeli attacks constituted one of the major reasons for the increasing negative feelings against the US in Turkey. The fact that the US found Israel completely rightful in its wars against Hamas and Hezbollah, and that it did not make any attempt to arrange a dialogue with Palestinian leaders in order to provide a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict brought it to a deadlock.¹⁰⁸ Turkey, whose sensitivity on Palestine became visible especially after the second intifada, showed strong reaction to Israeli policies against the Palestinians.

3.4 Domestic Structural Factors (Economics and Politics)

In addition to a number of international factors, there were also domestic reasons that paved way for the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relationship from the early 2000s onwards. From a domestic economic perspective, it can be argued that the 2000/2001 economic crisis in Turkey somewhat decreased the intensity of the economic relations between Turkey and Israel and thus also contributed to the

¹⁰⁶ Çağrı Erhan, "Bush Doktrini Ölmedi; İsrail'de Yaşiyor," *Türkiye Gazetesi*, 13 September 2011.

¹⁰⁷ "Terörist Devlet Olmanın Ağırılığı," *Milliyet*, 2 April 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Oğuzlu, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A Structural Account," p. 284.

deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relations. Throughout the 1990s, Turkey gained several advantages in its economic relations with Israel with the free trade zone agreement signed between these two countries. The fact that Israel was economically and technologically the most developed country in the region drove Turkey to trade with Israel in fields such as electronics, software, high technology, pharmaceuticals, automation, and telecommunication devices for defense industry.¹⁰⁹ Israel became one of the top Middle East countries receiving most of Turkey's exports. In the early 2000s, trade volume between the two countries reached up to \$ 2 million.¹¹⁰ However, in the face of the 2000/2001 economic crisis, Turkey had to make serious deductions in a 150 million-dollar military modernization project, for which it had bargained with Israel for 16 months, to modernize its old tanks in the following 25 years. Furthermore, the crisis caused Turkey to give up on buying new tanks costing 7 million dollars.¹¹¹ Although these kinds of issues did not cause the rupture in the relations of these two countries, changes both in requirements and in resources to be provided to the projects negatively influenced the Turkish-Israeli interaction. Here, it must be mentioned that although Turkish-Israeli economic relations were negatively affected by the Turkish economic crisis in 2000/2001, trade relations between Turkey and Israel survived the 2008 Gaza War and even the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident.¹¹² The tourism sector, where the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey significantly decreased, was one of the indicators of the worsening Turkish-Israeli relations in the economic realm after the Mavi Marmara incident. Furthermore, defense-related economic relations also suffered from Turkey's freezing of several defense projects with Israel during this period. However, except for the tourism and

¹⁰⁹ Yılmaz, "Turkey-Israeli relations: Past and Present," p. 18.

¹¹⁰ Amikam Nachmani, "Triangular Relationship: Turkish Israeli Relations and Its Implications for Greece," *Cahiers D'etudes Sur La Mediterranee Orientaleet Le Monde Turco-Iranien*, No. 28, June-December 1999, p. 5.

¹¹¹ "Tamamen Duygusal Bir Tank Hikayesi," *Milliyet*, 2 December 2001.

¹¹² Cited in Banu Eligür, "Crisis in Turkish-Israeli Relations (December 2008-June 2011): From Partnership to Enmity," p. 433.

defence sectors, the Turkish-Israeli economic relations continued and even improved despite the political crisis between these countries.¹¹³

Another domestic structural factor was Turkey's salvation from the feeling of isolation and enclosure, which was experienced in the Middle East for years, thanks to the foreign policy followed by the JDP government.¹¹⁴ The idea of departing from the Middle East as much as possible in order to be part of the West was a key aspect of Turkish foreign policy for many years, yet this fundamental idea began to change from the 1980s onwards. First, it was Turgut Özal, Prime Minister and then President of Turkey (1983-1993) who played an important role in liberalizing the Turkish economy and engaging Turkey with its neighbors. Second, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, İsmail Cem became a key figure during his tenure between 1997-2002 in encouraging closer relations between Turkey and Greece, Syria, and Iraq.¹¹⁵ However, the idea of an active foreign policy for Turkey and close engagement with the regional countries was more actively taken up by the JDP government from 2002 onwards. The foreign policy perspective of the JDP emphasizes that Turkey should not only adopt a Western identity but rather it should embrace multiple identities since Turkey is at the center of Europe, the Middle East, Black Sea, the Balkans and the Caucasus the same time. Although Turkey's attempts to get closer to the Middle East under the JDP's rule were associated with its Islamist background of the JDP by some researchers (e.g. Behlül Özkan, Tuğçe Ersoy Öztürk)¹¹⁶, Oğuzlu interprets this motivation as realist and pragmatist. For example, problems in Turkey's EU accession process and the worsening Turkish-American relations in the aftermath of the 2003 US War in Iraq were some of the reasons that brought Turkey closer to the Middle East in its foreign policy. However, regardless of the main incentive either

¹¹³ John Daly, "Trade Can be an Ice-Breaker in Turkish-Israeli Relations," *Turkey Analyst*, Vol. 6, No. 23, 2013, <http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/78-trade-can-be-an-ice-breaker-in-turkish-israeli-relations.html>.

¹¹⁴ Oğuzlu, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey-Israel Relations: A Structural Account," p. 281.

¹¹⁵ Ahmet Evin et. al., "Getting to Zero: Turkey, Its Neighbors and the West," *Transatlantic Academy*, Washington DC., 2010, p. 25-27, http://www.boschstiftung.de/content/language1/downloads/Report_TA_GettingtoZeroFINAL.pdf.

¹¹⁶ Behlül Özkan, "Turkey, Davutoğlu and the Idea of Pan-Islamism," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, Vol. 56, No. 4, 2014, pp. 119-140 and Tuğçe Ersoy Öztürk, "Religion as a Factor in Israeli-Turkish Relations: A Constructivist Overlook," pp. 62-74.

being ideological or pragmatic, the JDP government's approach towards the Middle East while continuing with the EU accession process at the same time was evaluated as an attempt to become a soft power in the region. It was stated that Turkey embraced an important political mission in the region by using its power based on a common history and culture.¹¹⁷ As Ahmet Davutoğlu argued in his book, "*Strategic Depth*", Turkey is heir to the Ottoman Empire and has a legacy which managed to build a stable order in the region for five centuries. Thus, Davutoğlu pointed out the importance of an active policy followed by Turkey in order to resolve problems in the Middle East region.¹¹⁸ According to him, as the security and democratization process in Turkey started to be gradually influenced by the regional developments, Turkey's chances to ignore the region faded away. Stating that every development in the Middle East is a concern for Turkey's interests, Davutoğlu expressed that Turkey is a regional power in the Middle East with the following statement:

"For the overall security, we would like the Middle East to turn into a region of security for every society and every country regardless of its ethnic and regional roots. We are dedicating great effort to this issue. Turkey is in the position of an order-making country that has the closest relations with all countries."¹¹⁹

Within this context of rising influence and prestige of Turkey among the Middle East countries, developing close relations with Israel would constitute a great risk for the new Turkish foreign policy vision of the JDP. As a result, Turkish domestic politics in the early 2000s provided an unfavorable atmosphere for the Turkish-Israeli ties.

Furthermore, with the JDP government in charge, the Turkish military's political influence significantly decreased compared to the previous time periods. Throughout the 1990s, having felt threatened by the increasing Islamic reactionism and the PKK terrorism in the country, the secular-Kemalist elite, the military bureaucracy in particular, played a key role in bringing the Turkish-Israeli

¹¹⁷ Mustafa Yağbasan, and Abdulsamet Günek, "Arap Medyasında Türkiye'nin Değişen Siyasal Algısı," *Global Media Journal*, No. 1, 2010, pp.139-140.

¹¹⁸ Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*, p. 331.

¹¹⁹ "Davutoğlu: Türkiye, Düzen Kurucu Ülke Konumunda," 23 June 2009, <http://www.haberler.com/davutoglu-turkiye-duzen-kurucu-ulke-konumunda-haberi/>.

relationship to a significant level. The army fervently supported close relations with pro-Western Israel and acted as an influential lobby on this issue.¹²⁰ For example, former commander of the First Army, Çevik Bir, emphasized the importance of joint naval exercises and pointed out the necessity of cooperative relations between Turkey and Israel as two democratic countries of the region.¹²¹ During his visit to Israel in February 1997, the then Turkish Chief of General Staff, İsmail Hakkı Karadayı, argued that Turkey and Israel's being the only democratic countries of the region facilitated the development of bilateral relations between them.¹²² Thus, throughout the 1990s, the Turkish military's strong role in politics facilitated closer relations between Turkey and Israel. General Çevik Bir's and General İsmail Hakkı Karadayı's visits to Israel in 1996 and 1997, the Turkish-Israeli joint military training agreement in 1995, and the Military Cooperation and Training Agreement as well as the Defense Industry Cooperation Agreement signed in 1996 confirm this situation.

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However, the Turkish military's role in politics began to decrease from the early 2000s onwards as several EU harmonization reforms were passed through GNAT with the goal of increasing civilian control over the Turkish military. When this situation was combined with the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials, which were about alleged coup attempts against the JDP government, the Turkish military became more and more hesitant to get involved in policy making processes in the country. Thus, from the early 2000s onwards, the JDP government remained as the main actor to shape Turkish foreign policy towards Israel unrestricted by the military's preferences.

These developments coincided with an increasing anti-Israeli stance among the Turkish public in the early 2000s. In February 10-11, 2009, a survey in about the perceptions of the Turkish public regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict showed

¹²⁰ Ali Balcı, "Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası ve İsrail: 1990'lar ve 2000'lere İlişkin Bir Karşılaştırma," *Ortadoğu Etütleri*, Vol . 2, No. 2, January 2011, p. 120.

¹²¹ Yasemin Çongar, "İsrail'le Tatbikat Planı", *Milliyet*, 4 June 1996.

¹²² "İsrail'e Paşa Sözü," *Milliyet*, 25 February 1997.

¹²³ Balcı and Kardaş, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey's Relations with Israel: An Analysis of 'Securitization'," p. 420.

that 79 percent of the participants thought that Israel was more responsible for what was happening in the region.¹²⁴ According to another survey conducted by Pew Global in 2004, 63 percent of the Turkish public claimed that Palestine should be favored in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Furthermore, in a study by the World Public Opinion Network in 2008, while 42 percent of Turkish public supported Palestine in this conflict, only a small percentage, 4 percent, supported the Israeli side.¹²⁵ These studies clearly show that the pro-Palestinian tendency has been quite high in Turkey in the 2000s. Thus, both Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit during the tripartite government's tenure between 1999 and 2002 and then Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan under the JDP rule harshly criticized Israeli military interventions in Palestine. After 2005, the number of top level military visits between the two countries significantly decreased. Until 2010, no visit was paid to Israel by the Chief of General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces.¹²⁶ Furthermore, in 2009, Israel was excluded from the Anatolian Eagle military exercise. With regard to Israel's exclusion from this regularly conducted military exercise, Erdoğan stated that "every political authority has an obligation to consider public opinion and the demands of the society. Be careful, I am saying that it is an obligation. I cannot ignore the demands of my society; and the demand of my society is in this direction".¹²⁷

In sum, positive changes in Turkey's relations with Syria and Iran from the early 2000s onwards, Israel's improving relations with the Iraqi Kurds after the 2003 Iraq War, improvements in Turkey's EU accession process with Turkey's candidate status in 1999, The US President George W. Bush's policies towards the Middle East in the aftermath of 9/11, Turkey's economic crises in 2000/2001, the JDP's new foreign policy vision, which put more emphasis on Turkey's relations with the Middle East countries, the decreasing role of the military in Turkish politics as well as the strengthening Turkish public support for the Palestinian cause in the face of

¹²⁴ Erdoğan, "Dış Politikada Siyasallaşma: Türk Kamuoyunun 'Davos Krizi' ve Etkileri Hakkındaki Değerlendirmeleri," p. 53.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ "İsrail'e Gitmiyor," *Hürriyet*, 25 September 2007.

¹²⁷ "Erdoğan: Türkiye Birilerinin Talimatıyla Karar Vermez," *Radikal*, 15 October 2009.

the second intifada, provided a context which opened way for the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations. A summary of these structural factors can be found in Table 3.1. Thus, from the early 2000s onwards, Turkish policy makers began to act more critical toward the Israeli policies in the region. However, until the Israeli attack on Gaza in 2008, the Turkish-Israeli ties did not experience a radical break. On the contrary, in the initial years of the JDP government, close relations were maintained both with Israel and with the Jewish lobby in the US Congress. For example, in January 2004, the American Jewish Congress awarded Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan the “Profiles in Courage” award in 2004 for his commitment to protect the Jews in Turkey, struggle with terrorism, and his contributions to peace in the Middle East¹²⁸. It was only with the war in Gaza that Turkish-Israeli relations began to move toward its bottom point.

¹²⁸ Umut Uzer, “Türkiye-İsrail İlişkilerinde Bunalım,” *Ortadoğu Etütleri*, Vol. 2, No. 2, January 2011, p. 150.

Table 3.1 Structural Factors which Provided a Context for the Deterioration of Turkish-Israeli Relations

Structural factors which provided a context for the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations from the late 1990s and early 2000s onwards	
International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turkey's improving relations with Syria and Iran from the late 1990s and early 2000s onwards (political+economic) • Israel's improving ties with the Iraqi Kurds after the 2003 Iraq War (political) • Turkey's EU candidate status in 1999 and improving relations with the EU (political+economic) • George W. Bush's policies toward the Middle East after 9/11 (political)
Domestic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turkey's economic crisis in 2000/2001 (economic) • JDP's new foreign policy vision after 2002 (political+economic) • Turkish military's decreasing role in politics (political) • Pro-Palestinian Turkish public opinion in the face of the second intifada (political)

CHAPTER 4

The Impact of Tayyip Erdoğan's Role as an Individual Leader in the Deterioration of Relations between Turkey and Israel

The idea that structural factors can only cause changes in foreign policy after being filtered through the ideas and perceptions of the individual leader constitutes the second step of the three-step foreign policy change model presented by Gustavsson. When Turkish foreign policy change towards Israel and the recent deterioration in the relationship are evaluated with a leader-focused perspective, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emerges as the main political figure shaping this process.

In this chapter, in order to demonstrate the role of Tayyip Erdoğan's ideas and perceptions in the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations, first, Erdoğan's discourse about Israel both before and after the 2008 Gaza War is analyzed. For this analysis, Erdoğan's political speeches, interviews and press meetings between 2003 and 2010 have been collected. This analysis is important to demonstrate how Tayyip Erdoğan played a key role in constructing Turkey's identity as well as Turkish foreign policy vis-à-vis Israel both before and after the Gaza War. Second, the decision making process through which Turkey's foreign policy change towards Israel took place under the leadership of Erdoğan is presented. In analyzing Erdoğan's discourse on Israel, Lene Hansen's discourse analysis framework has been used. According to this framework, identity is a relational concept and there is a strong connection between a country's identity and foreign policy. Furthermore, the relational nature of identity is constructed through two dimensions, namely the process of linking and the process of differentiation. While the process of linking refers to the construction of identity through the articulation of signs that constitute the relations of sameness, the process

of differentiation focuses on those signs that differentiate the Self from Other.¹²⁹ Erdoğan's foreign policy discourse about Israel is analyzed below in light of this framework.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was born in Rize on February 26, 1954, and later moved to Istanbul with his family to sustain their life in Kasımpaşa, İstanbul. Erdoğan did not study in well-known, prestigious schools, never lived abroad in his life-span, and he is not fluent in any foreign language. On the contrary, he studied in a Prayer Leader and Preacher School (Imam Hatip Lisesi) and then graduated with an undergraduate degree from Marmara University.¹³⁰

Erdoğan's political life started quite early and continued with his active participation in the National Salvation Party (NSP) founded by Erbakan. The National Outlook movement which was the essential political movement within the party caught Erdoğan's support and loyalty. Erdoğan, who came back to the political arena with the Welfare Party (WP) founded in 1983, after the closure of all the political parties in Turkey after the military coup on September 12, 1980, became WP Beyoğlu District Chair in 1984 and gained the chair of Istanbul city branch in 1985 becoming WP Administrative Board member. With his success in politics, Erdoğan got elected the Mayor of Istanbul in 1994 from the WP. He became more visible in politics after getting elected as the Mayor. In this process, on December 12, 1997, due to a poem he recited during a meeting in Siirt, Erdoğan was imprisoned with the accusation of driving people into hatred and enmity with no discretion of race or religion, and he was banned from politics.

After the February 28 process, the WP was closed down by the Constitutional Court of Turkey with the claim that the party had engaged in anti-secular and Islamic reactionist activities. As a result, the supporters of the National Outlook gathered this time to found the Virtue Party (VP). However, the VP was also closed down as it was claimed to be the heir of the WP. During the process towards the closure of the Virtue Party, a division emerged between the dominant elderly group in the party, namely the "traditionalists", and the young cadre who were in favor of change and

¹²⁹ Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, p. 37.

¹³⁰ Kesgin, *Political Leadership and Foreign Policy in Post-Cold War Israel and Turkey*, p. 134.

were labeled as the “reformists”. The reformists such as Bülent Arınç and Abdüllatif Şener with the leadership of Abdullah Gül came face to face with the traditionalists led by Recai Kutan. The reformists who lost in the party congress did not join the Felicity Party (FP) after the closure of the VP. Instead, they founded the JDP on August 14, 2001 with Tayyip Erdoğan as the chairman of the party. However, Erdoğan could not be elected as a deputy in the 2002 national elections due to his political ban. In 2003, with the law on abolishing Erdoğan's political ban proposed by the JDP government led by Abdullah Gul, Erdoğan's political ban was abolished. Then, Erdoğan participated in the by election in Siirt, the province where he had made the speech having caused his imprisonment. On March 9, 2003, Erdoğan got elected the Deputy of Siirt in the GNAT, and on March 15, 2003 he started his duty as the 59th Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey by founding the 59th government. Erdoğan served as the prime minister between 2003 and 2014, and then got elected as the 12th President of the Republic of Turkey on August 28, 2014 as a result of the first popular presidential elections in the country.

Erdoğan’s background in Islamist political parties of Turkey as well as his active political life from his early ages onwards constitute important factors that help us to have a better understanding of his strong negative position about the Israeli policies in the wake of the Gaza War and his leading role in the recent foreign policy change towards Israel. Erdoğan’s background characteristics such as coming from a conservative family, being called as a ‘hodja’ by friends even in elementary school, graduating from a Prayer Leader and Preacher School, participating in the National Turkish Student Union activities in his youth and being a youth leader in the National Outlook movement clearly show his leadership skills as well as his strong personal formation within Turkey’s Islamist politics.

Erdoğan’s negative perception of Israel and its policies toward Palestine has its roots in his long presence in and adoption of the National Outlook movement founded by Erbakan. Particularly an Islamist movement, the National Outlook has

been against the idea of Westernization. Furthermore, one of the most essential features of this movement has been its anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli stance.¹³¹

Although the word “national” in the National Outlook has a religious reference rather than a national one, it is a national movement which has aimed to change the society from top to bottom.¹³² Erbakan defined the National Outlook during the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the movement as follows:

“The chemistry of the National Outlook is kneaded of three kinds of dough: The first one is about keeping God above all, the second one is about being spiritual, and the third one is about not surrendering to the will but managing it... If you are not a supporter of National Outlook, just so you know that you are the soldier of Zionism.”

Therefore, Erbakan defined the National Outlook movement as the opposite of Zionism.¹³³

When it is considered that Erdoğan has started his political life and got socialized within the National Outlook movement, it can be argued that he has a similar perception of Israel and the Jews. Many of his statements about Israel in the 1990s, confirm this idea. For example, Erdoğan’s speech at the Second International Conquest Conference in 1997 clearly shows that he defends this ideology. In this conference, Erdoğan stated that “the Jews have shifted from being oppressed to become an oppressor now. They perform the same oppression against the Palestinians as the Christians once did against them. Therefore, I invite the Jews to face their history”.¹³⁴

Despite this background, the February 28 process can be considered a time period when Erdoğan began to deviate from the National Outlook movement, because this process, which has been labeled as a post-modern coup d’etat, played an important role in breaking the power of Political Islam in Turkey. The JDP, which

¹³¹ Mustafa Bölükbaşı, “Milli Görüş’ten Muhafazakar Demokrasiye: Türkiye’de 28 Şubat Süreci Sonrası İslami Elitlerin Dönüşümü,” *Journal of the Human and Social Science Researches*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2012, p. 171.

¹³² Ibid., p. 170.

¹³³ Ak, *Dış Politika Analizi ve Liderlik: Süleymaniye Krizi Sürecinde R.T.Erdoğan Örneği*, p. 81.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 106.

was founded with Erdoğan's leadership in 2001, emphasized that conventional Islamism had been left, and the members of the newly founded JDP defined themselves as a catch-all party which had a conservative democrat identity and political vision. As a reformist group they highlighted that they respected the Islamic values. However, they also emphasized that they put religion forward not politically but socially. After the 2002 elections, Erdoğan promised not to interfere with different life styles in Turkey, not to consider the headscarf issue as the fundamental issue in Turkish politics, and not to drift Turkey into another February 28 process.¹³⁵ When the JDP formed the government after the 2002 elections, this political party accelerated Turkey's EU accession process, strengthened efforts to integrate Turkey into the World and applied the International Monetary Fund (IMF) program in a determined manner.¹³⁶ In other words, in the early 2000s, Erdoğan portrayed a very different vision in Turkish domestic and foreign policy compared to the National Outlook framework, which he had adopted before. In the early days of the JDP government, Prime Minister Erdoğan, talked about a desired relationship with the West and a more moderate Islamic approach. Erdoğan and the JDP constituted a new intellectual Muslim group with close relations with the West and with a neoliberal orientation in economic policy. During this period, many of Erdoğan's speeches emphasized the differences between the JDP's ideology and program and the National Outlook movement. Erdoğan's close relations with the Jewish communities in Turkey and abroad in the early years of the JDP government as well as his references to the goal to improve Turkey's relations with Israel were important pieces of evidence that demonstrated the JDP's difference from the National Outlook movement.¹³⁷

During this period, it was possible to observe this understanding in many of Erdoğan's statements about Israel. Until the Gaza War, Erdoğan referred to Israel as Turkey's friend as well as its partner in the area of economic and military

¹³⁵ Bölükbaşı, "Milli Görüş'ten Muhafazakar Demokrasiye: Türkiye'de 28 Şubat Süreci Sonrası İslami Elitlerin Dönüşümü," pp. 180-181.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 181.

¹³⁷ Ak, *Dış Politika Analizi ve Liderlik: Süleymaniye Krizi Sürecinde R.T.Erdoğan Örneği* pp. 106-107.

cooperation. For example, Israel became one of the top Middle East countries receiving most of Turkey's exports. Especially, in the early period of the JDP government, trade volume between the two countries reached up to \$ 2 million.¹³⁸ However, although Turkey and Israel had good relations in the early years of the JDP's tenure, this relationship was not without problems. Mainly because of the structural factors discussed in the previous chapter, Turkey and Israel had begun to experience conflicts in their relationship during this time period. Thus, Turkey was critical of the hardline Israeli policies in the region towards the Palestinians. In Erdoğan's statements, while Turkey was frequently depicted as a safeguard for peace in the Middle East, Israeli government's policies were criticized. However, these criticisms were expressed with the condition that they were friendly criticisms and they mainly targeted the Israeli government specifically, rather than the Israeli public.

4.1 Crisis Situation

According to Gustavsson's model, a crisis situation is an important trigger for a change in foreign policy.¹³⁹ In light of this framework, Israel's 2008 Operation Cast Lead against Hamas in the Gaza Strip created this crisis situation and became a milestone in the Turkish-Israeli relationship. The Operation Cast Lead played the key role in bringing back and even strengthening Erdoğan's negative attitude towards Israel, which had its roots in his National Outlook background and experience. When this combined with Erdoğan's personality characteristics, a rupture in the Turkish-Israeli relations became inevitable after the 2008 Gaza War.

The occurrence of such an event at a time in which Turkey was attempting to mediate peace talks between Israel and Syria had a sharp impact on the relations between the two countries and brought these relations to a breaking-point. In the face of the Operation Cast Lead, the then Prime Minister Erdoğan played a key role in creating a new and very negative discourse about Israel. He complained that Israel

¹³⁸ Nachmani, "Triangular Relationship: Turkish Israeli Relations and Its Implications for Greece," p. 5.

¹³⁹ Gustavsson argues that foreign policy change takes place when the political leader recognizes an opportune moment to bring about change and the chances of foreign policy change increases when a crisis situation enters the picture.

was conducting negotiations in Ankara in the name of peace on one hand, but terminated the atmosphere of negotiations by attacking civilians in Gaza on the other hand in a period when Turkey had embraced the role of mediation. He also perceived this attack as a personal insult to himself since Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had not informed him about the operation during their meeting in Ankara a few days before the attack.¹⁴⁰ When Erdoğan's statements on the attack are analyzed, it is clearly seen that he made very harsh criticisms about the Israeli operation in Gaza. Erdoğan identified the attack as a blow stricken to peace and assessed it as a crime against humanity with the argument that: "it is unacceptable to kill innocent, defenseless people, children and women, to bomb settlements, and to use disproportionate power as such".¹⁴¹ Likewise, he stated at every occasion that Israel had flouted at Turkey.

Erdoğan's discourse on the importance of peace in the Middle East, which he has frequently emphasized since he became Prime Minister and his harsh reactions against Israeli operations in Palestine, which were assessed as an attack to this goal are reflections of the National Outlook movement which was claimed to be abandoned after the foundation of the JDP. It can be argued that the Operation Cast Lead provided new motives for Prime Minister Erdoğan to formulate a more critical Turkish foreign policy position towards Israel compared to the early years of his tenure. In fact, on the Palestinian issue, which brought the relationship with Israel to the point of rupture there is an inherited Muslim sensitivity from the past. In this context, Erdoğan's National Outlook mindset was reflected in his statements against Israel in the face of the Gaza War.¹⁴² During this period, Erdoğan's more critical position towards Israel did not receive any negative reaction from the other JDP founders and members, who come from the same National Outlook tradition like Erdoğan. The rest of the JDP members were also sensitive about the Israeli-Palestinian issue and critical about the relations with Israel. They promoted the idea

¹⁴⁰ Aytürk, "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri," in Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.) *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, p. 624.

¹⁴¹ "AKP Salonunda İsrail'e Öfke," *Hürriyet*, 29 December 2008.

¹⁴² Aytürk, "The Coming of an Ice Age? Turkish- Israeli Relations Since 2002," p. 683.

of Turkey's leadership in the Islamic community rather than developing close bilateral relations with Israel.¹⁴³

In addition to Prime Minister Erdoğan's National Outlook past, his personality characteristics and individual perception of the Operation Cast Lead also contributed significantly to the dramatization of this crisis. Due to his personality as a proud and charismatic leader, Erdoğan displayed in many occasions that he had no tolerance to feel insulted or cheated. Especially, his outburst in Davos is a clear example of this situation. Erdoğan is a politician who cannot hide his inner feelings about events and who voices his reaction honestly.¹⁴⁴ Thus, one of the reasons for his overreaction to the Israeli operation in Gaza, which was even stronger than the reaction of the Palestinian President Abbas and other Arabic countries' leaders, was that Israeli Prime Minister Olmert had not informed Erdoğan about the attack during his mediation. Erdoğan had attached quite an importance to Turkey's mediation role in the negotiations between Syria and Israel. He described this mediation as an attempt that would help prove how Turkey could be effective by using its soft power in the region. The mediation was very important for Erdoğan for Turkey's newly emerging role in the Middle East under the JDP rule.¹⁴⁵ There was no doubt that this role made Turkey a center of attention both in Washington and in several other capitals in the world. However, the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip during the negotiation process between Syria and Israel created a tremendous disappointment for Erdoğan partly because the Israeli operation damaged Turkey's efforts to be a key regional player. Erdoğan's feeling of "being cheated" by Israel caused him to display his anger on this issue very harshly and clearly.¹⁴⁶ The Operation Cast Lead changed

¹⁴³ Ersoy Öztürk, "Religion as a Factor in Israeli-Turkish Relations: A Constructivist Overlook," p. 69.

¹⁴⁴ Kösebalaban, "The Crisis in Turkish-Israeli Relations: What is its Strategic Significance?," p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Aytürk, "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri," in Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.) *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, p. 623.

¹⁴⁶ Fikret Bila, "Erdoğan'ın Verdiği Sert Tepkinin İki Nedeni," *Milliyet*, 30 December 2008.

Erdoğan' point of view toward Israel and thus Turkish foreign policy towards Israel.

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In sum, it can be argued that a number of structural factors, as discussed in Chapter 2, had already provided a framework for a negative direction in the Turkish-Israeli relations from the late 1990s and early 2000s onwards. However, when the JDP government came to office in 2002, the close nature of the Turkish-Israeli relationship was maintained to some extent. Although Prime Minister Erdoğan frequently criticized Israeli government's policies against the Palestinians, he always emphasized that Turkey and Israel were friends and these were only friendly criticisms. However, the Israeli Operation Cast Lead in 2008 opened way for the Erdoğan government to initiate a significant change in Turkish foreign policy towards Israel. This change was mainly shaped by Erdoğan's ideology dating back to his National Outlook background as well as his personal perception of the Israeli operations in Gaza. As a result of this operation, Turkey's attitude toward Israel became more critical and references to the Turkish-Israeli friendship significantly decreased in Erdoğan's discourse. The ensuing crises, namely the "One Minute", "Low Seat" and "Mavi Marmara" crises further deteriorated the relationship between Turkey and Israel. A summary of Erdoğan's discourse about Israel, which played an important role in constructing Turkish foreign policy vis-à-vis İsrail both before and after the Gaza War is presented in Table 4.1.

¹⁴⁷ Aytürk, "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri," in Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.) *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, p. 622.

Table 4.1 Tayyip Erdoğan’s Discourse about Israel before and after the 2008 Gaza War

	Before the Gaza War	After the Gaza War
Basic Discourse	Turkey as a safeguard for the Middle East peace	Turkey as a safeguard for the Middle East peace / Turkey as intolerant of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians
Linking/ Differentiation	Israel as Turkey’s friend/ Friendly criticisms against Israeli government’s policies toward the Palestinians	Very rare references to Israel as a friend/ Israel as an obstacle to peace efforts in the Middle East; Israel’s acts as a crime against humanity and state terror; Turkey’s deception by Israel
Turkish Foreign Policy	Military and economic cooperation	Gradually decreasing relations in the economic and political sphere, cutting of diplomatic ties between two countries

After the Gaza incident, Erdoğan started questioning Israel’s UN membership who did not abide by the UN norms, and continued his criticism in a strict manner. In the same year, during the World Economic Forum held in Davos, he had an argument with the Israeli President Shimon Peres. During a panel, which is remembered with Erdoğan's “One Minute” scold, he said “You know well how to kill!” to Peres and left the panel¹⁴⁸. This crisis made the negative pace of the relations even more visible. In the same year, a TV Series crisis erupted between Turkey and Israel due to a Turkish TV series named *Ayrılık* (Separation). This TV series showed Israeli soldiers as savages who killed babies and even included some anti-Semitic discourses. Another TV series *Kurtlar Vadisi* (The Valley of the Wolves) also caused problems for the relations between the two countries because of its anti-Israeli

¹⁴⁸ Yeşilyurt, “Orta Doğu’yla İlişkiler,” in Baskın Oran (ed.) *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, Cilt I, (1980-2001)*, p. 442.

scenes. In order to discuss these crises, Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel, Danny Ayalon, invited Turkish Ambassador Oğuz Çelikkol to his office. By addressing humiliating statements and behaviors to Çelikkol before the TV cameras during the meeting, he offered a low seat to Çelikkol. This move by Ayalon caused a huge reaction in Turkey. This incident took its place as the “Low Seat” crisis in history and it almost triggered the total dissolution of the already decreasing mutual trust between the two countries.¹⁴⁹

Finally, the “Mavi Marmara” crisis, which took place in the international waters off Gaza on May 31, 2010, became the most serious crisis in the history of relations between the two countries. In order to break Israel’s blockade on the Gaza Strip after the Operation Cast Lead in 2008 and provide humanitarian aid to the region, the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief, a Turkish NGO, organized a campaign. This organization was named as Free Gaza and included many ships to sail towards the region. The Mavi Marmara ship, which was purchased by this Turkish NGO for this aim and set out with hundreds of activists, was attacked by Israel. As a result, 9 activists, 8 of whom were Turkish and 1 was US citizen, were killed during the Israeli soldiers raided this ship.¹⁵⁰ This attack had a huge reflection in Turkey and caused a substantial backlash against Israel. The incident was protested both by the society and by the policy makers through the media for a long time. Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu identified this attack as “state terror” and he named the Mavi Marmara incident as ‘our 9/11’.¹⁵¹

Erdoğan's reaction against this incident was also very harsh. Erdoğan also named the incident as “state terror”, which targeted innocent people and caused bloodshedding. He pointed out the fact that the ships were white-flagged and were carrying civilians and volunteers only. He stated that the attack was against humanity, world peace and international law. In a speech, Erdoğan promised to the Palestinians that Turkey would not leave Gaza alone and this discourse reflected his

¹⁴⁹ “Mavi Marmara ‘11 Eylül’ümüz,” *Hürriyet*, 7 December 2010.

¹⁵⁰ Aytürk, “Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri,” in Faruk Sönmezoğlu (ed.) *XXI. Yüzyılda Türk Dış Politikasının Analizi*, p. 630.

¹⁵¹ Yeşilyurt, “Orta Doğu’yla İlişkiler,” in Baskın Oran (ed.) *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, Cilt I, (1980-2001)*, p. 443.

National Outlook identity and Muslim sensitivity.¹⁵² Erdoğan, who questioned and criticized Israel's actions, saw anyone who turned a blind eye to Israel's bloody assaults as guilty as the ones who actually performed the assaults. He mentioned that Turkey would always be on the side of the law in the face of Israel's actions and support the idea of peace and justice.¹⁵³ Erdoğan did not hesitate to react against Israel by reading the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shall not kill!", both in English and Hebrew during one of his speeches.¹⁵⁴

4.2 Erdoğan's Ideology and Personality in the Decision Making Process

The final step of Gustavson's foreign policy change model is the decision making process. This step refers to the process in which the policy makers feel the necessity for change in foreign policy, and they work within the formal and informal institutions to bring about this change. Thus, after presenting the role of Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership and discourse in the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations, it is important to demonstrate how Turkish foreign policy change towards Israel took place under this leadership through various mechanisms and with the contributions of several state and non-state actors.

First of all, it must be emphasized that a very important actor in the ideological background of the policy change toward Israel was Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was initially the chief adviser to Tayyip Erdoğan and then the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs between 2009 and 2014. As mentioned before, Davutoğlu constitutes the main author behind the JDP government's foreign policy vision and it was partly Davutoğlu's strategic depth doctrine, which played a role in providing context for the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations. According to Davutoğlu's foreign policy understanding, Turkey's geographic and historical characteristics turn it into a central country with multiple regional identities. Turkey is a Middle Eastern, Balkan, Caucasian, Central Asian, Caspian, Mediterranean, Gulf and Black Sea country at the

¹⁵² "Türkiye'yi Başkasına Benzetmeyin," *Hürriyet*, 1 June, 2010.

¹⁵³ "İnsanlık Dışı Terör Örgütü," *Hürriyet*, 1 June 2010.

¹⁵⁴ "Erdoğan'dan İsrail'e Sert Tepki Hamas'a Destek," *Milliyet*, 4 June 2010.

same time. Davutoğlu also emphasized that Turkey would be a regional actor in 2023 thanks to the new foreign policy in action.¹⁵⁵ However, within this understanding of multiple identities, Turkey's relations with the Muslim World constitute a special place. A significant factor in this foreign policy vision is the expectation of a vital role for Turkey in the region, especially in the process of resolving regional problems in compliance with the principles of objectivity, cultural hospitality and pluralism. This understanding also involves the policy of zero problems with neighbors, which highlights the importance of improving Turkey's relations with the neighboring countries.

As the first step of the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relations, it can be argued that Davutoğlu's strategic depth doctrine played an important role in terms of influencing how the 2008 Gaza War perceived by the then Prime Minister Erdoğan and other members of the JDP government. Erdoğan embraced Davutoğlu's foreign policy vision from the very beginning, and the concepts of strategic depth and zero problems with neighbors significantly shaped Turkish foreign policy from 2002 onwards. The then Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan's discourse about Israel in the face of the Gaza War and his reaction to the Operation Cast Lead were already discussed above. Here, it is important to mention that the rest of the JDP cadres also showed similar reactions to Israel's operation in Gaza.

The JDP gained major electoral victories in 2002 and 2007 national elections with % 34.3 and % 46.7 percent of the votes, respectively and the party established single-party governments after each election. Thus, a major reason why the JDP under the leadership of Erdoğan was able to change Turkish foreign policy towards Israel without much difficulty was that within the framework of a single-party government Erdoğan had the ability to easily mobilize the bureaucratic and political cadres mainly filled with JDP figures. For example, in the aftermath of the Gaza operation, the then President Abdullah Gül, also formerly a JDP politician, identified Israeli behaviour as a great irresponsibility.¹⁵⁶ During this period, the then Minister

¹⁵⁵ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2008, p. 77.

¹⁵⁶ Cited in Eligür, "Crisis in Turkish-Israeli Relations (December 2008-June 2011): From Partnership to Enmity," p. 436.

of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan stated that Turkey stopped its mediation role between Syria and Israel in the wake of the Gaza War, because Turkey was not informed about the operation and this would break Turkey's confidence in Israel. Babacan added that the Israeli existence in the region would be difficult without Turkey's support. Furthermore, on December 30, 2008, the National Security Council (NSC) called for Israel to stop the military operation against Gaza as soon as possible.¹⁵⁷ The JDP government "also mobilized the Prime Ministry and the Directorate of Religious Affairs (the latter controls mosques in Turkey), in order to gather financial assistance for Gaza."¹⁵⁸ In January 2009, the then Minister of Education Hüseyin Çelik published an order asking all the students to observe a minute of silence for the Palestinians in Gaza. He further announced a picture and essay competition among the students in the name of the "Humanitarian Tragedy in Palestine", which was later cancelled due to Israeli reactions.¹⁵⁹ This situation continued as Turkish-Israeli relations worsened with the "One Minute", "Low-Sea" and "Mavi Marmara" crises. For example, after the Mavi Marmara incident, Davutoğlu pointed out the tragedy of humanity in Gaza which was caused by Israel. He strongly stated that Turkey would not stay silent to what had happened, and the attacks were just banditry and barbarism.¹⁶⁰ In sum, taking advantage of the single party government, Erdoğan was able to mobilize several state actors and institutions mainly controlled by the JDP cadres in support of a more critical position towards Israel in the aftermath of the 2008 Gaza War.

A second major reason why Turkish foreign policy change towards Israel took place in the aftermath of the Gaza War without any opposition from different

¹⁵⁷ Aydın Hasan, "Askeri Harekatı Derhal Durdur," *Milliyet*, 31 December 2008.

¹⁵⁸ Cited in Eligür, "Crisis in Turkish-Israeli Relations (December 2008-June 2011): From Partnership to Enmity," p. 437.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 438.

¹⁶⁰ Binnur Özkeçeci Taner, "From Allies to Frenemies and Inconvenient Partners: Theory and Turkish-Israeli Relations," *Perceptions*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Autumn 2012, p. 118.

institutions of the state was the decreasing role of the Turkish military in politics.¹⁶¹ The military was one of the most important actors of the national security policy making mechanism in the 1990s. However, first with the EU harmonization reforms in the early 2000s and then with the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials from 2007 onwards, the Turkish military lost its central place in decision making circles. With the Ergenekon case, many intelligence authorities, retired generals, member of the Turkish Armed Forces, journalists, university presidents, professors, politicians, civil society members, and businessmen were imprisoned based on the allegation that they were plotting a coup against the JDP government. With similar allegations in the Balyoz lawsuit, several active and retired military personnel were imprisoned as well. As a result, the JDP government remained as the main actor in the formulation of Turkish foreign policy from the mid-2000s onwards. Thus, the Islamist influence in the policy making process began to be felt more and more. A striking example of this situation is that, after 2009 the JDP government closed the Turkish air space and military airports to Israeli military planes. While making this decision of closure, the JDP did not even inform the Turkish armed forces and ignored them in this process.¹⁶² In sum, the armed forces played an important role in rebuilding and protecting the close relationship between Turkey and Israel in the 1990s. For example, in 1996, a military agreement was signed with Israel as a result of the military pressure despite the then Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's opposition. However, in the post-Gaza period, the military's role in foreign policy decision making had already been weakened. This is very significant, because in the absence of the military's active support for a close Turkish-Israeli relationship, the JDP government, particularly the then Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan, remained as the

¹⁶¹ With regard to civil-military relations, a decrease in the impact of the Turkish military on the foreign policy decision making process toward Israel may not necessarily mean the military's general draw-back in every field. Especially discussions about Turkish foreign policy toward Syria since 2015 raise the issue of whether the Turkish military's political involvement, particularly regarding the Syrian civil war has the potential to increase. (See more information: Gönül Tol, "Turkey's Next Military Coup," *Foreign Affairs*, 8 August 2016, Murat Yetkin, "Orgeneral Özel Suriye Tepkisiyle mi İzne Ayrıldı?," *Radikal*, 5 May 2015 and Kadri Gürsel, "Erdoğan'ın Gözü Suriye'de, Asker Yine Rahatsız!," *Diken*, 2 February 2016, <http://www.diken.com.tr/erdoganin-gozu-suriyede-asker-yine-rahatsiz/>.)

¹⁶² Eligür, "Crisis in Turkish-Israeli Relations (December 2008-June 2011): From Partnership to Enmity," p. 447.

main actor in foreign policy. A previously important mechanism which could balance Erdoğan's foreign policy preferences was not present during this process.

In addition to acting within the comfort of a single-party government and in the absence of a politically powerful Turkish military in the foreign policy decision making process, the Islamist business circles as well as the broader civil society also played an important role in the process of worsening Turkish-Israeli relations in the aftermath of the Gaza War. Throughout its tenure, the JDP government created commercial opportunities for Islamic Turkish businessmen and so they brought together the economic profits and the foreign policy of the country. These businessmen played an important role in improving Turkey's relations, especially those of economic nature, with the Muslim world and contributed to distancing the country from Israel. In the aftermath of the Gaza War as well as the ensuing crises with Israel, civil society organizations were also put into use to promote to the JDP government's position vis-à-vis Israel. These organizations played an important role in spreading anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli sentiments among the Turkish people and in mobilizing the Turkish public opinion against Israel. Together with the JDP and the Felicity Party, they organized demonstration where, people denounced Israel with Palestinian flags and pro-Hamas placards, and they shouted slogans like: "Damn Israel", "Jews are cursed", "salute to Hamas", "Zionist dogs will give an account", "Israel is cancer in Muslim's body", and "A free Jerusalem, a world without Israel." Furthermore, the JDP also displayed billboards around İstanbul that included anti-Semitic slogans and that accused Israel of the civilian deaths in Gaza. On the anniversary of the Gaza War, Turkish Islamist civil society also protested Israel by burning Israeli flags in Istanbul.¹⁶³

Finally, the media played an important role in the deterioration of Turkey's relations with Israel. First and foremost, the Turkish media impressively aired Israel's attack on the Palestinians. Also, the media widely showed Israel's assassination of Hamas's religious leader Sheikh Ahmet İsmail Hasan Yasine, Israeli-Lebanon conflict in 2006 and Israel's Operation Cast Lead in 2008.¹⁶⁴ In

¹⁶³ Ibid., pp. 437-438.

¹⁶⁴ Balcı and Kardaş, "The Changing Dynamics of Turkey's Relations with Israel: An Analysis of 'Securitization'," p. 427.

September 2009, in a TV series titled Separation, which was broadcast on TRT 1, Israeli soldiers were portrayed as villains who killed Palestinian babies and defenseless people. Another Turkish TV series in a private channel, which created problems in the Turkish-Israeli relationship in January 2010 was “Kurtlar Vadisi”, in which MOSSAD agents were identified as children traffickers and in which there were several other anti-Israeli scenes. Thus, the media also contributed to the Turkish foreign policy change towards Israel by demonstrating this country as a threat for Turkey and thus shaping public perception by anti-Israeli broadcasts.

All in all, the Operation Cast Lead brought the relationship of Turkey and Israel, which had gone with ups and downs until then, to the point of rupture. Erdoğan’s strong reaction to this operation, such as regarding the incident as state terrorism and a crime against humanity as well as his pro-Palestine manner was the reflection of his connections to the National Outlook tradition. Besides, Erdoğan, who was considered as a charismatic leader, never abstained from telling his real thoughts and sentiments in case of his feeling of betrayal and injustice. He considered not being informed about the Gazze attack during the mediation process as an insult against himself and this situation turned the incident into a more dramatic crisis. In this process, the ensuing crises, including Erdoğan's “One Minute” scold and harsh reactions in the “One Minute”, “Low Seat” and “Mavi Marmara” crises caused further tension in the relations. In every occasion, Erdoğan increasingly stated his reaction against Israel, and presented his pro-Palestinian/Gaza attitude. These incidents carried the relations to a new level being filtered by Erdoğan through his Muslim sensitivity and critical ideology towards Israel. As a result, Turkish foreign policy change towards Israel in the aftermath of the Gaza War took place primarily under the leadership of the then Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan, but with the involvement and the contribution of the rest of the JDP cadres, the civil society, media, the Islamist businessmen and several other actors in Turkish domestic politics. Erdoğan, as mentioned in Gustavsson’s model, first perceived a necessity for a change in foreign policy and then worked within the framework of several formal and informal institutions in order to bring about this policy change.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary and Discussion of the Findings

While foreign policy analysis studies have been carried out all around the world since the 1950s, and the scholarship on foreign policy change has increased especially from the 1990s onwards, the development of this literature in Turkey has been relatively slow. For many years, studies on Turkish foreign policy have not paid adequate attention to decision makers and decision making processes. However, in the 2000s, the number of studies concentrating on Turkish foreign policy within the context of foreign policy analysis literature, examining various national and international factors affecting foreign policy, and analyzing decision making processes and behaviors of influential actors in these processes has significantly increased.

In order to provide a theoretical and systematic contribution to the existing studies, this thesis has examined Turkish-Israeli relations, which came to the point of rupture after the 2008 Operation Cast Lead, both by paying attention to the structural factors that provided a context for this change and by considering the ideology, foreign policy vision, and personality characteristics of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In order to analyze the deteriorating Turkish-Israeli relations, this thesis has focused on the domestic and international structural factors, as well as the role of Erdoğan within the three-step foreign policy change model of Gustavsson. The first step consists of a number of sources which are regarded as fundamental structural conditions and they are divided into two categories as international and domestic

factors and also two sub-categories as political and economic. The second step implies that changes in foreign policy can occur based on the individual decision makers' perception of structural factors and how they reflect upon them. The final step is the decision making process. This step refers to the process in which the policy makers feel the necessity for change in foreign policy, and they work within formal and informal institutions to bring about the policy change. Also, Gustavsson emphasizes the role of a crisis situation, which increases the chances of change in the existing foreign policy behavior. As a crisis situation involves the sense of fear and urgency, it provides an opportunity to remove the feeling of inertia for policy makers.

According to this model, as the first phase in the thesis, structural factors that constitute the context for the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relations have been explained. Despite the effects of structural factors which caused tension between Turkey and Israel from time to time, no radical change occurred in the relationship in the initial years of the JDP government. Although the then Prime Minister Erdoğan frequently criticized the Israeli government's policies against the Palestinians, he always emphasized that Turkey and Israel were friends and these were only friendly criticisms. However, the 2008 Gaza Crisis became a breaking point in the relationship. Israel's Operation Cast Lead in 2008 provided a motive for the Erdoğan government to initiate a significant change in Turkish foreign policy towards Israel. This change was mainly shaped by Erdoğan's ideology dating back to his National Outlook connection as well as his personal perception of the Israeli operations in Gaza.

This is an important argument not only as an explanation of a dramatic case of change in Turkish foreign policy that has been experienced in recent years, but also as an effort to understand the broader topic of foreign policy change. With regard to the literature on Turkish foreign policy, this thesis provides a theoretical and systematic understanding of the changing Turkish-Israeli relations in the aftermath of the 2008 Gaza War. This is an important contribution to the scholarship, because the existing studies either mainly focus on the structural factors that led to this change or make leader-focused arguments. The number of scholars who take into account various factors to explain the worsening Turkish-Israeli relations is actually very few

in the literature. This thesis provides a theoretical analysis that takes into account not only the structural factors, but also the individual-level explanations. The thesis also contributes to the international literature on foreign policy change, because although the number of studies on foreign policy change has substantially increased throughout the world since the 1990s, especially the individual leader's role in these processes remains a neglected topic. With its emphasis on not only the structural international and domestic factors, but also Prime Minister (and then President) Tayyip Erdoğan's role in the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relationship, this thesis provides an important case study to the international scholarship on the role of individual leaders in foreign policy change.

Following the 2008 Operation Cast Lead, the "One Minute", "Low Seat" and the "Mavi Marmara" crises have brought the relations between the two countries to more serious levels. In this context, the Turkish-Israeli relationship, which became highly problematic with the influence of the existing crises, became one of the significant issues of the period and remained on the Turkish foreign policy agenda for a long time. This issue has recently gained particular attention as there has been an attempt to re-build relations which have reached the point of rupture.

Currently, a normalization process has been going on between Israel and Turkey, and an agreement was recently signed between the two countries. A close analysis of the current developments shows that the arguments presented in this thesis in order to explain the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relations also help us to have a better understanding of the recent normalization process. It is possible to make the argument that the current normalization process has also been the outcome of a combination of structural and individual-level factors. First of all, the Arab Spring, which started in Tunisia in 2010, became a very important structural factor that significantly changed the dynamics in the Middle East. The uprisings' spread to Syria, and Turkey's support for the Syrian dissidents vis-à-vis the Assad regime seriously damaged the Turkish-Syrian relations from 2011 onwards. Turkey's strong position against Bashar al-Assad also brought with it the deterioration of Turkey's relations with Iran which is Syria's ally. From the Israeli perspective, especially the regime change in Egypt within the context of the Arab Spring caused lots of uncertainties. The attempts for democratization in several Arab countries created the

potential for further isolation of Israel in the region. Second, the energy cooperation project between Turkey and Israel brought these countries closer to each other for mutual economic benefits. The possibility of Israel exporting its natural gas resources to Europe through Turkey with a marine pipeline project created an important potential to build effective cooperation between Turkey and Israel. Third, improving its relations with a Muslim country like Turkey would clearly be in the interests of Israel regarding the latests developments about the Palestinian issue and the international criticisms about Israeli policies against the Palestinians. These structural factors have recently provided a favorable framework for Turkey and Israel to make an effort to mend relations.

In addition to these structural factors, the role of the individual leader, namely Tayyip Erdoğan, was also important in the normalization of Turkish-Israeli relations. Erdoğan clearly played an active role in this process. In fact, it was argued that Erdoğan was the main decision maker who managed the process of normalization¹⁶⁵ within the framework of the efforts the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly the then Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioğlu. It was Erdoğan's statements about a need to improve relations with Israel in different contexts that brought the Turkish-Israeli relationship to the active foreign policy agenda. For example, the first sign about the normalization process was observed when President Tayyip Erdoğan was in the Paris climate summit. On November 30, 2015, when Erdoğan was asked by an Israeli radio reporter whether Turkish-Israeli relations could be restored, Erdoğan responded by saying "why not, once our conditions are met?".¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, upon his return from Saudi Arabia on December 31, 2015 Erdoğan argued that 'Israel needs a country like Turkey in the region..We need to accept that we also need Israel'.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, when Erdoğan went to Washington, DC to attend a nuclear summit in March 2016, his speech at the Brookings Institution was important in giving a clear message about the ongoing process of normalization in

¹⁶⁵ Abdulkadir Selvi "Erdoğan-Putin Görüşmesinden Ne Bekleniyor?," *Hürriyet*, 29 June 2016.

¹⁶⁶ Verda Özer, "Turkey-Israel Relations Will Normalize Soon," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 16 January 2016.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Turkish-Israeli relations.¹⁶⁸ During his speech, Erdoğan touched upon the Israeli-Palestinian issue and he repeated three expectations from Israel in order to normalize relations after the Mavi Marmara crisis. Finally, Erdoğan was also the main figure who met with the Hamas leader Halid Meşal and informed him about Turkey's normalization process with Israel.¹⁶⁹

Throughout the process of restoring Turkish-Israeli relations, first, Israel apologized to Turkey in March 2013 for the mistakes that have led to the loss of life during the Mavi Marmara incident and by doing this fulfilled the first condition of Turkey. Then, as a second condition, Israel agreed to pay 20 million dollars of compensation to the families of the people who were killed by the Israeli soldiers during the Mavi Marmara incident. Third, the issue of removing the blockade on Gaza as the last condition was softened in a way to allow Turkey to send humanitarian relief to the Palestinians in Gaza through the Ashdod port of Israel. Thus, after the fulfillment of these three conditions, the agreement was achieved between Turkey and Israel in June 2016.

As clearly seen, the arguments presented in this thesis on the deterioration of the Turkish-Israeli relations are also useful to explain the normalization and the improvement of the relationship between Turkey and Israel. In the face of these developments, it has been even more important to provide a theoretical analysis about why Turkish-Israeli relations deteriorated in the aftermath of the 2008 Gaza War. This analysis provides an important foresight about the Turkish-Israeli relations in case the relations get into a negative pace again in the future.

5.2 Further Research

This thesis made use of Jakob Gustavsson's foreign policy decision making model, as a framework in explaining the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations

¹⁶⁸ Selin Nasi, "How Close are Turkey and Israel to a Deal," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 4 April 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4F4yxflCrn4>.

¹⁶⁹ Abdulkadir Selvi, "İsrail'le Anlaşmanın Perde Arkası," *Hürriyet*, 28 June 2016.

from the late 1990s and early 2000s onwards. Thus, it presents a certain point of view, which analyzes this decision making process with a focus on a combination of structural factors and the role of the individual leadership. However, further research on this subject can help us delve deeper into the specifics of Turkey's deteriorating relations with Israel if it takes into account two additional important concepts/theoretical frameworks. The first one of these is the power of pragmatism as a noticeable ingredient in Tayyip Erdoğan's thinking. Gustavsson's model of foreign policy change provides us with a framework to explore what kind of factors shape a leader's perceptions about the necessity of a change in foreign policy. This thesis discussed Erdoğan's National Outlook background as well as his determination to turn Turkey into a regional power (through acts like Turkey's mediation role in Syrian-Israeli negotiations) as an important factor in his perception of the 2008 Israeli military operation in Gaza. The thesis further argued that the recent improvement of Turkish-Israeli relations has its roots in the regional uncertainties caused by the Arab Spring, and a possible future energy project between Turkey and Israel with potential economic and political benefits for both countries. While the analysis provided in this thesis shows that Erdoğan follows a pragmatist attitude from time to time, Gustavsson's framework cannot sufficiently help us to have a deeper and more detailed understanding about the role of pragmatism in Erdoğan's thought process. Thus, future research can bring an additional focus on the notion of the "*reason of state*" of the Classical Realists like Thucydides, Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes.¹⁷⁰ The concept of the reason of state demonstrates that the interests of the state predominate over all other interests and values. In this sense, it can be argued that Erdoğan has recently changed his attitude about Israel and made an explicit effort to normalize Turkish-Israeli relations by giving priority to Turkish national interests, that is, to increase the political power and the economic benefits of Turkey. Here, Machiavelli's notion of "*dual morality*" can also be helpful in understanding the dilemma between Erdoğan's critical position against Israel in the face of the Operation Cast Lead, where he highlighted Israel's disproportional use of

¹⁷⁰ Chih-Hann Chang, "Ethical Foreign Policy? US Humanitarian Interventions," *Ethics and Global Politics*, 2011, p. 20.

force against the Palestinians as well as the civilian killings in Gaza and his recent effort to improve Turkey's relations with Israel.

Besides Gustavsson's model of foreign policy change, a second theoretical framework that can help us develop a deeper understanding and an alternative perspective about the changing Turkish-Israeli relations is Neoclassical Realism.

Traditional Realism is interested in understanding the anarchic international system in which a state uses its national power and statesmen try to maintain the balance of power. Similarly, Neorealism mainly examines state behaviours and systemic outcomes with a focus on the relative distribution of power at the international level.¹⁷¹ Neorealism takes the systemic level of analysis as its starting point to explain the behaviours of states rather than the unit or the state level. In contrast to Classical Realism and Neorealism, Neoclassical Realism does not aim to construct a general theory of how states behave in the anarchic international system. Instead, its goal is to explain the foreign policies of specific states.¹⁷² Neoclassical Realism does not reject the importance of a state's position in the international system, but it sees Neorealism not enough for explaining a state's foreign policy. Thus, Neoclassical Realists argue that in addition to the anarchic international system, one needs to take into account a number of intervening variables in order to have a better understanding of a state's foreign policy.¹⁷³ Some of common intervening variables examined by Neoclassical Realist scholars include the perceptions and misperceptions of statesmen, state-society relations, public opinion, political regimes, institutions, and culture (For examples of Neoclassical Works see Wohlforth 1993, Christensen 1997, Zakaria 1998 and Schweller 2004).¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, p. 80

¹⁷² Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 1, October 1998, p. 145.

¹⁷³ Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," p. 145.

¹⁷⁴ William Curti Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions During the Cold War*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1993, Thomas J. Christensen, "Perception and Alliances in Europe, 1865-1940," *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 1, Winter 1997, pp. 65-97, Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998 and Randall L. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underblanching," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 2004, pp. 159-201.

By taking Gustavsson's model of foreign policy change as its main theoretical framework, this thesis adopted a relatively similar approach to Neoclassical Realism in the sense that it examined the combined influence of structural factors and individual-level variables on a specific issue in Turkish foreign policy. However, for future researchers of Turkish-Israeli relations, Neoclassical Realism could provide a useful alternative framework, because it will not only allow the researcher to combine international systemic constraints with domestic and individual-level variables, but also help go beyond the focus on the individual leader and enable the researcher to explore the effects of other domestic variables on the changing Turkish-Israeli relations from the late 1990s and early 2000s onwards.

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Curriculum Vitae

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