

ISRAEL, TURKEY: MILITARY-POLITICAL AND MILITARY-TECHNICAL COOPERATION *(regional security problems)*

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

In the evening of 28 August, 1958, after a meeting of the General Staff of the Israeli Armed Forces, David Ben Gurion, the first prime minister and founder of the Jewish state, changed into civilian clothes and left in an unknown direction. Rumor within his entourage had it that he had gone to the Negev Desert to test a new secret weapon. Before long, however, the Israeli prime minister's car turned and headed for a military airfield where an airplane was already waiting with its engines running. A little later it took off and became airborne, hovered over the sea, and then set course for the north. For many years Ben Gurion's flight remained a mystery. At the time he met with leaders of a certain country and signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation, which came as a final chord in the formation of "cordon sanitaire" around Israel, on the perimeter of its borders with Arab states—a whole network of secret treaties in the Near and Middle East that came to be known as "periphery pact."

The drastic changes that occurred in the Middle East in the late 1950s, related to the strengthen-

ing of Soviet influence in the region and the de facto collapse of the Baghdad Pact (following Iraq's withdrawal from it in the wake of a coup led by Col. Cassem), forced Ankara to accede to Tel Aviv's plans to build an anti-Arab alliance. It was for a secret meeting with Turkish leadership that David Ben Gurion flew on 28 August, 1958.

The event set the stage for the evolution of close contacts between the two countries, above all in the military-political sphere. Despite the ups and downs, sometimes even a cooling of relations, by the mid-1990s, their relationship began to acquire more substance and elements of a strategic partnership, giving many experts on Middle East security cause to talk about formation of a military-political alliance between Turkey and Israel. This has become a key factor in regional security at the contemporary stage.

The present article will consider only the contemporary status and prospects for their military-political and military-technical cooperation as well as its impact on regional security problems.

Military-Technical Cooperation, a Key Component

The end of the Cold War confronted the two countries, but especially Turkey, with an array of new threats and challenges in the security sphere. As former Turkish Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin observed

in 1993, the breakup of the Soviet Union and the resultant vacuum of influence by extraregional “powerhouses” in the Middle East turned Turkey from “a ‘flank’ state to a ‘frontline state faced with multiple fronts.’”¹ Turkish generals played a main role in establishing and promoting new close contacts between Ankara and Tel Aviv. The masterminds behind the development of relations with Israel on the Turkish side were Deputy Foreign Minister Onur Öymen and former Deputy Chief of the General Staff Çevik Bir. In their view, strategic threats to Turkey’s national security today have a different character than in the Cold War era, which calls for new approaches to ensuring the country’s security, one of its key elements being military-political cooperation with Israel. After all is said and done, it is the only secular state in the Near East that holds pro-Western positions, adhering to Western values and democratic principles.²

The first agreement on military cooperation was signed, amid the utmost secrecy, on 23 February, 1996, in Tel Aviv by Deputy Chief of the General Staff Çevik Bir and the leadership of the Israeli Defense Ministry. For the first time in the history of relations between the two countries, it provided for interaction of their armed forces in implementing military training programs; joint land, naval, and air maneuvers; creation of a joint group on military-strategic studies; training flights by Turkish aircraft in the Israeli air space and Israeli aircraft in the Turkish air space; briefing of Turkish pilots; and intelligence sharing, especially in combating terrorism (in particular, joint monitoring on the borders with Syria, Iran, and Iraq). Furthermore, Israel pledged to help Turkey in modernizing and beefing up its borders with these three countries to protect it against Kurdish insurgents.

It was not until later on that information about the details of the document began to filter through.³ First of all, it turned out that technological cooperation between the two countries in combat employment of aviation was a very high priority (Turkey and Israel have the same types of U.S. made aircraft in service). The agreement envisioned training flights in Israeli and Turkish air space—initially without combat hardware, ammunition or electronic surveillance equipment.⁴ In addition, Israeli military aviation was given an opportunity to use Turkish bases and air space for combat training. In particular, Israeli F-16 aircraft periodically use Turkey’s Akinci air base. It is planned to expand cooperation between the countries’ navies while an agreement was reached to share intelligence and strategic assessment of the situation in the region. One example of cooperation in military information sharing is the technical data that Turkey received about MiG-29 fighters, the most modern combat aircraft whose various modifications are in service in the Air Force of Syria, Iran, and a number of other countries in the region with which Ankara has rather strained relations. The Israelis obtained this information after the FRG transferred to them three Soviet-made MiG-29s which in their time were in service with the East Germany military.⁵ The Israelis were also to provide assistance to Turkey in beefing up its borders with neighboring Arab countries as well as with Iran, including modernization of the electronics intelligence network in border areas.

Already on 28 August, 1996, Gen. David Irvi, a senior Israeli Defense Ministry official, arrived in Ankara to sign \$600 million worth of contracts to modernize 54 Turkish F-4 Phantom aircraft and organize military cooperation between state controlled aircraft factories.

Further advancement of these relations was not impeded even by the advent of Islamists in Ankara as Turkey’s top brass, which traditionally had considerable clout in the country’s political life, pressured the government into deepening cooperation with Tel Aviv. To demonstrate to the world public that the military persuaded the prime minister, in February 1997, Gen. Ismail Karadai, chief of the General

¹ D.B. Sezer, *Turkey’s Political and Security Interests in the New Geostrategic Environment of the Expanded Middle East*, Stimson Center, Occasional Paper, No. 19, Washington, July 1994, p. 25.

² See: M.R. Hickok, “Hegemon Rising: The Gap Between Turkish Strategy and Military Modernization. Parameters,” *The U.S. Army War College Quarterly*, Summer 2000, pp. 106-111.

³ See: *Force Projection in the Middle East. Strategic Survey 1998/99*, IISS, 1999, p. 164.

⁴ See: N.G. Kireev, “Turtsia i Izrail—strategicheskie soiuzniki na Blizhnem Vostoke (khronika voyenno-politicheskogo sotrudnichestva v 1994-1997 gg.),” *Blizhniy Vostok i sovremennost*, No. 5, ed. by V.A. Isaev, A.O. Filonik, IIBV, Moscow, 1998, pp. 105-113.

⁵ For more detail, see: D. Pipes, “A New Axis: The Emerging Turkish-Israeli Entente,” *The National Interest*, No. 50, Winter 1997/1998.

Staff, went to Tel Aviv, where he reaffirmed Turkey's commitment to advance military cooperation with Israel. During the visit, the parties also discussed joint naval maneuvers with the participation of the Sixth U.S. Fleet. Commenting on prospects for this cooperation, I. Karadai said that Ankara would not share information provided by Tel Aviv with other countries or transfer Israeli military technology to them.⁶

In October 1997, yet another agreement was signed—on missiles. It came in the wake of a visit to Turkey by Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, chief of the Israeli General Staff, who met not only with military leadership but was also received by Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz. According to Turkish military sources, Turkey and Israel had for several months discussed plans for production of long-range missiles. In the course of A. Shahak's visit, the sides focused on production of Delilah missiles (with a range of 500 kilometers). The need was highlighted by growing concerns over the shipment of Soviet/Russian-made S-300 missiles to Cyprus and the serious threat of possible missile attacks by Iraq, Syria, and Iran as well as Tel Aviv and Ankara's aspiration to build a satellite based communication system to provide a reliable information channel. Also, the Israeli company Rafael expressed readiness to sell the Turkish Air Force its Python-2 air-to-air missiles.⁷

One major area of cooperation is co-production of anti-aircraft systems, which has to do with the two countries' concern over the fact that a number of states in the Middle East have acquired missile systems. Within the framework of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), in 1988, Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI) landed a contract with the U.S. Defense Department to develop, produce, and flight-test the Arrow SAM capable of hitting tactical ballistic missiles. (In its specifications, this system is close to the Soviet/Russian-made S-300V SAM.) In the future, conditional on U.S. approval, Israel plans to ship these missiles (or their upgraded modification Arrow-2) also to Turkey.⁸ These missiles were first test-fired in June 2001, in the course of a joint U.S.-Israeli-Turkish exercise code-named Anatolian Eagle, in the southeast of Turkey.⁹

In early 1997, the Turkish president approved a \$670 million contract (factoring in interest on the loan, it is actually worth \$800 million) for modernization by IAI of 54 F-4E aircraft under the Phantom-2000 program. In addition to extending the aircraft service life for another 20 years, it was planned to replace obsolete onboard equipment, install new Israeli-made EL/M-2032 radars and EW equipment,¹⁰ and arm them with AGM-142 Popeye-1 air-to-surface missiles. To ensure successful implementation of this program, the Israeli parliament even decided to provide a \$430 million credit. Prior to that, in the spring of 1996, a group of Turkish pilots took a training course in Israel to operate new radars analogous to those installed on Israeli F-4-2000s.¹¹

Furthermore, it is planned to supply Guitard systems to protect helicopters that are used by the Turkish army in anti-Kurdish operations against SA-7 and Stinger missiles. Until recently these helicopters were merely equipped with night-vision devices. The decision was made after two combat helicopters, AH-1W Super Cobra and AS-532 Cougar, as well as an S-70A helicopter with 17 Turkish servicemen on board were shot down in Kurd populated areas.¹²

In addition, Israel is bidding for a contract to replace G-3 rifles currently in service with the Turkish army with modern 5.56-mm small arms and light weapons. Ankara has long been planning to buy air-

⁶ See: I.I. Ivanova, "Turetsko-izraelskie otnosheniya i problemy regionalnoy bezopasnosti," in: *Blizhniy Vostok: problemy regional'noy bezopasnosti*, Compiled by M.R. Arunova, IIIVB, Moscow, 2000, pp. 86-90.

⁷ See: N.G. Kireev, op. cit., pp. 161-162.

⁸ See: V. Koziulin, "VTS: Rossiisko-izraelskoe protivostoianie," *Yaderniy kontrol*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 2003, pp. 33-34; L. Sariibrahioglu, "Israel to Brief Turkey on Arrow-2," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 16 January, 2002, p. 4.

⁹ See: "The Arrow Missile Interceptor Deployed In Israeli-Turkish-U.S. Air Exercise," *Middle East News Line*, 22 July, 2001.

¹⁰ See: "Osnovnye tekushchie programmy modernizatsii samoletov vooruzhennykh sil zarubezhnykh stran," *Zarubezhnoe voennoe obozrenie*, No. 5, 1999, p. 35.

¹¹ See: A. Alekseev, "Sotrudnichestvo Turtsii i Izrailia v ukreplenii natsionalnykh VVS," *Zarubezhnoe voennoe obozrenie*, No. 4, 1997, pp. 30-32.

¹² See: L. Sariibrahioglu, "Turkey Places Helicopter Electronic Warfare Contracts," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 16 January, 2002, p. 15.

borne early-warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft with Tel Aviv offering to sell Falcon-equipped aircraft. About \$800 million is being provided to buy four such aircraft.

Joint military-strategic research programs have special priority for the two countries. The threat evaluation concept is a key component of bilateral cooperation. The programs in this sphere are implemented within the framework of what is known as Threat-2000 concept and are adjusted to ongoing changes in the situation in the Middle East. Incidentally, the main emphasis in the course of briefings organized on the subject in hand is placed on Syria and Iran while the sharing of information about them is maintained on the highest possible level. Furthermore, there are close contacts between the countries' leading think tanks on regional security and foreign policy issues.

Regional Security Impact

Government officials and experts in both states stress that relations between the two countries are not a military alliance in its traditional understanding. At the same time, they hold similar positions, coordinating basic security matters. According to Turkish and Israeli analysts, the relationship between Ankara and Tel Aviv is a strategic partnership, but it goes beyond the task of maintaining a balance of forces as each side has sufficient military capability to ensure its own regional security single-handedly. It is a relationship between two "status quo powers" that do not want to see drastic geopolitical changes in the region.¹³

In his time, Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai named potential opponents of an Israeli-Turkish alliance by name, saying in part: If countries such as Iran, Iraq and Syria think that they are able to use force against Turkey, they should bear in mind that standing behind Turkey are joint forces with whose support no one in the region is in a position to do anything against it; I discussed the strategic situation with U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen; we also examined these strategic matters with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman; we are well placed to pool our efforts in countering any threat in the region.¹⁴

Tel Aviv and Ankara note that militarily the principal goal of their strategic partnership is not to fight together against a common enemy but to ensure that their alliance can avert an outbreak of war against either of the two countries.

Virtually the whole Arab world was concerned by the formation of the Turkish-Israeli military-political alliance. The extent of this concern, however, varies depending on the level of tension between a particular Arab country, on the one hand, and Ankara and Tel Aviv, on the other. It is generally believed that Turkish-Israeli military-political cooperation is directed, above all, against Syria. Without going into the history of Turkish-Syrian relations, it will be noted that according to many analysts, it was in fact the alliance with Israel that became the principal argument in Turkey's intense, and successful, pressure on Syria in the course of the 1998 crisis. At the time the country's president, Hafiz al-Asad, had to keep troops, inferior to the Turkish troops as they were, on two fronts simultaneously, and ultimately yield to Ankara's demands: oust Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan and close the training camps and bases of his organization—the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)—on Syrian territory.¹⁵ The crisis showed that the Syrian military (especially its air force) was no match for Israeli or Turkish armed forces, also giving the Turkish military cause to hope that it could go on resolving problems with Syria from the position of force.¹⁶

¹³ See: Ç. Bir, M. Sherman, "Formula for Stability: Turkey Plus Israel," *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2002, p. 29.

¹⁴ See: N.G. Kireev, op. cit., pp. 150-151.

¹⁵ See: A. Makovsky, M. Eisenstadt, "Turkish-Syrian Relations: A Crisis Delayed?" WINEP, *Policywatch*, No. 345, 14 October, 1998 [www.washingtoninstitute.org].

¹⁶ For more detail, see: R.M. Bennett, "The Syrian Military: A Primer," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 8, August/September 2001.

According to Arab experts, in the spring and summer of 2002, the General Staffs of the Israeli and Turkish armed forces worked out a plan of joint action against Syria in the course of the U.S.-led operation in Iraq (should Syria and Iran take action that could jeopardize Ankara and Tel Aviv's security). It should be noted here that Turkey's far more restrained position toward the war on Iraq compelled it to improve its relations with Syria somewhat. That was due to an event that, as it seemed, could amend the prospects for both regional security and Turkey's cooperation with Israel: On 19 June, 2002, Gen. Hassan al-Turkomani, chief of the Syrian General Staff, made the first official visit to Turkey¹⁷ while in November 2002, for the first time in the history of Arab-Turkish relations (not counting the 1955 Baghdad Pact), the two countries signed a treaty on military cooperation wherein the United States, interested to improve the relations between Syria and Turkey in the lead-up to the Washington-planned military operation in Iraq, apparently played an important role. Even so, the agreement does not envision serious military-technical cooperation and cannot affect the military-political balance or prospects for regional security although on the whole it is conducive to easing tensions between the signatories.¹⁸ At the same time, it is generally expected to impact on the level of relations between Ankara and Tel Aviv.

One key element in the influence produced by the Turkish-Israeli alliance on regional security problems is their common policy toward Tehran. This is directly to do with the problem of nuclear nonproliferation in the region as well as with the possibility of Israel's delivering a preemptive nuclear strike against Iran (when it acquires nuclear weapons production capability). Experts point out that in this event Israel is likely to use its Air Force, which is by far the most powerful in the Middle East, especially after new U.S.-made F-15I aircraft were adopted for service.

In this context, Israel's military-political cooperation with Turkey, including joint training flights in the Turkish and Israeli air space (up to one week long, four times a year), is especially important. Furthermore, recently such exercises in the Turkish air space have already become three-way, with the participation of USAF aviation. Thus, in the course of maneuvers code-named Anatolian Eagle, in the southeast of Turkey, in April, June, and September 2001, more than 90 combat aircraft were deployed.¹⁹ It is also essential to take into account the possibility of U.S. technical and information support for the Israelis should Tel Aviv use the Turkish air space to strike Iran.

The likelihood of this scenario being played out is evident from, among other things, the fact that in the course of the air operation against Iraq (1998), the Turkish ambassador to the United States said that Ankara had considered the possibility of granting Tel Aviv the use of Turkish air space to deliver a retaliatory strike should Iraqi missiles be launched against Israel. What could be involved in this case is not of course only retaliation but also preemption. At the same time, the Israelis can target not only Iran's nuclear infrastructure, which they believe is used in the WMD program, but also missile positions, etc. Furthermore, by using Turkish territory, Israel can ensure early warning about missile launches from Iranian territory, just as it had before, from Iraqi territory. It is also important for Tel Aviv that it can use the Turkish air space to search and rescue downed pilots, land its aircraft that were damaged on Turkish territory, and deploy special task forces in operations against Iran.²⁰

From Tehran's perspective, Israeli-Turkish strategic cooperation poses a threat to its stability, in particular in so far as it weakens the positions of Syria, Iran's only reliable partner in the region, and seriously upsets the balance of forces that has evolved in the Near East.²¹

According to Turkish Gen. Çevik Bir, one of the alliance's masterminds, along with the WMD proliferation problem, another priority for the alliance is counterterrorism, Ankara's code word for punitive

¹⁷ See: M. Mufti, "Turkish-Syrian Rapprochement: Causes and Consequences," WINEP, *Policywatch*, No. 630, 21 June, 2002 [www.washingtoninstitute.org].

¹⁸ See: I. Muradian, *Problemy bezopasnosti v blizhevostochnoy politike SShA*, Erevan, 2003, pp. 128-130.

¹⁹ See: "Israel Center Stage: Country Briefing," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, 1 May, 2002, p. 25.

²⁰ See: E. Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli-Turkish Strategic Partnership," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Summer 2001, p. 51.

²¹ See: B. Aras, "Turkish-Israeli-Iranian Relations in the Nineties: Impact on the Middle East," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. VII, No. 3, June 2000, pp. 152-155.

operations against the Kurds.²² At times, however, the sides' interests on the issue did not coincide as Israel had long supported the struggle by Kurds in North Iraq against Iraq's ruling authorities. Yet Tel Aviv's new security policy priorities forced it to review its position toward the Kurds, which manifested itself especially in the course of Israeli air strikes against the Kurdistan Workers' Party in Lebanon in the north of Bekaa Valley (Operation Grapes of Wrath) as well as in that Israeli intelligence helped establish the whereabouts of and capture the Kurdish leader A. Ocalan.²³

It is also essential to note the growing role that Israel and Turkey are playing in the post-Soviet area, where their interests overlap, including their opposition to Iran's rising influence, especially on such issues as energy transit, the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the Central Asian republics, and so forth. In addition, Tel Aviv and Ankara's security goals largely coincide with Washington's position in the region.

Yet whereas earlier it was believed that Israel used Turkish territory to advance its interests in Central Asia and Azerbaijan, the last few years have seen an invigoration of independent Israeli policy, including in the military-political sphere. The alliance's key importance in the region is also due to the fact that Tel Aviv strongly supported Baku in the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, reinforcing its intelligence and special services and supplying weapons to the Azerbaijani army.²⁴ For its part, Ankara closely cooperates with Azerbaijan in various spheres, from training programs to joint maneuvers to arms and military equipment supplies. Baku is the by far most reliable partner for Ankara and Tel Aviv in the post-Soviet area. Thus, there is conclusive evidence of their joint shipments of Stinger SAMs and other weapons to Azerbaijan.²⁵

Azerbaijani analysts point out that the idea of creating a tripartite military-political alliance (Ankara, Tel Aviv, Baku), lurking behind which is "Washington's shadow," enjoys considerable support among the Azerbaijani public. Thus, in December 1999, Baku was visited by Israeli Deputy Defense Minister Gen. Efraim Sneh, co-chairman of the U.S.-Azerbaijani-Israeli interparliamentary friendship group, which was created back in 1998, in the course of Ilkham Aliev's visit to the United States. At the time, Efraim Sneh had a number of meetings with republic officials (including its then-President Heydar Aliev), discussing bilateral cooperation and regional problems. That was followed up by other visits, meetings, and consultations between Israeli and Azerbaijani officials.

True, the likelihood of a tripartite strategic military-political alliance being formed in the foreseeable future arouses doubts even among its most enthusiastic supporters in Azerbaijan itself. A major factor here is the position not only of neighboring Russia and Iran but also of the majority of Muslim countries. The latter have effective levers to influence Baku to prevent the creation of such a military-political alliance. Furthermore, the relationship between Israel and Azerbaijan in all spheres is incomparable with the level of contacts between Azerbaijan and Turkey, which, apart from other things, are linked by ethnic, linguistic, and religious proximity. Despite their active political contacts, Israel and Azerbaijan have rather weak economic relations. Say, in the 1996-1998 period, trade between them was a mere \$23.1 million (the bulk of it comprising oil shipments from Azerbaijan and telecoms equipment from Israel), as compared to more than \$832.2 million between Turkey and Azerbaijan (covering virtually all spheres).²⁶ All of the aforementioned gives little cause to talk about the feasibility of an Azerbaijani-Turkish-Israeli military-political alliance even if efforts to put it in place are approved and actively assisted by Washington.

True, none of this has substantial impact on Israeli and Turkish military-technical assistance to Azerbaijan, which is provided regardless of the level of economic and political contacts or their relations

²² See: Ç. Bir, "Turkey's Role in the New World Order: New Challenges," *Strategic Forum, INSS*, No.135, February 1998.

²³ See: V. Akhmedov, "Protivostoianie," *Azia i Afrika segodnia*, No. 1, 2000, p. 14.

²⁴ See: F.S. Larrabee, I.O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty*, RAND, Santa-Monica, 2003, p. 119.

²⁵ See: A. Rezai, "Izrail v Tsentral'noy Azii," *Amu Darya*, No. 1, 1999, pp. 103-104.

²⁶ See: A. Veliev, "The Israel-Turkey-Azerbaijan Triangle: Present and Future," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2, 2000, pp. 79-85.

within the framework of the alliance or any other structures. According to different sources, Tel Aviv sent to Azerbaijan not only weapons but also communication facilities as well as approximately 140 military advisers on security problems. The regional significance of the Turkish-Israeli alliance consists also in that the Jewish lobby in the United States strongly supports energy transport routes via Turkey, primarily construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline.

Many experts point out that yet another sphere of interests of this lobby is countering Greek and Armenian influence groups, in particular over the recognition of Armenian genocide by the U.S. Congress. Israel, whose people lived through a holocaust and the memory of which lives in every Jew, nonetheless holds a sharply negative position on the issue of recognition of Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire since this is linked to one of the key elements of its national security—relations with Turkey. Thus, ahead of his official visit to Turkey, in April 2001, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said: It is senseless to say that Armenians, like Jews, were subjected to genocide; on the issue of genocide, identification of Armenians with Jews is unacceptable.²⁷ Because, for a number of reasons, Armenia perceives Turkey as a real threat to its national security, until Erevan and Ankara have resolved their outstanding problems, the growing influence of both Turkey itself and its strategic partner, Israel, will definitely not be conducive to regional security in the South Caucasus.²⁸

Ankara has to a certain extent also become a conduit of Tel Aviv's policy in regions abutting Central Asia, in particular Afghanistan.²⁹ Shortly after the Taliban movement had emerged, Israel, not without directive from the United States, treated the Taliban as an anti-Iranian force that could weaken Tehran's positions and influence in Afghanistan while, through Pakistan and U.S. oil companies, interested in laying pipelines via Afghanistan, Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, actually established contacts with the Taliban. And although Pakistan does not recognize the state of Israel and does not have diplomatic relations with it, during the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), through the CIA, established contacts with Mossad. Nonetheless, following the United States' revision of its position toward the Taliban, which has to do with a rise in Islamic fundamentalism, human rights violations in Afghanistan, drug trafficking, and the collapse of negotiations between the Taliban and U.S. oil companies, say Unocal, Israel also revised its position toward the Taliban. One factor in this was that Turkey openly supported Afghan Gen. R. Dostoum (an ethnic Uzbek) who was in opposition to the Taliban. Ahmed Rashid, a well regarded expert, writes: "As the Unocal project evaporated and Israel realized the aversion its Central Asian allies and Turkey had toward the Taliban, Mossad opened contacts with the anti-Taliban alliance."³⁰

One new line in Israel's foreign policy in the 1990s was its relations with India. After Delhi recognized the Jewish state (January 1992), the two countries quickly established close military-political contacts in such spheres as military technology, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism. Nonetheless, lately regional security experts started talking about the possibility of an element of the so-called double periphery emerging in Tel Aviv's foreign policy in the region with the participation of Ankara and Delhi.

As to the prospects for relations within the India-Israel-Turkey triangle, it should be noted that they have a number of objective prerequisites going for them: counterterrorism and separatism (Kurds, Palestinians, Tamil and Kashmir separatists in India, etc.). True, this should not be seen as a new strategic tripartite alliance in the region. It is essential to take into account Ankara's close military-political contacts with Islamabad (Turkey's traditional support for Pakistan on the Kashmir problem, joint military personnel training programs, and information sharing)³¹ and the fairly warm relationship that

²⁷ See: A. Svarants, *Pantiurkizm v geostrategii Turtsii na Kavkaze*, Moscow, 2002, pp. 371-376.

²⁸ See: G.S. Asatryan, "Armenia and Security Issues in the South Caucasus," *Connections*, The Quarterly Journal, PFP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2002, pp. 24-27.

²⁹ See: M.R. Maleki, "Turetsko-izraillskie otnoshenia i ikh vlianie na Tsentral'nuiu Aziyu i Kavkaz," *Amu Darya*, No. 2, 1999, pp. 44-50.

³⁰ A. Rashid, "Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia," London, New York, 2002, p. 154.

³¹ For more detail, see: I. Berman, "Israel, India, and Turkey: Triple Entente?" *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 4, Fall 2002; P.R. Kumaraswamy, "India and Israel: Evolving Partnership," *BESA Mideast Security and Policy Studies*, No. 40, September 1998.

exists between Delhi and Tehran (largely similar positions on the Afghan problem, policy in Central Asia, relations with the West, primarily the United States, also based on their aspiration to counterbalance Pakistan's power in the region).³² Even so, all the three sides are interested in mutually beneficial military-technical cooperation. As of 1992, Israel has moved to third (after Russia and France) and according to some sources, to second position in military sales on the Indian arms market. For its part, India has emerged as Israel's second largest (after the United States) foreign partner in the military business.³³

Along with military-technical cooperation, Tel Aviv's relations with Delhi are characterized also by a certain measure of geostrategic orientation in so far as they agreed on the Israeli military using Indian military bases for firing practice and missile tests. Thus, in May 2000, a cruise missile was launched from an Israeli Dolphin class submarine at a naval test range near the town of Balasore (the state of Orissa). The missile, which according to experts can be armed with a nuclear warhead, hit a target at a distance of 1,250 kilometers,³⁴ which substantially changed the military-strategic lineup of forces in the Middle East. Whereas earlier, Israel's nuclear weapons comprised mainly a ground component (Jericho-1/2 ballistic missiles, tube artillery and mines) as well as an air component (above all, nuclear arms carrying F-16 aircraft), with the adoption of these nuclear missile armed submarines for operational service, Tel Aviv will become the first new member of the nuclear club with its strategic forces constituting a classic air-land-sea triad.³⁵

C o n c l u s i o n s

The strengthening of Israeli-Turkish military-political cooperation will probably become one of the main results of the war on Iraq. Against the backdrop of a cooling in relations between Ankara and Washington (despite the objections of the part of the Turkish top brass), Turkey is expected to distance itself from the United States, but not to such an extent as to damage its NATO membership, while the U.S. role in ensuring the country's security will also be declining. At the same time, there is a growing likelihood of regional states getting involved in new armed conflicts, which provides extra incentives for a deepening of the Turkish-Israeli relationship.

This said, as the United States is absorbed in a post-war settlement in Iraq, Israel is likely to try resolving many of its problems with the Palestinians single-handedly.³⁶ This could in the future become a greater impediment to cooperation between Ankara and Tel Aviv (which, incidentally, was a major factor in the cooling of relations between them from the late 1970s until the early 1990s) than even opposition from Arab countries.³⁷ Thus, on 4 April, 2002, Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit described the Israeli action against Palestinians as genocide, sharply criticizing Israeli Prime Minister A. Sharon. The following day, however, he said that his comment was misinterpreted while some Turkish generals even supported Israel's policy toward Palestinians. The importance that the two states attach to their bilateral relations before long led them to consider the incident closed.³⁸

³² See: *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. XII, No. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 139-144.

³³ See: A.V. Prokofiev, "Indiisko-izraelskie otnosheniya: desiat let," *Blizhniy Vostok i sovremennost*, No. 14, ed. by M.R. Arunova, IIBV, Moscow, 2002, pp. 221-225.

³⁴ See: M.K. Said, "Missile Proliferation in the Middle East: a Regional Perspective," *Disarmament Forum*, UNIDIR, No. 2, 2001, p. 58.

³⁵ See: W.D. Farr, "The Third Temple's Holy of Holies: Israel's Nuclear Weapons," *Counterproliferation Paper No. 2*, USAF Counterproliferation Center, Air War College, Alabama, 1999, pp. 19-20.

³⁶ See: A.W. Terrill, *Strategic Effects of the Conflict with Iraq: The Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey*, U.S. Army War College, SSI, Carlisle, March 2003, pp. 11-13.

³⁷ See: F.S. Larrabee, I.O. Lesser, op. cit., p. 144.

³⁸ See: C. Migdalovitz, *Turkey: Issues for U.S. Policy*, CRS, The Library of Congress, Washington, 22 May, 2002, pp. 16-17.

Despite all the difficulties and problems, the Israeli-Turkish alliance will be strengthening as security policy is the main imperative for the two countries.³⁹ At the same time, Israel and Turkey as well as the United States see this alliance as the core of a future regional security system. Their opponents, however, believe that it will set off a chain reaction in the formation of alternative blocs and a new spiral of tension and the arms race. As a result, this will erode security prospects in the whole of the Middle and Near East.

³⁹ See: A. Makovsky, *Israel-Turkey: Strategic Relationship or Temporary Alliance? The Middle East in 2015: The Impact of Regional Trends on U.S. Strategic Planning*, ed. by J.S. Yaphé, NDU, Washington, 2002, pp. 231-235.