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INSIGHTS ON TURKISH AFFAIRS

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From the Editors

Dear Friends,

The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies is proud to present the December 2016 issue of our monthly publication, *Turkeyscope*. This issue focuses on two distinct but related geopolitical strategies of Turkey at a regional level. The first article, written by Alan Makovsky, discusses the prospects for further normalization between Turkey and Israel, and the potential role that Cyprus and the energy trade can play therein. The second article, written by Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak, focuses on the nexus between Turkey's developing weapons industry and Turkey's relations with United States and the European Union.

Sarah Jacobs contributed to this issue as assistant editor.

The Cyprus Factor in Turkish-Israeli Normalization

Alan Makovsky

Over the course of the nearly six months since Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced their agreement on normalization of bilateral relations, it has become increasingly likely that the factor that clinched the deal was prospective cooperation on energy. That being said, should Israel proceed with a pipeline to bring its gas to Turkey, it faces the possibility of deterioration in its increasingly important relations with Greece and Cyprus, as well as Greek-Americans.¹

Energy key to normalization

Energy is not explicitly mentioned in the agreement, but prior to signing, an informal understanding apparently emerged that energy would be a significant component of the bilateral agenda. That factor helps explain why Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ultimately blessed an agreement reportedly similar to one he had rejected two years earlier.

According to a U.S. official intimately involved with the final stages of negotiations, Israel decided to embrace the normalization agreement only when it became convinced that Turkey would be the most strategic and lucrative route for exporting its gas to world markets. The U.S. played a significant role in bringing Israel to that conclusion, according to the official.²

The object of Turkey's apparent desire and Israel's apparent economic hopes is Israel's Leviathan gas field on the Mediterranean coast. The gas field has an estimated 600 bcm of proven gas reserves – and according to Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz, there may be as much as 2,200 bcm more gas reserves located in Leviathan and nearby.³ Israel is optimistically targeting 2019 as the year when gas will begin flowing from Leviathan.

The two nations' energy ministers met October 13 in Ankara to discuss prospects for an underwater gas pipeline; thus far, it is the only ministerial-level meeting since the normalization process began. It's worth noting that Turkish Energy Minister Berat Albayrak has unusual sway for one in his position; he is President Recep Tayyip

Erdoğan's son-in-law and widely considered the second-most powerful figure in Turkey.

A month after meeting Albayrak, Steinitz explicitly announced that “(we) decided to move ahead on the plan for a gas export pipeline from Israel to Turkey.”⁴ Of course, implementation is a long way off. Feasibility studies are necessary, and most importantly, investors must be found for a roughly 300-mile-long pipeline estimated to cost \$7 billion. Nevertheless, the Steinitz statement signals an affirmative decision to move forward.

Import of Israeli natural gas would mitigate Turkish dependence on Russia and Iran, Turkey's top two suppliers. Turkey imports more than half of its natural gas from Russia and nearly one-fifth from Iran. Reportedly, the pipeline now under discussion with Israel could also supply somewhere in the range of 9-12 bcm, more than one-fifth of Turkey's current usage. Some of the gas could be designated for Europe, also now heavily dependent on Russian gas.⁵

Turkey's reliability

While some Israelis may be concerned that Turkey's economic doldrums and Erdoğan's personal volatility and anti-Israel reflexes (pointedly re-affirmed in a November 21 interview with Israeli journalist Ilana Dayan) could undermine the project, the Israeli government does not appear to share that assessment. Last month, Steinitz described the Turkish economy, somewhat counter-intuitively, as “very stable and very strong.”⁶

Moreover, Israeli supporters of the pipeline concept point to the fact that Israel has been importing Azerbaijani oil through Turkey for years (via the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline), and Turkey never interfered with those shipments, even during the worst periods of Israeli-Turkish tension. Bilateral trade between Israel and Turkey actually grew dramatically during the post-Mavi Marmara years. Seemingly, Turkey had walled off the commercial relationship for special protection, thus creating confidence that despite political tensions, were a natural-gas pipeline to be built, Turkey would fulfill its end of the contract.

The Cyprus conundrum

So, with both governments seemingly committed, is it smooth sailing ahead for the Turkish-Israeli pipeline? Hardly. Assuming that everything else goes right – a bold assumption in the world of energy – one major diplomatic obstacle looms, confronting Israel with a difficult policy choice.

That obstacle – a longstanding diplomatic problem that rarely attracts international media attention – is the “Cyprus problem.”

By all accounts, the only feasible route for a Turkish-Israeli pipeline is one that would traverse Cyprus’ Exclusive Economic Zone, or EEZ.⁷ That may give tiny Cyprus some leverage over the Israeli-Turkish mega-project’s progress. And Cyprus has made it clear that it opposes the project, unless the Turkish occupation of the northern one-third of the island ends, and the Turkish-Cypriot-populated North is reunited with the Greek-Cypriot South.

That opposition mainly reflects resentment of Turkey’s unwillingness to recognize the Greek-Cypriot-dominated government⁸ and of Turkey’s claim to a large part of Cyprus’ EEZ. Cyprus also may want to use whatever leverage it has over the project to persuade Turkey, and Turkish Cypriots, to be more flexible on Cyprus problem-related issues. A Cyprus solution would eliminate all these problems: Turkey would recognize the new Cypriot government that includes Turkish Cypriots, and Turkey and Cyprus would then presumably demarcate their respective EEZs.

Could the Cypriot government be bought off? Perhaps, but those who assume so probably aren’t familiar with the tenacity of the Cypriot parties, particularly when dealing with issues that touch on recognition.

If Turkey and Israel proceed, it is unclear how much leverage Cyprus has to block the pipeline. With a limited military, Cyprus’ only recourse would be legal. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) explicitly permits “submarine pipelines” across the EEZ of another state (Article 58). However, somewhat confusingly, it also permits the coastal state – in this case, Cyprus – to object to “the course” of the pipeline (Article 79), and bring its objection to one of various venues prescribed in UNCLOS, including a special arbitration board and the International Court of Justice. Some say the process could take years, which would leave the

pipeline in limbo. Indeed, Cyprus' very objections may alienate potential investors, who may be reluctant to embrace a project in disputed waters.

Of course, if the Cyprus problem were resolved, Cyprus' objection to the pipeline would likewise be removed. In fact, Cyprus has its own small natural gas field (an estimated 125 bcm of proven reserves), and it might want to link up to the Israeli-Turkish line, exporting its gas through Turkey as well, pending a settlement to the Cyprus problem. Negotiations over gas amounts and price could even emerge as the final piece of a putative Cyprus solution.

However, achieving a solution to the Cyprus problem is a long shot at best. Reunification talks have been taking place off and on since 1975. There is currently more optimism than usual about prospects for success, but many gaps remain in the two communities' positions, some seemingly intractable.

Israeli-Hellenic relations

Were Israel and Turkey to proceed with the pipeline in the face of Cyprus' objections, Israel would risk its increasingly close relations with Cyprus and its sister Hellenic republic, Greece. These ties began to evolve significantly after the Mavi Marmara incident left relations with Turkey in tatters.

In recent years, Israel has reportedly conducted air exercises in both Greece and Cyprus, and carried out numerous joint air and naval exercises with Greece. Leaders of the three states meet regularly, including earlier this month in Israel. Moreover, Greece and Cyprus have been helpful to Israel's case in European Union decision-making centers.

Developing from this relationship, Greek-American and mostly Jewish-American pro-Israel ethnic lobbies have begun cooperating to a new and unprecedented degree; as a sign of solidarity, some Greek-Americans joined lobbyists from pro-Israel organizations in lobbying against last year's Iran nuclear agreement. Much of that cooperation could end if Turkey and Israel pursue their pipeline absent a Cyprus settlement.

For the United States, the prospect of an Israeli-Turkish pipeline in the absence of a Cyprus settlement would also create problems. On the one hand, the U.S. would

welcome the reinforcement of Turkish-Israeli stability that the pipeline would bring. Moreover, it has long wanted Turkey – and, for that matter, Europe – to ease its dependence on Russian energy. On the other hand, the issue could also play out awkwardly in Washington, where Administrations are usually sensitive to Greek-American concerns, and where some Congressmen would be torn between traditional support for both Israel and the Hellenic states. This issue could also place the U.S. – long-time champion of a Cyprus solution – in the uncomfortable position of supporting a project that angers Greek Cypriots, and thereby makes prospects for a solution more distant.

None of this is to suggest that if the Cyprus problem is solved, an agreement on the pipeline would be easy. Energy deals are notoriously difficult to put together. They can be derailed by market forces or by lack of mutual trust. First and foremost, the engineering challenge of building a 300-mile, deep-water pipeline could prove insuperable. Additionally, third party countries can also create problems. In this case, both Russia and Egypt might have concerns about a Turkish-Israeli pipeline.

Nor is any of the above intended to suggest that normalization of Turkish-Israeli relations would lose all value if the pipeline fails to materialize; now that normalization has been achieved, both sides presumably would want to preserve it, whatever the circumstances. Normalization enhances regional stability; opens channels for bilateral contacts at all levels of society; supports already-thriving bilateral commercial trade; and creates an opening for Israel and Turkey to cooperate against common threats, such as ISIS and perhaps Iran.

Nevertheless, the matchmaker in this Turkish-Israeli marriage of convenience seems to be energy. When Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot negotiators next meet on January 9-12 in Geneva, energy sector mavens in Israel, Turkey, and elsewhere, will be paying unusually close attention.

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No Strings Attached: Turkey's Arms Projects as a Foreign Policy Tool

Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak

Turkey's relations with the West have been tense since the July 15 military coup attempt. In the wake of the coup, the ongoing state of emergency, detainments, arrests, and shutdown of media outlets have evoked strong European criticisms of Ankara. Turkey views these criticisms with distrust, considering American and European leaders' willingness to provide asylum to accused coup perpetrators and reluctance to condemn the coup at the time of the event. On November 24, relations worsened when the European Parliament advised the European Union to suspend Turkey's accession process.⁹ The Austrian Parliament's simultaneous adoption of an arms embargo against Turkey added further tension.¹⁰ As a result, Turkish decision makers have increased efforts to develop Turkey's independent arms capabilities.

In this context, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan commented on the need to break Turkey's dependence on foreign countries, speaking after the launch of Turkey's intelligence satellite, Göktürk-1, from the French Guiana.¹¹ In a similar vein, Turkey's defense minister, Fikri Işık, criticized Austria's embargo decision, calling it a motivation builder for Turkey's arms industry.¹² To provide background, the US embargo that followed Turkey's military intervention in Cyprus in 1974 gave birth to Turkey's leading weapons manufacturer, Aselsan. Currently, Erdoğan's and Işık's statements signal the adoption of a more independent arms policy in Ankara. In fact, Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party's (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP) election manifests in 2011¹³ and 2015¹⁴ show that for the party, an independent, self-sufficient weapons manufacturing industry was already considered central to transforming Turkey into a prominent player in regional and world politics. As a result of Turkey's foreign policy goal, the country's most important defense contractors, including Aselsan, Tübitak, Roketsan, Havelsan, Tusaş, Tümosan, and Meteksan, were tasked with developing indigenous weapons and defense systems.

Turkey's ambitious Milgem Project - which produced its first national warship, TCG-Heybeliada, in 2011 - constitutes the most concrete example of this policy. The TCG-Heybeliada is also known as "the ghost ship" due to its capacity to go off radar. Having seen TCG-Heybeliada's success, the project began mass production. In 2013 and 2016 respectively, TC-G Büyükada¹⁵ and TC-G Burgazada¹⁶ entered the Turkish

Armed Forces' (Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri – TSK) inventory. Aside from addressing its own needs, Turkey also seeks to use the Milgem Project to become an active weapons supplier. For Turkey, Asian countries, particularly Pakistan, are important arms markets.¹⁷ Additionally, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are also potential markets for Turkish defense contractors selling maritime and non-maritime weaponry.¹⁸

Beyond improving its maritime warfare capabilities, the Erdoğan's government has also developed weaponry for its land forces. Using TSK's inventory of Western weaponry as models, Turkish engineers have developed indigenous weaponry. For example, the country produced its first national infantry rifle, called the MPT-76, similar to the M16. In May 2016, the MPT-76 went into mass production for TSK.¹⁹ TSK is also producing heavy weaponry, like its Fırtına howitzers, which are frequently used against the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat - PYD) at the country's Syrian border. While this weapon increased TSK's range and firepower capacity to 40 km,²⁰ it also highlighted the army's need for a long-range missile. Observation of Iran's Shihab-3 missile capabilities has pushed Turkey to develop its Yıldırım ballistic missiles, extending its missile range capacity. While Yıldırım-1's range is limited to 150 km, Yıldırım-2 is capable of reaching up to 300 km. With Yıldırım-3, Turkey seeks to expand its missile range to 900 km. Eventually, with Yıldırım-4, Ankara will seek to develop medium-range ballistic missiles, with a range of 2,500 km.²¹ TSK also launched a national tank project called Altay. Although this project is portrayed as exclusively Turkish, German and South Korean contributions to the tank's engine and cannon must be noted. Altay went into mass-production in August, and TSK will receive 250 Altay tanks in the next five years.²²

Likewise, the Turkish Air Force is also in the process of developing weaponry. In 2011, TSK developed its own Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) system, responding to frequent dogfights with the Greek air force on the Aegean Sea, such as those that took place in March²³ and December²⁴ 2015, and the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara flotilla case, which cast Israel as a possible adversary. Until 2011, Turkey had been using NATO's IFF system, which did not allow Turkey to redefine NATO's default friendly states. With its new Turkish manufactured IFF, Ankara acquired the ability to define its own friends and foes.²⁵ In terms of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), the

friction between Jerusalem and Ankara persuaded the Turkish decision makers to end their dependence on Israel. In 2008, Turkey bought 10 Heron UAVs from Israel for 183 million dollars.²⁶ By developing armed Bayraktar UAVs, in 2014, Turkey became an independent UAV manufacturer.²⁷ Additionally, by developing Atak, a Turkish attack helicopter, TSK further strengthened its position in its asymmetric war against the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan – PKK).²⁸

While relying on helicopters and UAVs in its war against the PKK, Turkey seeks to control its mountainous border regions with high-resolution efficient intelligence space satellites. The Göktürk-2 satellite was launched into space in 2012, and recently, the Italian Telespazio launched Göktürk-1, a more complex satellite.²⁹ Despite the success of the Italian launch, President Erdoğan stated his intention to end Turkey's dependence on foreign countries.³⁰

In addition to producing its own weapons, Turkey seeks to enrich its arsenal by diversifying its weapons imports from non-NATO countries, ending its dependence on NATO weapons. In the long run, this step would weaken NATO's influence over Ankara, and produce greater maneuverability for Turkish foreign policy. That being said, Ankara's effort to acquire a Chinese anti-ballistic system was blocked by strong NATO pressure.³¹

In light of tensions between Turkey, the European Union, and the United States, Ankara's desire for closer relations with Moscow and Beijing is a clear warning to the West. With its ambitious arms projects, Turkey is seeking to give an impression that it should no longer be seen as the West's "default" traditional Cold War ally, dependent on international protection. As Ankara redefines its relations with the West, security may no longer define the relationship. Instead, it appears that Turkey will emphasize economic and commercial relations, and chart a more independent course in terms of state security.

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Notes

¹ Public opinion clearly was not a factor. Both publics had serious misgivings. In a survey taken immediately after the agreement was announced, Israelis opposed the deal, 56%-33%. In a survey taken shortly before the agreement was announced, Turks opposed reviving relations with Israel by a remarkably similar margin, 57%-33%. "Israelis push back against Turkey normalization deal," *Times of Israel*, June 27, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israelis-push-back-against-turkey-normalization-deal/>; *Turkey's Pulse*, June 2016, p. 62.

² Background interview with U.S. official, July 28, 2016.

³ "Turkey, Israel discuss gas pipeline," *The Oil & Gas Year*, October 13, 2016, <http://www.theoilandgasyear.com/news/turkey-israel-discuss-gas-pipeline/>.

⁴ Weizman, Stephen, "Hopeful Israel invites bids for gas exploration," *AFP*, November 15, 2016, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/hopeful-israel-invites-bids-gas-exploration-180941063.html>.

⁵ Turkey imports more than 99% of its natural gas, which is its major source of energy; natural gas accounts for roughly 35% of Turkey's overall energy use. See Ellinas, Charles, "Turkey's Changing Energy Priorities," *Natural Gas World*, December 14, 2016 (Issue 9), pp. 11-14, for an argument that Turkey's domestic need for natural gas, while still rising, is leveling off and that, accordingly, its need for Israeli natural gas is less pressing. Even if so, however, Turkey has long sought to be an important regional transfer point — or, "hub" -- for natural gas to Europe, and Israeli gas, at the least, would help boost that aspiration toward reality.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), nations are sovereign over the seas up to twelve nautical miles offshore. Beyond that, for up to two hundred nautical miles further, nations are allowed to exploit the resources of the sea, but are not sovereign; this latter area constitutes the EEZ (Article 57).

⁸ Turkey is the only state that doesn't recognize the Greek-Cypriot-dominated Republic of Cyprus; the rest of the international community recognizes the ROC as the legal government of the entire island of Cyprus (minus two square miles of UK-held Sovereign Base Areas). Turkey is also the only state that recognizes the Turkish-Cypriot-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which claims control over the northern one-third of the island held by the Turkish military.

⁹ "Avrupa Parlamentosu'ndan Türkiye kararı!", *Sabah*, November 24, 2016, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2016/11/24/avrupa-parlamentosundan-turkiye-karari>

¹⁰ "Austria votes to impose arms embargo on Turkey", *Rudaw*, November 24, 2016 <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/turkey/241120163>

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¹³ "Başbakan Erdoğan'ın 2011 Genel Seçimleri Seçim Beyannameşi Açıklamasının Tam Metni, AKP", April 16, 2011, <https://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/basbakan-erdoganin-2011-genel-secimleri-secim-beyannameşi-aciklamasinin-tam/7171#1>

¹⁴ "7 Haziran 2015 Genel Seçimleri – Seçim Beyannameşi, www.akparti.org.tr/upload/documents/2015-secim-beyannameşi-20nisan.pdf pp. 256-257

¹⁵ "Milli gemimiz suya indirildi", *Yeni Şafak*, September 27, 2013, <http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/milli-gemimiz-suya-indirildi-569041>

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¹⁷ "Aselsan eager to expand activities in Pakistan", *Quwa*, November 25, 2016 <http://quwa.org/2016/11/25/aselsan-eager-to-expand-activities-in-pakistan/>

¹⁸ "MKEK, 5 kıtaya silah sattı kar rekoru kırdı", *Hürriyet*, March 5, 2002, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/mkek-5-kitaya-silah-satti-kar-rekoru-kirdi-20052936>

¹⁹ "Milli Piyade Tüfeği MPT-76'nın seri üretimi başladı", *En Son Haber*, May 13, 2016, <http://www.ensonhaber.com/milli-piyade-tufegi-mpt-76nin-seri-uretimi-basladi-2016-05-13.html>

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