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Supporting Dialogue for Peace & Development

Emerging Turko-Israeli Rift Helps Turkey-Iran Entente

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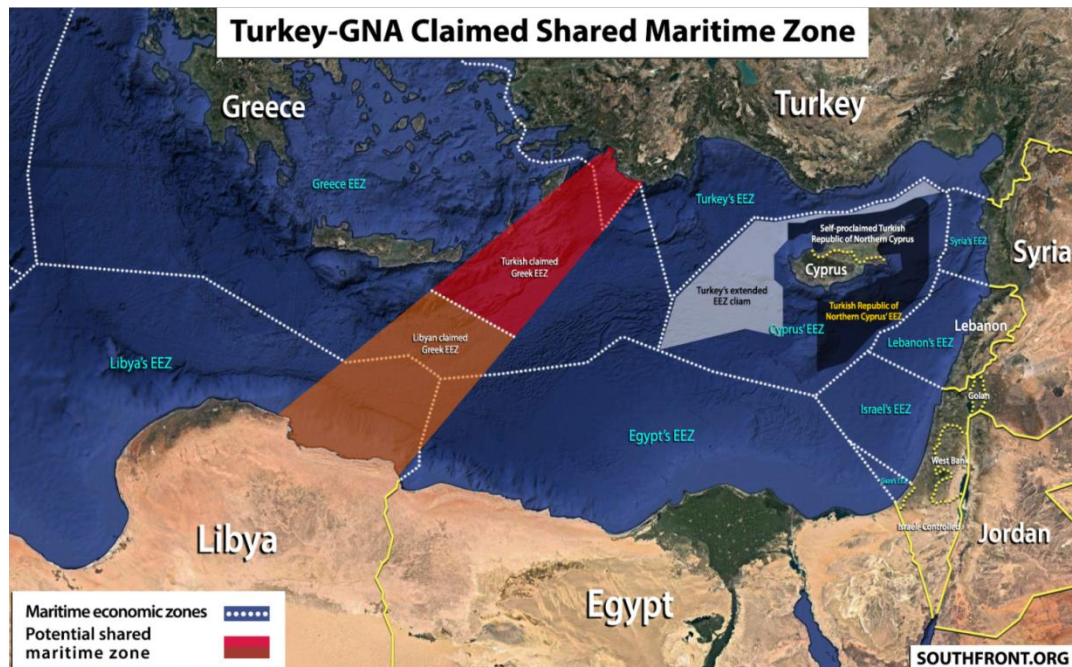
Israel has long possessed a capacity to force, whether by design or by consequence, the upending of alignment dynamics between regional states in ways few else are capable of. Given several relatively recent developments vis a vis blocs and alliances across the Middle East region and also in the Eastern Mediterranean, driven by Israeli policies, profound rifts are visibly opening in Turkey-Israel ties with special importance for Israel's primary rival and regional power Iran.

The Eastern Mediterranean Rivalry: Deep fissures in Israel-Turkey ties

In 2018, the 1350 mile long Eastern Mediterranean Gas Pipeline (EastMed Pipeline) was agreed upon as a major regional energy project by Israel and longtime Turkish rivals Egypt, Greece and Cyprus. The project's route has made it centerpiece to a rapidly developing geopolitical rivalry pitting Turkey against a combination of old rivals in its regional neighbourhood and new ones.

Prime among the new rivals, and responsible for [spearheading](#) the planned pipeline, is a country which until relatively recently was an ally to Turkey: Israel.

Turkey and its allied faction in civil war-torn [Libya signed a memorandum of understanding in late November](#) 2019 demarcating a maritime boundary separating their respective EEZ's. The two's EEZs overlap with waters Greece claims under its EEZ and the boundary line overlaps with Greece-claimed EEZs as well.



Importantly, the EEZs subject to conflicting claims by Turkey with the Libyan GNA versus Greece comprise a major part of the proposed EastMed Pipeline. The project thus runs strongly antagonistic to Turkey's interests.

In mid-December 2019, [Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan declared](#) that the military aspect of the MoU with the Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli allowed Turkey to deploy troops to Libya if invited. Receiving immediate approval by the GNA, Turkey raised the stakes considerably in the East Mediterranean rivalry and demonstrated the depth of significance it attaches to countering the designs of the Israel-Greece-Cyprus-Egypt bloc.

The bloc which also involves [joint military drills](#) seeks to utilize the Pipeline to transport gas from newly discovered Mediterranean gas fields controlled by Egypt, Israel and Cyprus to the European market. The EastMed Gas Forum comprising Israel, Egypt, Greece and Cyprus along with the Palestinian Authority, Jordan and Italy [has received support and special attention from the EU](#) and is backed by the US as well.

[It deliberately excluded Turkey despite Turkey being the most plausible destination for the gas to travel to Europe](#), considering Turkey's Ceyhan Ports' proximity to the new fields and Turkey's already-established pipeline network connecting to Europe. The EastMed bloc's rivalry thus took precedence over efficiency.

According to a [21 December analysis posted to Anadolu Agency](#), Turkey and Israel in June 2016 had signed a deal to normalize their ties, strained since 2010, and work on a joint gas pipeline to Europe which would involve Greece, Cyprus and Turkey. However, after the July 2016 coup attempt against Erdogan, talks on the pipeline were stalled and Egypt, Greece and Cyprus' unwillingness to work with Turkey dashed hopes for the project.

The analysis goes on to state that the Turkey-GNA maritime border cutting through the EastMed Pipeline's route is a red line shown by Turkey regarding regional energy projects excluding it and also a signal to Israel to reconsider decisions taken at the cost of Israel-Turkey ties. Israel, however, is determined for the EastMed Pipeline to proceed.

Overall, the EastMed Pipeline represents the rupturing of a specific aspect of the traditionally strong Israel-Turkey partnership and loss of one of the factors which kept the two allied.

This aspect is Turkey's prized goal to become a hub of energy trade between Europe and regional exporters which could not have progressed without an instrumental role from Israel in the 1990s. Israel's support to Turkey in this regard allowed the sustainment of a strategic alliance which [since the 1950s](#) involved [jointly countering Arab nationalism](#) and generally close military

ties.

The Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline from Azerbaijan's Caspian Sea oil fields, completed in 2006 for taking Caspian energy resources to the Mediterranean Sea via Turkey's Ceyhan Port for sale to Europe, was made possible by extensive Israeli lobbying. Without the Israeli role in utilizing its powerful lobbyists in Washington to unilaterally sanction Iran – preferred by US and multinational oil companies at the time as the ideal transit route for Caspian energy resources to warm waters and the global market – the BTC with its greater costs, rougher terrain to traverse and longer distance would never have been considered.

This dynamic has been effectively mirrored by the 1870 kilometer EastMed pipeline which takes a longer route to the desired market than it would require if it did not exclude Turkey.

The 1996 Iran Libya Sanctions Act by US Congress targeting companies spending more than \$20 million in Iran's oil and gas industry [was drafted by the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee \(AIPAC\)](#). AIPAC, Israel's largest officially registered lobbyist in the US (yet which more appropriately merits registration under the foreign agents' law considering its long record of [spying on the US for Israel](#)), has for decades possessed influence over the US Congress due to its role in organizing huge flows of money to fund election and re-election campaigns for Congress members based on their willingness to pass pro-Israel legislation.

For the objectives of weakening Iran, boosting Israel's only security and economic partner in the region i.e. Turkey and [ensuring Caspian Sea energy exports reached warm-waters from an ally's port](#), the BTC was promoted just as ILSA was implemented. Turkey thus profited as the transit state and attracted further international investment – still afraid to deal with Iran or build pipelines across it due to Israel-inspired sanctions – for [more such projects](#) taking energy to Europe.



This collaboration in assisting Turkey with its energy trade ambitions was an essential cornerstone of Israel-Turkey ties and a form of reward for Ankara for its security-strategic alliance with Israel against regional Arab states. This cornerstone has now almost completely collapsed and scope for ties to deteriorate further has risen steeply.

On 15 December 2019, Israeli state-run radio *Kan* reported that Turkey was willing to negotiate cooperation with Israel for gas transfer to Europe via Turkey, as conveyed by a [‘high-ranking Turkish energy source’](#). Moreover, on 24 December 2019 Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz [stated that Israel opposed the Turkish-Libya maritime border demarcation](#) while stating that neither Israel nor Turkey desired ‘confrontation’.

Israel again emphasized that it will not back down from the EastMed Gas Pipeline.

Given the overall geopolitical trends in the East Mediterranean as well as growing Israeli rifts with Turkey over other issues as will be explored in detail as follows, these developments will likely not lead to any meaningful ‘rapprochement’. The stakes for Turkey and its rival bloc are high in ensuring strategic edge over the other side and the above ‘soft’ statements from Israel and Turkey represent futile attempts by parts of the two states’ political and military bureaucracies to salvage what used to be a consistent bilateral alliance.

As expected, [the 3 January 2020 signing](#) by Israel, Greece and Cyprus of the pipeline drew heated criticism from Turkey.



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu attend a joint news conference in Athens, Greece following the signing of a deal to build the EastMed pipeline, January 2, 2020. © Reuters / Alkis Konstantinidis

Egypt also has [agreements with Cyprus](#) connecting gas fields subject to territorial dispute between Cyprus and Turkey to Egyptian gas liquefaction plants, exacerbating Turkey-Egypt rivalry. An additional [pipeline from Egypt connecting to the EastMed Pipeline](#) is also reportedly under proposal.

For Iran, the growing rift between Israel and Turkey marks a strategic opening for it to enhance its own ties with Turkey at Israel's expense.

Iran on 2 December announced plans for [a new direct shipping route for its exports to the Eastern Mediterranean region](#) which utilizes the Black Sea that connects to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

The route will be of prime value to Iran as it will reduce its reliance on the Persian Gulf as well as the Red Sea and Egyptian Suez Canal to reach the Mediterranean. The Persian Gulf has witnessed increasing military-naval buildup by the US using the GCC's territory and the Red Sea is watched closely by the GCC and allies as well since the [ceding by Egypt in 2016 of the Red Sea islands Tiran and Sanafir to the Saudis in 2016](#).

Considering Turkey's Bosphorus Strait chokepoint is the only means of the Black Sea connecting to the Mediterranean via the Sea of Marmara, Iran would gain greater motive for closer ties with Turkey. Together with Iran's overall approach of countering Israel, this may make more open Iranian support to Turkey in its Eastern Mediterranean disputes plausible.

The Israel-Kushner-bin Salman orchestrated blockade of Qatar

Turkey secured a military base in Qatar days after the June 2017 GCC embargo and vocal Qatari support for Turkey even in scenarios where few voiced open backing for it, such as when Turkey launched Operation Peace Spring in northeastern Syria in October 2019. Iran gained a monopoly over Qatar's food market while Qatar's maritime border with Iran became the only route from which Qatar could export or import. Qatari reliance on both Iran and Turkey [thus increased manifold](#).

The blockade was spearheaded by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) and saw the presentation [of GCC demands to Qatar](#) ranging from shutting down the Turkish military base, scaling back ties with Iran, cutting off support to the transnational Muslim Brotherhood movement (which includes Hamas in Gaza) and shutting its prolific *Al Jazeera* news network.

The demands fit in with the overall agenda of the Israel-GCC alliance against Iran - and increasingly Turkey as well. However, the push required for such a risky maneuver with its negative consequences for intra-GCC stability came from outside and not after careful deliberation with Saudi political elites – much of whom MbS was at odds with and arrested months later in his famous purges.

Instead, it came from President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, who in fashion typical of his foreign policy management [bypassed official channels](#) to coordinate the Qatar policy with MbS. Kushner, a wealthy Zionist real estate businessman (a common feature in American politics) with close ties to the Netanyahu family in Israel, [acted as the point-man for the deepening of GCC-Israel strategic ties](#) even prior to Trump's election.

Weeks prior to the embargo, [Qatar's decision](#) to pull out of a \$500 million investment crucial to the viability of a rapidly failing Kushner Companies' New York real estate project led to Kushner deciding to pressurize the small state. Together with the increasing Israeli agitation at Qatar's ties to Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood (in which the ruling party of Turkey under President Erdogan has its roots), the overall Zionist agenda on Qatar turned extremely hostile.

A crucial detail in this affair was that senior US career officials in the State Department and the US military – whose Central Command's forward base in the region was transferred to al Udeid, Qatar from Saudi Arabia in 1991 – did not burn their bridges with Qatar. It was thus not a uniform US foreign policy decision, but an Israeli one routed through Kushner acting as a special agent of Israeli interest which brought the GCC into the fray thanks to Kushner's personal rapport

with MbS.

Israel's secular Arab dictators, the renewed crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran's ties with the Sunni world

The oldest and largest modern transnational Sunni Islamist movement since its launch in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology influenced anti-monarchy Iranian Shia clerics. Known as the *Ikhwan ul Muslimeen* in Arabic, its founder Hassan al Banna and his successors had [liaison to and influence over figures such Nawab Safavi who was executed by the Shah in 1955 and also Ruhollah Khomeini](#), who would in 1979 bring the Islamic Revolution to Iran.

The successor to Khomeini as Iran's top-most official and religious authority, Ayatollah Khamenei, translated al Banna's works into Persian in recognition of the impact he had on Khomeini's views with regard to his views on imperialism and pan-Islamism.

The Brotherhood has always possessed a long-term geopolitical importance for Iran. With the two's opposing alignments in the Syrian War, even Hamas and Iran severed ties with each other in 2011 but events soon thereafter possessed impact profound enough to lead to a rapprochement and incentive for greater future cooperation.

[Alongside Israel](#), the GCC barring Qatar supported the 2013 military coup by Abdel Fatah al Sisi that removed the Muslim Brotherhood government of Mohammed Morsi. It also committed no assistance to Hamas against Israel during the [2012 assault on Gaza](#). By 2014, Hamas and Iran began [restoring ties](#) and Iran remains a supporter in material terms of Hamas.

Notably, another major resistance group operating in Gaza, Islamic Jihad (whose leadership resides in Syria and Lebanon in close quarters to Iran's allies in Damascus and Hezbollah) [sustained alignment with Iran](#). Islamic Jihad receives training and arms from Iran, who has in recent times [suggested](#) it and other allied Palestinian groups establish joint operations rooms in Gaza for coordination with Hezbollah.

Iran's ties to Islamic Jihad are often described as a vital partnership with a non-Shia faction in the region. The broader Muslim Brotherhood movement across the region is afforded importance by Iran for similar reasons, i.e sustaining ties with Sunni Islamist entities.

As already stated, Turkish President Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development (AKP) party [has roots in the Muslim Brotherhood](#) and Erdogan together with Qatar have had increasing rivalry with the GCC since the toppling of Egypt's Morsi. Turkey recently has been portrayed by the GCC as a threat much in the same manner Iran is, [with the UAE claiming it to be a 'threat to](#)

the Arab world'.

Turkey in this scenario becomes a viable partner for Iran to build closer ties with and avert the risk of, despite its support for Palestine, being seen as a Shia-centric Muslim power.

Certain regional developments indicate that Iran is pursuing this as a policy agenda with its desire to counter Israel at the forefront of its motives.

In Libya, the Tripoli-based and UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) supported by Turkey and Qatar is associated with Libya's Brotherhood while its rival General Khalifa Haftar leading the 'Libyan National Army' (LNA) backed by the GCC, Egypt and Israel, states he wishes to 'purge' Libya of the Brotherhood.

The LNA is partnered with the 'House of Representatives' (HoR) in Tobruk, a parliamentary body.

Haftar has fought the GNA since 2014 and controls most of Libya's oil fields and its eastern and southern lands. Despite this, Turkey's active military support and Qatari financial assistance has allowed the GNA to thwart Haftar from additional gains.

From Europe, Italy supports the GNA while France supports Haftar. The US' stated policy is recognition of the GNA, but in practical terms the US has no clearly implemented Libya policy.

In May 2019, the Turkish news site *The Bosphorus Observer* reported that a sanctioned Iranian container ship had departed for Libya's port city Misrata from Bulgaria, crossing the Turkish Haydarpasha Port in the journey. Misrata is controlled by the GNA.

Earlier in April, another Iranian ship had been seized near Misrata Port by the GNA under pressure to comply with US and EU sanctions, leading the LNA to accuse Iran of supplying weapons to the GNA.

Iran rejected the notion that the ship had been seized and stated there was only a 'dispute' about the ship with the GNA, which it describes as the 'Libyan Government'. It also rejected Haftar's accusation that it carried weapons. The GNA soon afterward corroborated the Iranian rejection of reports that weapons were among the 114 containers aboard the ship.

However, credible reports have arisen indicating otherwise.

SouthFront, which publishes military maps on Middle East war zones, published on 17 November pictures shared on Twitter by Oded Berkowitz, Deputy Chief Intelligence Officer at Tel Aviv-based Max Solutions Ltd, of Iranian-made Dehlaviyeh Anti-Tank Guided Missiles with GNA troops.



In August Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif met with the GNA's Minister for Foreign Affairs Mohammed Taher Siala in Japan. [A report by Almarsad](#), pro-Haftar media outlet, while pointing out that no GNA media outlet reported the meeting, suggested that the GNA sought to build ties with Iran due to the failure of the 'international community' to back it due to its UN-recognized status. Almarsad also claimed the earlier Iranian cargo ship arriving at Misrata had brought missiles.

Additionally, Iran's Ambassador to Libya is seated in Tripoli and the Libyan Ambassador to Iran is of the GNA.

Due to Iran's lack of historical importance afforded to Libya, Iran's increased involvement there required more potent, specific compelling reasons. It is evident that these reasons are countering Israel and availing the growing regional rivalry with Turkey for closer ties with Sunni states.

General Haftar, despite the overall UN embargo on weapons being sent to Libya, has been armed via cargo dropped by planes [which fly](#) between Israel, Jordan (part of the GCC-Egypt bloc) and Egypt.

Haftar has also received military assistance and service [from Russian mercenary groups](#). [As columnist for Al-Monitor's Turkey Pulse Cengiz Candar points out in a 23 December analysis](#), Russia has shown a practical tilt toward Haftar as the candidate to govern Libya based on his 'anti-Islamist' credentials and even criticized the Turkey-GNA maritime border demarcation of 27 November.

Cengiz quotes senior Russian officials stating that Russia and Turkey would soon negotiate Libya's future utilizing the same mechanism of cooperation implemented on Syria and adds that Turkey is like to use its ties to NATO and its control over the situation in Idlib (Syria) as

bargaining chips to reduce Russia's support for Haftar.

Israel invested heavily in Haftar since he began 'Operation Dignity' in 2014, selling him weapons and providing him aerial support in exchange for him [selling Israel Libyan oil](#) (something most Libyan governments would not do). In 2015 and 2016, [Haftar formed ties with Israel's intelligence agency the Mossad](#) via UAE-arranged meetings in Jordan.

[Haftar reportedly travelled to Jordan to meet the Mossad again in 2018](#), requesting greater Israeli involvement in Libya. In 2017, Haftar's Minister for Media [met with Israeli officials in Greece](#) at a conference for Libyan Jews that had emigrated following reprisals caused by the 1967 Israeli-Arab Six Day War.

The conference was organized by Rafael Luzon, chairman of the Union of Libyan Jews and Edwin Shuker, wealthy Iraqi Jewish property dealer. The theme of the conference was on the 'right of return' of Libyan Jews to Libya and 'compensation' for losses they suffered.

Notably, Haftar sells oil to Israel via the same shipments that take [clandestinely sold oil by Iraqi Kurds](#) from Turkey's Ceyhan Port to Israeli ports (albeit this supply chain faces potential disruption due to souring Israel-Turkey ties and the weakened position of Iraqi Kurds since their failed independence bid in 2017).

Israel finds utility in Haftar as a potential Libyan replication of the secular, anti-Islamist military dictator al Sisi in Egypt, who has proven a valuable ally for Israel. Haftar's utility to Israel is likely to continue, as Haftar departed talks scheduled in Moscow on 13 January 2020 between himself and the GNA [without signing a truce agreement](#) mediated by Turkey and Russia despite GNA head Sarraj having signed it.

Haftar insisted that the truce include dismantling 'forces loyal to the GNA', an unrealistic demand that would leave Haftar entirely militarily dominant in Libya. In response, Erdogan declared the same day that Turkey would ['teach Haftar a lesson'](#) if he did not cease his offensive on Tripoli.

Meanwhile, a summit involving Russia, Germany, France, the UK and the US [was held in Berlin, Germany on 19 January 2020](#) where GNA head Sarraj and Haftar met for conflict resolution. While praised by Russia as an optimistic start, it did not extract any concessions from either warring faction and was portrayed as merely the beginning of a long process which would begin with both GNA and Haftar agreeing to a ceasefire.

Given the geopolitical stakes involved and the historically poor performance of regional multilateral mediatory efforts unaccompanied by enforcement mechanism, the struggle in Libya is likely to continue. [As explained by Moscow-based independent geopolitical analyst Andrew](#)

[Korybko](#), commenting on the post-Berlin summit state of affairs in Libya:

‘Ankara's political will hasn't wavered one bit, which inspires confidence in its peers to seriously consider following suit. Likewise, the GCC+ hasn't wavered at all in its support of General Haftar, hence why he's refused to "compromise" despite heavy international pressure to do so (though crucially without any enforcement mechanisms to compel him, at least not yet). In other words, the Libyan Civil War has now turned into the Libyan Standoff, with this new state of affairs either lasting a short while or becoming the new status quo depending on subsequent developments.’

Soon after the summit concluded, it was revealed by diplomatic sources [that Haftar refused to sign the ceasefire](#), causing the GNA to also refuse. Also revealed was that Haftar’s LNA [continued blocking oil exports](#) from eastern ports. The measure sought to strangle the GNA financially.

Haftar shares similarity with MbS and al Sisi with regard to the special role of Israel in his ascent to power and his policies. One manifestation of their unique importance to and reliance on Israel is the fact that no standard consensus from career US foreign policy or military circles mandated their power consolidation.

In fact, in many ways socio-political arrangements forged for the long term by State Department and US military professionals were even damaged in order for Israel to promote these regional ‘strongmen’ leaders.

Prior to his return to Libya to participate in the NATO-supported toppling of President Gaddafi in 2011, Haftar resided for two decades in Virginia, USA, in notably close quarters to the CIA headquarters at Langley. [Fellow exiled Libyan affiliates](#) have professed ignorance as to the source of Haftar’s income during his stay in the US.

Haftar’s utility to the US during years in exile was already on the decline as Gaddafi’s toppling seemed unlikely. Moreover, his inability to get recognition by the anti-Gaddafi rebels in 2011 as their military leader led to him returning to Virginia again, thus showing that the US was not attempting to install him as leader in Libya.

Haftar’s reappearance in Libya and announcement of Operation Dignity in 2014, [greeted with initial surprise and disapproval by the State Department](#), was thus evidently enabled by purely Israeli interests. In fact, US officials in November 2019 even met him at an undisclosed venue in the Middle East [to request he halt his operation](#) against the GNA.

The case is similar with MbS.

MbS along with father King Salman in June [forced to resign](#) and placed under house arrest

the erstwhile Crown Prince, Interior Ministry head and [favourite of the CIA Mohammed bin Nayef](#), thus becoming Crown Prince himself. Also under Kushner's influence, MbS followed the Qatar embargo with a mass-arrest of princes months later which not only further [endangered the truce between different branches of the Saud clan](#), but also changed the security-military apparatus which the US was familiar with.

In Egypt, al Sisi's 2013 coup occurred upon the impulse of the Israel-GCC alliance as opposed to US intervention. The Morsi government could not meaningfully challenge the power of the US-trained Egyptian military, enriched by annual US financial aid and arms sales since 1979. To add to this, Morsi's stance on the Syrian War mirroring the US' own (i.e that Syrian President Bashar al Assad must step down) meant that he took little action that may have generated US consensus that his ouster was necessary.

Even the US Congress [exhibited uncertainty](#) as to whether or not to continue aid to Egypt post-coup in view of the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act forbidding US aid to military juntas. In view of the US having had installed Sisi of its own machinations, this would not have featured as a concern.

Predictably, [it was AIPAC's influential intervention](#) in the Congress which led to prominent senators vetoing introduction of an amendment to an existing bill which would suspend military assistance to Egypt. This showed the special Israeli interest in backing Sisi.

The Israel-GCC 'Deal of the Century' for Palestine

Another foreign policy product borne of the top-heavy coordination between Israel and the GCC via the Kushner-MbS partnership is the infamous 'Deal of the Century' being formulated to address the issue of Palestine in a manner that suits Israel.

[Details of the Deal](#) leaked thus far by Israeli media show plans for a 'New Palestine' to be created which is not a state, but effectively a scattering of 'autonomous' enclaves militarily controlled by Israel with their currently militarily capable organizations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza disarmed completely.

The GCC would provide the funding for the 'New Palestine' state for basic budgetary needs (albeit considering the financial status of the Palestinian Authority of the West Bank much of this will realistically go to paying off debts) alongside any other external donors that are convinced to endorse the widely-opposed Deal.

The Deal also proposes Egypt's Sinai to host 'New Palestine's' airport and an industrial zone, while land leased from Egypt would connect Gaza to the West Bank where all the illegal

Jewish-only settlements constructed by Israel since 1967 will be annexed to Israel. Similar land corridors – guarded of course by Israel – would connect the parts of the West Bank under ‘New Palestine’ to Jordan (where Israel has often attempted to claim Palestine should ideally exist).

Jerusalem – recognized illegally in late 2017 by the US as Israel’s capital – will be completely governed by Israel without any ‘East-West’ division between the Palestinians and Israelis as has often been proposed in past ‘peace processes’.

The lopsided Deal has angered Palestinians across the spectrum and most importantly in Gaza, which Israel is incapable of colonizing with settlements due to the presence of armed groups unlike in the West Bank overseen by the Palestinian Authority.

The GCC endorsement of the Deal, contrasting with Iran and Turkey’s rejection of it, has predictably soured its ties with these groups even further.

Hamas recently broke with a longstanding tradition of sweeping tensions with the GCC under the rug by [criticizing](#) the arrest by Saudi Arabia of Hamas-affiliated Palestinians residing there on charges of funding Hamas and praising it on social media. Hamas described the arrests as part of an Israeli plan overseen by MbS.

Islamic Jihad [also condemned the Deal](#) and decried Arab states supporting it as participating in sedition against Palestine.

[A workshop led by Jared Kushner](#) was conducted in Manama, Bahrain, on 25-26 June 2019 as the first stage of the Deal’s unveiling, seeking to secure \$50 billion from foreign donors. Besides assurances from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, it is unclear as to the progress the workshop, boycotted by all Palestinian factions, made on this front.



Prior to the workshop, [Qatar's Foreign Ministry's confirmation](#) of its participation came with a commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders (rendered physically impossible due to Israeli settlements long ago yet frequently mentioned as part of the common 'Two State Solution' discourse). The highly cautious confirmation also came with an urging for the end of the Israeli occupation.

[Considering the Deal's leaked details were already publicized before this](#) and involved no such Palestinian state or end to Israeli occupation, Qatar's cautiously worded attendance confirmation likely sought to assure its non-GCC partners that it would not commit funds to an unjust Deal.

Indeed, considering its reliance on states which ardently oppose the Deal, it is unlikely Qatar will use its prolific sovereign investment fund to bankroll it even as it makes gestures such as attending these events to prevent worsened tensions with the GCC.

Turkey and the Israel Lobby: From Allies to Enemies

In late October 2019, the US Congress' lower chamber, the House of Representatives, [voted overwhelmingly in favour of](#) official recognition of the 1915-1923 Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Empire which Turkey to date denies was an organized genocide. The resolution followed Turkey's Operation Peace Spring against the Israeli-allied Kurdish SDF-PKK in northeastern Syria and also supported sanctions on Turkey.

Considered a grave insult by Turkey, [the US Senate approved the resolution on 12](#)

December 2019. A low point in US-Turkey relations, the push for the provocative politicization of the over century-old issue came only after a certain very strategically placed obstacle to such official recognition of the Genocide – promoted by Armenian-Americans for decades – were removed.

This obstacle was the longstanding [collusion between the Israel Lobby and Turkey](#) – in view of their past strategic ties – to counter numerous attempts at legislation backing recognition of the Genocide. As Turkey-Israel ties deteriorated, the Israel Lobby in recent times ceased cooperating – and in fact even promoted recognition.

According to Armenian-American activist David Boyajian, [the Anti-Defamation League \(ADL\) wrote and sponsored bills](#) earlier this year in the Massachusetts state legislature requiring for the Armenian Genocide to be taught about in public schools. Boyajian testified in front of the Massachusetts State House against the bills due to the ADL’s history of exploiting issues of genocide in history to serve the interests of Israel and its double standards on the issue of the Genocide.

The ADL, an organization now over 100 years old, is best known for its campaign to declare most criticism of Israel, the circumstances around its coming into existence and its policies as ‘anti-Semitism’ and its smear campaigns against anti-Zionists. The ADL, [courtesy of its privileged status as a content flagger](#) with YouTube and Google, has contributed greatly to censorship of content online which is critical of Israel.

For constantly finding and flagging such content, [the ADL maintains and runs large, organized censorship operations](#) from Jewish community centers in the US which also involve members of Israel’s high-tech spy branch, Unit 8200. The ADL has [ties to Israel’s Mossad](#) and ran the one of the US’ largest [domestic spying operations in the 1990s](#), targeting groups and individuals campaigning against Israel’s occupation of Palestine and also against apartheid South Africa.

The ADL [eagerly endorsed](#) the House’s October resolution, making no reference to its [long history of helping stifle resolutions recognizing the Genocide](#).

With the tables thus turned and the Israel Lobby backing Armenian Genocide recognition to spite Turkey, even [Trump’s Republican Senate majority which had blocked such attempts](#) in the past fell in line with the agenda. As is the case with legislation with the power of the Israel Lobby behind it, Democrat or Republican makes little difference. Even the will of the President himself, [who opposed the resolutions](#) in view of the personal rapport he developed with Erdogan, did not hinder Congress.

On the East Mediterranean front, a prominent Christian Zionist lobbying group fanatically devoted to Israel called Christians United for Israel (CUFI) [spent \\$60 000 thus far in 2019 lobbying Congress for an anti-Turkey stance on Cyprus](#). The Senate on 17 December thus voted 86-8 in favour of conditionally lifting an old arms embargo on Cyprus and allowing it to receive US arms if it cuts back ties with Russia significantly.

Israel thus constituted the source of the ‘anti-Turkey sentiment in Washington’ described by Burhanettin Duran of the Turkish *Daily Sabah* in an article titled [‘Trump Must Stop Congress From Ending Turkey-US Relationship’](#). The article correctly appraised the relationship between Trump and the US legislative, but held back from identifying the Israel Lobby as the force providing the push to make even Senate Republicans turn on Trump on the issue of Turkey.

It is clear that Israel intended to show Turkey how far their interests now diverged, with yet another area of intimate Turkish-Israeli cooperation now the site of growing rivalry.

Conclusion

The divide thus grows deeper between Israel and a state which for most of Israel’s existence was a firm ally. Just as happened with the coup in Egypt, the alienation of Qatar, the push for an Eastern Mediterranean energy trade tailored to exclude Turkey and the introduction of ‘Libyan al Sisi’ Haftar to Libya, Israel-driven policies create scenarios of great interest to Iran.

For Iran, meaningfully enhancing ties with Turkey at this juncture in history will yield much more value than it would have done had the aforementioned policies not been forced through by Israel. Perhaps bizarrely, Israel thus has done much with its uncompromising and aggressive policies to create an opening for Iran vis a vis ties with Turkey.

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