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## ISRAEL'S POSITION IN TÜRKİYE'S FIGHT WITH PKK TERRORISM

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### ABSTRACT

Although the military security dimension of Türkiye-Israel relations was crowned with an agreement especially in the 1990s, intelligence cooperation from the second half of the 1950s until these years gave bilateral relations a special and strategic character. By considering in this context, the PKK has become an increasingly important topic in the security and intelligence aspects of Türkiye-Israel relations. The data obtained by Israel as a result of its occupation of the southern regions of Lebanon in 1982 and the operations carried out on the training camps there, are considered an important turning point in bilateral relations. There is a strong belief that Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK terrorist organization, who was finally captured in Kenya after a long chase in the late 1990s, was also caught with the contributions of MOSSAD. On the other hand, since there are strong suspicions that Israel is in parallel with the policy of an “independent Kurdish state”, may also support the PKK terrorist organization. In this study<sup>1</sup>, considering that Türkiye-Israel relations have developed mostly on the basis of the security sector, Israel's position towards the PKK terrorist organization will be discussed from a historical perspective.

**Keywords:** *Türkiye, Israel, Middle East, Security, Intelligence, Terrorism, PKK*

## TÜRKİYE'NİN PKK TERÖRİZMİYLE MÜCADELESİNDE İSRAİL'İN KONUMU

### ÖZET

Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinin askeri güvenlik boyutu, özellikle 1990'lı yıllarda bir anlaşmayla taçlanmış olmasına rağmen, 1950'li yılların ikinci yarısından bu yıllara kadar istihbari işbirliği ikili ilişkilere özel ve stratejik bir nitelik kazandırmıştır. Bu çerçevede düşünüldüğünde, 1980'li yılların ilk yarısında terör eylemlerine başlayan PKK, Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinin güvenlik ve istihbarat boyutunda giderek önem arz eden bir başlık hüviyeti kazanmıştır. İsrail'in 1982'de Lübnan'ın güney bölgelerini işgal etmesi ve burada bulunan eğitim kamplarına düzenlediği operasyonlar neticesinde elde ettiği veriler, ikili ilişkilere önemli bir dönüm noktası olarak kabul edilir. Sonraları 1990'lı yılların sonlarında uzun bir

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kovalamacanın ardından nihayet Kenya'da yakalanan PKK terör örgütünün lideri Abdullah Öcalan'ın da MOSSAD'ın katkılarıyla yakalandığına yönelik güçlü bir inanç vardır. Bir yandan da bu mantıksal örgünün aksine, İsrail'in "bağımsız bir Kürt devleti" siyasetiyle paralellik arz ettiğine yönelik güçlü şüpheler bulunduğundan, PKK terör örgütüne yönelik destek verdiği de özellikle kriz anlarında Türk medyasında sıklıkla gündeme gelen bir konu başlığıdır. Bu çalışmada, Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinin ekseriyetle güvenlik sektörü temelinde serpiştiği göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, PKK terör örgütüne yönelik İsrail'in konumu tarihsel bir perspektiften ele alınacaktır. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinin iniş ve çıkışlarıyla irtibat kurulmaya çalışılacak ve Türkiye'nin PKK terörizmiyle mücadelesinde İsrail'in konumunu bu minval üzere anlamlandırma çabasına girişilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Türkiye, İsrail, Ortadoğu, Güvenlik, İstihbarat, Terörizm, PKK*

## **INTRODUCTION**

It is known that the threat of terrorism in international politics does not arise solely as a result of unique and local conditions. In this context, terrorism is often considered as a weapon that states use against each other in international politics. In an international political arena where the possibility of interstate war is minimized due to the high costs it will entail, states can support terrorism in order to wear down the states they perceive as rivals or enemies, to detect security weaknesses or to divert the focus of their foreign and security policies. Considering that terrorism does not have a universal definition, states that fight against terrorism can often become isolated.

There is a similar example in Türkiye's fight against terrorism. A close look at the ethnic-based terrorist organizations that directly target Türkiye reveals the dimensions of this isolation. The weakness of international reactions to the terrorist acts carried out by ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) and PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) terrorist organizations in the 1970s and the following years, and moreover, the fact that the covert support given to these terrorist organizations often became overt, played an important role in the evolution of Turkish security thought. The fight against terrorism, which is carried out in isolation, has a content that explains the development of Türkiye-Israel relations, especially in the security sector, which emerged in the 1990s.

Within this framework, Türkiye's security policies, alliances and fight against terrorism were chosen as the main topic of this study and the research was divided into subheadings accordingly. In particular, Türkiye's fight against PKK terrorism and its relations with Israel within the scope of

this fight represent a research question that the study essentially aims to answer. This study questions Israel's position in Türkiye's fight against PKK terrorism; It aims to produce an original text about the fight against terrorism, alliance policies, national security approaches and Türkiye-Israel relations.

## **1. THE EVOLUTION OF TURKISH SECURITY THOUGHT**

Türkiye has had a security agenda for many decades, facing various forms of terrorism. Especially since the late 1970s and 1980s, it has been the target of some ethnic-based terrorist organizations for various reasons and has developed security paradigms accordingly. It was during the mentioned decades that the Turkish security strategy became acquainted with PKK terrorism and began to produce corresponding responses.

The PKK terrorist organization, which carried out its first major terrorist attack in 1984, has gradually shaped Turkish security thinking since then. Until the 1980s, Turkish security thought, which focused on macro-scale security problems within a bipolar world order imposed by the Cold War universe, perceived the expansionism of communism as the main danger, adhering to the jointly constructed agenda of the Western security organizations it was involved in, and transformed almost the entire security paradigm into this (Oğuzlu, 2015, p.230).

It should also be noted that the intra-NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) tension with Greece closely concerns Turkish security thinking. This threat perception, which reached its peak with the Cyprus Peace Operation in 1974, had a quality that shaped bilateral relations and security perceptions in general. In this context, on the Turkish side, the security structure was revised and an army structure independent of NATO was established to address possible military tensions in the Aegean Sea. On the Greek side, the need to leave NATO's military wing was felt and Türkiye was placed at the top of threat assessments (Kıyanç, 2020, p.22). The aforementioned threat perceptions, including the possibility of interstate war, dominated the following decades as the main determinant of Türkiye-Greece relations.

As a result of this understanding of security, which focuses more on the possibility of an interstate war, becoming established, Türkiye was caught relatively unprepared for the terrorism threat encountered in the 1980s in the meaning of the methods of struggle, especially the Turkish

Armed Forces (TAF) dominated the process. In the following years, units and troops suitable for unconventional warfare were formed, and the members of the Turkish security apparatus were reshaped in this manner. In addition, police teams specially trained for the fight against terrorism in the police force have been at the forefront of Türkiye's fight against PKK terrorism.

The difficulties encountered in the fight against terrorism as a security threat in the 1990s, together with the rise of regional threats, made the evolution of Turkish security thought a necessity. In this context, the threat panorama presented jointly by regional threats at the state level and terrorist organizations as non-state actors has brought about new initiatives in both foreign policy and national security thinking on ways to combat all of these threats. In this context, in addition to the state-level threat perceived from Syria and Greece, the rise of PKK terrorism has led to the emergence of a security idea centralized by the "2.5 War" concept formulated by retired ambassador Şükrü Elekdağ in 1994 (Bila, 1999).

In the following years, the fight against PKK terrorism increased periodically, decreased relatively with the capture of the leader of the terrorist organization in 1999, and eventually, with the power vacuum created in the north of the country with the US invasion of Iraq, terrorist acts increased and caused Türkiye's fight against terrorism to accelerate again. However, especially since the 2000s, Turkish security thought has mostly developed within the framework of the fight against terrorism. Although the tensions experienced in the Eastern Mediterranean region in the 2010s strongly reintroduced the possibility of interstate war into security thinking, the fight against terrorism was one of the main agenda items of this process.

Within the scope of this part of the study, the evolution of Turkish security thought in the post-Cold War period is examined and the sources of the necessary intellectual/practical transformation, especially when the fight against terrorism comes into play as a major agenda item, are outlined. In the next subheading, Israel's policies towards the region and the relations of these policies with the Kurds will be evaluated.

## **2. ISRAEL'S PERIPHERY STRATEGY AND THE KURDS**

There are very strong opinions in the Turkish public and political circles that Israel has contributed to the development of terrorist organizations, especially the PKK terrorist organization, as a result of its

regional strategies and policies that can be traced back almost to its founding years (Milliyet, 2012). When considered in this context, Israel looks at the region through different lenses and follows different policies towards the Kurdish population concentrated in the northern regions of Iraq and Syria. This strategic/political divergence represents one of the most significant crossroads in Türkiye-Israel relations.

Israel's interest in the region has developed particularly within the framework of an approach called periphery strategy.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Israel has been surrounded by hostile Arab states since its founding. The only way to overcome this existential security concern requires establishing strategic relations in various ways with non-Arab states or ethnic communities located on the periphery of the region, according to the relevant periphery strategy (Bengio, 2004, p.34). In this regard, Israel, in the second half of the 1950s, maintains a quadripartite relationship consisting of Türkiye, Iran and Ethiopia, especially on the basis of intelligence sharing.

On similar dates, in the first half of the 1960s, it came into contact with the Kurdish communities mobilizing in the north of Iraq (Bengio, 2014). Within the scope of this contact, it was aimed to weaken the Arab nationalist Ba'ath ideology, which was accepted as a major threat to Israeli security thought. In this process, Iran, in particular, offers serious opportunities to Israel. However, the Algiers Agreement signed in 1975 not only froze the hostility between Iran and Iraq, but also cut off Israel's contact with the Kurdish tribes in the region through Iran (İzzeti, 2006, pp.38-39).

The relationship type described above has manifested itself as a reflection of the policies that Israel has designed as an periphery strategy. The strategy, which was activated for many decades with the aim of breaking the dam of the Arab countries and, moreover, surrounding these countries through the external perimeter, also changed its focus with the revolution process that developed in Iran in 1979. In this context, the elements of Israel's periphery strategy have been functionalized in order to limit Iran's regional influence and design possible military/intelligence operations against Iran.

Especially during the US invasion of Iraq (2003) and the subsequent period, Israel re-established a strong relationship with the Kurdish

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<sup>1</sup> For the most current studies in the literature examining the relevance of Israel's regional policies to the Kurds, one should look at the works of Bengio (2021), Bishku (2018) and Ahram (2024).

communities in the north due to the possibility of Iran establishing influence in Iraq (Bengio, 2014). In this context, according to the Israeli strategy, the Kurdish communities in the north of the country will prevent Iran from gaining full influence over Iraq and, moreover, will serve as an important pillar of possible military/intelligence operations against Iran.

The rise of DAESH (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), which is considered a radical Islamist terrorist organization in the region in 2014, should be noted as another development that brings both Iraqi and Syrian Kurds to the fore. In this process, the PYD-YPG (Democratic Union Party-People's Defence Units) terrorist organization, which stands out especially among the Kurdish communities in the north of Syria, has entered the agenda of Turkish security thought, as it is an organic extension of the PKK terrorist organization. Elements of the PYD-YPG terrorist organization, which were armed and trained with the aim of breaking and reducing the influence of DAESH in the region, were equipped with heavy weapons and subjected to intensive training by the US (United States), despite its NATO ally Türkiye's persistent objections (TRT Haber, 2023). The US's choice of a terrorist organization over Türkiye in the fight can be seen as one of the concrete indicators that NATO allies have come to a clear crossroads. In parallel with these developments, Israel did not see any harm in providing intense support to terrorist elements in the region.

In the following years, regional politics became even more heated, and the independence referendum held by the Kurdish communities in northern Iraq in 2017 revealed Israel's regional strategy in the clearest way possible in terms of its political/rhetorical reactions. The only state that publicly supported the outcome of the referendum was Israel. This political support, voiced directly by Prime Minister Netanyahu, has dragged the potential path towards the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in the north of Iraq into an even more complicated situation (Anadolu Agency, 2017). In a process that even the US could not openly support, the independence referendum of the Iraqi Kurds has also revealed the regional strategy of Israel in all its nakedness, the only supporter. In this context, it has been publicly confirmed that a potential Kurdish state will serve the Israeli strategy, and this situation has been carefully noted by the countries in the region, especially Türkiye.

### **3. ISRAEL'S POSITION IN TÜRKİYE'S FIGHT AGAINST PKK TERRORISM**

The ups and downs of Türkiye-Israel relations are like a code of conduct that has dominated almost all periods of bilateral relations. These ups and downs emerged as reactions to Israel's policies within the scope of the Palestine Problem, rather than concerns about its regional strategies. Israel's expansionist profile and its efforts to establish a permanent regime in the lands it occupied as a result of the Six-Day War in 1967, caused the Turkish side to take a position by taking into account both the acts contrary to international law and the reactions of the Arabs. In this context, the up-and-down relationship style mentioned above has become a kind of dominant behavioral code.

When Türkiye-Israel bilateral relations are viewed from a narrow perspective, the situation becomes slightly different. It is very difficult to claim that two countries have direct problems, conflict of interests, or have directly become parties to any conflict. Problem areas that cause tension in bilateral relations and often reduce the level of diplomatic representation among the countries, generally consist of indirect topics, especially the Palestine Problem. Contrary to popular belief, Israel's acquisition of the image of a "security-producing" state, with the influence of its military successes in its region, has also influenced Turkish security elites for many years (Bir and Sherman, 2002, pp.23-32). In this context, Israel's technological and military capabilities have been considered as a strategic asset that should be utilized by the Turkish side.

Perhaps the only exception to these indirect problem areas was the raid by Israeli soldiers on the Mavi Marmara ship, which was carrying aid supplies to Gaza and containing entirely civilians, in 2010, and the Turkish citizens who were massacred there. In this context, bilateral relations have been severed, never to return to the golden period they reached in the 1990s. The rupture also limited the opportunities to intervene Israel's strategic plans and control its regional initiatives, which have been developing against Turkish interests since the 2010s. In this context, Israeli policies, especially against terrorist organizations located in the north of Iraq and Syria, have become a risk factor for Türkiye's national interests. In any case, the strategic moves of Israel, which is considered an important power in its region, are an element that should not be ignored in Türkiye's strategic



calculations. In this context, Israel's position in Türkiye's fight against PKK terrorism will be examined in the following subheadings.

### **3.1. The occupation of Lebanon and the opportunities provided by Israel**

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and some developments during this period provide a context that Turkish security units follow closely. In this context, Israel's entry into the Beqaa camp as a result of its military operations and targeting the terrorist elements there have created some advantages in favor of Türkiye.

The strengthening of leftist movements in Türkiye in the 1970s brought about conflicts between right-wing and left-wing student groups. Particularly left-wingers went to PLO camps due to the risk of prosecution in Türkiye and received armed training there in order to both "serve the Palestinian cause" and "open the door to a potential revolution in Türkiye" (Özcan, 2005, p.28). In this context, camps in Lebanon have become a gathering area for those escaping from Turkish security forces. These camps, where terrorist organizations such as ASALA and PKK also operate, will serve as an important catalyst for Türkiye-Israel relations.

The information and documents obtained by Israel in the Beqaa camp have been considered as a strong source of intelligence regarding the activities of both ASALA and PKK terrorist organizations in this region. There are ambiguous statements that Israel shared this information and documents with the Turkish side. However, according to the generally accepted understanding, Israel both shared information and documents and ensured the participation of Turkish security units during the operations it carried out here (Özcan, 2005, p.41).

In fact, these developments, which took place at a time when bilateral relations appeared quite problematic, can be seen as a continuation of the covert cooperation between Türkiye and Israel in the field of intelligence and therefore security. Bilateral relations, which were quite tense due to the declaration of Jerusalem as the unified capital of Israel (1980) and the annexation of the Golan Heights (1981), showed signs of improvement thanks to the intelligence/security cooperation in question (Aharon, 2018, pp.275-293). In this context, Türkiye-Israel covert normalization, which ran parallel to the improvement of Turkish-American relations in the 1980s, will continue to be shaped by new ups and downs in the coming years.

### **3.2. Israel's arms supply and Turkish deterrence capacity in the 1990s**

In the background of the rapid development of Türkiye-Israel relations in the 1990s, PKK terrorism, which has reached the level of one of the main agenda items in Turkish national security, plays one of the leading roles. In this context, the most significant factor of the post-Cold War period in terms of Turkish foreign and security policies is that the US has caught a "unipolar moment".<sup>1</sup> Bilateral relations, which have been based on the NATO alliance for many years, have also been put under pressure in this context. The fact that the US, with its unique superpower status, adopted a more imperious attitude at this time created critical vulnerabilities for Türkiye's immediate security interests. For example, the blockages in the arms trade with the US, within the framework of a human rights-centered counter-argument, have created periodic strategic problems in Türkiye's fight against PKK terrorism. This situation has strengthened the search for alternative resources among Turkish political and security elites (Bengio, 2004, pp.113-114).

In light of the above, Western states often block Türkiye's fight against PKK terrorism with a human rights-centered counter-argument. In particular, they aimed to gain a legal basis for the de facto division in Iraq and, if possible, to establish an independent Kurdish state in the north of the country. In this context, the Kurds were first encouraged to establish their own parliament in 1992 (O'Leary, 2002, p.19). The gap between the Western strategic calculations in question and Türkiye's security concerns hit the surface of the water forcefully during the military operations of the TAF against the elements of the PKK terrorist organization in the region.

Within the framework mentioned above, a number of major military operations carried out by the TAF in 1990s dealt a heavy blow to the elements of the PKK terrorist organization located in the north of Iraq. Despite strong American/Western objections, the Commander of the Land Forces, General Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu, carried out one of these operations which brought about short-term tensions in Turkish-American relations.<sup>2</sup> Especially since the geographical area free from central authority created in

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<sup>1</sup> Although this situation is called a "moment", the American influence at the global level will continue very strongly for almost two decades and will show signs of ending with the economic crisis of 2008 and Russia's intervention in Georgia in the same year.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, a short time later, the death of Colonel Vural in the tragic incident during the Toros 97 exercise brought forward the allegations of assassination against General Kıvrıkoğlu. It is known that Kıvrıkoğlu remained very distant from American policies during these dates. It is also noteworthy that Ofra Bengio (2009, p. 159) does not mention Kıvrıkoğlu's name among the military leadership that supports the institutionalization of bilateral relations among Turkey and Israel in her important work.

the north of Iraq, following the liberation of Kuwait, was hopefully designed as an independent Kurdish state in line with American (and possibly Israeli) plans, Türkiye's military operations in the region were tried to be prevented.

The problems that Türkiye, as a NATO ally, has experienced in supplying weapons from the USA have revealed one of the most significant fractures in Turkish security thinking. The arms embargo, which developed as a result of the bilateral crisis experienced previously due to poppy cultivation and the Cyprus Peace Operation (1974), again led to a similar break in perception and caused a serious tension in the bilateral relations between NATO allies Türkiye and the US. The arms supply crisis experienced during these dates also paved the way for the development of the Turkish national defense industry (Demir, 2020, pp.23-25).

In the 1990s, at a time when PKK terrorism was on the rise, Turkish security units were experiencing a serious armament problem. In light of what has been stated above, Türkiye did not receive the expected support from both its American and European partners, on the contrary, they constantly created a barrier with a human rights-centered discourse in its fight against PKK terrorism. Thus, Türkiye found the solution in improving its relations with Israel, which does not have similar concerns. In this context, Israel served as a kind of “lifeline” for the urgent military needs of this period. A large number of high-tech military equipment, especially night vision capabilities, were delivered to the Turkish authorities. In this context, Türkiye gained an important opportunity in the fight against PKK terrorism (Özcan, 2005, p.61).

As reflected in the Susurluk Report, Turkish security units entered into a conditional arms exchange with Israel, prioritizing the capture and delivery of Öcalan, the leader of the PKK terrorist organization. Considering the statements of the then Chief of Police, Mehmet Ağar, it can be said that the arms exchange in question also included the capture and delivery of the leader of the PKK terrorist organization (Özcan, 2005, p.55). However, the process was disrupted and the leader of the terrorist organization was not caught.

Ultimately, the development trend of Turkish-Israeli relations in the 1990s owed primarily to the detente of Israeli-Arab relations, which had softened with the steps taken in the Palestine Question. In this period when the American power emerged as the sole superpower, Türkiye-Israel

relations were considered the main elements of a regional system supported by the US. When looked at in terms of the distinct threat perceptions experienced by Turkish security thought at that time, it can be claimed that the move was aimed atbalancing the danger posed by Greece, Syria and the PKK terrorist organization by improving Türkiye-Israel relations(Bengio, 2004, pp.82-83). When examined in this context, In addition to providing weapons and intelligence support in the fight against PKK terrorism, Türkiye-Israel relations also aimed to pacify regional threat sources at the state level. The capture of the leader of the PKK terrorist organization in Kenya in the late 1990s and his delivery to Türkiye appears to be a result of the aforementioned equation.

### **3.3. Capture of the Leader of the Terrorist Organization**

Intelligence sharing in the fight against PKK terrorism, which constitutes an important pillar of Turkish-Israeli relations, came to the fore again, especially during the capture and delivery of PKK terrorist organization leader Öcalan to Türkiye at the end of the decade. The leader of the terrorist organization, who was residing in Damascus, the capital of Syria at that time, was removed from Damascus by the coercive diplomacy methods implemented with the extra deterrent capacity acquired by Türkiye with the contribution of the relations it developed with Israel, and a chase began (Aras, 2009, pp. 207-223). Although the leader of the terrorist organization tried to eliminate the process by settling in geographies such as Russia, Greece and Italy for short periods of time, he was caught in Kenya.

It has been claimed that the American intelligence agency CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and the Israeli intelligence agency MOSSAD (Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations) also made extensive contributions to the process of capturing the leader of the terrorist organization in Kenya and subsequently handing him over to Turkish security units. In particular, as understood from the statements made by the then Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit on the subject, the intelligence organizations in question captured the leader of the terrorist organization and handed him over to their Turkish counterparts. But from this moment on, Israel has tried to separate itself from the process, which it sees as a development that could put its entire Kurdish policy at risk. In this context, Israeli political and security elites felt the need to make numerous statements that they were not part of the process in question (Bengio, 2014, p.7).

In light of the information revealed, it can be said that the Israeli intelligence agency MOSSAD has taken part in the process. Two strategic military/intelligence cooperation agreements signed with Türkiye in the 1990s seem to have formed the basis for this partnership. One of the fruits of the process observed and evaluated as the Turkish-Israeli alliance at that time was undoubtedly the capture and delivery of the leader of the PKK terrorist organization to the Turkish side. Other fruits are that Syria and Greece, respectively, have stepped back from their policies involving the threat of hard power against Türkiye and displayed a more conciliatory profile.

### **3.4. The Enigma of HERON**

Türkiye took its relations with Israel to a very high level with the two important military/intelligence agreements signed in 1994 and 1996, and on this ground, it also created a suitable environment for weapons supply and modernization. The process of procuring unmanned aerial vehicles, namely HERON from Israel within the framework of another agreement signed in 2001 caused one of the most critical breaks in bilateral relations. The HERON unmanned aerial vehicles delivered to Türkiye within the framework of the agreement were either defective or destroyed (NTV, 2011).

Türkiye's use of the HERON technology created great satisfaction among the military elites, especially during this period. The close surveillance, which was described as "like a BBG house"<sup>14</sup> with the original analogy of Yaşar Büyükanıt, the Chief of General Staff at the time, was targeting the terrorist centers in the north of Iraq with the contribution of HERONs. However, various problems experienced in these unmanned aerial vehicles disrupted the process and did not fully meet expectations.

The huge disruptions experienced in the procurement and use of HERONs have made Israel's strategic value open to question in the eyes of the Turkish security and political elite. Going even further, domestic air defense/attack capabilities have been tried to be strengthened, and dependency on this need has been minimized, especially with the unmanned

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<sup>14</sup>The program called Someone is Watching Us (BBG) went down in history as a "reality show" that was followed with very high ratings on Turkish television at that time. The program, which consists of contestants trying to survive by dividing labor in a closed home environment, has been included in political jargon with the analogy of General Büyükanıt.

aerial vehicle project implemented with the initiatives of Baykar company (Baykar, t.y.).

### **3.5. Open support to the extensions of the PKK terrorist organization in Syria**

Israel's relationship with the PKK terrorist organization seems to have been continued embarrassedly, especially since it has the potential to affect Türkiye-Israel bilateral relations. In this context, when the statements made by Israeli officials as of 2019 are followed, it can be understood that Israel's Kurdish policy is not only directed towards the communities living in the north of Iraq.

The statements made by the Israeli political elites during the development of the military operations carried out by Türkiye in the north of Syria on these dates revealed that the PYD-YPG terrorist organization in the region was actually fattened with the support of Israel itself (News 7, 2019). Statements revealing that terrorist elements, which are accepted by the Turkish public to be formed with American support and assurance, also receive strong support from Israel, strengthened the suspicions of Turkish security elites against Israel. In this context, even the title of a news article published in the Jerusalem Post is quite significant. This headline of the newspaper article, which states that "Six years of investment turned into waste in six days", undoubtedly shows that Israel is not satisfied with the military operations carried out by Turkish side (Frantzman, 2019).

As stated in the previous stages of the study, Israel does not hesitate to support the processes in the northern regions of Iraq and Syria, as it positions the Kurdish presence in the region as a strategic value. In this context, the fact that Iran has stood out as an existential threat in the Israeli security agenda for many years and that the Kurdish geography is seen as an outpost of this threat constitute the logical basis for this Israeli support.

## **CONCLUSION**

Cooperation opportunities run parallel to the general course of Türkiye-Israel relations, undoubtedly show themselves in Türkiye's fight against the PKK terrorist organization. It can be observed that when Türkiye-Israel relations are on the rise, the opportunities for cooperation against the PKK terrorist organization also increase. On the other hand,

during bilateral relations decline, Israeli officials can openly support the PKK terrorist organization and its extensions.

As this study reveals, Israel's contributions to this struggle appear to be quite limited. It is possible to say that the periphery strategy, which is historical for Israel, is still valid, especially on this issue. Contact and support to ethnic minorities in the region seem to continue in terms of Israeli strategy. Thus, Israel's contributions to the fight against the PKK-YPG terrorist organization remain limited.

Israel's contributions to Türkiye's fight against PKK terrorism have a more “tabloid” nature, as in the process of capturing the leader of the terrorist organization. This situation, which can be considered as a kind of PR (public relations) effort in the eyes of the public, seems functional in whitewashing Israel. However, it is highly doubtful that it has made a long-term strategic contribution to Türkiye's fight against PKK terrorism. On the contrary, the strategic/political goals aimed by the mentioned terrorist organizations seem almost exactly compatible with Israel's periphery strategy. In this context, Türkiye's ability to cooperate with Israel in its fight against PKK terrorism is seemingly an oxymoron as a future projection.

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