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# The Arabs And Turkey

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What Arabs who look admiringly to Ankara do not understand is that Turkey's leaders act in concordance with Turkish public sentiment, not to save Arab dignity, writes Azmi Bishara

There is something in the Arab public space that hampers an objective discussion of Turkey's increasing political involvement in the region, its remarkable stances in favour of Arab causes, and an overall performance record that merits more than just praise. The source of the difficulty is that for more than a year Turkey has increasingly become an outlet for the frustrations of Arab societies and a convenient peg upon which to hang their hopes, but not just their hopes.

Two interrelated factors are largely responsible for this development.

The first is the lack of an effective Arab leader-state capable of championing Arab causes at the international level and in the confrontation with Israel. The second is the need on the part of self-appointed representatives of certain identities (or newly founded affiliations that have been transformed into identities) for a "Sunni state" (a contemporary Arab term that has nothing to do with either reality or history) to pit against Iran, the champion of the resistance and the Palestinian cause. In view of Egypt and Saudi Arabia's embarrassing performances on Arab causes, particularly during the war on Lebanon in 2006, the war against Gaza in 2008-2009 and the economic siege of Gaza, there is need for a country that could be cast as a "Sunni state" playing an honourable role in these matters. So Turkey's actions are built up to signify the emergence of a neo-Ottoman state, or even the resurgence of the Islamic caliphate.

Ankara's tensions with Tel Aviv are exaggerated to the point where some forecast a Turkey invasion of Israel in retaliation for that attack on the Freedom Flotilla, whereas other minds mould Prime Minister Erdogan into the statue of the valiant hero loyal to the Arab/Muslim nation. "After all, Saladin wasn't an Arab," they say, as if there were such concepts as ethnic nationalism and modern nation states in the age of Saladin.

But supporters of a no-holds-barred settlement with Israel, who serve as Washington's executive assistants in the region and dream only of being the local sidekick to the American champ (whether envoy, journalist or adventurer), are made very uncomfortable by the bold stances Turkey has been taking on Arab causes recently. They are particularly disconcerted by the combination of levelheadedness and self-respect that Turkey has brought to its performance, which translates in the popular mind into a stark juxtaposition between Turkish dignity and Arab officialdom's indignity. Their instinctive reaction is to belittle Turkish stances and cut Ankara down to size.

They cast aspersions on Turkey by means of sarcasm, that double-edged sword that often backfires against its users when it exposes their bitterness and petty jealousies (there is no reason to deny that some Arab leaders are prey to such foibles, unless one forgets that they are indeed very human creatures). Another means to deprecate Turkey's stances is to feign academic detachment and chalk them up to the mere pursuit of self-interest and a bid at regional leadership.

Such resentment against Ankara's performance proves that the opposition of these quarters to the resistance stems not from their support for peaceful grassroots activism but from their having positioned

themselves against any militant stance. It further indicates that their opposition to Arab supporters of the resistance does not originate from their own support for democracy and aversion to despotism, or even from their preference for pragmatism and rejection of adventurism. Arab critics of the resistance are grandiloquent on democracy, but they are not democrats. They pay political lip service to the right to peaceful protest, but peaceful protest makes them uncomfortable, and organised activism makes them very nervous, whether we speak of a real protest march (as opposed to a picnic organised for PR purposes) or of a mass uprising against Israel. If it were not the case, there would be a proliferation of Bilin and Nilin popular committees in the pro-political settlement camp. The members of this camp who oppose the resistance are equally averse to courting any dispute with the US, even a dispute among friends. They prefer complete and unruffled subordination. We have always known that, but events conspired to reconfirm it.

Turkey is unquestionably a democracy by the standards of our region. I would even go so far as to say that if ever an Arab country becomes democratic, it would find it hard to outshine Turkey. For one, it will find it hard to be more secular than Turkey is today. Contrary to the dream of some Arab intellectuals, religion will play no less important a role in the Arab democratic parties of the future and in their political battles than it has in Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP). Incidentally, this party is neither religious nor Islamist, in accordance with its own definition of itself. Nor is this self-definition a form of "dissimulation under duress" as has been claimed by some Islamists who fondly pin some of their own dreams on the JDP. The JDP is an Islamist party insofar as it has a vision of Islam as a cultural and civilisational identity that Turkey needs to emphasis in order to recover its balance and achieve its latent potential. At the same time, Turkey is a US ally and a member of NATO.

Also, the recent Israeli attack against the flotilla that apparently had Ankara's unofficial backing was an attack against a classical act of civil protest, not against a militant operation. Under the present circumstances such realities or the actual implications of such realities elude us, because of the various lenses through which Turkey is viewed in the Arab world. Here there exists a people without a leadership that projects their frustrations and hopes onto Turkey. On the other, there is an Arab officialdom that defies the logic of nations and that is suspicious of any nation that behaves as a nation should, because that nation could offer a model for handling tough issues different from the customary approach of Arab ruling families.

Such a dilemma leaves precious little space in the public sphere for a rational analysis of the Turkish role in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nevertheless, my purpose here is precisely that -- at least a stab at it.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:** In 1949, Turkey became the first predominantly Muslim nation to recognise Israel. Ankara had determined to draw closer to the West. It sent token units to fight in Korea alongside US forces (which were fighting beneath the UN banner at the time), and it clearly manoeuvred to make itself part of the alliances that were forming on the periphery of the Arab world and that were opposed to the Arab nationalist movement. Pakistan, Iran and Turkey were eager and energetic partners in the formation of the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) in the 1950s. Turkey was among the many countries of the periphery that began to cooperate culturally, economically and militarily with Israel (if this does not apply to Pakistan, it

certainly does to Ethiopia on the southern border of the Arab world).

In eastern Turkey there are still Israeli observation and communications monitoring posts for spying on Iran (according to reports in Israeli newspapers).

Turkey's relations with Syria, on the other hand, have always been tense, shaped as they were by the historical conflict over the Levant and the Turkish annexation of the province of Iskenderun (Alexandretta, later renamed Hatay) in the 1930s. In the latter half of the 20th century, tensions continued to flare periodically between the two countries, as was the case during the period of Egyptian-Syrian unification (1958-1961) and when Syria's support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) triggered a Turkish threat of war against Syria towards the end of president Hafez Al-Assad's rule. In addition, Turkey's interventions in northern Iraq in pursuit of PKK fighters and its construction of dams along the Tigris and Euphrates occasioned other flare-ups in the 1990s. An interesting episode in the matrix of Turkish-Syrian/Turkish-Israeli relations involves the Israeli bombing of a site in Deir El-Zor, where Israel claimed Syria was constructing a nuclear reactor. According to recently revealed details on the incident, the Israeli aircraft that bombed that site flew through Turkish airspace. If so, it is one of the remnants of the Turkish-Israeli military ties that were crowned by the 1996 strategic cooperation agreement between them. Still, somehow I doubt that the Turkish military had informed the JDP that it had permitted the Israeli bombers to use Turkish airspace, if, indeed, it had given this authorisation.

When the JDP reached power in 2002 (which was after the core of its founding members had regrouped and redefined themselves following the failed experience of the Refah -- Welfare -- Party), its first test was to safeguard its government and its parliamentary majority in the face of US pressures to use Turkish territory in the invasion of Iraq.

The government put the matter to a vote in parliament, which is to say it braced itself with democratic procedures and its grassroots base.

Such unfamiliar behaviour on the part of a Middle Eastern ally of the US would become a sample of its forthcoming political conduct, in which it used real democracy as an expression of sovereign will and in order to reject subordination to the US. This is perhaps the most important lesson that Arab public opinion could gain from Turkey's pioneering experience.

**THE DETERIORATION OF TURKISH- ISRAELI RELATIONS:** The Freedom Flotilla, the aid-for-Gaza convoy organised by Turkish charity societies and Islamist forces from the former Refah and Saadet (Felicity) parties, shed light on the erosion of Turkish-Israeli relations, but not in the way many think. Following the Israeli assault against the flotilla, in which nine Turkish activists were killed onboard the lead ship, the Mavi Marmara, the world watched as the deterioration spiralled, up to the level of the UN Security Council. That these relations had experienced a number of serious rocky patches before this gave rise to an Arab trend to construct a picture of a steadily escalating crisis that began the moment the JDP reached power. Generally, the following incidents are cited as evidence:

- Prime Minister Recep Erdogan's statements, since the beginning of his second term, in which he linked the development of Turkey's relationship with Israel to progress in the peace process. While such

statements did anger Israel and are generally cited as proof of the long-standing nature of the crisis in Turkish-Israeli relations, in fact they are more appropriately perceived in the context of Turkey's search for a political role that is more consistent with the Turkish vision for this role at a time when the JDP is in power. That vision demands a more balanced position between the Arabs and Israel, instead of a pro-Israeli bias and conceding that the peace process is an American monopoly.

- The noticeable upswing in Turkish-Syrian relations. This development arose from Ankara's efforts to mediate between Damascus and Tel Aviv, a role encouraged by Israel and the US because the US needed a moderate leader with credibility in the Islamic world and both the US and Israel wanted to distance Syria from Iran. However, the trend here was to see this Turkish role as a gradual shift in favour of Syria, even as it failed to sever Syria from Iran.

- The reception of a group of Hamas leaders following the Hamas victory in the Palestinian legislative elections and the formation of a new Palestinian government in 2006. Bear in mind, however, that there were no high-level meetings following this reception and that the invitations stopped once the Gaza crisis erupted and the national unity government collapsed. Moreover, it was clear that these formalities were the JDP's way of symbolically capitalising on the fact that there was at least one Islamist party in power. It had an eye to acting as a mediator on this track, too, and it openly tried to persuade both the West and Hamas of the need for Hamas to participate in the "peace process".

- The clash between Erdogan and Israeli President Shimon Peres in late January 2009. In this famous televised debate on the sidelines of the Davos Summit, Peres was trying to defend the Israeli invasion of Gaza to a Turkish prime minister incensed because Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had visited him on 22 December 2008, precisely one day before the invasion, and did not notify him of the Israeli plan.

Erdogan was both insulted and deceived. He felt that he had been stabbed in the back because he had put himself on the line in brokering the then ongoing indirect negotiations between Syria and Israel and now the Gaza war would inevitably cause these negotiations to collapse. Naturally, this incident is important, not in and of itself, but because it was the first indicator of a substantial shift.

Since the Israeli invasion of Gaza, the negative dynamic gained impetus in these bilateral relations. I do not believe that this was a conscious Turkish choice from the outset or that it was inevitable.

Rather, it had more to do with Israeli arrogance and the inability of the captains of the Zionist ship to understand what was happening in Turkey, especially as regards the dialectic between the grassroots bases of a real political party and the leadership of this party, and the relationship between this and the development of Turkish relations with the Arab world.

Proceeding full steam ahead with this blend of imperiousness and blindness, the Israeli assistant minister of foreign affairs summoned the Turkish ambassador to the Israeli Foreign Ministry in order to deliver a public dressing-down. This offensive treatment that departed from all diplomatic convention reflected the hubris of the Israeli government and could only backfire. Not only was Ankara able to force a public apology from Israel, but also the incident gave

Erdogan a new opportunity to champion both the eastern Islamic side of Turkish identity and Turkish national pride. His and his party's popularity soared, while the rightwing secularist parties that support closer relations with Israel could only cringe and join the chorus of condemnation against Israeli behaviour in defence of Turkish dignity.

Following the Israeli assault on the Freedom Flotilla and the murder of nine Turkish civilians, Erdogan delivered an impassioned speech to the Turkish parliament in which he condemned these "inhuman" and "atrocious" crimes, and vowed that Israel would have to pay the price.

Speaking from central Anatolia, President Abdallah Gul said, "After this point, Turkish-Israeli relations will never be as they were before." In a more concrete manifestation of its anger, Ankara cancelled two previously scheduled joint military manoeuvres with Israel and recalled its ambassador from Tel Aviv. It is worth mentioning here that this was not the first time Turkey recalled its ambassador to Israel. In 1982 it did so in order to protest the Israeli war on Lebanon, and it took 10 years before he was sent back.

Turkish-Israeli relations have seriously declined. The Turkish government's criticism of Israel has become increasingly strident, while JDP party ranks have worked to mobilise Turkish public opinion.

However, to read this development as the consequence of an ideological decision made in advance -- a pre-prepared plan to search for opportunities to shift to a confrontational stance -- is, to me, the type of reading that derives from an Arab ideological outlook that is charged with a mixture of hope and despair, or what I would call the "discourse of wishful thinking". In addition to ignoring the contexts of the abovementioned incidents that are cited as evidence of a deliberate plan -- to revive the glory of the Ottoman Empire, for example -- the proponents of this reading also ignore other developments since the JDP came to power (such selectivity is the ideologue's way of substantiating a proposition, versus the scientific method of proving a hypothesis). The developments I refer to are those that testify to the increasing importance of Turkey's political weight and to the growing awareness of this factor in the JDP era. In my opinion, they also affirm that, at the beginning, the JDP sought to order its relations with Israel, not to destroy them.

The "Zero-Problem" theory that Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu began to apply aims to empower Turkey by demonstrating its true capacities and potential. The theory embraces Armenia, Greece, Syria, Israel, and the countries of Central Asia. JDP Turkey wanted to develop its relations with Israel and with the Arab world with an eye to positioning itself to exercise a political role commensurate to Turkey's size and consistent with the will of the Turkish public it represents. That public voted in a government that it felt would act in a way that reflected a Turkey that was not subordinate to the US, that was angry with Europe, and that was not in Israel's pocket with regards to the Palestinian cause and relations with the Arabs.

In the Erdogan era, Turkey and Israel signed several military and economic agreements, and the volume of their bilateral trade doubled.

But Turkey's volume of trade with the Arab world increased many fold (see chart below). In addition, there are now 200 Arab companies in Turkey, with investments in Turkey totalling \$2.6 billion.

In the summer of 2005, Turkey hosted the first official public contact

between Pakistan and Israel. This meeting -- between Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri and Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom -- was personally arranged by Erdogan in response to a request by then Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, after the Israeli disengagement from Gaza provided a suitable excuse.

At the beginning of the JDP's second term, in November 2007, Shimon Peres delivered a speech in Hebrew before the Turkish parliament. It was the first speech of an Israeli president before a parliament in a country with a Muslim majority.

The Turkish-brokered revival of Syrian-Israel negotiations in Istanbul, in 2008, demonstrated the consummate expertise and intelligence with which Turkey could capitalise on its good relations with all. It had clearly emerged as a powerful political player and a great mediator. Confirmation of Turkey's new standing came in the form of President Obama's choice of the Turkish parliament as the podium from which to deliver his address of 6 April 2009.

THE TURN IN THE TURKISH MOOD: How then are we to understand Turkey's growing acrimony toward Israel? Certainly, the Israeli bombardment of Gaza within a day of Olmert's visit marked a turning point, although the earlier Turkish-Syrian rapprochement helped considerably. With the collapse of the US neoconservative policy towards the Middle East and the debacle of America's Arab crutches, the way was clear for Turkey to play a stronger role in the region. The role would require that it distance itself somewhat from Israel and it would also ruffle Arab governments that do not want to see the rules of the game change by a new and strong player who enjoys both the respect of the US and popularity among the Arab and Muslim public. But another crucial factor came into play, one that Turkey had long dreaded: the emergence and self-assertion of a semi-autonomous Kurdistan in northern Iraq.

This development broadened the realm of common concerns with Iran and Syria, which also feared a growing Kurdish influence controlled, at least in part, by adverse international factors. Israel has long openly supported the Kurdish parties operating in Iran and the Israeli government and security agencies have developed a broad network of relations in Iraqi Kurdistan.

However, the chief factor, in my opinion, is one that the Israelis simply could not fathom. The JDP is a political party in the modern sense of the term, with a broad grassroots base, sophisticated party machinery, and its own range of public opinion within the broader spectrum of Turkish public opinion. But, more crucially, it is closer to the concept of a modern political party and much more dependent upon public opinion than any ruling Turkish party had ever been. The JDP still cannot rely on the sources of strength embodied in the machinery of the state, which remains an arena of conflict for it. It has been fighting an uphill battle against corruption ever since it initiated corruption investigations against former prime ministers Mesut Yilmaz and Tansu Ciller, and it continues to lock horns with the military establishment and with the judiciary, the zealous protector of the Ataturk system that generally frequently quashes legislation passed by the JDP majority parliament. So it is little wonder that the JDP, more than any other party, has to depend on its popularity and its strengths in civil society (civil society is being used here in its conventional sense as a society that reproduces itself in a market economy and outside the framework of statist coercive relations).

The reopening to the East was inaugurated by the Turkish market system

in the 1980s; however, it was established as a strategic option under Turgut Ozal, who represented the aspirations of Turkish investment capital for investment and expansion, and who espoused a pragmatism towards this end that sought to lessen the hold of ideology, inclusive of the prevailing secularist ideology. Ozal's party, the Motherland Party, which included liberals, nationalists, secularists and Islamists, swept the elections for a second time in 1987. Soon after came the crisis that led to the alliance between Necmettin Erbakan (Refah Party) and Ciller (True Path Party), the corruption scandal that haunted Ciller and compelled her to accept Erbakan as prime minister, followed by the army's dissolution of parliament. In 1994, the Refah Party won 19 per cent of the vote in the local elections. It won an even higher percentage in the municipality of Istanbul, in which it fielded the young Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was elected mayor with 25 per cent of the vote. He had clearly tapped the public pulse and taking this as his lead, he persisted, following the banning of Refah, to found the JDP, which won a sufficient majority in the parliamentary elections of 2002 to usher him securely into the premiership. The Erdogan-led government, which has ruled Turkey for most of the first decade of this century, has achieved numerous successes. Its economic and fiscal policies stimulated higher economic growth rates and per capita income rates, and its tax reforms made it possible to support the poorer sectors of Turkish society. Since coming to power, this government has made steady inroads against corruption and in reducing the national debt. The value of the Turkish lira climbed against the dollar, Turkish exports increased by a third, and the inflation rate fell by about 20 per cent.

The JDP's economic successes won it new allies among the classes that normally supported the hardcore secularist parties. But it was more than rising economic growth rates and better living standards that were responsible for this. The party had simultaneously proven itself capable of expanding civil liberties and of following a relatively liberal and peaceful domestic policy that included a focus on predominantly Kurdish areas, legislation permitting for Kurdish cultural and linguistic expression, and other measures intended to counter and isolate Kurdish militancy.

Any analysis of this government's actions must also consider the JDP's constituency, which has a say in matters pertaining to Turkey's identity. The JDP derived the bulk of its support from the Islamist trend, as well as from many non-Islamists who complained of the economic straits and the corruption that prevailed in the late 1990s.

However, even the party's Islamist supporters are far from homogeneous. Some came from the ranks of the Refah Party (renamed the Virtue Party), others from Sufi orders, especially such new orders as the Nurcu Movement, founded by Said Nursi and whose current leader lives in the US. What these groups have in common is that they represent a "moderate" Islamist position, one that would like to see good relations with the US and even with Israel. From this trend originated the idea of persuading the US that it had more to gain from shifting its support away from the Turkish generals and backing a democratically "moderate" government, even if that government had an Islamist tinge. Proponents of this trend are leery of the growing influence of the more hardcore Islamist forces associated with the JDP government, especially those connected with the Islamist charity organisations that organised the Freedom Flotilla.

The JDP, in theory and in practice, created a form of compromise between the Islamic/Eastern orientation in Turkish identity, on the

one hand, and the acceptance of the rules of the political game, as set in the Ataturk era, inclusive of the principles of equal citizenship and the separation between religion and the state. This compromise is at ease with civil liberties and it respects them, and it is at ease with the secularism of the governing order. That it reverberates through Turkish society is borne out in numerous opinion surveys, which have shown strong opposition to US policies and strong support for democracy, and in which a majority of opinion supports the right to wear the veil in universities, but equally supports the neutrality of the state in religious affairs and the right not to wear the veil. Still, it is not surprising that the Islamic/Eastern orientation in Turkish identity is increasingly asserting itself in such a manner, especially in view of what really underlies the European position on Turkey's accession to the EU. It seems equally clear that most of Turkey's recent disputes with Israel take as their starting point the opinions and attitudes of the JDP's constituency and the Turkish public at large, whether we are speaking of solidarity with the people of Gaza during the Israeli invasion, anger over the Israeli treatment of the Turkish ambassador, and most recently the civil society initiative that organised the Freedom Flotilla in order to break the siege of Gaza.

The JDP's domestic and foreign policy choices have not yet become the choices of a state. They remain very much the choices of a political party in power, which is to say that they are not matters that are taken as axiomatic by the state establishment. Examples of such matters in the US, for instance, are certain national security tenets, the capitalist order, and political liberalism, which are taken for granted by both the Democratic and the Republican parties. In Turkey, the secularism of the state is such an axiomatic matter for all political parties, including the JDP, which proves that secularism in Turkey remains the state's chosen course and that the JDP has merely tried -- successfully, in my opinion -- to temper it somewhat. As for Turkey's eastward orientation and its attempt to assert itself as an independent nation in regional matters concerning Iran, Palestine, Iraq and elsewhere, these remain a ruling party's compass points. At the same time it is true that they have begun to attract broader segments of public opinion and that the state establishment has begun to soften on them recently. One can only wonder what the army and judiciary will be like if the JDP lasts another term or two in power.

What is the significance of the fact that Turkey's foreign policy towards the Arabs, the Palestinian cause and other regional issues rests on the majority opinion in a democratic country? It signifies that:

- The credibility of Turkey's positions rests on a perception of Turkish interests and identity that enjoys widespread grassroots support that needs to be borne out in the forthcoming elections as in previous elections. The ruling party has to convince people that its positions conform not only to its platform, on the basis of which it was elected, but also to its interests and Turkey's higher interests.
- If an alternative position emerges it will arise in the context of political party competition and/or from changes in the prevailing ways to define Turkish interests and identity.
- The JDP needs to accommodate to the ability of the state, as well as of the Turkish public and the democratic process, to assimilate its positions, which entails compromise. After all, it is ultimately a political party in a democratic state. Its source of strength resides

in its constituents and the support of public opinion. It is not trying to become a proxy ruling party in an empire dependent for its survival on ethnic and sectarian alliances and balances. Nor is it seeking to model itself after state parties in the Arab world. It is a party that has embraced the democratic process in a secular state and it is doing precisely what it was elected for, which is to represent Turkish public opinion and to try to promote its chief principles to the level of unanimously agreed upon principles of a state establishment.

BACK TO THE BEGINNING: What the Arabs should take as the starting point in their attempts to analyse the Arab-Turkish relationship is not what Turkey wants. This could produce some minor errors when assessing what Turkish officials say in light of some historical knowledge and with the application of a bit of thought and logic: there is a Turkish state that has certain attitudes and interests and in which a certain conflict is clearly in the process of unfolding.

However, the real problem is to know what the Arabs want. If there is no Arab state or unified Arab political entity that expresses the Arab will, or even the glaring disputes and clashes in the Arab world, the problem is difficult enough. It becomes almost insurmountable when an incalculable amount of frustration and disappointment clouds the Arab view of Turkey's attitudes and actions. I believe this problem harms not only the Arabs but also the prospect of drawing on and promoting a Turkish position favourable to us.

Consider, for example, that even when Turkey raises the ceiling of its demands and the tone of its rhetoric on the question of the siege of Gaza, it finds some Arab states opposed. At best it is as though they are telling Turkey not to go to all the bother of intervening on behalf of the Arabs. Imagine, then, Ankara's reaction if, on top of this, it learns that a couple of those Arab states went running to their master in Washington to ask him to order Turkey to back off because it is embarrassing them in front of their people.

A different sort of problem arises from those who want Turkey to become an Arab leader. The problem is that Turkey has no desire to become one. It does not want to lead a rejectionist/ resistance axis.

Even to begin to attempt to push it in this direction could create serious trouble for the JDP. At the very least it would open it to accusations from its rivals and from the state establishment to the effect that it is leading the country away from the Turkish agenda and dragging Turkey into a position where it has to be more Arab than many Arabs want to be.

Yet another difficulty comes when some parties try to emulate Turkey only to find that they have failed where Turkey succeeded. The way that Turkey is handling its dispute with Israel, inclusive of Turkish civil society's peaceful activism against Israel, is appropriate to a country that is in a state of peace with Israel. It is effective precisely because it functions in this context. However, when countries or movements that are in a state of war (or at least presumed to be in a state of war) with Israel try to imitate Turkey's style of talk and action they will not be effective. The ways that resistance movements and countries that are at war with Israel have of being effective are totally different and either they should use them or wait until they can, because for them to imitate the Turkish way of handling its disputes with Israel can only be regarded as a form of retreat.

There, Arab alliance with Turkey is very important. However, such an

alliance does not mean that we should impose our own perceptions of it on Turkey. Rather, our task should be to form a clear and objective understanding of the actual dynamics of this alliance. At the same time, we should allow Turkey to deal with its conflicts the way it sees fit, while offering our advice when it solicits it, and expressing our gratitude when it does not.

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