

Why Does War Between Türkiye and Israel Remain Deferred?



In December 2025, Israeli occupation Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood in Jerusalem alongside Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides during a trilateral summit focused on security, energy, and cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean. As cameras followed the joint press conference, Netanyahu made a statement carrying messages that went beyond the framework of direct regional cooperation, saying: “Those who dream of rebuilding their empires and taking control of our lands should forget it.”

He did not mention Türkiye explicitly, but the substance of the message was directly tied to rising tensions with Ankara and “Israel”’s growing rapprochement with its regional rivals.

That scene reflected a rapid shift in the nature of Turkish-“Israel”i relations in recent years. The war on Gaza after October 7, 2023 pushed ties between the two sides into one of their most tense phases since the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan escalated his political rhetoric to unprecedented levels, describing “Israel” as a “terror state” and accusing its leaders of committing war crimes, while Ankara recalled its ambassador and downgraded diplomatic relations, before Türkiye’s Ministry of Trade announced in May the suspension of all exports and imports with “Israel”.

Even so, many lines continued to connect the two sides in the background. Trade flows did not disappear entirely, Azerbaijani oil continued to pass through

Türkiye's Ceyhan port toward "Israel", and interests tied to energy, maritime corridors, and regional alliances remained a constraining factor preventing political tension from turning into open confrontation.

In this context, Turkish-"Israel"i relations appear closer to a conflict managed by interests than one governed by absolute ideological rupture. Political rhetoric continues to intensify, while energy channels, trade, and regional alliances keep imposing a different rhythm on the calculations of both sides, keeping tensions under a controlled ceiling so far despite widening disagreements and overlapping arenas of competition between them.

The Azerbaijani Artery

About 100 kilometers east of Baku lies the Azeri-Chirag-Gunashli field in the depths of the Caspian Sea, the largest oil field in Azerbaijan's sector, directly feeding the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, one of the region's most important cross-border energy arteries. The pipeline stretches from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Türkiye's Mediterranean port of Ceyhan, before oil shipments continue southward to "Israel"i ports, illustrating how energy has become part of the deep structure of regional relations, even among parties exchanging political escalation and hostile rhetoric.

International estimates and reports indicate that Azerbaijani oil arriving through this pipeline covers between 40 and 46% of "Israel"'s oil needs during some periods, making the corridor running through Turkish territory a fixed pillar in "Israel"'s energy security equation.

The sensitivity of this equation increases with Azerbaijan's position within the regional network of interests. The Azerbaijani state oil company SOCAR is the largest foreign investor in Türkiye, with massive investments in energy, petrochemicals, and refining, while at the same time maintaining strong strategic partnerships with "Israel" in oil, gas, and energy cooperation.

This overlap places Baku at the heart of a complex triangle linking Ankara and Tel Aviv in a web of interests that is difficult to dismantle without high political and economic costs. "Israel" depends on Azerbaijani oil, Türkiye depends on Azerbaijan as a strategic partner and major source of energy and investment, while Baku needs stable transit routes and markets alike to preserve its position as a regional energy hub.

"Israel" is using your company's oil to kill Palestinians" .. A protest organized by dozens against the Azerbaijani company "SOCAR" at its headquarters in Istanbul, which is still supplying the occupation with oil until now, demanding that Turkish officials shut down its pipelines passing through Turkish territory
#Türkiye#AlAqsaFlood pic.twitter.com/goN3KaqxV6

– Noon Post (@NoonPost) May 31, 2024

The legal dimension adds another layer of complexity. The Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline operates under international agreements that grant the states and companies operating it broad guarantees for the uninterrupted flow of oil, regardless of political tensions or regional shifts. Host government agreements stipulate protection for transport operations and prohibit their disruption, limiting Ankara’s ability to use the pipeline as a direct pressure card against “Israel”.

That is why oil flows continued even during the most intense phases of political tension after the Gaza war, because any broad disruption would have threatened Türkiye’s standing as a reliable energy corridor, opened the door to legal disputes and massive financial compensation claims, and harmed Azerbaijan itself, Ankara’s closest ally in the South Caucasus. The scale of this complexity became clear after the February 2023 earthquake, when the operating company announced force majeure at the port of Ceyhan, highlighting how Türkiye’s sovereign decision is tied to an international network of contracts, energy markets, and transcontinental companies.

Although reports said Azerbaijan halted oil exports to “Israel” in late 2024, tankers continued their voyages through complex maritime routes involving intermediaries from third countries and the disabling of tracking systems in parts of the Eastern Mediterranean, indicating the ability of global energy networks to reshape their routes away from declared political rhetoric.

Major international energy companies also maintained their central role in securing a large share of “Israel”’s oil needs, reflecting that the energy system linked to “Israel” extends beyond direct bilateral relations into a broad international network of producers, shipping, refining, and trading companies.

In parallel, “Israel” has in recent years become a growing gas export hub in the Eastern Mediterranean, benefiting from its large offshore fields and intertwined relations with Egypt and Jordan. In August 2025, Tel Aviv signed a massive \$35 billion gas deal with Egypt, increasing supplies from the Leviathan field in the largest gas export agreement in “Israel”’s history. Gas exports to Egypt and Jordan also rose during 2024 despite public political condemnations of the war on Gaza, reflecting a growing separation between political rhetoric and the region’s energy security requirements.

This complex energy network has made Azerbaijani oil and gas an implicit calming factor in Turkish-“Israel”i relations. The stability of transit and export routes serves all parties, and any broad disruption could directly affect markets, shipping traffic, supply security, transit revenues, and investment returns.

That is why energy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Caucasus appears more

as a factor for managing tension and regulating its pace than as a tool of direct confrontation, given the interlocking interests of Türkiye, “Israel”, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Greece, and Cyprus in a regional equation from which no party can withdraw without paying a high price.

Trade That Does Not Stop

In May 2024, Ankara announced the suspension of all forms of trade with “Israel” and presented the decision as a punitive step in response to the war in Gaza. The announcement came with sharp political rhetoric and official statements speaking of a complete closure of trade, export, and transit routes, suggesting that economic relations between the two sides had entered a phase of total rupture. But figures that emerged later revealed a more complex picture, showing that the economy continued moving in a different direction from the declared political rhetoric.

According to international trade data, Türkiye remained among the largest exporters to “Israel” in 2024, despite a sharp decline compared with previous years. UN international trade data indicate that Israel’s imports from Türkiye reached about \$2 billion in 2024 from the Israeli reporting perspective, while republished data from the Turkish side showed a lower figure of around \$1.52 billion.

This gap between the two figures reflects the overlap of several factors, including differences in timing and methodology, the rerouting of goods through intermediary countries, and the existence of flows passing through channels not officially classified as direct Turkish-“Israel”i trade. Ankara itself also explained that part of the announced figures included exports destined for the Palestinian territories that passed through “Israel”i gateways, further complicating the reading of trade data after the war.

In the months following the ban announcement, trade continued through a sprawling network of indirect routes. Israeli and international media reports said Israeli importers resorted to using ports and shipping lines passing through Georgia, the UAE, Bulgaria, and Greece to bring Turkish goods into the “Israel”i market away from direct routes.

The company “Repkon USA” (the American branch of the Turkish defense industries company Repkon) announced that it had officially changed its name to “Ballistic Technologies,” in a move aimed at distancing itself from its Turkish identity after a wave of widespread anger and accusations that it supplied ammunition and military equipment to “Israel”.

– The sudden shift came after the revelation... pic.twitter.com/KEy6YZ4Rca

– Noon Post (@NoonPost) March 12, 2026

Some companies also moved to alter shipping documents or use intermediaries and firms from third countries to conceal the final destination of goods. In August 2025, Ankara tightened restrictions on “Israel”-linked ships and barred some from docking at Turkish ports, while imposing additional requirements related to letters of guarantee and cargoes. Yet these measures pushed trade toward greater complexity and circumvention rather than a complete halt.

Before the war, annual trade between Türkiye and “Israel” stood at about \$6 billion, with broad Israeli sectors relying on Turkish products, especially iron and steel, construction materials, chemicals, electrical appliances, and textiles. Data from the Turkish Exporters Assembly also showed that Turkish exports to “Israel” were concentrated in strategic industrial sectors and intermediate goods directly feeding construction, industry, and energy. Despite the sharp decline in 2024, these sectors maintained a clear presence in the “Israel”i market, albeit through indirect channels.

The domestic economic factor played a decisive role in this equation. Türkiye was facing severe inflationary pressures, a weakening lira, and rising unemployment, making the cost of a full boycott high for broad sectors of the Turkish economy. Halting the flow of Azerbaijani oil through the port of Ceyhan or disrupting energy networks linked to “Israel” would also have directly harmed Azerbaijan, Ankara’s closest ally in the South Caucasus, and threatened transit revenues and energy-related investments. That is why Turkish measures appeared closer to a calculated management of escalation than an attempt to impose a complete economic rupture.

In this context, trade and energy became indirect channels for managing the dispute between the two sides. The continuation of some trade flows and the keeping open of energy lines provided room to avoid moving from political escalation to comprehensive economic or strategic confrontation. It also preserved a minimum level of interdependence that allows for the possibility of repairing relations in the future, much as happened after previous crises such as the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010, when relations went through years of tension before diplomatic and economic channels gradually returned.

“Israel”’s Balancing Network

On December 22, 2025, the leaders of “Israel”, Greece, and Cyprus met in occupied Jerusalem at a trilateral summit reflecting a trend toward building a broader cooperation network in defense, energy, maritime security, and infrastructure, within a regional trajectory that treats Türkiye as one of the most important variables in Eastern Mediterranean equations. Israeli and Turkish

reports and research centers spoke of this rapprochement moving from the stage of limited sectoral cooperation to a more comprehensive level tied to redrawing the region's balances, especially after years of rising tension between Ankara and Tel Aviv.

The roots of this trajectory go back to 2010, when Turkish-Israeli relations deteriorated after the Mavi Marmara incident. Since then, "Israel" has begun expanding its partnerships with Greece and Cyprus, benefiting from the historical tensions between these parties and Türkiye, whether over the Aegean Sea and continental shelf, the Cyprus issue, or disputes over maritime border demarcation and gas exploration rights in the Eastern Mediterranean.

With the region's major gas discoveries, this rapprochement gained an additional strategic dimension, because offshore energy fields became an axis of geopolitical competition tied to maritime corridors, export routes, and balances of regional influence.

In this context, the East Mediterranean Gas Forum emerged as one of the most important institutional frameworks reshaping the region's energy balances. The forum, which includes Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, "Israel", Italy, France, Jordan, and Palestine, was established without Türkiye's participation, making it for Ankara a sign of an attempt to reorganize the regional energy market in a way that reduces its geographic and political role.

For its part, "Israel" saw the forum as a platform giving it a broader network of economic and security partnerships and providing alternative export routes that do not depend on Turkish territory. That is why Tel Aviv in recent years moved to strengthen gas exports to Egypt and expand cooperation with Egyptian liquefaction facilities, in parallel with developing electricity interconnection and energy projects with Cyprus and Greece.

The Greek-Cypriot node within this network acquired an increasingly military dimension, as cooperation expanded to include air and naval exercises, arms deals, intelligence sharing, and joint training. At the end of 2025, the leaders of "Israel", Greece, and Cyprus announced they were studying the creation of a rapid intervention force to protect energy facilities in the Eastern Mediterranean, in addition to establishing a maritime cybersecurity center in Cyprus.

As the conflict between the United States and "Israel" with Iran intensifies, discussions have recently escalated within Israeli security circles over Türkiye's place on the threat map after Tehran... What are the reasons behind the growing Israeli "Turkophobia"?

Read more in the following article <https://t.co/QLO5BJFoHb>
pic.twitter.com/5kJGhkAbWd

– Noon Post (@NoonPost) March 1, 2026

In Israeli discourse, this trajectory was accompanied by a clear rise in portraying Türkiye as a long-term strategic challenge. Israeli research centers and politicians adopted concepts referring to neo-Ottoman ambitions and the need to build a network of regional alliances to balance Turkish influence. In recent years, Israeli arguments have also appeared calling for reviving the so-called “periphery doctrine,” an old strategy based on building partnerships with non-Arab powers or surrounding regional actors to confront shifts in the regional environment.

“Israel” is essentially working to build a multi-level balancing network based on diversifying energy routes, strengthening maritime and military alliances, and expanding the regional institutional structure in a way that reduces Türkiye’s ability to dominate influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. In this framework, Egypt plays a pivotal role as a practical outlet for exporting Israeli gas, while Greece and Cyprus provide European and security depth, and Azerbaijan gives “Israel” an energy channel linked to the Caucasus through a partner that itself maintains close relations with Ankara.

What were the main outcomes of the summit that brought together the “Israel”i occupation, Cyprus, and Greece? What does the timing of its convening signify, and what “Israel”i messages were sent to Türkiye through it? Could it become the starting point for forming a trilateral front targeting Ankara?

More details in this report <https://t.co/wU6nsUZhPa>
pic.twitter.com/1nzSMgq2ie

– Noon Post (@NoonPost) December 30, 2025

This interlocking reality makes the scene more complex than a mere bilateral confrontation between Türkiye and “Israel”. Türkiye still possesses one of NATO’s largest armies, along with geographic depth extending toward the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Balkans, and the Middle East, and it maintains broad economic and security relations with states that are difficult to exclude from any regional equation.

That is why the alliances “Israel” is building appear closer to tools for constraining Turkish influence and redistributing balances of power in the Eastern Mediterranean than to a project capable of imposing a comprehensive strategic siege on Ankara. In response, Türkiye has countered these moves by deepening its presence in Libya, signing maritime and security agreements, and expanding its network of regional relations, within an open contest for influence over energy maps, maritime corridors, and military alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Horn of Africa

On December 26, 2025, “Israel” announced its recognition of Somaliland in a move revealing a growing Israeli orientation toward expanding its presence in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Horn of Africa. The region, overlooking one of the world’s most sensitive maritime corridors, gives any power present there the ability to monitor shipping traffic and influence trade and energy routes linking Asia and Europe.

The importance of this step for Türkiye is directly tied to Türkiye’s growing presence in Somalia, where Ankara is one of the main backers of the federal government in Mogadishu and maintains a military base as well as broad training and security support projects. For this reason, Israel’s recognition of Somaliland was interpreted as part of a reshaping of a regional influence network stretching from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Horn of Africa, in coordination with regional actors such as the UAE and Ethiopia, within a trajectory aimed at strengthening “Israel”’s presence near Bab al-Mandab and the Gulf of Aden and securing shipping lanes linked to the Red Sea.

“Israel” also views the Horn of Africa as an important space for monitoring maritime movements linked to the Houthis, especially after attacks on commercial and Israeli ships in the Red Sea escalated following the war on Gaza. This Israeli expansion intersects with Türkiye’s accelerating expansion in Africa, where Ankara has in recent years strengthened its economic, military, and diplomatic presence across the continent, especially in the Horn of Africa. As a result, the region has become an arena of growing competition over ports, maritime corridors, and networks of political influence.

Even so, these moves face clear constraints, because countries such as Ethiopia and India maintain balanced relations with multiple parties, including Türkiye and Iran, and any broader Israeli involvement in the Horn of Africa runs into complex regional and international sensitivities.

Tension That Does Not Explode

It becomes clear that Turkish-Israeli tension moves within a highly complex space governed more by a deterrence equation and intertwined interests than by a desire to move toward direct confrontation. Despite its sharp political rhetoric toward “Israel” since the war on Gaza, Ankara remains part of the Western system and a key member of NATO, and its regional moves have remained bound by a ceiling that prevents sliding into open military conflict with Tel Aviv.

For its part, “Israel” realizes that dealing with Türkiye differs fundamentally from dealing with smaller regional actors, because Ankara possesses major military

capabilities and a broad presence in Syria, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Caucasus, in addition to a network of security and economic relations that makes any direct confrontation fraught with high political, military, and economic costs.

Domestic politics in both countries also plays an important role in keeping tensions within calculated limits. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan faces internal economic and electoral pressures that make escalatory rhetoric toward “Israel” an effective tool for regaining part of popular support and absorbing anger linked to the war on Gaza, without entering a confrontation that would impose economic and security costs difficult to bear.

In “Israel”, Benjamin Netanyahu likewise uses the image of the Turkish threat to strengthen the cohesion of his right-wing coalition and justify expanding the network of regional alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Thus, political escalation often becomes part of managing internal balances as much as it is an expression of an actual geopolitical conflict.

RUSI security and defense expert Dr. H.A. Hellyer: “Israel”’s attempts to portray Türkiye as a “new Iran” have not succeeded beyond its borders; Ankara’s strategic weight within NATO is stronger than any attempt at political framing.
pic.twitter.com/IEbyNhf2f6

— Noon Post (@NoonPost) May 8, 2026

In the background, undeclared communication channels continue to operate, whether through regional intermediaries such as Azerbaijan or through security and intelligence understandings linked to preventing direct friction, especially in the Syrian arena. There is mutual awareness on both sides that any major field miscalculation could push the region into a crisis difficult to contain, especially with continued Israeli strikes inside Syria in areas where Turkish-linked forces and institutions are active.

That is why the possibility of an unintended clash in Syria is viewed as the most sensitive scenario, because it could force both sides to move from a war of words to a field confrontation that neither wants to expand.

The American factor adds further complexity to this equation, especially with rising regional doubts about the limits of US security commitment in the Middle East. Washington’s allies have become increasingly cautious in watching the decline of America’s ability to impose stable balances or provide absolute security guarantees, pushing regional powers such as Türkiye and “Israel” to build more independent deterrence networks and alliances.

It appears that Turkish-Israeli relations are heading toward a model of



“controlled hostility”: sharp competition over influence, energy, and maritime corridors, matched by a mutual desire to prevent a full explosion, because the cost of direct war remains far higher than its potential gains for both sides.

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