

**TURKEY AS A THIRD PARTY IN ISRAELI-
PALESTINIAN CONFLICT:
ASSESSMENT AND REFLECTIONS**

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The involvement of third parties¹ in the settlement of international conflicts has a very long history and has been studied intensively during the last decade by international relations and conflict resolution scholars. In international conflicts, often there is more than one third party involved in the conflict settlement efforts. Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one such conflict in which numerous third parties with different capabilities have been involved in the conflict settlement efforts since the mid-20th century. However, despite the mediating efforts of various third parties, a peaceful solution to the conflict is yet to be achieved.

There are certainly many variables that affect the success of a mediation effort and it is difficult to blame the third parties alone for the failure. Only some of the variables that affect the success of mediation are concerned with the nature of the mediator and how the mediator conducts the process.² The rest of the factors that affect the success of the mediation process are related to the nature of the dispute and the parties and their relationships.³ Of the few variables related to the nature of the mediator, two of them especially affect the quality of the mediation process: the motive of the mediator in getting involved with the case and complementarities between the activities of different third party actors.

The goal of this paper is to discuss the following questions: what kind of a third party role is more suitable for Turkey in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? What alternative strategies can Turkey consider for its third party role in this conflict?

In order to discuss these questions, the paper first focuses on different strategies and types of mediation and motives for mediation.

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¹ In this paper, we use third party to refer to those actors that are not parties to the conflict and those that assist the parties in conflict in their peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts.

² See Jacob Bercovitch (ed.), *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Towards this end, we first provide an overview of the theoretical framework that drives the analysis in this paper. Second, a short review of current mediators involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is undertaken with special attention to their motivations and the types of mediator roles they perform. Finally, the paper discusses the questions posed above concerning what type of third party role is more suitable for Turkey given this overall picture.

Varieties of Third Party Strategies, Modes, Activities, and Motivations

In intractable conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, often there are several mediators involved in the conflict settlement efforts. Each mediator has different capabilities, characteristics and makes different contributions to peace efforts. Scholars of international mediation suggested several frameworks to categorize strategies, modes, activities, and motives of third parties. In this section we review some of these frameworks.

One important categorization is concerned with different strategies employed by third parties. Stern and Druckman⁴ and Crocker et. al.⁵ suggested an overall distinction between third party strategies as structural prevention and conflict transformation/social-psychological approaches. The first type of third party intervention mainly refers to institution building efforts of third parties in a conflict, such as contributing to the development of social capital, establishing and maintaining legal and political institutions that offer incentives for the non-violent waging of the conflict and negotiations, and conflict sensitive development assistance. This strategy implies that mediation is more than just assisting conflicting parties in reaching a negotiated solution, but also includes activities that create a conducive environment to get the conflicting parties change their rational calculations about a negotiated settlement. Institution building and capacity building (or their withdrawal or the threat of their withdrawal) is offered by the mediator as side payments or incentives (or negative inducements) to create an environment conducive to negotiations.

On the other hand, conflict transformation/social-psychological approaches to third party intervention refer to a third party intervention

⁴ Stern, P. and D. Druckman. (eds.) *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War*, Washington DC., National Academy Press, 2000, p. 5.

⁵ Crocker, C., F. Hampson, and P. Aall (eds.) *Herding Cats*, Washington DC., USIP Press, 1999.

strategy that emphasizes activities concerned with communication processes and relationship building in order to change the perceptions and attitudes of the conflicting parties towards the conflict and towards each other. Third parties help the disputants to reconcile by helping them redefine their interests.

Stern and Druckman⁶ add another third party intervention strategy to these which is quite frequently practiced in international politics: power politics. Coercive bargaining and power mediation can certainly be considered as one of the main tools of this third party intervention strategy.

A third party can adopt either one of the strategies mentioned above or mix several of them. Mediation efforts that are held by hegemonic powers are more likely to be in a power politics fashion. Other mediation efforts mix structural prevention and power politics strategies as often done by the US in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On the other hand, a softer mediation strategy has been adopted by Norway in the past in their facilitation activities. Indeed, Norway often combined conflict transformation and structural prevention strategies especially through development assistance and side payments to the Palestinians.

Mediation is a generic term used to define different types of intermediary activities ranging from second track diplomacy/interactive problem-solving workshops to power mediation. The different nature of intermediary activity corresponds with a third party intervention strategy.⁷ While problem-solving workshops are an example of conflict transformation strategy; power mediation is an activity of power politics. A useful categorization of mediation activities was offered by Zartman and Touval, where they grouped the functions of an international mediator into three modes: communicator, facilitator, and manipulator (power mediation).⁸ In the first mode, the mediator assists the communication process between the parties. In the second mode, the mediator aims at generating mutually acceptable formulas for a negotiated solution. In the last mode, as a manipulator, the mediator uses its power to push and pull the parties towards an agreement.

⁶ Ibid. p.5

⁷ See Stern and Druckman, *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War*, p. 5.

⁸ William Zartman and Saadia Touval, "International Mediation in the Post Cold War Era" in Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, (eds.), *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, Washington, DC., United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996, pp. 445-61.

A complementary categorization was suggested by Kriesberg as to the type of mediation activity undertaken by the mediator.⁹ Kriesberg identified these activities as follows: helping to arrange the agenda and to select negotiating parties, providing a safe space for meetings, conveying information between the parties, increasing resources for settlement, reframing the conflict as a joint problem to be solved, suggesting options, helping the parties discover new options, raising costs of failing to de-escalate, helping to create parity, helping the parties to implement agreements, and fostering reconciliation.¹⁰ According to Kriesberg certain third parties are more apt to play one or more of these roles, and some of these roles may be incompatible for a specific third party at a specific time.¹¹ For example, raising the costs of failing to de-escalate is more successfully accomplished by a third party in the manipulator/power mediator mode, because it requires leverage and resources. On the other hand, helping to arrange an agenda and suggesting options are roles more suitable for a formulator type mediator. Providing a safe space and conveying information are some of the important roles often best played by a communicator type mediator. Finally, some of these activities are more frequently performed in a particular third party intervention strategy. For example, while increasing resources for settlement is in the spirit of structural prevention; reframing the conflict as a joint problem is an activity that reflects a conflict transformation strategy. Similarly, helping to create parity is often performed in power politics inspired mediation.

Keashly and Fisher suggested, in their “contingency approach,” that the type of third party intervention should match the characteristics of the conflict and what is needed for that conflict at that particular stage and time.¹² Their rationale was that each stage of the conflict (i.e. discussion, polarization, segregation, and destruction), to be discussed below, requires a different type of third party technique. At the discussion stage, a conflict just starts to escalate as the communication difficulties begin to occur between the conflicting parties. Yet, at this stage their relationship is still in a good shape. So, a third party would be most useful if it facilitates

⁹ Louis Kriesberg, “Varieties of Mediating Activities and Mediators in International Relations” in Jacob Bercovitch, (ed.), *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 224, and also L. Kriesberg, “Mediation and the Transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 38, No. 3, 2001, pp. 373-92.

¹¹ Kriesberg, “Mediation and the Transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, p. 378.

¹² Keashly, L. and R. Fisher, “A Contingency Perspective on Conflict Interventions: Theoretical and Practical Considerations” in J. Bercovitch (ed.), *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996.

communication between the parties and clarifies the substantive issues for the parties to move forward the negotiation on these issues. At the stage of polarization, relations between the parties begin to deteriorate, trust begins to erode, and negative stereotypes and enemy images begin to emerge. For this stage, Keashly and Fisher recommend mediation combined with third party consultation that aims at improving relations and rebuilding trust.¹³

At the third stage of conflict escalation- segregation- hostility between the parties dominates the situation. The enemy images begin to solidify and parties see each other as a threat to their security and existence. Keashly and Fisher recommend power mediation to control the conflict escalation spiral and to convince the parties that an agreement on substantive issues is possible. At this stage, third parties use their leverage on the parties through positive (i.e. rewards such as economic aid) and negative inducements (i.e. sanctions). As an accompaniment to power mediation, third party consultation focusing on improving relations could be a complementary third party activity at this stage.

In the last conflict escalation stage, destruction, parties try to hurt and eliminate each other by often resorting to violence. Keashly and Fisher argue that the appropriate form of third party intervention at this stage is peacekeeping in order to separate the fighting parties and to bring the violence under control before moving on to negotiations. Once violence is taken under control, peacekeeping should be accompanied with power mediation, consultation, and development aid. Thus, according to Keashly and Fisher, the third party intervention is likely to result in failure if undertaken with inappropriate interventions at the wrong conflict stage.¹⁴

Apart from the match between the stage of the conflict and the type of third party intervention, a third dimension should be added to analyze the role of third parties in a conflict. This third dimension is the motivation of third parties to get involved in a conflict. Mitchell elaborated motives for mediators as: rewards they receive from involvement and the costs incurred from getting involved in a particular manner or not getting involved at all.¹⁵ The rewards a mediator receive can be in four arenas: rewards from affecting the conflict itself, rewards from affecting the regional

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Mitchell, Christopher, "The Motives for Mediation" in C. Mitchell and K. Webb (eds.), *New Approaches to International Mediation*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1988, pp. 29-51.

environment, rewards from affecting other third parties involved in the conflict, and rewards from affecting one's own constituency.¹⁶ In addition to where the reward is expected, the nature and type of reward is also an important motivator for the third party getting ready to be involved in the conflict. The nature of rewards can be *material rewards* gained from mediation; *influence rewards* which are non-tangible rewards such as promises of a strategic alliance; *support rewards* gained in the form of an increased ability of the mediator on another party as a result of the settlement; *security rewards* referring to rewards gained from getting rid of the risk of overt conflict, and finally *status rewards* gained due to the prestige gained at the international and regional environment as a result of conflict settlement.¹⁷

In light of this theoretical discussion, the next section of the paper will analyze what type of third party roles are being played in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict currently and within this overall picture what kind of a role is more suitable for Turkey.

Overview of the Current Third Parties and Their Motivations in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Throughout the years a variety of third parties were involved in the Israeli Palestinian conflict. It would not be very wrong to say that almost all of the developed countries and most of the regional powers intervened in some stage of this conflict as a third party in addition to major international organizations. Therefore, it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an extensive review of all third parties and their activities. Rather, we will only mention a few of these actors that have been active and influential especially since the Camp David negotiations in 2000. Before reviewing the type of mediation roles performed by these third parties, it is useful to briefly discuss the stage of the conflict and the matching third party intervention for this stage in light of the 'contingency approach' mentioned earlier.

In the past couple of decades, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was waged at the destruction stage. Although the conflict began to de-escalate in 1993 with the Oslo peace process, it never successfully de-escalated

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 36-37.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 44-45.

below the destruction stage. The level of violence has fluctuated between high and low, but even during the height of the peace process violence has always existed and overshadowed the peace-making efforts. The outbreak of second Intifada in September 2000 brought a new surge of high level violence. For destruction that takes place at this level, the primary third party intervention suggested by Keashly and Fisher is peacekeeping and power mediation. These can be accompanied with secondary intervention techniques like facilitation in order to improve communication between the parties. Yet, most of the efforts during this violent period in the Israeli-Palestinian case were limited to fact-finding inquiries and communication-formulation type mediation efforts. Despite the need for a neutral force to separate the parties and take violence under control, various proposals to send a peacekeeping force to the region following the outbreak of second Intifada were vigorously rejected by Israel and were not supported by the US.¹⁸ The only ‘power mediator’ involved, the US, supported technical fact-finding inquiry missions (i.e. the Mitchell inquiry team, Tenet report, and Zinni’s recommendations) instead of a neutral international force and an effective ‘manipulator’ type mediation. These fact-finding missions were not bolstered by additional carrots and sticks by the US. Therefore, third party intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict hardly matched what was required to control violence at the destruction stage.

The most critical intermediary in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has always been the US despite all the skepticism about its impartiality due to its strategic alliance with Israel. The nature of the US role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has changed from time to time, but US has been the main mediator during the Camp David negotiations and the period following the negotiations. During the Camp David and the following months of negotiation, US, under the Clinton administration, assumed all three types of mediator roles- manipulator, formulator, and communicator-simultaneously. In order to overcome the deadlock over Jerusalem and the right of return, the American team, including Ambassador Dennis Ross, conveyed information between the two sides, suggested several bridging proposals, and formulated alternative options for settlement until the last days of Clinton administration in December 2000. Moreover, the Clinton administration also used leverage to push the parties, albeit mostly on

¹⁸ See reports such as Edith Lederer, “Palestinian supporters press for vote on 2,000-strong U.N. observer force,” *Associated Press*, 6 December 2000; “Israeli minister cool on peacekeeping force,” *Agence France-Presse*, 1 December 2000; Amos Perlmutter, “The folly of an international force,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 13 December 2000.

Arafat, towards an agreement by raising the costs of non-compliance.¹⁹ Indeed, US was the only country that could assume a ‘manipulator’ or ‘power mediator’ role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because of the resources it could contribute to the resolution and its potential leverage on both Israelis and Palestinians. However, despite being considered as one of the most even-handed US administrations with regard to its stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Clinton administration was still criticized for not being an honest broker because of its one-sided pressure on the Palestinians and of blaming Arafat publicly as the sole reason of failure.²⁰ It was highly debated that the US played the power mediation role effectively during this period.

The Clinton administration carried multiple motives behind their active third party role. Apart from affecting the conflict, a successful mediation outcome promised an opportunity to the US to influence the whole regional environment especially in terms of curbing the support for radical regimes and terrorist groups. Clinton administration was also concerned about satisfying its own constituency before the upcoming elections at the end of 2000. Undoubtedly, a successful mediation outcome could have brought the returns of influence, support, security, and status rewards for the Clinton government and the US.

The US role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was transformed during the George W. Bush administration and moved even further away from an honest broker and impartial mediator. This administration was critical of Clinton’s Middle East policy and was not as ambitious like the Clinton administration to serve as a mediator in the conflict. The new administration showed initial signals of disinterest in such a third party role by abolishing the special Middle East coordinator position and by dropping the use of the term “peace process.”²¹ The disinterested attitude of the new US administration coincided with one of the most violent times in the conflict; the escalation of mutual destruction. The September 11, 2001 attacks by Al-Qaeda in New York and Washington DC and the “war on terror” made it more difficult for the US administration to see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the eyes of an impartial mediator. The increasing

¹⁹ See Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004; Robert Malley and Hussein Agha, “Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors,” *New York Review of Books*, August 9, 2001; and Akram Hanih, “The Camp David Papers”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 2001) for a more detailed account of the US role during the Camp David negotiations.

²⁰ Malley and Agha, “Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors”.

²¹ Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging Peace*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 185.

importance of Hamas as one of the key Palestinian political players moved the US even further away from staying impartial in this conflict. Finally, the war in Iraq and the crisis with Iran over nuclear capabilities shifted American attention towards other areas of the Middle East and made the US efforts with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict even more indeterminate and detached.

The change in the US policy at this time can be understood better by looking closely into the motives of the Bush administration. The Bush administration thought that the rewards gained from increasing influence, security, and status in the region did not stem from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that these rewards could be achieved by focusing on other issues in the Middle East. This administration also wanted to affect the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the regional environment, but they thought the route to these rewards went through Iraq and through a more comprehensive master plan for the region called the 'Greater Middle East project' rather than pushing the Israelis and Palestinians to get to the negotiation table. The status loss of President Clinton for failing to end the negotiations successfully was another reason why this administration was hesitant towards playing a more active mediating role in this conflict. For President Bush, who was elected with a slight margin in 2000 and who had very little experience in world politics, an active mediation role was riskier than it was for Clinton.

Despite the diminishing motivation, during the first Bush administration, US still occasionally assumed various mediator roles though irresolutely and reluctantly. As far as the communicator role is concerned, the Bush administration refused to deal with Arafat and relied heavily on their exchanges with the Israeli side while formulating their stance towards the parties. Therefore, their mediator role as a communicator between the parties was hampered considerably.

For the formulator role, until mid-2002, the Bush administration refrained from formulating a peace proposal or using its muscle to push the parties to get to the negotiation table. It was not until June 2002 that the US President Bush presented a plan for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement based on the two-state solution and introduced a timeline for the establishment of a Palestinian state. With this plan, US looked like resuming its 'formulator' and 'manipulator' modes of mediation. The plan articulated that the Israeli side had to stop the settlement activity and the Palestinian side had to

choose a new leadership that renounces violence and had to undertake a series of democratization reforms in the Palestinian state and society.

However, instead of backing up this proposal with well-articulated incentives in the form of positive incentives and negative inducements; and with a viable and realistic implementation plan, the US left the responsibility of implementation to the parties. Thus, the US remained far from being an effective ‘power mediator’ during this period. The political environment that emerged as a result of September 11 attacks further prevented the Bush administration from playing this role effectively. The administration saw Arafat as a supporter of terrorism and forged a closer stance to that of Sharon’s and his unilateralist policies. The turmoil resulting from the war in Iraq further moved US from being an effective mediator and no follow-up plans were suggested by the US to bring an end to the conflict. Thus, 3-4 years after the Camp David negotiations, the US position towards the conflict was quite distant from being that of an effective mediator.

Besides the individual efforts of the US, in April 2002 the Quartet was formed by four states, US, Russia, EU, and UN in April 2002. For the first time, there was a forum in which major parties could act as a coalition in a coordinated manner and with one voice in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Following the Bush plan in June 2002, the Quartet released the “Road Map” in September 2002 which delineated a way out towards the restart of negotiations. The efforts of the Quartet did not go further than getting Sharon to finally accept the road map in 2003 and to facilitate a Palestinian-Israeli meeting in June 2003 between Ariel Sharon and Abu Mazen. However, the resignation of Abu Mazen in September 2003 and the refusal of Israel and the US to deal with Arafat led to a new period of stagnation. Despite the opportunity the Quartet provided for further coordination between important intermediaries, it could not perform a combined power mediator/formulator role effectively and resolutely. The efforts of the Quartet remained limited to the release of the road map and were not bolstered by the US leverage in order to get the parties to follow the road map. US support for the initiative was not decisive and strong enough, but rather remained as a half-hearted support.

Apart from the US and the Quartet, several Arab countries have been active as third parties in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These are mainly Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan. During the last few years Egypt

and Jordan mostly took on a communicator role between different Palestinian factions, between Israel and the Palestinian Authority,²² and occasionally between the Palestinian Authority and the US.²³ An example to Egypt's communicator role is Egyptian President Mubarak's hosting of the Sharm al-Sheikh summit between Ariel Sharon and Abu Mazen in February 2005, the first meeting that took place between the two sides in four years. Egypt also played a critical third party role between Israel and Palestinians by placing guards at the Gaza-Egypt border in order to facilitate Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza.

On the other hand, during the recent years Saudi Arabia assumed an ambitious mediator role and not only came up with a proposal for the settlement of the conflict in 2002, but also brokered an agreement for a Palestinian national unity government between the fighting Palestinian factions of Hamas and Fatah. The Saudi peace plan proposed in 2002 suggested an Israeli withdrawal to 1967 borders in return for full peace and normalization with Israel's Arab neighbors. The plan was later on adopted during the Beirut summit of the Arab League. Even though the 'Saudi initiative' was not adequate to bridge the differences between the parties, it remained on the table for a while as a proposal to be considered. Till now, the 'formulator' mode of mediation of the Saudis was not backed up by an effective 'power mediator' who could offer the right incentives for the implementation of the plan. Although US welcomed the initiative, it was not enthusiastic about the plan. Thus, the mediating capabilities of the Arab states hardly went beyond suggesting ideas and proposals and conveying information between the parties.

Finally, the Scandinavian countries should be mentioned as third parties; especially Norway. Scandinavian countries assumed a 'softer' and more impartial mediation strategy. Norway worked most of the time as a 'facilitator.' Norway's role was most of the time in supportive of the UN's communicator role in the conflict especially after Terje Roed Larsen, the name behind the secret Oslo talks in early 1990s, was assigned as the special representative of the UN Secretary General to the Palestinian Authority and as UN's official coordinator for peace negotiations. Norway also used structural prevention strategy to support its facilitation. It

²² Barry Schweid, "Egypt offers border guards at Gaza, seeks to halt Hezbollah attacks," *Associated Press*, 15 February 2005; "Palestinians say deal reached on transfer of security control," *Agence France-Presse*, 15 February 2005.

²³ "Abbas and Rice raise Middle East peace hopes," *Financial Review*, 15 February 2005.

provided significant humanitarian assistance and development aid to the Palestinians and also served in several fact-finding missions usually in association with the UN.

What kind of a Mediator Role for Turkey?

Given this overall picture depicting other intermediaries involved in the conflict, where does Turkey stand? What kind of a third party role is more suitable for Turkey? What kind of third party intervention strategy did and should Turkey adopt in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? If Turkey is going to serve as a mediator, what mode of mediation is feasible? In order to answer these questions, one needs to discuss Turkey's role in terms of strategy, mode of mediation and types of mediating activity, and motives.

Since the beginning of the Oslo peace process, Turkey has expressed interest in playing an active third party role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While expressing this interest, Turkey often referred to its historical ties with the region. Indeed, Turkey's third party role in the regional affairs dates back to the Ottoman period. During the Ottoman Empire, the sultan and his appointees often acted as a third party to settle disputes in the area. An example to this kind of role was the arrangement done by the Ottomans with regard to power-sharing within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The Ottoman decree in 1852 ended the dispute between the fighting Christian sects about the control over the Church and re-established order by giving primary control of the Church to Orthodox, Armenian, and Roman Catholic sects and assigned the duty of unlocking the church every morning to a Muslim family trusted by the Christian community. This unique type of mediation activity, based on Turkey's past political and administrative experience in the region and impartiality, is still assumed occasionally by Turkish authorities. A recent example of a third party intervention of this sort can be seen in Turkey's sending of a technical inspection team to inquire about the recent excavation work being held near the Haram al-Sherif compound.²⁴ However, the argument about historic ties by itself is not adequate to form the basis of a well-articulated third party intervention strategy in the region. It is very limited in its scope and it romanticizes Turkey's relations with the region rather than putting them on a realistic and strategic track. Let's first

²⁴ "Turkey to inspect Jerusalem work," http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6365767, retrieved on 17 February 2007.

have a look at the strategies and modes of mediation used by Turkey in the recent past of the conflict.

Following the outbreak of the second Intifada, Turkey's mediation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is being pronounced more noticeably due to an urgent need in the region to end violence and to go back to the negotiation table. The calls for Turkey's mediation began during the coalition government under Ecevit's leadership²⁵ and intensified during the AKP government. The fact that Turkey is seen as a relatively neutral party that both sides have good relations with and that it is a country with important human and material capital that it can contribute to the resolution efforts have been emphasized by the parties and have become advantages of Turkey to play this role actively. Relying on Turkey's good relations with and equal distance from both sides, during the upsurge of violence both governments asked Turkey's help. The Israeli government often asked Turkey to convince the Palestinians to renounce terrorism and stop resorting to violence.²⁶ Likewise, the Palestinian government, especially Arafat, asked Turkey to convince Israel to get back to the negotiating table or to end specific military operations.²⁷ For most of the Palestinians, Turkey's good relations with Israel were seen as an asset that could work in their favor. Therefore, often times Turkish diplomats and politicians engaged in shuttle diplomacy between the parties to convince them to end the vicious cycle of violence and restart a political dialogue.

Despite Turkey's willingness to play this role, the nature of Turkey's mediator role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained somewhat ambiguous. Not always all the parties and the other mediators in the conflict were excited about Turkey's contribution. From time to time, the Israeli government, some Arab countries, and the US refrained from expressing a welcoming attitude towards Turkey's more active mediator role. Furthermore, the abundance of third parties involved in the conflict and the competition between them made it more difficult for Turkey to find an appropriate place for itself within the big picture. Therefore, despite the enthusiasm expressed by Turkey and the occasional calls of the disputants

²⁵ See several news reports published right after the Intifada. For example, Sami Kohen, "Kolaylaştırıcı Rolü Zorlaşıyor," *Milliyet*, 16 February 2001.

²⁶ See editorials "Barak: Tesir gücünüzü kullanın" *Sabah*, 24 November 2000 and also "Sharon to urge Turkey to pressure Arafat to put an end to violence" *Jerusalem Post*, 8 August 2001.

²⁷ See editorial titled "Arabulucu Olun," *Zaman*, 7 August 2001.

for mediation, the extent of Turkey's contribution to the process has remained somewhat ambiguous and was not defined clearly.

We argue that this ambiguity was also, at least partially, due to a lack of coherent third party intervention strategy through which Turkey could channel its activities. Without a coherent third party intervention strategy, Turkish activities remain mostly as well-intended, but uncoordinated and haphazard interventions. For instance, often times the words mediator and facilitator have been used interchangeably by Turkish authorities and the media indicating that the mode of mediation to be pursued is still not defined clearly. Finally, it seemed like Turkey is favoring a facilitative mediation mode. This was an appropriate step considering the nature of the mediator role played by Turkey, which has mainly been facilitating communication, conveying information between the parties, and providing safe space. However, certain actions later on cast doubts about the effectiveness of this role, which will be discussed in the next few paragraphs.

Up until now, Turkey has hardly assumed a mediator role in this conflict that could fit into formulator or power mediator/manipulator modes. This also means that Turkey has refrained from pursuing a "power politics" strategy for third party intervention, but rather preferred softer strategies of conflict transformation and structural prevention. Power mediation would require a third party to not only facilitate communication between the parties and suggest options, but also bolster these suggestions with rewards and punishments in order to make the parties accept and implement these options. Facilitation was preferable to power mediation not only because the latter was performed by more powerful 'muscle' parties such as the US, but also because the resources and capabilities owned by Turkey, the capabilities and resources that are offered by other third parties, and the needs and demands articulated by the parties in conflict made facilitation more feasible. Turkey did not have enough leverage on the parties to set a negotiation agenda, suggest options, and use its muscle to implement these suggestions and the reward and punishment mechanisms effectively. Thus, a power mediator role which required activities like increasing the costs of non-settlement or helping create parity was difficult for Turkey to perform at least at the moment. On the other hand, a formulator role was not also very realistic. The US and Arab states were very much involved in this regard. There were already many proposals put out on the table it did not make much sense to introduce

another proposal where the main problem was to bring the dragging disputants to the negotiation table. Furthermore, unlike Egypt and Jordan, Turkey neither shared boundaries with Israel or Palestinians; nor had a considerable number of Palestinian refugees within its borders that prompted it to have a say in the content of a peace proposal. Therefore, the facilitator mode of mediation was suitable considering Turkey's credibility in the eyes of both parties and its capabilities.

As a facilitator, overall Turkey played an effective role especially in several initiatives and activities that it led or participated in with others. These activities include Turkey's constructive role in several fact finding and inquiry commissions (i.e. the Mitchell inquiry commission), providing a channel of communication between the parties by conveying messages and explaining the rationale for the behavior of the other side, providing safe space for meetings (i.e. proposals to host a peace conference), and lobbying and advocacy on the US, EU, Quartet, and Arab countries for particular actions to move the negotiations and peace-making efforts forward.

However, right when facilitation seemed to be the preferred and practiced mode of mediation, certain activities were undertaken that would rather suit a manipulator/power mediator, which jeopardized the facilitative role by putting the impartiality and the credibility of the Turkish third party role. For the facilitative mode of mediation, the *sine qua non* characteristics of a mediator are impartiality, credibility, and the voluntary nature of its activities. It is these characteristics that make facilitation different from power mediation, which is often performed by partial states in the international environment. Given Turkey's good relations with both sides, facilitation was natural. Most of the time Turkey managed to keep its impartiality and credibility despite the overwhelming sympathy of the Turkish public opinion and politicians towards the position of Palestinians. On two occasions, however, Turkey's impartiality and credibility in this role was jeopardized. One of them was after Ecevit's speech calling Israeli military's operation into the Palestinian territories in April 2002 as "genocide."²⁸ However, this damage was contained and compensated rather quickly with a follow-up declaration by the then Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit and with a more balanced and nuanced warning to Israel during Sharon's visit to Turkey.

²⁸ Murat Yetkin, "Ankara'da soykırım paniği" *Radikal*, 6 April 2002.

The second event that jeopardized Turkey's facilitator role happened after Halid Meshal's, the Hamas leader in Syria, visit to Ankara in February 2006. This visit created question marks as to whether Turkey was satisfied with a facilitator role, or was in search of a more active, and perhaps a power mediator type, role. The invitation of Meshal was justified with an argument that he was invited for a consultation in order to give Hamas messages promoting peace and democracy, emphasizing their political responsibility and the need to modify radical policies. For a government that calls itself as a facilitator it is appropriate to contact all of the political stakeholders on each side in order to contribute to communication between the disputants and convey messages between the parties especially when official channels between them are closed. Facilitators can take on the role of face saving by talking to a party that the other does not recognize. Indeed, the signatory of the Oslo peace agreements PLO was not recognized by Israel for a long time and initial contacts and communication between the PLO and Israel was realized through facilitators. However, Turkey's invitation of Meshal was undertaken without due consideration for whether Turkey has enough power to instigate such change in the Hamas leadership or not and whether Turkey owns effective rewards or punishment mechanisms, or not, to bolster its suggestions to Hamas leadership to encourage change. Thus, what has been told to Meshal did not go much beyond verbal advice that is not adequately backed up with positive or negative inducements offered to change the destructive behavior of Hamas. Unless this type of intervention is backed up with necessary incentives, the power mediator role that is aspired for does not achieve much. Furthermore, while establishing initial contacts with the non-recognized parties, the facilitators especially need to pay attention to how they conduct the process in a way that they can keep their impartial behavior.

Maintaining impartiality does not necessarily mean that no criticisms can be addressed to the parties. Facilitators can criticize parties' destructive actions, but still can preserve their impartiality. The key to achieving this is for the third party to be able to distinguish between impartiality as *attitude* and impartiality as *behavior*. Regardless of the attitude towards certain political developments, policymakers can still maintain their impartiality and credibility by striving for impartial behavior in their conducting of the process. So, an effective facilitator role requires designing a process diligently that could allow Turkey to explore the interests of Hamas. However, while exploring the interests of this new

political player and opening new channels of communication, Turkey as a facilitator should keep the other stakeholders and parties engaged in the process and in the loop as well simultaneously. This can be achieved more easily through contacts that are not made overtly public right away and problem-solving workshops where test balloons can be sent out without incurring political risks. Such subtle channels of communication could also give Israel enough space for maneuvering and face saving.

Recently Turkey's facilitation mode of mediation has been accompanied with increasing number of activities reflecting a structural prevention strategy. The most prominent activity of such kind of intervention is the initiative undertaken by the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB) in Gaza. The initiative started following Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and with the support of Israeli, Palestinian, and Turkish governments. TOBB has taken over the management of the Erez industrial zone in order to attract investment in the area that will provide employment to hundreds of Palestinians. The initiative is a good example of "conflict sensitive development." Such development projects are not only development projects, but also incorporate conflict transformation mechanisms.

In a conflict sensitive development project, the outcome is expected to return dual gains: structural and/or institutional improvements on the ground such as economic development and institution building as well as improvement in security and relations between the parties.²⁹ Conflict sensitive development approach, which is being implemented in many conflict zones such as Burundi, supports development projects that do not only exacerbate the conflict, but also preferably contributes to peace-building and conflict prevention.³⁰ The TOBB project not only contributes in terms of employment, private sector development, and economic and social capacity building in Palestine, but it also increases security for Israel.

In the past, development aid and humanitarian assistance was provided to the Palestinian Authority most of the time via governmental and semi-governmental channels in Turkey. The impact of this aid is hardly assessed in terms of whether or not it exacerbates the conflict or encourages

²⁹ For a more detailed account of "conflict sensitive development" approach see the OECD guidelines in *OECD-DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation*, 1997.

³⁰ See "Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction" paper no. 27, June 2005. Burundi for an example of development projects funded by the World Bank using this approach.

conflict prevention and peace-building. However, the unique aspect of the TOBB project is that it provides development assistance that also contributes to conflict resolution such as forging good relations between Israeli and Palestinian businessmen and having the two sides cooperate at the same time. Such type of conflict sensitive development projects should be undertaken more frequently by Turkey since such projects combine structural prevention and conflict transformation strategies successfully. However, it should be remembered that conflict sensitive development projects require rigorous conflict assessment beforehand, which means that the capacity of the Turkish institutions in this regard need to be strengthened as well.

In sum, there is a need for a better articulated and coherent third party intervention strategy. It seems like a combination of structural prevention and conflict transformation (facilitative mediation) strategies are more appropriate for Turkey than a power politics strategy of third party intervention. Important steps have been taken so far to implement structural prevention and conflict transformation strategies despite some ups and downs with the performance of effective facilitation. However, even though these strategies are appropriate, there is still a need to diversify third party activities undertaken towards the fulfillment of these strategies. TOBB's initiative is an exemplar case, but other similar conflict sensitive development projects can be undertaken by Turkey in the region. Water, energy, and agriculture can be other sectors where conflict sensitive development projects can be developed by Turkish organizations. In addition, structural prevention strategies should also spread to institution and capacity building in the security (especially policing) and governance sectors in Palestine. Identifying what specific projects might be pursued in all of these areas requires a strong connection with not only the elite level and policymakers in Israel and Palestinian Authority, but also with important grassroots groups such as farmers' cooperatives, municipalities, chambers, trade unions, and professional associations.

Finally, while deciding about the most appropriate strategy and mode of mediation, another variable should be taken into account. What motivates Turkey to play these third party activities? Historical ties with the region is not an adequate answer to this question. Turkey needs to take into consideration the rewards it receives from involvement and the costs incurred from getting involved or not getting involved at all. The direction of rewards can be multiple and the nature of the rewards can be both

political and economic. Rewards to be received from a more peaceful Middle East are apparent as well as domestic political rewards for doing something positive for the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Besides non-material rewards, such as increasing influence in the region and on the parties, prestige, improvement in regional security; material rewards should not be disregarded. TOBB's initiative in the Erez industrial zone is also a good example in this regard in terms of introducing material gains to Turkish investors as well.

Conclusion

At the moment, the most appropriate third party intervention strategies for Turkey in the Israeli-Palestinian case are structural prevention and conflict transformation rather than power politics. Following these strategies, Turkey should continue to play a facilitation type mediator role which is concerned more about the process rather than the content of the solution. This mode means the continuation of conveying messages between the two sides, opening communication channels between the parties, serving in fact finding and inquiry commissions, providing safe space for the meeting of the parties or for regional conferences, and supporting civil society and track two exchanges. This type of third party role should not be seen as less valuable than being a power mediator or a formulator that drafts agreements. Facilitation role can also be performed by governmental and non-governmental actors. However, the most important qualifications of the facilitation role, impartiality in terms of behavior if not in terms of attitude, should be strictly followed. Otherwise, the performance of this role can be jeopardized significantly resulting in a loss of credibility and negatively affecting Turkey's future endeavors as well.

Simultaneously with the facilitation role performed by both governmental and non-governmental actors, 'conflict-sensitive development' projects and other institution and capacity building initiatives need to be undertaken to fulfill the structural prevention strategy. Development projects, even if they do not make direct contributions to peace-building and conflict prevention, should not at least exacerbate the conflict. Development aid and institution building projects should be directed towards sectors and actors that are supporters of peace rather than spoilers of the peace process. For this reason, both governmental and non-governmental organizations need to develop their conflict assessment

capacities and identify the local actors that are spoilers before making their investments. If the spoilers are going to be included in these projects, certain mechanisms need to be created to offer incentives for them to change their destructive behavior. Furthermore, development and institution building projects that are successful at the moment should diversify and need to spill over to other sectors. Finally, only after consolidating the incentive mechanisms, Turkey can start thinking about a power politics strategy, which requires the effective use of such incentive mechanisms on the parties. Otherwise, the historical ties argument will not suffice to undertake this role.