

## **The Turkish Delegation- Position Paper**

The aim of this document is to present the current international, regional, national and personal interests of Turkey's foreign policy. This analysis will be the basis according to which Turkey will conduct its negotiation strategy as part of a Middle-Eastern peace process based on the Saudi/Arab Peace Initiative.

Today more than ever before, Turkey is in a position to be a key actor in the international arena. Its geographic location, its close relations within countries of the Middle-East and the US and having a relentless leader all put Turkey in position in which it would take a significant part in the Middle-Eastern peace process.

### **Current geo-political and strategic background:**

After taking power in 2003, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has become the most dominant political figure in Turkey since Ataturk. It is certain that Erdogan would pursue taking a major role in the Arab Peace Initiative not only for achieving national prestige but for increasing his own personal prestige. On the international scale, after years in which Turkey was considered to be identified with the West it now plays a more balanced role between east and west, an approach that is adopted by its recently appointed foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu. According to this approach Turkey should use its common grounds (Islamic, modern, and democratic) with all other states of the region and play the role of a mediator. Turkey is maybe the only country in the region that has good relations with all of the Arab countries, Iran, Israel, the EU and the US. Consequently, Turkey would defiantly be a significant actor in the peace process negotiation.

### **Interests with parties taking part in the peace negotiation:**

**Israel:** Turkish-Israeli relations have seen several ups and downs throughout the years. Currently, the relationship is on the down side, mainly because of Erdogan's pro-Islamic approach. Nonetheless, Turkish secular elite (especially army generals) still see Israel as a close ally and balance Erdogaon's point of view. It is important to note that solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will restore Israeli-Turkish relations and serve Turkey's foreign policy goals.

**US:** Obama's choice to visit Turkey as the first country (after Canada) after his being elected reflects the great importance the US sees in Turkey as a regional actor, which probably results from its proximity to Russia, Iran and Afghanistan as well as its close relations with Iran and Syria. Turkey on its part would want to restore American-Turkish relations that were damaged following Turkey's refusal to allow American access to Northern Iraq in 2003.

**EU:** The EU is maybe the only party which Turkey has more to pursue than to offer. Turkey's chances of acceptance to the EU could increase if it would show a responsible democratic behavior in the peace process. On the other hand, if the EU decides to take a bigger strategic role as a unitary actor, through the peace process it will be able to comprehend Turkey's significance as a major power.

**The Russian Federation:** Russia would want to use the process to restore its Cold War influence in the Middle-East. Turkey can serve as initial bridge to bypass the US in order to reach Israel. As a result, Russian-American competition over Turkey's attention is presumed to take place.

**Iran:** Turkey is maybe Iran's sole ally in the process, what makes Turkey a big Iranian interest. Turkey on its side would want to maintain its proper relations with Teheran especially when it is about to reach nuclear capability and they both compete for regional influence.

**Lebanon:** As one of its bordering countries, Turkey would strive to improve its relations with Lebanon. Lebanon could use Turkish influence over Hezbollah (via Iran) to restore domestic political unrest.

**Egypt:** Turkey and Egypt compete over being the most influential regional power in the Middle-East. Consequently, both will try to be seen as the one actor who did the most to achieve peace and receive political gains.

**Jordan:** Jordan as having the most stable relations with Israel (along with Egypt) could be a possible Turkish mediating competitor over Israeli. There is also a possible Economic interest of the two countries (and maybe for Lebanon as well) to cooperate for achieving peace and advancing Middle-Eastern economic trade and water supply cooperation.

**Saudi-Arabia:** The big initiator of the process would see Turkey as a competitor for regional influence and American attention. In addition, Saudi-Arabia and Egypt would try to block a Turkish-Iranian Middle-Eastern alliance.

**The Palestinian Authority:** Erdogan gives high importance to pro Palestinian public opinion in Turkey and in the entire region, since it has a direct effect on his political stand in Turkey and in the Arab world as a national and regional leader. Thus, he will try and win Palestinian affection by pressing Israel to apply for Palestinian demands. The PLA would use the same reason to apply Turkish pressure over Israel.