

How Do You Say 'Lose-Lose' in Hebrew and Turkish?

by [Soner Cagaptay \(/experts/soner-cagaptay\)](/experts/soner-cagaptay)

Sep 12, 2011

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Soner Cagaptay \(/experts/soner-cagaptay\)](/experts/soner-cagaptay)

Soner Cagaptay is the Beyer Family fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute.

Articles & Testimony

The downward spiral in Turkish-Israeli relations is not only an irreversible trend, but also a lose-lose situation for both sides.

The downward spiral in Turkish-Israeli relations is not only an irreversible trend, but also a lose-lose situation for both sides.

The two countries are locked in a longterm dispute over Hamas' role in the region -- whereas Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) views Hamas as a legitimate actor in the Palestinian theater, Israel opposes Hamas' control of Gaza, and neither side will change its mind soon. This suggests an irreversible trend in bilateral ties that does not bode well for either side, as Turkey and Israel will both lose from the current stalemate.

The downward spiral in Turkish-Israeli relations is not only an irreversible trend, but also a lose-lose situation for both sides.

After its establishment in 1948, Israel enjoyed the comfort of having a close ally among the three "civilized countries" in the region: Turkey, Egypt and Iran, representing the Turkish, Arabic and Persian heritage of the Middle East, respectively.

Now, however, with Iran and Israel in opposing camps, the Arab Spring and recent dramatic deterioration of Turkish-Israeli ties are presenting Israel with a uniquely threatening security environment. For the first time since 1948, Israel faces the risk of not having one of the three "civilized countries" of the Middle East as its ally.

In post-Mubarak Cairo, Israeli-Egyptian ties face their greatest challenge since the two countries made peace in 1978. The outcome of the forthcoming Egyptian elections is far from certain, yet it is very likely that the Muslim Brotherhood will emerge as a power to be reckoned with in the Egyptian polls this fall. Even if the Egyptian military stands for maintaining ties with Israel, the Muslim Brotherhood will push for limiting those ties. Accordingly, Egyptian-Israeli ties will continue to become more cold and tenuous with each passing day.

Things are perhaps worse on the Turkish front. Ankara's September 8 warning that its warships would escort missions to Gaza suggests that not only is Turkey no longer a trusted friend of Israel, but that it has begun to emerge as the key regional actor opposing Israel.

For the first time since 1948, the two major states of the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey and Egypt, could ally against Israel.

And for the first time since 1948, Israel faces the challenge of not having a large Middle Eastern power as its friend. In losing Turkey, Israel could also be losing the strategic environment that it has cultivated since it gained independence.

Turkey will also suffer losses from the downturn in bilateral ties, if only in a more intangible fashion.

In the past decade under the AKP, Ankara has positioned itself as both a regional actor trusted by all sides and as a player on the global stage. This hinges primarily on Ankara's ability to win the attention of Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East, as well as position itself as a responsible actor in the international arena.

Following these recent developments, it would be far-fetched to say that Israel is likely to heed Turkish advice, or that Ankara has earned a place at the giant's table when it comes to establishing and maintaining order in Middle East. Additionally, while Turkey has been lauded for balancing its Muslim identity and non-Muslim world politics over the past decade, the continued deterioration of Turkish-Israeli ties will weaken this trend in the region.

Furthermore, if Turkey enters a conflict with Israel, Ankara's grand design to become a game-setter state would be exhausted.

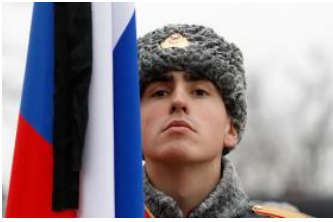
Turkey would appear to be a revisionist country that squanders its power in overseas adventures -- less like France, unfortunately, and more like Egypt under Nasser.

It is ironic and telling that neither Turkish nor Hebrew has a term for lose-lose.

Soner Cagaptay is director of the [Turkish Research Program \(/template102.php?](/template102.php?)

[SID=12&newActiveSubNav=Turkish%20Research%20Program&activeSubNavLink=template102.php%3FSID%3D12&newActiveNav=researchPrograms](/template102.php?3FSID%3D12&newActiveSubNav=Turkish%20Research%20Program&activeSubNavLink=template102.php%3FSID%3D12&newActiveNav=researchPrograms))

RECOMMENDED



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[The Ukraine Crisis Isn't Over: Russia Has Lied About Troop Withdrawals Before](#)

Feb 16, 2022



Anna Borshchevskaya

[\(/policy-analysis/ukraine-crisis-isnt-over-russia-has-lied-about-troop-withdrawals\)](#)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[As China Thrives in the Post-9/11 Middle East, the US Must Counter](#)

Feb 16, 2022



Jay Solomon

[\(/policy-analysis/china-thrives-post-911-middle-east-us-must-counter\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Unpacking the UAE F-35 Negotiations](#)

Feb 15, 2022



Grant Rumley

[\(/policy-analysis/unpacking-uae-f-35-negotiations\)](#)

TOPICS

[Arab & Islamic Politics \(/policy-analysis/arab-islamic-politics\)](#)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Israel \(/policy-analysis/israel\)](#)

[Turkey \(/policy-analysis/turkey\)](#)