



## Press Release

### New Study Analyzes Israeli-Turkish Relations During the Cold War

**Relations between Turkey and Israel have deteriorated significantly since 2023. Historian and International Relations scholar Eldad Ben Aharon draws parallels to the crisis in Israeli-Turkish relations in the 1980s. The book analyzes how the crisis was handled in the regional and international context and concludes that the denial of the Armenian Genocide played a central role. Ben Aharon has been working as a researcher at PRIF – Peace Research Institute Frankfurt since 2020.**

With his new book, *Israeli-Turkish Relations at the End of the Cold War: The Geopolitics of Denying the Armenian Genocide*, Eldad Ben Aharon presents the first comprehensive study of Israeli-Turkish relations in the 1980s. Using archival records and interviews, he analyzes Israeli foreign policy towards Turkey, including the persistence of secret contacts despite the diplomatic crisis after July 1980. Tracing the influence of the Turkish military leadership, the book also reveals the special role of former Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal in normalizing bilateral relations.

Ben Aharon examines the relationship between the two countries through the lens of key regional turning points, including the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Jerusalem Act of July 1980, the military coup in Turkey in September 1980, and the first Lebanon War in 1982. The book explicates these regional developments alongside Turkey's 1987 bid to join the European Economic Community, U.S. foreign policy under Ronald Reagan and the early stages of the American "war on terror".

Through the analysis of internal debates within the Israeli diplomatic corps, Ben Aharon reveals the dilemmas that arose from Turkey's policy of denying the Armenian Genocide, which threatened to undermine Israel's foreign policy priorities in Washington and Brussels. Showing how the basic features of international memory politics took shape in the 1980s, the book reveals that while the Holocaust became a global normative scale for human rights education and the prevention of genocide, the Armenian Genocide was marginalized, contested, and denied by Turkey. As a result of these actions during formative years, Turkey's NATO allies refused to recognize the Armenian Genocide for decades.

Despite emerging under very different circumstances, the crises of 1980 and 2023 follow strikingly similar patterns. As Ben Aharon notes, the book: *"not only shows how the foundations of the alliance Israel and Turkey laid in the 1980s shaped relations for decades to come", but also "explains how the historical constellation had a lasting influence the rise of Erdogan and Netanyahu"*.

Regarding the choice of cover image, the author comments: *"I decided to feature Turgut Özal, the Turkish Prime Minister from 1983 to 1989, on the book cover. His portrayal not only reflects the iconic style of the 1980s but also shows the central role of certain individuals in shaping diplomacy and statecraft."*

#### About the Author

[Dr. Eldad Ben Aharon](#) is a senior researcher at PRIF – Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, where



he works in the “Glocal Junctions” Research Department. He also heads the German Research Foundation-funded project, “Jewish Foreign Policy and the Exodus of the Syrian Jews: Zionism, Migration, and the Diaspora (1948-1990)”. Previously, he was a postdoctoral fellow of the Irish Research Council for International Security at Dublin City University and a Minerva Postdoctoral Fellow at PRIF.

Ben Aharon's research interests include national security and intelligence, theories of security, oral history, and the intersections of security and memory politics. His area of expertise is Israeli foreign policy in the context of regional conflict dynamics. He publishes in leading academic journals such as the *European Journal of International Security*, *Intelligence and National Security*, and the *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*.

### **About the Book**

“Israeli Turkish Relations at the End of the Cold War: The Geopolitics of Denying the Armenian Genocide” is Ben Aharon's first monograph. It is based on his dissertation, which he completed in 2019 at the Department of History at Royal Holloway, University of London. The book was published by Edinburgh University Press on November 30, 2025.

### **About PRIF – Peace Research Institute Frankfurt**

[PRIF – Peace Research Institute Frankfurt](https://www.prif.org) is one of Europe's leading peace research institutes. It was founded in 1970 as a foundation under public law funded by the state of Hesse and the federal government. The institute's goal is to analyze the causes of international and domestic conflicts and develop solutions. The institute is active in numerous national and international research networks. PRIF has been a member of the Leibniz Association since 2009. The Institute combines interdisciplinary basic research with the transfer of knowledge to politics, the media, and society.

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