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Influence of Turkey-Israel relations on Turkish Jews businesspeople

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ABSTRACT

Multidimensional relations have protected Turkey and Israel from the effects of political crises. The main question of this article is how Turkey-Israel relations impact Turkish Jews business representatives. Interviews with Turkish Jewish businesspeople, who are primarily influenced by the developments in foreign policy due to their international business volumes, answered the question of how Turkish Jews were influenced by foreign policy, and emphasised the importance of minorities in foreign policy issues. The article explores the role of minorities in foreign policy and sheds light on how ethnic minorities, who are viewed as secondary agents in foreign policy, are influenced by the Turkey-Israel relations.

KEYWORDS Foreign policy; Turkey; Israel; relations; Turkish Jews; businesspeople

The issue of minorities in Turkey and the position of Turkish Jews (born and living in Turkey) have taken their place in political debates on various occasions and have become the focus of academic studies. Evaluations of minorities' roles in nation-state building, whose first instances were obsessed in the latest periods of the Ottoman Empire and increased in importance with the proclamation of the republic, have highlighted the concept of citizenship as a basic tool.¹ While evaluating the situation of Turkish Jews, qualitative and quantitative studies were carried out including factors such as the validity of anti-Semitism, whether discrimination was encountered, legal status, identity debates, in addition to the citizenship debate.² The aforementioned studies analysed the living conditions and perceptions of approximately 15,000 Jews. However, these studies did not uncover any specific findings regarding Turkish Jews' capacity to exert influence on or be influenced by foreign policies. The existence of many actors should be

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considered when examining the processes in the context of foreign policy. While foreign policy evaluations usually focus on the decisions taken by policymakers, actors who do not have the power to make decisions but are influenced by them may be excluded from the evaluation. Minorities are at the forefront of these actors. This article investigates the influence of foreign policy on minority groups in Turkey, with a specific focus on Turkish Jews.

Specifically, the article focuses on how Turkey-Israel relations influence Turkish Jewish businesspeople. In general context, businesspeople are often among the first groups impacted by global politics and foreign policies. Business success can be impacted by host country political decisions, so foreign policy evaluations are often considered when making commercial and economic decisions. Based on in-depth interviews with 30 Turkish-Jewish businesspeople, this article seeks to enrich the discourse on minority groups as active participants in foreign policy by examining the impact of Turkey-Israel relations on Turkish Jews. First, the role of ethnic minority groups in foreign policy evaluations is explained. Second, the position of Jews in both the Ottoman and the Republican eras is explored, revealing their peaceful coexistence with the state and lack of political demands. Additionally, the effects of the Wealth Tax, which placed a heavy burden on the material and spiritual assets of Jews during World War II is considered. Subsequently, the article discusses Turkey-Israel relations shaping foreign policy judgement in Turkish and Jewish perspectives. The final section of the article employs in-depth interviews to present the foreign policy outlook of Turkish-Jewish business representatives, analysing the economic and political influence of foreign policy decisions and practices, particularly those relating to Turkey-Israel relations, on Turkish Jews.

Ethnic minorities in foreign policy

Foreign policy has a distinguishing quality that reflects how countries act within the international system. Foreign policy reflects the political and social characteristics alongside the values of countries and points out the global goals of the countries and how they try to fulfill these goals. While Carlsnaes' comprehensive definition of foreign policy draws attention to what should be understood by this concept, it also refers to the complex nature of foreign policy. According to Carlsnaes, foreign policy is 'those actions which, expressed in the form of explicitly stated goals, commitments and/or directives, and pursued by governmental representatives acting on behalf of their sovereign communities, are directed towards objectives, conditions and actors -both governmental and non-governmental- which they want to affect, and which lie beyond their territorial legitimacy'.³ As Carlsnaes points out, foreign policy legitimacy claim is a multi-actor process that is carried out to achieve many goals within a defined political and

institutional structure. On the other hand, foreign policy presents itself as a challenge when it comes to understand how states, institutions and people engage among themselves both within, and with, a vibrant and complex international system.

The actors' importance in determining and advancing the process in foreign policy is undeniable, the decisions taken in this framework are at least as valuable as the formers' role. Brighi and Hill note, 'foreign policy decisions should be seen primarily as heightened moments of commitment in a perpetual process of action, reaction, and further action at many different levels and involving a range of different actors, inside and outside state, all of which need to be considered'.⁴ Brighi and Hill point out, foreign policy decisions constitute a process involving many domestic and foreign actors. The main actors in foreign policy are those with authority and competence to make decisions. Bureaucrats and organisational structures of the state play a role in foreign policy decision-making processes, but there are also other actors involved, such as civil society organisations, corporations, and social groups in society. In other words, foreign policy involves a diverse range of entities beyond just policymakers and state structures.

Minorities being one of a diverse range of entities in foreign policy generally refer to ethnic groups residing within a nation-state that are subject to dominant societal forces that socially and politically exclude them from exercising their full range of rights. Such groups possess distinct ethnic identities derived from their affiliations to a particular ingroup. Ethnic minorities perceive themselves as communities of a shared culture and identity and ethnic identity serves as a fundamental determinant of their access to resources, opportunities, and political power. Ethnic minorities considered less important in the literature while analysing foreign policy. Generally, they are treated as separatists and involved in foreign policy evaluations as causes of conflicts between states.⁵ Foreign policy processes and practices often disregard minorities' interests for various historical, sociological, demographic, economic, and political reasons. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to consider the possibility that minorities, though perceived as secondary agents in foreign policy, may have a greater impact on the development of international relations than previously assumed.⁶ Moore drew attention to the importance of minorities in foreign policy by asking 'to what extent minorities can influence foreign policy'.⁷ However, the question of 'to what extent are minorities influenced by foreign policy' is equally important. In the literature, how ethnic minorities are influenced by the host country's foreign policy is often under-emphasised. Instead, ethnic minorities are seen as interest groups trying to influence foreign policy. In this context, there are many studies on the lobbying activities of Diasporas and the foreign policy activities of the host country.⁸ Political processes involve mutual interactions between actors, albeit often in an asymmetric manner. However,

traditionally, this interaction has been viewed as occurring solely between states in the context of international politics. That's why newer approaches argue that all actors can engage in foreign policy interactions. In either case, Keohane and Nye suggest that actors with greater independence can leverage their position to negotiate or gain leverage over less independent actors.⁹ It should be considered how all groups influenced by this process are affected by the positive or negative political steps, as well as the behaviour of the disadvantaged actor. Ethnic minorities are among the actors involved in developing, complex and interactive international relations. Therefore, attention should be paid to those who are influenced by foreign policy as well as those who influence foreign policy processes and practices. Although they are not active or have the power to influence foreign policy, it is extremely important to understand the influence of foreign policy on minorities, to see the indirect or direct social effects of foreign policy, and to comprehend social integration.

As an ethnic minority, Turkish Jews have a distinctive ingroup identity. Although this identity gives Turkish Jews different characteristics, it does not seem to erode their bond with Turkey. As a result of this, Turkish Jews have identified themselves as 'Jewish' and 'Turkish'.¹⁰ Turkish Jews have been able to maintain their cultural, ethnic, and religious identities without any government limitations, but they also had to deal with the prejudices against them, especially their perception as loyal to Israel due to their identity. Actions that are deemed unfavourable to Israel's policies have fuelled negative societal perceptions of Turkish Jews, especially in the context of Turkey's relations with the Palestinians.

Businesspeople are another group that holds significance comparable to matter of ethnic identity within the realm of foreign policy. However, in foreign policy analyses, the question of how businesspeople are also influenced by foreign policy tends to be overlooked. However, these people are often among the first groups influenced by international politics and foreign policies. For companies engaged in extensive international trade, in particular, the political decisions of host countries are of critical importance. While calling for 'institutional foreign policy', Chipman draws attention to the impact of international politics on business.¹¹ For this reason, foreign policy is a tool frequently used by businesspeople when making their commercial and economic decisions. These sensitivities of the business world on the effects of foreign policy cause businesspeople to be more interested in foreign policy. This raises the issue of how sectors, companies and businesspeople are influenced by foreign policy processes and practices.

As noted above, this article explores how Turkey-Israel relations influence Turkish Jewish individuals, particularly Turkish Jewish businesspeople, and it does so within the framework of the discussion on foreign policy and the role of ethnic groups in this context. The most important reason for

conducting the study on Turkish Jewish businesspeople is that Turkish Jews can be included in the discussion of how ethnic groups are influenced by foreign policy and that Turkish Jews are active in commercial life in Turkey. Therefore, the interviews that formed were held with Turkish Jewish businesspeople who were influenced by foreign policy processes and practices but also followed them closely. The awareness of Turkish Jewish businesspeople about the developments in foreign policy and their understanding of the scope of the questions asked in the interviews have been also considered as reassuring factors. To understand the effects of the processes and practices in Turkey-Israel relations on Turkish Jews, it is necessary to first discuss the Jews in the Ottoman Empire and the Republican eras. In this way, it will be revealed on what background the current evaluations of Turkish Jews regarding both their position in the country and the economic conditions are based.

Jews in the Ottoman Empire and the earlier years of the republic

Jews in Anatolia under the Ottoman Empire were divided into two groups: Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews.¹² Sephardic Jews arrived in 1492 after being expelled from Spain and were welcomed by the Ottomans. They brought their knowledge and skills and contributed to the culture and economy of cities like Istanbul, Thessaloniki, Edirne, and Izmir. Specialised artisans in fields such as leatherwork, coppersmithing, textile weaving and dyeing were trained, and as they knew many languages, they undertook important duties in foreign affairs and were also very successful in trade. Sephardic Jews preserved their language, Ladino, as well as their customs and traditions for over 500 years, and today, they are one of the leading trade groups in Turkey.¹³

After World War I, Turkey embarked on a nation-state building process, aiming to unify all ethnic groups under the same umbrella. Regulations were put in place to make the Jews equal citizens, but also required them to learn Turkish and integrate into the national education and legal systems. While Jews were generally in harmony with the state during the Ottoman and Republican eras, there were incidents such as the Civil Service Law in 1926, Thrace Events in 1934¹⁴ and the 6–7 September Events in 1955¹⁵ that caused unease in the Jewish community. The Wealth Tax, specifically targeting Jewish capital accumulation, has also left a lasting impact on the collective memory of Turkey's Jewish community. Jewish representatives of the business world point to the capital gap that has arisen, though it has been abandoned over time.

During World War II, Turkey maintained its neutrality but was required to remain prepared for war due to its strategic location. However, increasing foreign debt and a large recruitment of men had

a negative impact on production, causing inflation and leading to the need for economic regulation.¹⁶ The National Protection Law was enacted in 1940, giving the government broad powers to control prices and confiscate mines and factories if necessary. The Wealth Tax Law was enacted on 11 November 1942 in accordance with the policy of 'Statism' following the National Protection Law. It was a one-off tax under the extraordinary conditions of World War II and was abolished after 16 months. However, criticism of the law targeting non-Muslims, especially Jews, has continued to the present day. The law, numbered 4305, had economic, political, and cultural consequences, and was debated and accepted in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The tax affected the Jews not only financially but also psychologically and in terms of trust. The Wealth Tax directly concerned not only the capital accumulation of the Jews, but also their views of their country. The Jews had to struggle not only with the capital gap, but also with the psychological and trust gap. After the challenging conditions of World War II, another issue that affected the evaluations of Turkish Jews was Turkey-Israel relations.

Turkey-Israel relations shaping foreign policy judgement in Turkish and Jewish perspectives

Turkey, as the first Muslim nation to recognise Israel post-creation, disregarded potential fallout with the Arab states. This recognition was fuelled by security priorities and Ankara's alignment with the Western Bloc in the post-World War II era, which bolstered relations with Israel until 1955. However, subsequent regional issues from the late 1950s onwards strained the bilateral relationship. Initial tensions emerged after the Baghdad Pact signing (1955), with Israel asserting that the pact would escalate 'Arab aggression against Israel'.¹⁷ The Suez Crisis, another pivotal event altering the Middle East's dynamics, unfolded with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's declaration of Suez Canal nationalisation in July 1956. This development further strained Turkey-Israel relations, constituting a second source of tension. The re-establishment of amicable relations was solely achievable through the enactment of the Environmental Pact in 1958.¹⁸

The years 1960–80 were a period of crisis in Turkey-US relations, which also affected relations with Israel. For example, Ankara condemned Israel during the 1967 war, did not allow the use of NATO bases, and collaborated with the Arab states at the UN.¹⁹ It allowed the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to open an office in Ankara in 1976, and condemned Israel's decision to declare Jerusalem its capital in 1980, reducing diplomatic relations to the level of *chargé d'affaires*.²⁰ And while Israel gives a special place to its relations with Turkey, which it sees as one of the important countries of the region, Ankara's attitude towards Israel did not meet the

latter's expectations until the 1990s, due to the limitations arising from its Middle Eastern policies.

The end of the Cold War ushered both new prospects and a surge of uncertainty, accompanied by security apprehensions for Turkey. The apparent progress towards a two-state solution following the Madrid Conference (1991) and the Oslo Talks profoundly influenced Ankara's rapport with Jerusalem, leading to the upgrading of diplomatic relations to ambassadorial level.²¹ Additionally, the desire to balance the influence of the Armenian lobby in the US with that of the Israel lobby contributed to this reconciliation during the era.²² Notably, President Chaim Herzog's visit to Turkey in 1992, commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Jews' migration to the Ottoman Empire, was succeeded by reciprocated high-level visits. Another pivotal moment transpired with the 'Defence Cooperation' accord of 1996, facilitating information exchange, arms trade, collaborative projects, and airspace usage.²³ Israel's constructive role during Turkey's 1999 earthquake further bolstered relations. Yet, the inception of a turbulent phase followed Ankara's endorsement of a UN General Assembly resolution in response to the 'al-Aqsa Intifada', accusing Israel of the use of disproportionate force against Palestinians.²⁴

Turkey's ambitions to lead in the Sunni world hastened this trajectory, particularly post-mid-2000s, driven by a conservative and religiously oriented foreign policy that negatively impacted Turkey-Israel relations. However, amidst fluctuating political ties, economic interactions between the two states remained unbroken. Notably, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) highlighted a remarkable 475% surge in foreign trade volume between Turkey and Israel from 2002 to 2021. Israel held the 9th spot, constituting 2.8% of Turkey's 2021 exports, while Turkey ranked 4th with a 6.2% share in Israel's 2021 exports. In 2022, Israel ranked 10th among the most exported countries. As of 2022, Israel represented 2.8% of Turkey's total exports, though it did not secure a spot within the top 20 states for most imports, according to TUIK data.

The strain in Turkey-Israel relations, initially evident with the Cast Lead Operation in December 2008–January 2009, escalated notably when Israeli forces intercepted the Mavi Marmara ship en route from Turkey to provide aid to Gaza in 2010. The process of re-establishing rapport began with Israel's commitment to compensate families affected by the Mavi Marmara incident, solidified through the Compensation Procedure Agreement of June 2016. This marked a pivotal step towards normalisation. Ambassadors were mutually reinstated in November 2016, further solidifying the diplomatic re-engagement. This era is characterised by a shift away from the military dimension that dominated the 1990s. Instead, current relations prioritise economic collaboration and the diversification of energy transmission networks.

Research method

Starting from the question of ‘how much are minorities influenced by foreign policy?’ the extent to which the Jewish minority is influenced by foreign policy, especially Turkey-Israel relations, is analysed. The subject is business-people because they are among the first actors to be affected by international developments and foreign policy choices. In this context, this article specifically focuses on how Turkish Jewish businesspeople are affected by their ethnic identity. The research was based on in-depth interviews. An in-depth interview is a qualitative research method used to gather detailed information about a person’s experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours and to gain a deep understanding of the interviewee’s perspective on a particular topic or experience. It is typically a one-on-one interview conducted by participants, and the questions asked are open-ended, allowing interviewees to provide detailed and nuanced responses. The advantage of in-depth interviews is that it allows participants to probe deeper into interviewees’ responses and ask follow-up questions to gain a better understanding of their perspective.²⁵

The appropriate sample size for in-depth interviews in qualitative research is dependent on various factors and there is no straightforward answer. Saturation, the point at which new data no longer provides new insights, is more important than sample size. The appropriate sample size is determined within the context and scientific paradigm of the research being conducted, and sometimes a single example can provide a rich understanding of the phenomenon under study.²⁶ In this context, in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 participants residing in Istanbul and Izmir, the cities with the highest Jewish population in Turkey. These individuals are active in various sectors such as media, tourism, and textile, and have national and international connections. A noteworthy shared characteristic of participants is their utilisation of their Jewish names while not abstaining from concealing their ethnic identity in every facet of life. That is why they are influenced by foreign policy decisions, and closely follow decision-making processes and their effects. Turkish Jewish businesspeople’s awareness of foreign policy developments and their broad vision were evaluated as a reassuring factor in this research. In this context, participants were interviewed and posed six open-ended questions concerning the measurement of their knowledge and awareness regarding the developments in Turkey-Israel relations during the period spanning September–December 2022. The main themes of questions were understanding business processes are affected by the relations of the two countries due to their identities, their way of interpreting the direct or indirect effects of the relations on their business processes and social lives, understanding Turkey’s foreign policy approaches, as well as group and belonging identities.

Findings

The study's findings have been presented based on six questions posed to participants and the responses provided by the participants to these questions.

Politics and identity effect on commercial relations

In the evaluations of the interviewees regarding the effects of Turkey-Israel relations on their business volumes due to their Jewish identity, different sector representatives' comments on the impact of relations on business volumes and political relations may differ, albeit partially. As literature knowledge presented, there is a visible link between political and trade relations. States with high level trade volume tend to better political relations.²⁷ Political and economic relations between Turkey and Israel were affected by regional and international developments. However, political crises had a limited effect on economic and commercial relations because of relations' multidimensional features.²⁸ In other words, despite rising tension between Ankara and Jerusalem, specifically after the 2010 Davos crisis and the Mavi Marmara incident, trade figures have not changed influenced by political relations. The volume of trade has not decreased.²⁹

This knowledge required to ask any changes of Turkey-Israel relations on their business volumes. While some participants have direct commercial relations with Israel, and Israel has an important place in their business processes, it has been observed that some participants do not have any commercial activity with Israel. In light of these two factors, the prominent issues in the evaluations of participants were collected. The first point that comes to the fore in the evaluations is that political relations have never influenced business volumes; in particular, commercial relations between the two states continue to develop by gaining momentum. The reason why economic relations between the two states are not influenced by the vicissitudes in the political relations, it has been suggested that economic relations between Turkey and Israel always maintain their rational ground. It has been stated that though the negativities in the relations do not have a negative effect on business volumes, the positive relations between the two countries have a positive effect on the bilateral trade. It was also stated that the periods of normalisation of political relations had a positive effect on the business volume in different sectors. However, tourism was highlighted as the only sector in which the deterioration in relations caused a contraction in business volume. As to the reason why commercial relations are not affected by political relations, participants emphasised the universality of market processes, namely globalisation, and emphasised that economic relations and commercial life became independent from politics and identity. Thus, it has

been determined that the unique functioning of the market economy makes business processes independent. Participants pointed out that economic successes and business volumes are also affected by non-political factors, and stated that the effect of the relations between the two countries on the processes, as well as the effect of career development and personal achievements should be considered in their commercial success. With this emphasis, they stated that their identities did not come to the fore.

Ideological effects on business relations

The ethnic based discourse on minorities in Turkey has been transformed with reference to Turkish political culture which builds relations between citizenship and nationality. This could make non-Muslims' and Turkish Jews' positions complicated. Also, this could affect their trade relations negatively.³⁰ During the interview, participants stated that fluctuations in Turkey-Israel relations did not negatively impact their relationships with other business partners. This was due to their strong sense of civic duty and loyalty to Turkey as citizens, as well as their commitment to maintaining high-quality, ethical business practices. Participants also emphasised the importance of a win-win approach in business relationships, which helped to prevent negative impacts on their partnerships. While identity is sometimes utilised as a discriminatory element against Turkish Jews, leading to marginalising discourses in social and personal relationships, proper work output prevents relations with Turkish business partners from shifting to a negative direction. In addition, there is the continuity of the conditions under which both parties achieve gains by benefiting themselves in commercial relations and carrying out all kinds of strategic actions. However, some participants stated that Turkish companies that want to internationalise are in search of cooperation and partnership, especially with Turkish companies of Jewish origin. On the other hand, while some Turkish companies form to make partnerships, they do not want this to be known. They argued that certain sectors, such as the entertainment industry, remain largely immune to the influence of political relations.

Business relations and bureaucratic conditions

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has affected Turkey's policy towards Israel for internal and external reasons. The conflict has become a pillar of Turkish Muslim national identity. So, it has become possible to expect an attitude based on this background from the bureaucracy in Turkey.³¹ However, participants stated that they did not experience any bureaucratic obstacles even in times when Turkey-Israel relations were on a decline curve. This was due to the support they received from the government and their ability to

establish high-level connections with government officials. Additionally, participants noted that the bureaucracy recognised the economic contribution of Turkish Jewish citizens. The fact that they stand out not with their Jewish identity but with their businesspeople identity, and the development of business relations with this identity is another issue that has been noted by participants. Some participants acknowledged that individual problems may have been experienced in the past with the bureaucracy, but stressed that such instances were not widespread. Furthermore, they noted that during periods of heightened political tension, such as the Mavi Marmara incident, individuals may experience some unease in their dealings with the bureaucracy.

Mutual relations of countries and continuity of business

Commercial relations between states may reflect economic-based liberal dynamics or security-based realist dynamics. Realist-based dynamics is more acceptable for the case of Turkish–Israeli relations. Security-based relations gave importance to awareness of mutual interdependencies. So, because of this effect, Turkey and Israel tend to protect their political relations and bilateral trade at a certain level.³² This leads the two states to maintain a certain level of political ties and bilateral trade, shielding them from significant fluctuations in their relationship.

Notably, the profit motive plays a role in sustaining this partnership as participants highlighted. Also, the stability of well-established, large companies contributes to the continuity of business conditions. Many participants reported diverse international business connections beyond Israel, particularly in Europe, which insulate them from the political tensions between Turkey and Israel.

While participants acknowledged the link between foreign policy and the economy, their focus leaned towards global trends rather than Turkey's foreign policy specifically. Participants expressed their focus on the impact of global developments, such as currency fluctuations in global markets, oil prices or the Russia-Ukraine war on their business relations. In addition, some participants drew attention to the effect of Turkey's general political and economic legal situation on foreign investment, and thus the negative impact of foreigners on their attempts to invest or establish partnerships in Turkey, rather than the positive-negative processes in Turkey-Israel relations.

Sense of belonging

Participants primarily identified as Turkish citizens, though they openly displayed their Jewish identity. Most reported feeling respected in society,

with only a few instances of discrimination. Some participants did not feel different from other citizens and did not encounter discrimination, attributing this to fulfilling their rights and obligations as citizens. Despite Spain and Israel offering opportunities, their strong preference to remain in Turkey reflects a significant sense of citizenship bonds and belonging among Jews. On the other hand, a minority of participants expressed a desire to live on an equal footing with other citizens, reporting that the state had not fully fulfilled its responsibility to provide security, leaving them feeling isolated and insecure. In addition to security concerns, there were also participants who stated that they were afraid of exposure to inequality and discrimination, despite fulfilling their civic duties. It is observed that concerns about inequality and discrimination persisted, partially due to historical practices like the Wealth Tax affecting their sense of security.

After changing governmental dynamics, Turkey differentiated itself from traditional foreign policy references. The new Turkish governments' conservative character highlighted critical perspective against Western dominance in the international arena.³³ In short, Turkey's foreign policy reflected this critical perspective.³⁴ This created new reason for the insecurity. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that Turkish Jews' commercial relations continue by gaining momentum in a way that reinforces the sense of belonging with the effort to work and produce. Though there was decrease in the volume of some sectors like tourism, the volume of trade has not decreased so much.³⁵ This suggests that as long as Turkey adheres to a liberal economic model within a multi-party political landscape, bilateral economic and military ties can persist even during conservative governance, fostering continuity and reducing mutual insecurity.

International networks and business for Turkey

Participants in the interviews displayed strong social and business connections with foreign countries. They described their roles in fostering relations between their countries, using terms like unifying, conciliating, converging, integrating, reinforcing, and giving importance to their roles. They have emphasised their contributions to ethical trade policies, seen as beneficial for the Turkey-Israel relationship. The importance of fulfilling civic duties and cultivating social bonds was stressed for enhancing bilateral ties. Participants also emphasised the importance of representing the country in the best possible manner by demonstrating principled behaviour in their business dealings, being active members of relevant associations, and building networks beyond Turkey. While some participants expressed their willingness to play a positive role in improving relations between Turkey and Israel if the state requested it, others expressed their concern about conflicting political views on the issue. Finally, some participants highlighted the

role of cultural exports in promoting convergence and improving relations between the two communities.

Conclusion

This article examined the potential of Turkey's foreign policy choices to cause problems for Turkish Jews through interviews with Jewish businesspeople. In other words, the answer to the question of how much ethnic minorities are influenced by foreign policy has been explored through the experiences of Turkish Jews. As such, the article also provides valuable findings on ethnic minorities, seen as secondary agents in foreign policy. The interviews on which this research is based have shown that Turkish-Israeli relations, which were sorely tested during the past decade, have not had a compelling effect on Turkish Jews. Notably, despite the unique characteristics of their Jewish identity and heritage, Turkish Jews maintain a strong connection with Turkey and do not appear to be adversely influenced by foreign policy decisions.

Political tensions between Turkey and Israel do not significantly affect the business volumes of Turkish Jews businesspeople, as commercial relations between the two countries can still develop despite political issues. Globalised market conditions and market dynamics have been cited as the main reasons for this. So far, Turkish Jewish businesspeople have experienced commercial and economic processes that are largely unaffected by political influence. After that, bilateral economic and military relations between Turkey and Israel can continue even during difficult periods as long as they adhere to the liberal economic model.

Even when there is a crisis in the relations between the two states, these two issues that stand out especially in the continuation of economic relations are important topics that should be evaluated separately. First, it has been seen in the interviews that Turkish Jews defined themselves mainly as respectable citizens of Turkey who have not been subjected to any discrimination. Despite this, a limited number of participants said that the state did not fully fulfil its responsibility to provide security for them, which triggered feelings of loneliness and insecurity. It can be assumed that the trauma created by the Wealth Tax is behind this insecurity problem. In fact, it was seen that the Wealth Tax was frequently emphasised in the interviews and it left a mark on their personal lives and the common identity of the community. It has been observed that the Wealth Tax has caused businesspeople to be exposed to inequality and raised concerns about discrimination despite the intervening period of over 70 years.

The second point is the emphasis of Turkish Jewish businesspeople on their understanding of quality, qualified and ethical business practices. This emphasis reflects their perception about themselves as actors who make

a positive contribution to the relationship between Turkey and Israel, as well as their confidence in their ability to enhance Turkey's international reputation. Another important issue is that they define themselves as representatives of Turkey's international image. It is seen that participants engaged in trade and production in the international context – as citizens of Turkey – are not only sensitive to Turkey-Israel relations, but also demonstrate their sensitivity in all international platforms.

The sensitivity of Turkish Jews to representation on international platforms is closely related to their strong integration into society by protecting their Jewish identity. This integration allows them to comprehend foreign policy not only in the context of Turkey-Israel relations but also from a broader perspective, and to adopt constructive roles. On the other hand, Turkish Jews generally display a self-introverted profile. Therefore, when an evaluation is made on identity, it is seen that they act with their citizenship identity – as citizens of Turkey – not with their Jewish identity. Nevertheless, Jewish identity at times has attracted attention during periods of tension between Turkey and Israel. Despite their adaptation to social life and the organisation of their business activities, they occasionally perceive prejudice based on their Jewish identity. In conclusion, Turkish Jews should be considered actors in foreign policy who are influenced to some extent by the foreign policy decisions made. As shown in the economic domain, their positive contributions cannot be disregarded. Finally, the results highlight the strong and sustainable social integration of the Jewish community.

Notes

1. Toktaş, "Citizenship and Minorities," 395.
2. Toktaş, "Perceptions of Anti-Semitism"; and Toktaş, "The Conduct of Citizenship."
3. Carlsnaes et al., *Handbook of International Relations*, 335.
4. Brighi and Hill, "Implementation and Behaviour," 134.
5. Petersen, "A Research Note"; Saideman, "The Power"; Davis and Moore, "Ethnicity Matters"; and Lutz, "Considering Ukraine's Ethnic Minorities,"
6. Klatt, "Minorities," 240–241.
7. Moore, "Ethnic Minorities," 71.
8. Shain, "Multicultural Foreign Policy"; Haney and Vanderbush, "The Role"; Sandler, "Towards a Conceptual Framework"; and Bird, "The Political Representation."
9. Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 9.
10. Toktaş, "Cultural Identity, Minority Position," 522.
11. Chipman, "Why Your Company Needs a Foreign Policy," 36
12. Sharon, *Türkiye Yahudileri*, 32–35.
13. Bağış, *Osmanlı Ticaretinde Gayrimüslimler*, 24–26.
14. Levi, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Yahudiler*, 42–43; and Bali, *1934 Trakya Olayları*, 33.

15. Ayaz, “6–7 Eylül,” 82–92; Babaoğlu, “6–7 Eylül,” 1349–1371; and Güven, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları*, 12–15.
16. Oran, “İkinci Dünya Savaşında,” 239–242.
17. Özcan, “Türkiye İsrail İlişkileri,” 331.
18. Bengio, *The Turkish Israeli Relationship*, 16–19.
19. Altunışık, *Türkiye ve Ortadoğu*, 18.
20. Ibid.
21. Erhan and Kürkçüoğlu, “İsrail’in Bölgesel Eylemleri,” 149.
22. Yılmaz, “Soğuk Savaş Sonrası,” 53–54.
23. Altunışık, *Türkiye ve Ortadoğu*, 38–40.
24. Kardaş, “Türkiye-İsrail,” 348.
25. Roller and Lavrakas, *Applied Qualitative Research Design*, 56–57.
26. Fusch and Lawrence, “Are We There Yet?” 1408–1410.
27. Çakmak and Ustaoglu, “Politics vs. trade,” 303–304.
28. Ibid., 314–316
29. Tür, “Economic Relations with the Middle East Under the AKP,” 594–598.
30. Aviv, “Israel, Turkey, and the Turkish Jewish Community,” 87.
31. Bardakçı, “Turkey’s New Middle East Policy,” 448.
32. Çakmak and Ustaoglu, “Politics vs. trade,” 316; and Kirişçi and Kaptanoğlu, “The Politics of Trade and Turkish Foreign Policy,” 705, 715.
33. Çınar, “Turkey’s Western or Muslim Identity and the AKP’s,” 187.
34. Inbar, “Israeli-Turkish Tensions and Beyond,” 33.
35. See note 29 above.

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