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CRISIS AND TOURISM IN TURKEY-ISRAEL RELATIONS

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Abstract

This article examines the political tension and crisis in Turkey-Israel relations and its effects on the number of Israeli, Iranian, and Arab tourists visiting Turkey. Turkey-Israel relations are examined in two periods: crisis period and non-crisis period. In protest of the Gaza blockade, military operations conducted by Israel aimed at the fleet from Turkey was determined to be the beginning of the crisis period in Turkey-Israel relations. The research data were obtained from secondary sources. The data obtained from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism were analysed with descriptive analysis and two independent groups t-test. According to the results of the analysis, there was a statistically significant difference between the crisis period and non-crisis period in Turkey-Israel relations in terms of the number of tourists from Israel, Arab countries and Iran.

Keywords: Turkey-Israel Relations, Number of Tourists, Mavi Marmara, Crisis, Tourism.

Introduction

There are two important elements behind relations established between countries: becoming stronger in terms of military, politics and economy and having a historical, cultural, and ideological proximity. These two elements may be referred to as national interests (military, political and economic) and identity-based considerations (historical, cultural and ideological proximity) (Uzer, 2011: 139). After the Tourism Cooperation Agreement signed between Turkey and Israel in Jerusalem on 1 June 1992, the 1st Session Protocol of the Joint Tourism Commission signed again in Jerusalem on 22 November 1999 (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2016) can be considered as an important step taken by two countries toward improvement of tourism. The reason behind the interest in tourism shown most countries, developing countries such as Turkey in particular, can easily be seen by looking at the data of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) summarizing the share of tourism in world economy.

According to the data of UNWTO, 1 million 133 thousand people participated in the international tourism mobility by traveling from their home country to another country. Considering that this number was only 25 million in 1950, the importance and growth of tourism is note-worthy. 6 billion people, on the other hand, participated in the national tourism mobility. 1 out of every 11 people is employed in the tourism industry throughout the world. Also, tourism accounts for 6% of the world's exports with USD 1.5 trillion (UNWTO, 2015: 3).

As a developing country, Turkey strives to get a bigger share from world tourism market presented with the data from UNWTO. In addition to infrastructure and superstructure efforts aimed at increasing transportation and accommodation capacity, advertising and marketing activities have been carried out from the mid-1980s in order to improve tourism. As a result of these efforts, Turkey reached up to sixth place in the world in terms of international tourist arrivals in 2014 with 39.8 million foreign tourists. About 4 out of every 100 tourists participating in the international tourism mobility in the world visited Turkey in 2014 and Turkey reached to a tourism income of USD 29.522 billion (UNWTO, 2015: 6).

People travel from their home country to another country for several reasons related to culture, curiosity, entertainment, relaxation, health, sports, religion, business, education, adventure and visiting friends and relatives. In planning of these travels, many factors are considered such as geographical and cultural proximity, economic situation of the destination country, visa and customs treaties, international relations and safety. On the other hand, Turkey has been located in a region of instability with both 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war which broke out during 1980s when Turkey made considerable investments on tourism and the First Gulf War started with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Statements of Russia after Turkish F-16s shot down a Russian plane violating its borders on 24 November 2015, which damaged and even stopped tourism all together, may be given as an example of how international relations influence in short- and mid-term.

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This article mainly aims to examine how Turkey-Israel relations, which came to a halt due to tensions and disputes, affect the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey. Arab countries and Iran are other countries in the region having tensions with Israel. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, Turkey has tried to follow a balance policy between Arab countries and Israel and to find out whether the tension between Turkey and Israel affects the number of Arab and Iranian tourists visiting Turkey is the sub-goal of the study. In this context, first of all, the development and current state of Turkey-Israel relations are addressed. Secondly, the article evaluates effects of political crisis in bilateral relations on tourism. The study ends with statistical analyses related to number of Israeli, Arab and Iranian tourists visiting Turkey and interpretation of resulting findings.

1. Turkey-Israel Relations

Turkey's welcoming Jews who had to leave their home due to World War II, which is similar to Ottoman Empire's welcoming Jews expelled from Spain in 1492, is an important factor for the beginning and strengthening of Turkey-Israel relations (Çevik and Ersaydı, 2011: 2). Turkey recognized Israel, founded on 14 May 1948, on 28 March 1949 and the first diplomatic mission was opened with the presentation of the letter of credence to Chaim Weizmann, President of Israel, by chief of mission Seyfullah Esin on 7 January 1950 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016).

Improved relations with the United States of America (USA) and gaining the support of the West may be considered as factors leading to Turkey's recognition of Israel (Belal, 2012: 4). From 1949, when Turkey recognized Israel as a State, to early 2000s, Turkey-Israel relations have continued with ups and downs depending on military, security and intelligence, but without interruption, in spite of political crisis periods from time to time (Yılmaz, 2010: 10). Israel's invasion of the Suez Canal in 1956 and two petrol crises in 1970s brought relations between Turkey and Israel to a halt and caused Turkey to avoid establishing a relation with Israel (Punsmann, 2011: 2).

During the 1964-1979 period, which also includes Israel-Arab wars of 1967 and 1973, Turkey have become closer with Arab countries and maintained its objectivity between Israel and Arab countries. The reasons behind Turkey's becoming closer with Arab countries are the worsening economic situation and intention to find support for the Cyprus problem (Belal, 2012: 11). As a reflection of Turkey's multilateral initiative initiated to keep pace with the big change in the Middle East, the convergence between Turkey and Israel has started in early 1990s (Özcan, 2005: 125). When Turkey-Israel relations are considered within the context of realism, which is an international relations theory emphasizing the element of interest, the reason behind the convergence of Turkey and Israel in 1990s is the presence of common enemies or opponents, especially Syria and Iran (Uzer, 2011: 154). The Military Training and Cooperation Agreement signed between Turkey and Israel on 24 February 1996 led to a convergence between two countries by resulting in military, strategic and diplomatic gains for both countries in addition to gains in trade, tourism and scientific cooperation (Pamukçu, 2003: 45).

The elimination of obstacles in 1990s to the establishment of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Arab countries, disappearance of the Turkish Armed Forces' priority of modernization, military superiority of Turkey on PKK and the Palestine-supportive policy and harsh criticisms of the Justice and Development Party governments, which came to power starting from the election on 3 November 2002, led to predictions related to an end to the convergence between Turkey and Israel (Özcan, 2005: 126). Due to factors such as efforts of Israel to make its dominance permanent on occupied territories starting from 2000s, disproportionate use of force in response to attacks aimed at Israel in Palestinian territories and reluctance to carry out an effective peace process, convergence between Turkey and Israel was interrupted and caused social dynamics that added depth to bilateral relations lose their effects (Özcan, 2010: 42).

Towards the end of 1990s, Turkey-Israel relations started to decline and relations between Turkey and Arab countries began to improve. Adana Agreement signed with Syria in 1998 opened new doors in both bilateral relations with Syria and relations with other countries in the Middle East and initiated a rapid improvement process (Yılmaz, 2010: 19). The troubled period entered by Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Saudi Arabia due to difficulties experienced while struggling to assume the leadership of the Arab world is the most important factor that made Turkey an important actor in the Middle East today (Turan, 2010: 56).

An improvement was observed in Turkey-Israel relations in 1990s, when the peace efforts between Israel and Palestine were in progress and a deterioration was observed in Turkey-Israel relations in late 1990s due to interruptions in this peace process, which indicates Palestine was an important factor in Turkey-Israel relations (Tür, 2009a: 23). The power balance which shifted toward Turkey, ability to follow independent policies in the region due to the decrease in the influence of the United States and intention of Turkey to become the leader of the region were facilitating elements behind the harsh approach of Turkey toward Israel (Kardaş, 2011: 17).

Considering Israel's establishing and maintaining strategic partnerships within the scope of its national security policy as a necessity, it is of great importance for Israel to choose smart and reliable partners. It is a fact that there are not many countries in the Middle East eager to enter into such a partnership with Israel. However, the fact that Israel's lack of candidates to establish strategic partnerships in the region is not sufficient to consider Turkey as an ideal strategic ally for Israel. In the short-term, Turkey may seem like an important partner, but in the long run, this partnership raises important questions for Israel (Lochery, 1998: 58).

After Hamas victory in the election in Palestine held in 2006, the Israeli attack on Gaza under Hamas control in 2009, known as "Operation Cast Lead", played an important role in deterioration of Turkey-Israel relations. The fact that this attack was made soon after Erdoğan-Olmert meeting and no information was given to Turkey about the attack was perceived as an act of betrayal by Justice and Development Party (Crisis Group European Report, 2010: 3).

According to the Goldstone Report, the attack on Gaza involved violations of both the humanitarian law and the international law. It was reported that, although in different dimensions, both Israel and Palestine committed war crimes and crimes against humanity (Topal, 2008: 1112). Appearance of Israeli soldiers killing Palestinian children and civilians in the TV series called *Ayrılık* (Separation) broadcasted in TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) and Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon's having the Turkish Ambassador sit on a lower seat than himself and showing this act publicly and reprimanding the Ambassador were two important elements that increased the tension between two countries (Kosebalaban, 2010: 38).

Another event that led to a tension between Turkey and Israel was the quarrel between Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Israeli President Shimon Peres in a session of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland and the "One minute!" outburst of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan aimed at the moderator who wanted to end the session, also known as "One minute incident" or "Davos crisis" (wikisource.org, 11.01.2016).

Israel, with the idea that the country is surrounded with enemies, considers itself as a country that is forced to defend itself at all times. As a result, it is safe to say that the foreign policy and strategy of the country is based upon this main idea and the country acts before it is attacked and adopts the tactic of attacking and destroying the enemy (Tür, 2009b: 39). Mavi Marmara incident, the event that carried relations between two countries to the deepest depression since the beginning of Turkey-Israel relations, meant renouncing strategic relations with Turkey developed in 1990s for Israel, which did not refused to apologize or sign normalization agreements (Özcan, 2011: 19).

On 31 May 2010 at 4.26 a.m. a flotilla of six vessels was boarded and taken over by Israeli Defence Forces. The vessels were carrying people and humanitarian supplies. Nine passengers lost their lives and many others were wounded as a result of the use of force during the take-over operation by Israeli forces (Palmer et al., 2011: 3). Mavi Marmara incident, which was described as an act of "self-defence" by Israel, was described as "piracy", "State murder" and "State terrorism" by Turkey (Kosebalaban, 2010: 37). This incident, which caused Turkey to face a problem with another country in terms of international relations never before experienced throughout the history of the Republic, is the killing of civilians, the majority of whom were citizens of the Republic of Turkey, by the Israeli forces (Özcan, 2010: 37).

The report prepared by the commission established in order to investigate Mavi Marmara incident was written only by the chairman and the deputy chairman, was not signed by Turkish and Israeli delegates, was leaked to New York Times on 2 September 2011 by Israel and failed to become anything more than a document referred to as the Palmer report, which did not represent the consensus (Akgün, 2011: 1). After Mavi Marmara incident, Turkey's demands for an official apology, compensation to relatives of individuals who died in the incident and the termination of the Gaza embargo were not accepted by Israel. Israel's statement that they felt deeply sorry for individuals who died in the incident and the offer to pay compensation to relatives of individuals who died in the incident without changing legal positions of soldiers participated in the operation were not found sufficient by Turkey to re-initiate relations (Oğuzlu, 2011: 31).

"In order for Turkey-Israel relations to return its former state, Israel needs to face with realities of the region and act in accordance with the principle of 'peaceful coexistence' and take Turkey's concerns into account (Yılmaz, 2010: 24)." Traumatic events experienced by Israel throughout the history are remembered in each new incident and influence current politics. Turkey's case is similar as well and Turkey follows a road in foreign politics which sometimes reflects its sensitivities (Çevik and Ersaydı, 2011: 15). The majority of academics working on Turkish Foreign Policy have a consensus that Turkey's foreign policy underwent a remarkable change in terms of language and discourse with Justice and Development Party (AKP) (Yeşiltaş and Balcı, 2011: 10).

Interest- and identity-based factors, which are defined as realism (interest) and constructivism (identity) in international relations theory and frequently used in Turkey-Israel relations, play an important role in relations between two countries. The convergence that started in 1990s left its place to mutual accusations due to Israel's Gaza operation in 2008 and finally on 31 May 2010, the death of nine Turkish citizens and one American citizen as a result of the operation carried out by Israeli soldiers on Mavi Marmara, which departed from Turkey to break the Gaza blockade and attract world's attention on Gaza, in international waters caused a hard-to-repair damage in Turkey-Israel relations (Uzer, 2011: 139). With the Mavi Marmara operation of 2010, Turkey-Israel relations hit the rock bottom for a third time after the Suez Crisis of 1956 and the Jerusalem Law of 1980 (Sandıklı and Kaya, 2014: 296).

2. Crisis and Tourism in Turkey-Israel Relations

In the years that followed 1990s, trade between Turkey and Israel has grown steadily. In addition to Israeli companies' establishing textile factories in Turkey, tourism between two countries has developed rapidly (Fishman, 2013: 37). The improvement process, which started with taking relations between Turkey and Israel to an ambassadorial level in 1991, was enhanced even more with a series of agreements signed in 1996. Especially military, trade and tourism were clear areas of improvement in Turkey-Israel relations. However, in addition to changing internal and regional balance in 2000s, the convergence of Turkey with its Arab neighbours caused Turkey and Israel to lose the thrill of 1990s in mutual relations and resulted in a weakening of the cooperation (Tür, 2009b: 36).

Tourism, reported to be one of the largest industries in the world, is considered to be an important economic sector for many countries. However, tourism cannot be evaluated only with its economic dimension since it includes complex social interactions. As well as being easily and largely affected by global economic and political factors, tourism has the power to guide international relations and may become the influencing party, rather than the influenced. Boycott calls for tourists made by States lead to an undesirable situation for tourism destinations and concern politicians and tourism's politicization in the political structure becoming increasingly more complicated is an undesired situation for the tourism industry (Suntikul and Butler, 2010: 2).

Political violence is the kind of violence committed by the Government or political opponents of the Government based on political motivations. Tourists do not want to be concerned about their safety of life and property especially when traveling to a country or a region in masses. Therefore, tourists who feel threatened in term of safety of life and property choose alternative tourism destinations, which do not concern them in this regard (Neumayer, 2004: 260).

The stability or instability of a Government in its policies stands out as the most political condition that interests and concerns the tourism market. This directly and rapidly affects the international tourism mobility to a country with a developed tourism industry. A countries' support, encouragement or promotion of any industry depends on its Government. Therefore, a government's controls and restrictions on tourism entries and exits and boycott calls are important factors required to be taken into account by representatives of the tourism industry operating in tourism destinations (Singh, 2012: 8).

Governments have direct influences on presentation of touristic products, regulation of trade and business activities, policies on the protection and use of historical and cultural values and policies on taxation. Therefore, effects of political decisions on economic, ecological and social environment are reflected in the success of tourism activities as well (Litvin, 2012: 18). Media is an important tool in creation and manipulation of perception of societies living in the Middle East or any other region or country of the world. Whether it is managed by the State, private sector or independent organizations, media has an important role in reflecting and enhancing oppositions or cooperations and in creation of the perception of "us" and "others" (Lewin, 2000: 239).

The first element of a tourism destination affected as a result of the conflict and violence environment emerging due to cases of terrorism, political crisis or natural disaster is its image. For this reason, marketing activities must be carried out in order to restore and improve the worsened image of a tourism destination by taking measures within the scope of crisis management (Sönmez, 1998: 437). The study conducted by Lewin Anat on Turkish and Israeli media covering the years of 1994-1999 shows that both medias present Turkey and Israel as democratic countries compared to other non-democratic countries in the Middle East. Also, both medias emphasize the secularity of Turkey and Israel compared to other countries in the region and present the two as role models for Middle Eastern countries due to the similar structure of political culture (Lewin, 2000: 245).

Tourism is one of the important dimensions of bilateral relations between Turkey and Israel. Following the 2000-2006 period, referred to as the golden years in which 324 thousand Israeli tourists visited Turkey and the 2007-2008 period in which the number of Israeli tourists peaked by exceeding half a million, the fact that the number of Israeli tourists dropped below 100 thousand in 2010-2012 due to the Mavi

Marmara crisis is important in that it shows the influence of crises in bilateral relations on tourism (Arbell, 2014: 23).

International tourism demand is usually measured by total tourist arrivals from an origin country to a destination country (Song and Witt, 2000: 3). Man-made crises and natural disasters have a remarkable effect on tourism demand (Song and Li, 2008: 216). Regardless of the type and scale, any area of economic activity and business may be affected by cases of conflict and dispute (Scherle, 2004: 235). There are two important factors behind the decline in international tourist mobility: media reporting political turbulences to the society and negative experiences reported by family members or friends. The image of a tourism destination damaged by these means continues to be worsened for a long period of time (Haddad et al., 2015: 54).

In an interview conducted by members of Yedioth Ahronoth and Maariv newspapers, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made the following statement, "We do not need Israeli tourists in Turkey and we do not feel their absence." (matzav.com, 10.12.2015). Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made this statement as an answer to a question regarding how Israel's boycott of tourism to Turkey might affect Turkish economy (sabah.com.tr, 10.12.2015).

Promotion efforts of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism aimed at Arab countries, Turkish TV series broadcast in Arab countries and activities of travel companies in Middle East countries as representatives of the private sector as a result of the convergence of Turkey to Arab countries in recent years may be suggested to contribute to the increase in the number of Arab tourists (Mengü, 2012: 106). Perfect, unique or at least unproblematic physical, cultural and political relations between the origin country and the destination country significantly affect the motivation to participate in tourism (Butler and Mao, 1996: 28). Israel's Counter-Terrorism Bureau expressed their concerns regarding the growing number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey in its travel advise prior to the annual holiday and stated that Turkey was not safe enough for Israelis and included Turkey among the countries to be avoided by Israelis as much as possible (Cohen, 2015).

Georgia stood out as an alternative destination for Israeli tourists after the deterioration of Turkey-Israel relations. The Jewish population of 28 thousand in Georgia in 1979 decreased to 4 thousand today. However, a significant increase was seen in the number of Israeli tourists visiting Georgia beginning from 2009 and reached to 60 thousand with a record increase of three times. A male Israeli tourist in his 30s described Georgia as, "No anti-semitism and as close and affordable as Turkey" and added, "I do not feel myself in a position to contribute to Turkish economy", showing his negative attitude toward Turkey. On the other hand, according to another Israeli tourist who stated that he did not visit Georgia to protest Turkey for conflicts with Israel, "a vacation in Turkey in a resort on the beach or on a poolside is incomparably different from the Georgia offering an experience for appreciating nature and sightseeing (Liphshiz, 2015)".

A report released by the Association of Mediterranean Touristic Hotels and Enterprises presents the number of tourists visited Antalya in the first quarter of 2014 according to countries. More than 53 thousand Iranian tourists with an increase of 463.9% and 39 thousand Israeli tourist with an increase of 146.5% visiting Antalya led to headlines such as, "Iranian and Israeli tourists choose Antalya" in the media (dailysabah.com, 2014). According to Israel Airlines Authority, Turkey reached 1st place in direct flights from Israel with 172,507 passengers in July 2015 despite of the tension in Turkey-Israel relations. The United States, ranking first in direct flights from Israel, dropped to the third place (Sadeh, 2015).

The reason behind this improvement in the number of Israeli tourists is the "disappointment" experienced by Israeli tourists in other "all-inclusive" alternatives in the region, namely Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria. Media representatives, aware of this situation, visited popular holiday destinations such as Antalya and Bodrum and observed Israeli tourists and attitudes and behaviours of the tourism personnel toward Israeli tourists. According to the data obtained from these observations and index results showing the willingness of the people of Israeli to forgive Turkey and improve relations, Israeli tourists wish to revisit old holiday destinations (Nir, 2015).

Turkey is an extraordinary place for Jews to travel and visit. Fantastic historical and cultural places and points of attraction throughout the country and the tolerant attitude of the people of Turkey toward Israelis are enough reason for visiting Turkey. Also, the fact that Jews live and preserve their identity in Turkey without being oppressed (20 thousand Jews live in Turkey, 17 synagogues are open to worship all year and 3 synagogues are open in summer) is the proof of how powerful Jewish-Turkish and Turkey-Israel relations are (Kopf, 06.01.2016).

3. Research Methodology

This is a descriptive research based on qualitative data. Presenting a descriptive and realistic image is the main purpose in research based on qualitative data (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 48). The research

utilizes the secondary data obtained from the official website of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (01.12.2015).

3.1. The Purpose and the Scope of the Research

The main purpose of the research is to determine whether there is a statistical difference between the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey before and after political crises in Turkey-Israel relations. The sub-goal of the research is to determine whether there is a statistical difference between the number of Arab (1) and Iranian (2) tourists visiting Turkey before and after political crises in Turkey-Israel relations.

The scope of the research consists of tourists from Israel, 16 Arab countries¹ and Iran who visited Turkey in the last ten years between January 2005 and the end of December 2014 and stayed at least one night. 120 months constituting the period of 10 years were divided into two periods: crisis-period and non-crisis period. The death of nine Turkish citizens and one American citizen of Turkish origin as a result of the operation carried out by Israeli soldiers on Mavi Marmara, which departed from Istanbul to break the Gaza blockade and attract world's attention on Gaza, became a turning point in Turkey-Israel relations. In this context, the period between January 2005 and May 2010 (65 months) was determined to be the "Non-crisis" period, whereas the period between June 2010 and December 2014 (55 months) was determined to be the "Crisis" period. Although the military operation carried out by Israel on Gaza on 27 December 2008 and the quarrel known as the "One minute" incident between the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the President of Israel Shimon Peres in Davos, Switzerland on 29 January 2009 caused a tension in Turkey-Israel relations, they did not carry the bilateral relations to a breaking point as the Mavi Marmara incident did. For this reason, instead of January 2009, the beginning of the crisis period was determined to be June 2010, soon after the Mavi Marmara incident. Three research hypotheses were determined in accordance with the purpose of the study:

H₁: There is a significant difference between the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey in the crisis period and the non-crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations.

H₂: There is a significant difference between the number of Arab tourists visiting Turkey in the crisis period and the non-crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations.

H₃: There is a significant difference between the number of Iranian tourists visiting Turkey in the crisis period and the non-crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations.

3.2. Data Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

The document analysis technique is utilized for data collection for the purposes of the research. The document analysis used for analysis of sources such as documents, correspondences and photographs is one of the most widely used data collection techniques in qualitative research (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 89). Document analysis may be defined as a compilation of documentary sources performed by collecting written and visual materials and documents prepared by organizations and/or persons other than the researcher and examining within the context of studied topic (Seyidoğlu, 2009: 46).

Initially, the research data; the number of tourist arrivals to Turkey from Israel, 16 Arab countries and Iran, are descriptively presented with charts. Descriptive analysis is used to process and assess the data that do not require in-depth analysis (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 89). Secondly, percentage and frequency distributions of the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey are given according to "Crisis" and "Non-Crisis" periods with cross-tables. The distribution of the data according to two or more variables is presented with cross-tables (Yükselen, 2009: 112). Cross-tables used to present frequency values related to at least two variables at the same time are also utilized to show the relationship between variables possibly related to each other (Gegez, 2007: 310). The most basic way to show summary data is to use tables presenting the frequency distribution of specific events (Proctor, 2003: 267). Lastly, the data obtained within the scope of the research are analysed with independent two sample t-test and whether there is a statistically significant difference between the number of Iranian tourists visiting Turkey in the "Crisis" period and the "Non-crisis" period is identified.

¹The League of Arab States includes 22 countries: Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Djibouti, Morocco, Palestine, Iraq, Qatar, the Comoros, Kuwait, Libya, Lebanon, Egypt, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Oman, Jordan and Yemen. Member States, *League of Arab States*, <http://www.lasportal.org/en/aboutlas/Pages/CountryData.aspx> (Access Date: 10 December 2015).

However, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism keeps statistics for tourist arrivals from only 16 of these countries, namely Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Morocco, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, Libya, Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Jordan and Yemen. For this reason, 6 countries, namely Djibouti, Palestine, Oman, Mauritania, Somalia and the Comoros were excluded from the study. Due to the ongoing civil war in Syria, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism stopped keeping statistics related to this country beginning from 2013. For this reason, statistics of 2013 and 2014 related to Syria were created by calculating the average tourist arrivals from this country between 2005 and 2012 according to months.

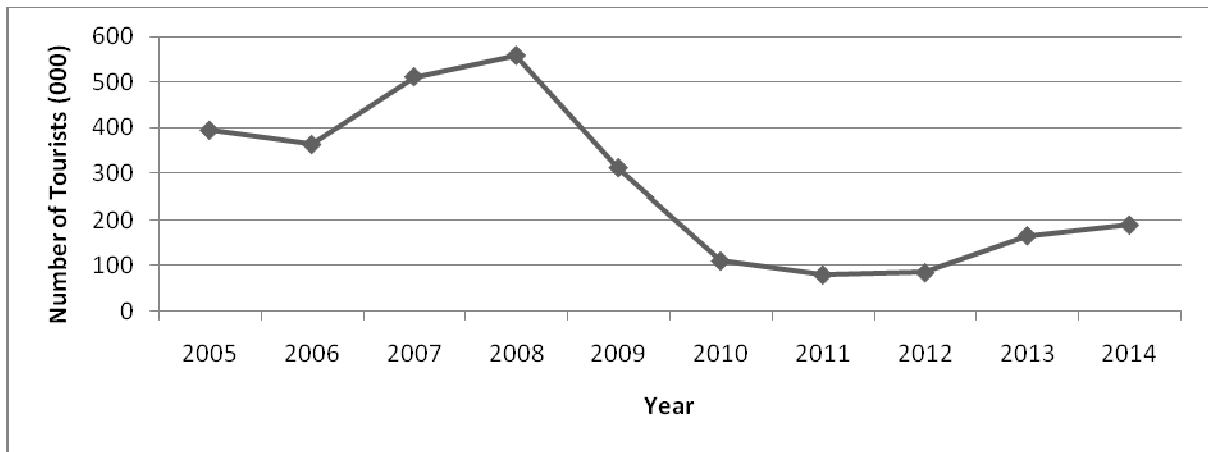


Figure 1. Number of Israeli Tourists Visiting Turkey (2005-2014)

It can be said based on Figure 1 that the Gaza operation and the One Minute incident initiated the downward trend in the number of Israeli tourists. However, interpret the radical decline in the number of Israeli tourists in same period with the Mavi Marmara operation only as a coincidence would be an incomplete inference.

Only 2,605 Israeli tourists visited Turkey in June 2010. Considering that this number was 62,691 in June 2008 and 27,289 in June 2009, which is the year when the Gaza operation and the One Minute incident occurred, it is easier to understand the decline in the number of Israeli tourists after the Mavi Marmara operation. On the other hand, the number of Israeli tourists tends to rise again in 2013. This uptrend is believed to be a result of the President of the United States Barack Obama's conveying the apology of the President of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu from the people of Turkey for deaths in the Mavi Marmara operation after his three-day visit to Israel on 22 March 2013 to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and subsequent improvement process in bilateral relations initiated thereafter.

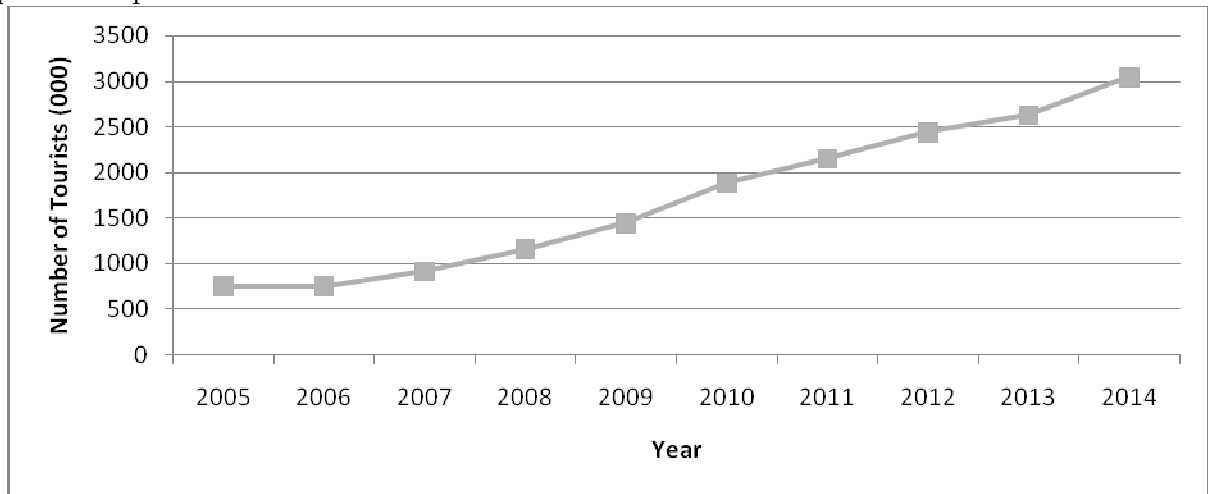


Figure 2. Number of Arab Tourists Visiting Turkey (2005-2014)

Figure 2 shows the number of Arab tourists from the 16 Arab countries included in the study visiting Turkey between 2005 and 2014. According to Figure 2, although there is an upward trend in the number of Arab tourists visiting Turkey between 2005 and 2008, this upward trend is more pronounced in 2009 and especially in 2010. For example, the number of Arab tourists visiting Turkey was 752,514 in 2005, whereas it reached to 1,162,190 in 2008 with an increase of 54.44%. That being said, the number of Arab tourists reached to 2,151,807 in 2011 with an increase of 85.15% compared to 2008.

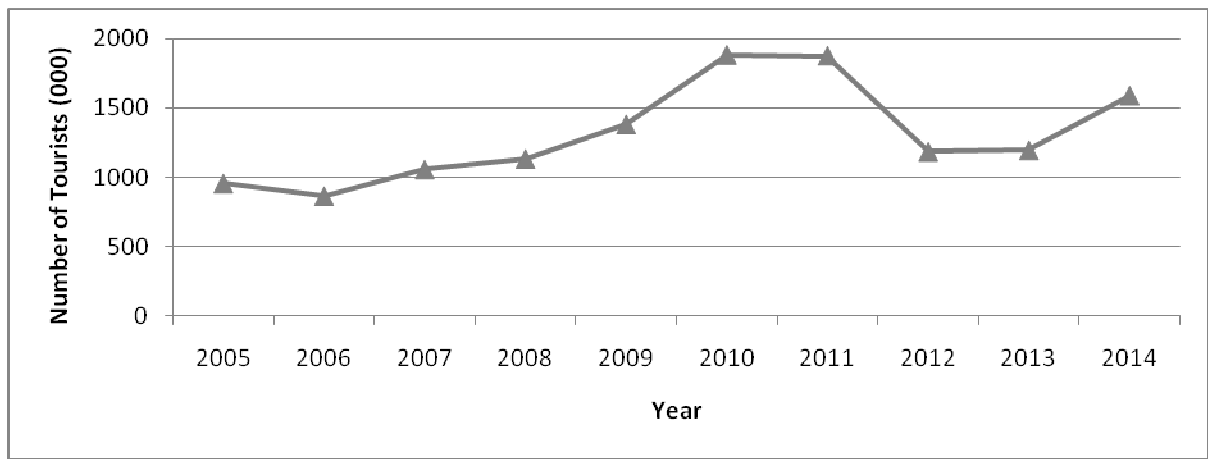


Figure 3. Number of Iranian Tourists Visiting Turkey (2005-2014)

Figure 3 shows the number of Iranian tourists visiting Turkey between 2005 and 2014. According to Figure 3, although there is an upward trend in the number of Iranian tourists visiting Turkey between 2005 and 2008, this upward trend is more pronounced in 2009 and especially in 2010, similar to the number of Arab tourists. For example, the number of Iranian tourists visiting Turkey was 957,244 in 2005, whereas it reached to 1,134,965 in 2008 with an increase of 18.57%. That being said, the number of Iranian tourists reached to 1,879,304 in 2011 with an increase of 65.58% compared to 2008. The reasons behind the decline in the number of Iranian tourists in 2012 are believed to be the embargo decision of the United States against Iran initiated in 2011 and the decline in the economic situation of Iran.

Although it is too early at this stage of the study to conclude that the reason behind the increase in the number of Arab and Iranian tourists visiting Turkey is the crisis in Turkey-Israel relations, it should be noted that the number of Arab tourists increased by 85.15% and the number of Iranian tourists increased by 65.58% in 2011 compared to 2008, whereas the number of Israeli tourists decreased by 85.81%.

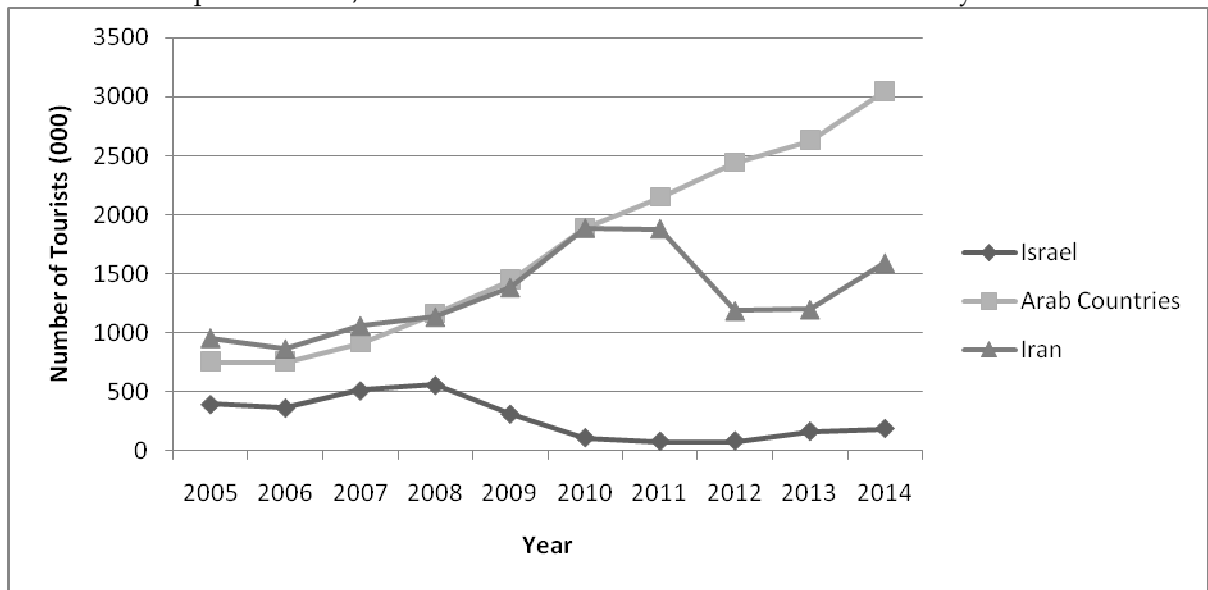


Figure 4. Number of Israeli, Arab and Iranian Tourists Visiting Turkey (2005-2014)

Figure 4 shows the number of Israeli, Iranian and Arab tourists visiting Turkey between 2005 and 2014. According to Figure 4, the change in the number of Israeli, Arab and Iranian tourists was parallel between 2005 and 2008, whereas the number of Israeli tourists and the number of Arab and Iranian tourists showed a trend in opposite directions. On the other hand, while there was not a considerable decline in the number of Israeli tourists in 2012, the number of Iranian tourists declined by 36.87% with a decrease of 692,961 tourists in 2012. That being said, the upward trend in the number of Arab tourists continued without any declines.

Figure 5 includes four charts showing (a) the number of Israeli tourists; (b) the number of Arab tourists; (c) the number of Iranian tourists; and (d) the number of tourists from all three groups visiting Turkey in the 120-month period covering January 2005-December 2014. In each chart, the Gaza operation carried out by Israel on 27 December 2008 (48th month), the One Minute incident occurred between Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Shimon Peres in Davos, Switzerland on 29 January 2009 (49th month) and the operation carried out in international waters by Israeli soldiers on Mavi Marmara which departed from

Turkey to break the Gaza blockade and attract world's attention on Gaza on 31 May 2010 (the end of the 65th month and the beginning of the 66th month) were marked with arrows, which facilitates to see whether a change occurred in the number of Israeli, Arab and Iranian tourists visiting Turkey after events which caused tension in Turkey-Israel relations and even brought bilateral relations to a halt.

According to Figure 5a, more than 500 thousand Israeli tourists annually and more than 80 thousand Israeli tourists monthly (87,314 tourists in the 32th month, 88,890 tourists in the 44th month) visited Turkey. On the other hand, the annual number of Israeli tourists dropped to 312 thousand and the monthly number dropped to 72,020 (56th month) in 2009, when the Gaza operation and the One Minute incident occurred. It is clearly seen that the actual decline in the number of Israeli tourists occurred after the Mavi Marmara operation (2,605 tourists in the 66th month). The least number of tourists from Israel to Turkey within the 120-month period was observed in June 2010. From this date on, the highest number of Israeli tourists was observed in April 2014 with 30,045 tourists. The number of Israeli tourists seems to have continued on lower levels on both annual basis and monthly basis compared to the period before the Mavi Marmara operation. Although it is not known for sure whether the apology of the Prime Minister of Israel from the people of Turkey on 22 March 2013 had any effect, the number of Israeli tourists showed a mild upward trend in 2013 and 2014 compared the period before the Mavi Marmara operation.

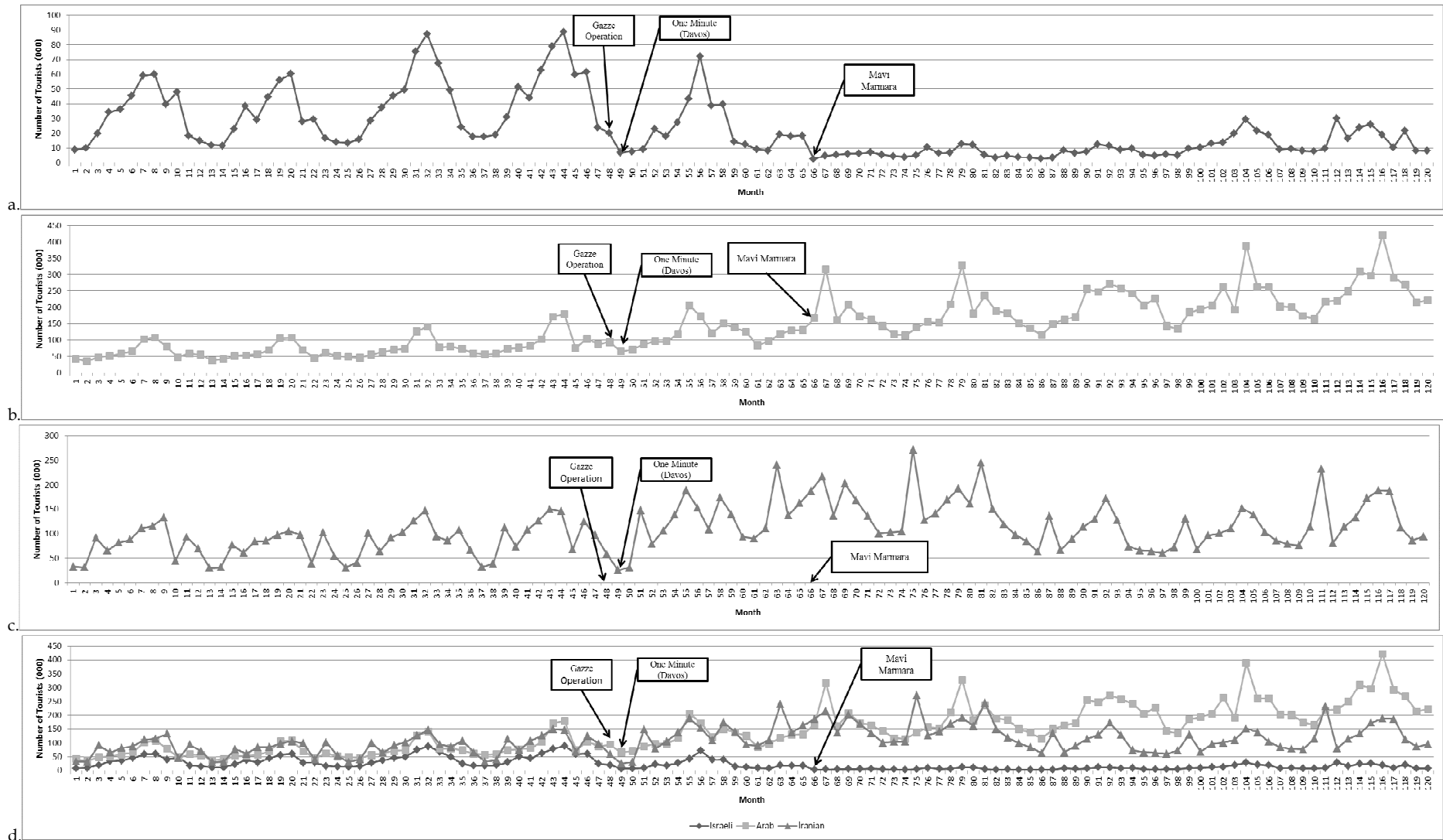


Figure 5. Number of Israeli, Arab and Iranian Tourists Visiting Turkey (January 2005-December 2014)

Figure 5b shows the number of Arab tourists visiting Turkey from 16 Arab countries during the 120-month period covering January 2005-December 2014. While 752,514 Arab tourists visited Turkey in 2005, this number reached to 1,162,190 in 2008, before the Gaza operation of Israel and the One Minute incident. On the other hand, the number of Arab tourists visiting Turkey reached to 2,151,807 in 2011, after the Gaza operation, the One Minute incident and the Mavi Marmara operation, with an incredible increase of 85.15% compared to 2008. The low level of increase between 2005 and 2008 in the number of Arab tourists visiting Turkey accelerated starting from 2010, when the Mavi Marmara operation took place, and finally reached to 3,048,214 in 2014.

Figure 5c shows the number of Iranian tourists visiting Turkey during the 120-month period covering January 2005-December 2014. While 957,244 Iranian tourists visited Turkey in 2005, this number reached to 1,134,965 in 2008, before the Gaza operation of Israel and the One Minute incident. On the other hand, Iranian tourists visiting Turkey reached to 1,879,304 in 2011, after the Gaza operation, the One Minute incident and the Mavi Marmara operation, with a considerable increase of 65.58% compared to 2008. However, the increase in the number of Iranian tourists did not show the same consistency as the increase in the number of Arab tourists and dropped to 1,186,343 in 2012.

Figure 5d shows the number of Israeli, Arab and Iranian tourists visiting Turkey during the 120-month period covering January 2005-December 2014. The number of tourists showing a similar trend until the end of 2008 seems to differ starting from 2009. The upward trend in the number of Arab and Iranian tourists accelerated from 2009, whereas the number of Iranian tourists started to show a downward trend. The difference between the number of Israeli tourists and the number of Arab and Iranian tourists started to grow in 2010, in which the Mavi Marmara operation took place. The number of Iranian tourists started to decline in 2012, whereas the number of Arab tourists continued to increase and the difference between the number of Arab and Israeli tourists grew even bigger. In 2014, 188,608 Israeli tourists visited Turkey, whereas the number of Arab tourists was 3,048,214 in this same year. Thus, the difference of 358,571 between the number of Arab and Israeli tourists in 2005 reached to 2,859,606 in 2014.

Table 1: Periods in Turkey-Israel Relations and Number of Israeli Tourists

Period	Number of Israeli Tourists ¹						Total
	10000 and below	10001-20000	20001-30000	30001-40000	40001-50000	50001 and above	
Non-crisis	7 (10.8)	18 (27.7)	10 (15.4)	8 (12.3)	8 (12.3)	14 (21.5)	65 (100)
Crisis	36 (65.5)	13 (23.6)	5 (9.1)	1 (1.8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	55 (100)

Numbers in the first line indicates the frequency of occurrence of events. Values in parentheses in the second row indicate percentages.

Table 1 shows the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey during the 120-month period divided into crisis and non-crisis periods in Turkey-Israel relations. In this context, less than 10 thousand tourists visited Turkey in 36 months included in the crisis period. On the other hand, the number of more than 40 thousand tourists visiting Turkey was only reached in the non-crisis period. The 30 thousand Israeli tourists threshold was passed only in a single month during the crisis period in Turkey-Israel relations.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics related to the number of Israeli, Arab and Iranian tourists visiting Turkey during the 120-month period covering January 2005-December 2014. Period refers to the crisis period and the non-crisis period in Turkey-Israel relations, (N) refers to number of months in each period, (sd) refers to standard deviation, Mean refers to mean value of each variable. The most and the least numbers of tourists are also given within the scope of descriptive statistics.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Related to Israeli, Arab and Iranian Tourists Visiting Turkey

Period	Country	N	Sd	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Non-crisis	Israel	65	21568.08	34,001.68	6,727	88,890
	Arab Countries	65	37945.93	85,982.32	35,301	205,988
	Iran	65	43543.36	94,452.62	25,848	239,989
Crisis	Israel	55	6841.10	10,063.62	2,605	30,045
	Arab Countries	55	65909.61	210,908.36	113,825	421,463
	Iran	55	49830.37	127,243.75	60,226	270,998
Overall	Israel	120	20368.68	23,030.07	2,605	88,890
	Arab Countries	120	81564.40	143,240.09	35,301	421,463

When the number of tourists visiting Turkey as seen on Table 2 is assessed ignoring the crisis period and non-crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations, the mean number of tourists during the 120-month period was 23,030 for Israel, 143,240 for Arab countries and 109,482 for Iran. On the other hand, the mean number of tourists during the 65-month non-crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations was 34,002 for Israel, 85,982 for Arab countries and 94,453 for Iran. The mean number of tourists during the 55-month crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations was 10,064 for Israel, 210,908 for Arab countries and 127,244 for Iran.

Considering minimum and maximum values given in Table 2, the minimum value of 2,605 tourists for Israel during the 120-month period was within the crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations, whereas the maximum value of 88,890 was within the non-crisis period. That being said, a different situation is observed in terms of minimum and maximum values for Arab countries and Iran. The minimum value of 35,301 for Arab countries and the minimum value of 25,848 for Iran were observed within the non-crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations, whereas the maximum value of 421,463 for Arab countries and the maximum value of 270,998 for Iran were observed within the crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations. 3 research hypotheses identified within the scope of the study will be tested in order to determine whether this difference is statistically significant or not.

Although parametric tests that examine differences are limited to t-test, chi-square, z-test, ANOVA and one-way ANOVA, t-test and z-test are widely used in order to investigate differences between two samples (Altunışık et al., 2012: 169). Independent Two Samples t-Test will be used to test research hypotheses. Independent Two Samples t-Test is a statistical test developed in order to compare mean values of two independent groups or samples according to a dependent variable and test the significance of the difference between mean values with a certain confidence level (Ural and Kılıç, 2006: 200). This test is used to compare the standard error of the difference between mean values and mean values of two samples. The test statistics is obtained by subtracting the mean value of the second sample from the mean value of the first sample and dividing the difference between mean values by the standard error (Bayram, 2009: 94-95).

In order to apply Independent Two Samples t-Test, units in samples must be independent from each other, data must show normal distribution, dependent variable must be measured on the ratio scale or at least the interval scale and variances must be equal (Bayram, 2009: 94). In this study, the "crisis" period and the "non-crisis" period are independent from each other. Also, the research data are measured on the ratio scale. No separate testing was performed to test homogeneity of variances since Independent Two Samples t-Test used to test research hypotheses allows for testing whether variances are equal or not. Whether variances of two groups tested are equal or not is examined with the Levene's test (Altunışık et al., 2012: 194). Findings obtained as a result of testing research hypotheses will be interpreted according to results of the Levene's test. Whether the research data shows normal distribution or not, the final assumption to be met in order to apply Independent Two Samples t-Test, will be checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test (Altunışık et al., 2012: 208). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is one of the most popular tests used to test whether statistically distributions violate the normality assumption or not (Gegez, 2007: 363).

According to the results given in Table 3, the number of Israeli tourists -data was applied square root transformation- ($p=0.117$; $p>0.05$), the number of Arab tourists ($p=0.235$; $p>0.05$) and the number of Iranian tourists ($p=0.244$; $p>0.05$) had a normal distribution. Below are findings and interpretations related to research hypotheses tested with Independent Two Samples t-Test.

Table 3: Normal Distribution (One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov) Test Results

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test				
		Number of Israeli Tourists	Number of Arab Tourists	Number of Iranian Tourists
N		120	120	120
Normal Parameters	Mean	23,030.07	143,240.09	109,481.88
	Standard Deviation	20,368.677	81,564.401	49,149.471
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.192	1.034	1.025
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.117	.235	.244

H₁: There is a significant difference between the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey in the crisis period and the non-crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations.

Table 4: Results of Independent Group t-Test Performed to Determine Whether the Number of Israeli Tourists Visiting Turkey Differed According to the Period Variable

Period	N	Mean (\bar{X})	sd	t Test		
				t	sd	p
Non-crisis	65	34,001.68	21568,076	8,459	78,807	,000
Crisis	55	10,063.62	6841,992			

According to the results given in Table 4, there is a significant difference on 0.05 significance level between the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey in the 65-month non-crisis period in Turkey-Israel relations covering January 2005-May 2010 and the 55-month crisis period covering June 2010-December 2014 ($t=8.459$; $p<0.05$). According to Table 4, the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey during the non-crisis period ($\bar{X}=34,001.68$) is higher compared to the number of Israeli tourists visiting Turkey during the crisis period ($\bar{X}=10,063.62$).

H₂: There is a significant difference between the number of Arab tourists visiting Turkey in the crisis period and the non-crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations.

Table 5: Results of Independent Group t-Test Performed to Determine Whether the Number of Arab Tourists Visiting Turkey Differed According to the Period Variable

Period	N	Mean (\bar{X})	sd	t Test		
				T	sd	p
Non-crisis	65	85.982,32	37945,925	-12,422	83,028	,000
Crisis	55	210.908,36	65909,612			

According to the results given in Table 5, there is a significant difference on 0.05 significance level between the number of Arab tourists visiting Turkey in the 65-month non-crisis period in Turkey-Israel relations covering January 2005-May 2010 and the 55-month crisis period covering June 2010-December 2014 ($t=-12.422$; $p<0.05$). According to Table 5, Arab tourists visiting Turkey during the non-crisis period ($\bar{X}=210,908.36$) is higher compared to Arab tourists visiting Turkey during the crisis period ($\bar{X}=85,982.32$).

H₃: There is a significant difference between the number of Iranian tourists visiting Turkey in the crisis period and the non-crisis period of Turkey-Israel relations.

According to the results given in Table 6, there is a significant difference on 0.05 significance level between the number of Iranian tourists visiting Turkey in the 65-month non-crisis period in Turkey-Israel relations covering January 2005-May 2010 and the 55-month crisis period covering June 2010-December 2014 ($t=-3.847$; $p<0.05$).

Table 6: Results of Independent Group t-Test Performed to Determine Whether the Number of Iranian Tourists Visiting Turkey Differed According to the Period Variable

Period	N	Mean (\bar{X})	sd	t Test		
				T	sd	p
Non-crisis	65	94,452.62	43543,356	-3,847	118	,000
Crisis	55	127,243.75	49830,367			

According to Table 6, Iranian tourists visiting Turkey during the non-crisis period ($\bar{X}=127,243.75$) is higher compared to Arab tourists visiting Turkey during the crisis period ($\bar{X}=94,452.62$).

Conclusion

As far as the stability in relations between Turkey and Israel goes, it would not be a wrong assessment to say that wavy relations between two countries continue. Since its foundation, the State of Israel has not entered into war with Turkey or two countries have not directly or openly threatened each other's sovereignty. Having said that, one might question why Turkey-Israel relations are wavy. The answers of this fair question might be the geographical locations of two countries and the Muslim majority in Turkey.

Being at an intersection that connects continents, regions and countries may be an advantageous geographical location for Turkey, but it also brings along certain disadvantages. Each and every country in the world requires energy in order to improve the quality of life of its people. Petroleum and natural gas stand out as two of the most important energy sources that satisfy this requirement. Therefore, security of these energy sources must be ensured or in other words, this energy flow must continue in an orderly and consistent manner. Also, the matter of use, distribution, production and pricing of these energy sources may lead to conflicts between countries from time to time. To what degree Turkey is affected from these conflicts is closely related to the scale and duration of these conflicts. Regardless of scale and duration, each conflict in

the region directly and rapidly affects tourism. When participating in the tourism mobility, people prefer tourism destinations where they can feel secure.

The fact that the majority of Turkish people are Muslims leads to social and political reactions to every sort of verbal and physical attacks aimed at Muslims anywhere in the world. With the foundation of the State of Israel, relations or problems between Israel and Palestine, Israel and Arab countries, Israel and Iran, Turkey and Arab countries and Israel and Turkey have started. The geographical location of Turkey, emphasized in the previous paragraph, is believed to be as effective as the matter of Palestine on wavy relations between Turkey and Israel. When the political crisis and tension in Turkey-Israel relations after the Jerusalem Law of 1980 and the Mavi Marmara operation of 2010 is taken into account, the effect of the matter of Palestine in bilateral relations should be easier to understand. Therefore, the solution of Israel-Palestine problem can be suggested to be one of the most important conditions of stable relations between Turkey and Israel.

Every sort of action aimed at Palestine performed by Israel is perceived as an act against Muslims and Islam in Turkey, which leads to harsh social and political reactions against Israel. On the other hand, harsh reactions are perceived as anti-semitism by the people and politicians of Israel. People influenced by mutually uttered harsh statements hold protests, which sometimes result in undesired events. The way media announces events via every kind of visual, auditory and written tools to the public may sometimes play a role in stalemate in bilateral relations. Both presentations of the media and statements of politicians have the power to influence or even direct perceptions of people.

Turkey-Israel relations came to a standstill after Israel's blockade of and attack to Gaza, the Davos incident and the Mavi Marmara operation. Demonstrations held in Turkey against Israel and statements of politicians caused Israelis to perceive Turkey as an unsafe place and led them to alternative tourism destinations. Findings obtained as a result of analyses performed within the scope of this research shows that the decline in the number of Israeli tourists after the Mavi Marmara operation, which brought Turkey-Israel relations to a halt, is statistically significant. However, the decline in the number of Israeli tourists due to tense relations between Turkey and Israel was not observed in trade between two countries and the trade volume grew even bigger. Another statistically significant finding of the study is the increase in the number of Arab and Iranian tourists simultaneous to the decline in the number of Israeli tourists.

Tourism will no doubt be the industry experiencing the most rapid positive gains when Turkey manages to establish tension- and conflict-free relations with Israel, as well as Arab countries and Iran. a Russian plane violating the Turkey-Syria border was shot down by Turkish F-16s on 24 November 2015. Statements and mutual accusations of Turkish and Russian politicians immediately after this incident, Russia's warning to its citizens not to travel to Turkey emphasizing the lack of safety and Russia's blocking tour and vacation packages to Turkey constitute a current example of how rapidly tensions in bilateral relations influence tourism. For this reason, media representatives and politicians of both countries must be very careful in their statements and discourse and avoid statements that may be perceived as islamophobia or anti-semitism, which is believed to contribute to the improvement of damaged tourism relations, at least quantitatively.

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