

# Great Game Playing Field: Russia/Turkey versus Palestine/Israel

By [Eric Walberg](#)

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A vital playing field in today's Great Game is Palestine/Israel, where again there is a tentative meeting of political minds between Russia and Turkey. In defiance of the US and much of Europe, both endorsed the Goldstone report into atrocities committed during Israel's invasion of Gaza in December 2008, where 100 Palestinians died for every Israeli casualty. Neither government is captive to Israel in the way European and US governments are, though they both have important economic relations with Israel.

Israeli dissident writer Israel Shamir [commended the Turkish leaders](#) at a conference in Ankara in December: "Your president, Mr Gul, said a few days ago to our president, Mr Peres, that he will not visit Israel while the siege of Gaza continues. Turkey is no longer an American colony. You stopped joint air force exercises with Israel and the US. You expressed your clear anger over the horrors of Gaza. Now you pay more attention to the area where you live; you play an important role already and are destined to play an even greater role. So much depends on you! We feel it every day in Palestine."

He called on Turkey, as inheritor of the Ottoman-era responsibility for Palestine, to follow the lead of the Spanish and British judges who issued arrest warrants for Chilean General Pinochet and Israeli Prime minister Tzipi Livni for murder, and issue an arrest warrant for the infamous Captain R, accused of murdering a Palestinian child Iman Al-Hams, but feted in Israel as a hero. "A Turkish warrant for his arrest should await him wherever he goes," just as "according to Israeli law, if a Turk does wrong to a Jew in Turkey, he may be snatched, arrested, tried and punished in Israel. Turkey should introduce a symmetrical law, covering offences against Palestinians who otherwise are not protected by law."

Though unlikely, this would be wildly popular in Turkey. Similarly, unlike brainwashed Westerners fed daily doses of pro-Israeli media, Turks and most Russians have no use for the Zionist project. True, over one million Russians took up the tantalising offer of instant Israeli citizenship in search of a better life, qualifying as Jewish merely via marriage or with as little as one grandparent racially Jewish. But, despite the chauvinism of the Russian-Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, many of these Russian Israelis, too, have no use for the Zionist project, with its innate racism, some even marrying Palestinians. Many are returning to Russia, bitter at the way they are treated by *sabra* (Jews born in Israel). The natural sympathy of these and non-Jewish Russians is for the Palestinians.

The Soviet Union was one of the first states to recognise the state of Palestine after the Palestinian Declaration of Independence in 1988, and Russia has maintained that position. As Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Al-Maliki said during a visit to Moscow last year, the "fact there is a Palestinian embassy in Moscow is a sign of the strength of our relationship." Visiting Russia a week after the Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman, he found the Russian

position on the peace process and the question of Israeli settlement building in the occupied territories unchanged.

As a member of the so-called “quartet” of negotiators (along with the European Union, the United States and the United Nations), Russia has stuck to the principles of the “road map” for peace, which requires Israel to freeze expansion of settlements in the occupied territories as a condition of further talks.

Russia has 16 million Muslims, about 12 per cent of the population, and Western-style Islamophobia — and, the flip side, Judophilia — is largely absent. It recently attended the Organisation of Islamic Conference as an observer and expressed interest in joining. The problem with asserting a clear policy towards Muslim countries, including Turkey, is of course the tragedy of Chechnia and the persistence of Islamist terrorism within Russia, resulting in anti-Muslim sentiment in Russian cities, which thrive on cheap labour from the “stans” and where much of the small-scale trade has been run by Chechens and other “blacks”.

Shamir explains: “In Europe, if you inspect the coffers of anti-Muslim neo-Nazi groups, you’ll find that they thrive on Jewish support. In Russia, Jewish nationalists and Zionists try to rally the Russians against their Muslim brethren. Sometimes they do it under cover of the Russian Church, or of Russian nationalism. The most fervently anti-Muslim forces in Russia are organised by crypto-Zionists.”

As is the case in all countries of importance, the Zionists have their lobby in Russia too. Yevgenny Satanovsky (that’s right), the president of the Institute for Middle Eastern Studies in Moscow, using the royal we, argues, “For us, there is no distinction between ‘rebels’ and ‘terrorists,’ as there is in Europe. They’re all part of the same jihad, and on this we agree with Israel.” But while busy promoting anti-Muslim sentiment among Russians, he fails to mention the support that his colleagues give to those very forces.

The Zionist footprint in Chechnia was hinted at during the scandal surrounding the murder of Russian FSB defector Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2008. In a Le Carre twist, Litvinenko converted to Islam on his deathbed, attended by exiled Chechen rebel leader Akhmed Zakayev and exiled Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky, whose Zionist credentials are well known. While the nature and extent of Mossad activity in the Caucasus is impossible to know for sure, there is no doubt that abetting terrorists is a useful way for Israel to apply pressure on the Russian government, and that Russian security forces do their best to keep track of it.

Turkey, Russia and Palestine all share a common geopolitical threat in the form of US and Israeli global plans, from NATO expansion eastward and US-Israeli plans to wage war on Iran, to the ongoing US-Israeli colonisation of what remains of Palestine. Just as Russia must struggle against NATO expansion eastward, intended to encircle and contain Russia, “if the US and Israel do take Iran, Turkey will be encircled and cut off. The fate of Palestine also depends on the fate of Tehran,” writes Shamir.

[Shamir congratulated](#) the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) on its resounding reelection in 2007: “The East returns to God, and finds its own way. Istanbul has followed Gaza: the AKP-ruled Turkey will be a friend to Hamas-ruled Palestine, to Islamic Iran, to Orthodox Greece and Russia, to the religious anti-occupation forces of nearby Iraq. She will

again take her place of pride as the centrepiece of the Eastern mosaic, while its pro-American and God-hating generals, the Turkish Dahlans, will creep back to their barracks. Faith in God unites us, while the nationalists had divided us." The shift in Turkish politics since then only confirms Shamir's words.

Is there is a *pax russia* unfolding? [Ukraine is poised](#) to turn back the anti-Russian policies of the Orange revolutionaries. Both Ukraine and Turkey depend heavily on Russian energy supplies, and their political course is responding to this as well as to an aversion to the aggressive nature of US foreign policy around the world. If Georgia rids itself of its pro-US anti-Russian president, suddenly US hegemony in the region evaporates.

Armenia and Azerbaijan, despite their bitter standoff now have good relations with both Turkey and Russia and will inevitably have to bury their hatchet as their conflict loses its ability to mobilise support in the interests of power politics. The Iranians sensibly refuse to cave in to Western and Israeli pressures. Their star can only rise as the US and Israel's sets.

**Eric Walberg** writes for Al-Ahram Weekly <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/> You can reach him at <http://ericwalberg.com/>

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### About the author:

Canadian Eric Walberg is known worldwide as a journalist specializing in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia. A graduate of University of Toronto and Cambridge in economics, he has been writing on East-West relations since the 1980s. He has lived in both the Soviet Union and Russia, and then Uzbekistan, as a UN adviser, writer, translator and lecturer. Presently a writer for the foremost Cairo newspaper, Al Ahram, he is also a regular contributor to Counterpunch, Dissident Voice, Global Research, Al-Jazeera and Turkish Weekly, and is a commentator on Voice of the Cape radio. Eric Walberg was a moderator and speaker at the Leaders for Change Summit in Istanbul in 2011.

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