

Commentary

Institute of Diplomacy and Global Affairs

Goodbye Ankara

by Daniel Pipes

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Expelling an ambassador is the diplomatic equivalent of a wife ordering her husband out of the bedroom and on to the living room couch. It may be temporary but it sure stings.

Ankara's decision today to throw out the Israeli ambassador (who was anyway leaving in a matter of days) probably signals more than a fleeting estrangement. One, because it also involves reducing relations to the level of 2nd secretary, suspending all military agreements, and perhaps further hostile economic, diplomatic, and security steps. Two, because it fits into a profound realignment of Turkish foreign policy now underway, turning from the West toward an Islamist outlook akin to but more subtle than those emanating from Riyadh and Tehran.

Although disappointed and saddened by the shift taking place in Turkey – as recently as a decade ago, I saw it as a model of modernity and moderation for other Muslims to follow – I am quite content to see the Israeli emissary pack his bags and leave Ankara, for this small drama helps anyone still myopic about Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AKP to understand just how much they are repositioning Turkey as a state hostile to the West.

I have argued before and repeat here: an ally no more, time has come to remove, or at least to suspend, the Turkish government from membership in the NATO alliance. (September 2, 2011)