

# The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East

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## ABSTRACT

Turkey has been traditionally viewed mostly as a hard power in the Middle East, due to its military and economic strength. In recent years, however, there has been a discussion on Turkey's soft power. This article focuses on two aspects of Turkey's soft power in the region. First, Turkey's relevance to the debate on political and economic reform is discussed. It is argued that because of Turkey's internal transformations its attractiveness has increased. In addition to having assets, Turkey is generally more willing to project soft power as well as having increasing credibility in the region. Second, the article focuses on Turkey's use of soft power tools, especially its eagerness to play third party roles in the management and resolution of regional conflicts. Turkey's roles in the Israeli-Syrian, Israeli Palestinian and Lebanese conflicts are considered as an example. The article argues that Turkey's soft power has increased in these two aspects and yet it also elaborates on existing and possible constraints in this regard.

In this article, Turkey's role as a wielder of soft power in the Middle East is analyzed through a consideration of two aspects. First, Turkey's relevance to the debate on political and economic reform in the Middle East is discussed. Second, Turkey's use of non-military tools in its relations with the region, particularly its potential for playing a third-party role in the management and resolution of regional conflicts, are explored. The article will discuss these two aspects of Turkey's soft power by considering their possibilities and limitations

## Turkey's Role in the Debate on Political and Economic Reform in the Middle East

In some ways, Turkey's relevance to the issue of modernization in the Middle East and the Islamic world is not entirely new. In the early years of its establishment, the so-called Turkish model was popular in the Middle East

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Turkey's reform process and the parallel progress in Turkey-EU relations have had an impact on how Turkey is perceived in the Arab world

among some leaders and intellectuals. After all, unlike the other countries of the region, Turkey was born out of a determination not to accept the post-WWI settlement that was imposed on it by the winners of the war. Turkey's war of independence was closely monitored by

nationalists in different parts of the Arab world, who were formulating their own plans for independence. Later, through the reforms that followed the war of independence, Turkey embarked on an extensive modernization path, more assertive than the one it had already initiated in the late 18th century. Turkey's fierce commitment to modernization became a source of inspiration particularly for Iran, Tunisia and Afghanistan.

Despite these countries' admiration for Turkey, which may be considered a soft power asset, the developments in the post-World War II period posed limitations for such a role. After the end of the Second World War, Turkey became a member of NATO, thus strongly anchoring itself to the Western Bloc during the Cold War. The Middle Eastern countries on the other hand did not officially become part of any bloc, although they individually developed close ties with one of the two superpowers. The rise of Arab nationalism led to the 'othering' of Turkey;<sup>1</sup> Arab nationalist discourse framed Turkey as a stooge of the West, and succeeded in building on the negative historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire that existed in some parts of the Arab world, particularly in the Mashreq region.<sup>2</sup> Turkey's recognition of Israel in 1949 created an additional rift. In sum, during the Cold War years the regional countries largely viewed Turkey in a negative light. For its part Turkey also distanced itself from the region for the most part and identified itself instead as part of the West. Thus, during most of the Cold War, Turkey had a limited influence in the Middle East. Turkish foreign and security elites defined the region as unstable and conflict-ridden, and thus tried not to 'get drawn in to the Middle East swamp.' In the 1970s, mainly in response to increasing oil prices, some emphasis was placed on developing better economic relations, but political involvement remained limited.

In recent years several developments in the region and in Turkey itself have led to changes in the way Turkey is perceived in the region. These changes have opened a way for Turkey to assume a more diversified role in the Middle East. Regionally, the decreasing importance of Arab nationalism, in tandem with a deepening political and economic crisis which has led to a crisis of legitimacy, as well as

the dilemmas created by the ascendancy of political Islam, have contributed to an environment conducive for rethinking Turkey. Similarly, developments in Turkey itself, particularly those having to do with political and economic modernization, improvement of relations with the EU and its parallel reform process, and the evolution of Turkey's political Islamist movement have increased interest in Turkey and made it relevant to the debates in the Middle East.

In an article published in *Arab Studies Quarterly* in 2005<sup>3</sup> I argued that in recent years Turkey's appeal as a soft power has increased, especially in the Arab Middle East. Specifically, I made the argument that Turkey has the assets, the will and the credibility to be a soft power in the region in regard to the debate on political and economic reform. What Turkey has become in fact constitutes its main assets. Compared to its neighbors in the Middle East, Turkey has achieved considerable socioeconomic and political development. It has also engaged in a rigorous reform process since the mid-1990s. The reforms began under the auspices of the coalition government led by Bülent Ecevit of the Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti-DSP*). Despite the difficulties of reaching consensus in a three-party coalition, the government was able to adopt significant reform measures. In October 2001, the Turkish parliament passed a series of reforms, such as reducing police powers of detention and easing curbs on human rights. It also lifted the ban on Kurdish language broadcasts and increased civilian representation on the National Security Council (NSC). The parliament adopted a new Civil Code, which became effective in January 2002, and that aimed in particular at improving freedom of association and assembly. The Code also introduced improvements in issues related to gender inequality. In February 2002, parliament passed another reform package that introduced reforms to the penal code and anti-terrorism law. In August 2003 it outlawed the death penalty and legalized instruction in languages other than Turkish. After coming to power, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP*) used its majority in the parliament to accelerate the reform process, especially in its first term. Through new "Harmonization Packages" and amendments to the Constitution, freedom of thought,

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expression and assembly have been enhanced while new measures have been taken to prevent torture. There was also a change in the role and institutional aspects of the National Security Council. The balance between the civilian and military members of the NSC shifted as

force commanders are no longer members of the Council and the institution itself is now headed by a civilian. Further, the executive powers of the General Secretariat of the NSC and the Council itself have been curtailed. The reform process as a whole contributed to the December 2004 decision of the European Council to start accession negotiations with Turkey. Turkey's reform process and the parallel progress in Turkey-EU relations have had an impact on how Turkey is perceived in the Arab world. At a time when almost all Arab governments are facing a crisis of governance and legitimacy, which is well-documented by successive Arab Human Development Reports of the UNDP, Turkey's recent reform experiences have been largely seen as a source of inspiration, especially by the reformers in the region.

In addition to these changes, the evolution of political Islam in Turkey in the form of the AKP and its coming to power after the 2002 elections represents an important development for Turkey's soft power. The AKP's coming to power also comprises an asset for the Turkish model, as it demonstrates both the evolution of the Islamist movement in Turkey, and the potential for reconciling democracy and Islam. The Party is a touchstone for Turkey's soft power, as the question of the role of Islam in government is a source of ongoing debate. Islamist parties have been part of the Turkish political system since 1970. The mainstream Islamist movement "national view" (*milli görüş*) has been represented in the Turkish parliament and in the government under different names, although the parties were from time to time banned due to their anti-regime rhetoric and activities. The AKP was established by a splinter group of reformers in the movement who had become increasingly critical of its policies and inner party politics. The founders of the AKP argued that the new party was no longer Islamist but rather conservative democrat, along the lines of the Christian Democrat parties of Europe. In its program, the party projected the image of a conservative central right party willing to operate in a secular constitutional order. Unlike its Islamists predecessors, the AKP staunchly supported Turkey's membership in the EU.

Different domestic and foreign actors have highlighted different aspects of the AKP's role as an asset for Turkey's soft power. One can identify two slightly di-

vergent positions in this regard. The first view considered the evolution of Turkey's political Islam and the coming to power of the AKP as an example to show the compatibility of Islam with democracy. In particular, the Turkish 'experiment' was regarded as demonstrating the possibility of moderation in political Islam, as evidenced by the party's willingness to operate under democratic norms. A corollary of this view sometimes posits that the more Turkey moves away from strict secularism and toward reconciliation with its moderate Islamic roots, the more it's potential to become a model for the Islamic world as an example of moderation increases. The second view credits Turkey's history of democratization and secularism for the evolution of Turkish political Islam. According to this argument, the Turkish example demonstrates the importance of democratic and secular norms as well as the importance of establishing an institutional structure in the evolution of political Islam.

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Clearly, what the Turkish model means and what really constitutes its assets is subject to debate. Those who focus only on the evolution of political Islam and the AKP government emphasize the importance of the Turkish example as revealing the possibility of moderate Islam and its compatibility with democracy. This is a particularly important asset, and has been used, for instance, by the U.S. administration as a panacea for addressing the growth of Islamist radicalism in the world. Those who, on the other hand, focus on the Turkish experience in a larger context emphasizes the important example Turkey sets as a Muslim nation that is democratic, secular, economically well-integrated with globalization, an accession country with the European Union, and one historically belonging to key Western institutions such as NATO, OSCE, the Council of Europe, and OECD. Within such a larger framework, Turkey's appeal cannot be limited merely to the AKP or the moderation of Islam, as they are the products of Turkey's other characteristics. Still, no matter which view one holds, it is clear that Turkey possesses the potential for soft power in the field of its internal politics.

However, the possession of assets is not enough to render a country a soft power. There should also be the will to act. Does Turkey have the will to turn its assets into influence and power? The traditional elite, reflecting their general reluctance to get involved in the Middle East, has been arguing that Turkey has no desire 'to be a model.' Some seculars have likewise been particularly uneasy about the discussion of Turkey within the framework of the Greater Middle East Initiative, as they question whether this would mean the promotion of Islam in Turk-

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ish politics. The first interpretation of Turkey's assets explained above, i.e. that Turkey provides a model for the symbiosis of democracy and Islam, increases their uneasiness about the discussion of a Turkish model.

On the other hand, the AKP government and some figures among the foreign policy elite are more willing for Turkey to play a role model. The speeches of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan and former Foreign Minister and current President Abdullah Gül in different forums attest to this. In their speeches in both Western and Islamic countries, Erdoğan and Gül give the message that Islam and democracy are very much compatible. For example, in his address at Harvard University on 30 January 2003, Erdoğan said:

I do not subscribe to the view that Islamic culture and democracy cannot be reconciled. As a politician who cherishes religious conviction in his personal sphere, but regards politics as a domain belonging outside religion, I believe that this view [i.e. of irreconcilability] is seriously flawed. I should like to repeat what I stated recently in the Jeddah Economic Forum in Saudi Arabia: It won't be the religion, but rather the world-view of some of its followers that shall be made current.<sup>4</sup>

The theme of the necessity for Islamic countries to engage in self-criticism and to reform has similarly been made clear, especially in meetings held in different parts of the Islamic world. For instance, former Foreign Minister Gül, in his speeches at the Organization of Islamic Countries Conference (OIC), the foreign ministers meeting in May 2003, and the World Economic Forum meeting in Jordan, emphasized good governance, transparency, accountability, respect for human rights, and integration with the rest of the world.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, AKP leadership has been given messages to the EU and the U.S. on the one hand, and to the Islamic world on the other. To the EU and the U.S., the message has been that democracy and Islam is compatible and they should get rid of their prejudices about the Islamic world. To the Islamic world, the AKP has been speaking from within

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and has been arguing that the Islamic countries should put their house in order and adopt political and economic reform. For the AKP, Turkey is appropriately poised to give these messages as it demonstrates these characteristics and possesses relevant assets.

The eagerness of the AKP to play the role of a promoter of democratization in the Islamic world and to bring together West and East fit nicely with several elements of the party's ideology. The policy of playing a leadership role in the promotion of democratization locates Turkey in a strategic position as regards its relations with the EU and the U.S., as well as ascribing a leadership role to Turkey in the transformation of the Arab world. Such ideas have been particularly tied to Turkey's quest for membership in the EU. As Abdullah Gül, during his tenure as Foreign Minister, stated:

Turkey's EU membership will mean that Europe has achieved such maturity that it can incorporate a major Muslim country into its fold and demonstrate that the EU stands for common values and institutions rather than common religion... For the world, this would be evidence that civilizations line up in terms of their democratic traditions, and not on the basis of religion. The message of reform, modernity, moderation, and integration represented by Turkey's EU membership will be spread to the wider international community.<sup>6</sup>

Statements such as these indicate a will, however implicit, to play the role of a soft power. But in order to truly don this mantle, Turkey should also have credibility in the region. In recent years, Arab views of Turkey have started to evolve in a more positive way. There are several reasons for this: First, the coming to power of the AKP has had a positive effect on perceptions of Turkey in the region. Several Arab intellectuals have made public their perception that the Turkish experiment (i.e. the democratic system that allowed the AKP to come to power and to transform itself into a party that accepts secularism and democracy), as important and successful. As a result, Turkish democracy is increasingly seen as genuine, rather than a façade. More importantly, the AKP's coming to power challenged beliefs long-held by Arab intellectuals in regard to Turkey. Both Arab nationalists and political Islamists in the Arab world have for a long time held a very simplistic view of Turkey that perceived a binary opposition between a "small secular elite" and "populous but powerless Islamic masses." Thus, the coming to power of a party with Islamic roots dramatically challenged that view and led to a conceptual revisiting of Turkey at a time of deep crisis in the Arab world.

The Turkish experience and the AKP's coming to power are particularly relevant to two groups in the Middle East. The first is the cluster of so-called

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moderate Islamist groups. These are Islamist groups that have learned their lessons from such experiences as the Algerian case, and are increasingly willing to play according to the rules of the game.<sup>7</sup> They are eager to participate in electoral politics and have denounced violence as a political method. The AKP has cred-

ibility among them. With their roots in the Islamist tradition in Turkey, most of the AKP politicians have personal contacts with the leadership of the Islamist parties of the Arab world. Furthermore, the AKP experience itself provides the moderate Islamist groups in the region with an example of a way to engage in legal politics without abandoning their conservative agendas.

The second group in the Arab world that closely follows the AKP experience is the collection of reformist, liberal and secular groups. Although these groups do not necessarily share the AKP's ideology, they see its experience in Turkey as a possible way out for their own dilemma. The political Islamists are the main opposition parties in all Arab countries. Therefore, if political reforms are implemented these parties are poised to benefit from them the most. This reality poses a dilemma for the secular reformists in the region, one which led them to side with the regimes that they criticize throughout most of the 1990s as the lesser of two evils. Increasingly, however, Arab reformers are more inclined to cooperate with moderate forces in the Islamist parties and movements to bring about a transition to a more democratic rule. The AKP experience thus presents them with a model that demonstrates that, through institutional limitations and democracy, Islamists parties can be managed and moderated.

In addition to the AKP, the Turkey-EU process has also become an interesting case for Arab reformers to consider. The reform process that deepened in Turkey as a result of its relationship with the EU presents a stimulus to political reform in the Arab world as well. As Fares Braizat of the Center of Strategic Studies of the University of Jordan explains:

Turkey is seen by Muslim countries as a role-model that has successfully balanced tradition and modernization. The Arabs looked up to Turkey as a model for bringing modernization and democracy... This could inspire Arab countries that if you introduce democratic reforms, it would mean you have the advantage of being considered for a better partnership with the European Union.<sup>8</sup>

Turkey-EU relations are also a test case to see whether the EU would incorporate a Muslim country or refuse it because of cultural differences. Up until recently,



Turkey's pursuit of EU membership was considered a "dream," largely because many in the Arab world believed that the EU would never accept a Muslim nation as a member. The Helsinki decision and the developments since then, particularly the decision to start accession negotiations, began to challenge that perception.

Finally, the Turkish parliament's refusal to allow the U.S. to station its troops on Turkish soil to open a second front against Iraq increased Turkey's credibility in the Arab world. This decision challenged Turkey's image as a stooge of the U.S. in the region, and garnered respect for Turkey as an independent actor looking after its own interests. This new credibility was especially prevalent on the Arab street and among intellectuals critical of their own government's secret dealings with the U.S. in support of the war, irrespective of public sentiments. As a result of all these developments, Turkey's image in the Arab world gradually improved.

Still, however, the emergence of Turkey as a soft power in the Arab world is an evolving process, and there are several obstacles to its sustainability:

First, to some extent, Turkey's soft power is a factor of Turkey's ability to solve its own internal problems. The current political instability in Turkey, including that related to the Kurdish issue, undermines Turkey's soft power capabilities. Similarly, the prospects for the future of the AKP experience will have repercussion for Turkey's soft power status, as the coming to power of this party contributed in an important way to the perception and the relevance of the Turkish experience in the eyes of the region. During the first term of the AKP government, the traditional establishment to a large extent tolerated its rule, and indeed the AKP has continued to work within the confines of democracy. Yet recently this experience seems to have come under duress as polarization began to reemerge between the secularists and the AKP government. The political crisis in the system would undermine the image of Turkey in the Arab world as a successful example of political modernization.

Second, the problems in Turkey-EU relations in recent years and the stagnation of the reform process also have implications for Turkey's soft power. Although accession negotiations did begin, the ensuing process has been marred by increasing contention. On the one hand, the EU criticizes Turkey for slowing

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down the reform process; on the other, Turkey expresses increasing dissatisfaction with the way the EU is handling its accession process.

Finally, increasing polarization and radicalization in the Muslim world in general and the Arab world in particular limit the appeal of Turkey, which has long represented cooperation and harmony rather than conflict between the West and the East. Increasing "Islamophobia" in Europe and the U.S. plays into the hands of radicals in the Islamic world. The spreading of mutual prejudices and the acceptance of an "us-them" mentality has the potential to undermine the attractiveness of the Turkish model. It is not a coincidence that al-Qaeda considers Turkey as one of its main targets.

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### **New Tools and Strategies: Turkey's 'Third Party' Potential**

In recent years, Turkey has diversified the tools and strategies it deploys in its relations with the Middle East. One of the novelties in Turkey's foreign policy towards this region has been its increasing eagerness to play third party roles in the management and, if possible, the resolution of regional conflicts. This willingness clearly signals a shift in Turkey's long-standing policy of non-intervention in regional conflicts. Since the end of the Cold War several Turkish governments have played with the idea, and yet only the current AKP government has made the peace-builder role an important element of its policy towards the region. Turkey's main asset in this regard is its position of having good relations with the parties to different conflicts. This rather unique situation positions Turkey well to be a third party mediator.

Turkey's third party involvement to date has largely focused on different tracks of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Following the gradual improvement of Turkey's relations with Syria after the October 1998 crisis, and after the collapse of Syrian-Israeli talks in 2000 and the deterioration of U.S.-Syrian relations, Turkey has been trying to restart negotiations between Israel and Syria. Prime Minister Erdoğan is said to be involved personally and to have conveyed messages to both sides. In May 2008, after several failed attempts, the two countries started indirect peace talks in Istanbul under Turkey's aegis. Although the sustainability and the success of this attempt remain to be seen, bringing the two sides together to talk, even if indirectly, after eight years is an important first step.

Turkey has also been involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in many different ways. For example it participates in what is called structural prevention, i.e. attempts to increase resources for settlement and capacity building. One such attempt has been the TOBB-BIS Industry for Peace Initiative, which is led by the Turkish Chambers and Commodity Exchange. Part of this initiative is the Ankara Forum, which consists of representatives from the Chambers of Commerce of Israel, Palestine and Turkey, based on the understanding that private sector dialogue is good for confidence-building. The Forum has so far had seven meetings. One of the specific projects proposed by the Forum has been the establishment of the Erez Industrial Zone. This project recognizes that there is a close correlation between economic development and peace; it thus aims to contribute to the Palestinian economy by creating up to 7,000 jobs. The project offers profit for the Turkish companies involved and security for Israel on its borders, making it a win-win project for all those involved. However, the implementation of the project had been slow, due first to the worsening security situation in the area and then to the problems of signing a security protocol with Israel. After the Hamas takeover in Gaza, the project was moved to Tarqumia in the West Bank. In addition to the TOBB Initiative, projects involving pipelines for energy, water and power supplies are also under discussion. All these projects are examples of Turkey's third party role in structural prevention and in creating a conducive environment for peace.

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Turkey has also been providing development and humanitarian aid for the Palestinians. Since the Paris Protocol of 1996, Turkey has poured a total of 10 million U.S. Dollars into the fields of health, education, public administration, institutionalization, security, tourism and agriculture. As to other capacity- and institution-building activities, Turkey has supported the political reform process, and Turkish experts have participated in the constitutional and administrative reform processes. Similarly, the Turkish Foreign Ministry conducted a Young Palestinian Diplomats' Training Program. Former President Süleyman Demirel was part of the Mitchell Commission which was formed after the eruption of the al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000 and Turkey formed the Jerusalem Technical Committee to investigate whether the excavation works by Israel are detrimental to Haram al-Sharif. Finally, Turkey has been part of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron which was formed in 1997. In short, given its good relations with both

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sides, Turkey has earned a status as a logical facilitator, providing a safe space for meetings and conveying information and messages between the parties.

This status does not come without risk, however. Recently, in its role as a third party in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Turkey took the bold step of in-

inviting Khaled Mishal, a Hamas leader then residing in Damascus, to visit Turkey soon after Hamas' victory in the Palestinian legislative elections was announced. The Turkish government later stated that Mishal was called to Turkey to receive the message that now that Hamas had won the elections it should act in a reasonable and democratic way. Mishal, however, made no announcement of moderation or a change in policy while he was in Turkey, and thus the whole saga served only to legitimize Hamas. Turkey apparently started this initiative without the knowledge of the other party, i.e. Israel, and neglected to get any commitment from Mishal beforehand. The visit thus created a debate in Turkey and raised doubts about the previous involvement of the Foreign Ministry in the whole affair. Despite this uproar, the visit demonstrated how far the AKP government was prepared to go in its third party role. In this case, Turkey was threading a very fine line that could, if improperly handled, hurt its longstanding role as an honest broker. With that said, it was less the idea of talking with Hamas, which could be considered a valuable component of Turkey's third party role, than the way in which it was done that was problematic.

Lastly, Turkey's involvement in the recent Lebanese conflict is another example of Turkey's new willingness to play third party roles in Middle East conflicts. Turkey has involved in the Lebanese crisis at two levels. First, the Turkish parliament took the decision to send forces to UNIFIL II. This was a novel policy at the time, in light of Turkey's policy of non-involvement in Middle East conflicts. Nevertheless, the AKP government decided to send the forces despite some domestic criticism. I would argue that Turkey's participation in UNIFIL II was in line with the general turn in Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East. From a realist perspective, what was happening in Lebanon was related to larger regional geopolitical struggles; thus, involvement in UNIFIL II helps Turkey position itself in the emerging geopolitical landscape. The AKP took a different tack, however, and justified Turkey's involvement on the basis of historical and cultural ties, even making references to Ottoman times. As a bonus, the fact that UNIFIL II is largely an EU force underlined the possibility of cooperation between Turkey and the

EU in the Middle East. On the second level, Turkey attempted to mediate between different parties in the political crisis within Lebanon. The eagerness of the AKP government to participate on this level quickly waned, however, when Turkey realized its limitations.

In sum, Turkey has increasingly been involved in the management and resolution of conflicts in the Middle East, and its role has been accepted by different regional and external actors. However, it is clear that Turkey needs to study and think more about its goals and the appropriateness of its various methodologies. In doing so, Turkey must to assess its own capabilities and connection to the conflicts, as there is a danger of having an expectations-abilities gap. Similarly, in each case, there should be an assessment of costs and benefits, as the Mishal visit vividly demonstrated. Finally, there is the danger of overextension as Turkey remains eager to play third party roles.

To conclude, it is clear that in recent years Turkey's soft power in the region has increased. Thus Turkey's military and economic might in the region is now supported by its soft power, particularly through its increasing attractiveness and its ties with conflicting actors in the region.<sup>9</sup> However, there are several constraints upon Turkey as a wielder of soft power, some of which originate from Turkey itself. For one, Turkey's soft power is dependent on its ability to solve its own problems; thus the periods of crises Turkey goes through have a negative impact on its status as a soft power. Similarly, the problems in Turkey's relations with the EU have repercussions, and, finally, some of the constraints on Turkey's soft power originate from regional politics with global extensions. The radicalization in the region, the further polarization of regional politics, and the increasing rift between Turkey's Western allies and its regional friends could put serious restraints on Turkey's soft power roles, at least in the medium term.

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## Endnotes

1. For the negative images held by both sides about the other, see Dietrich Jung, "Turkey and the Arab World: Historical Narratives and New Political Realities," *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 10 (2005), pp. 1-17.

2. The legacy of the Ottoman Empire is more positive in the Maghreb countries. This is mainly due to two reasons: First, they were further away from the central administration and thus experi-

enced more autonomy under the Ottomans. Second, they came under European colonial rule much earlier than the Mashreq countries and thus ceased to be part of the Empire long before its demise. The Mashreq region, however, experienced the difficult and confusing process of disintegration and thus has a more negative historical memory in regard to the Empire.

3. Meliha Benli Altunışık, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No.s. 1 and 2 (Winter and Spring 2005), pp. 45-63.

4. Address by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "Democracy in the Middle East, Pluralism in Europe: the Turkish View," Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government, 30 January 2003.

5. Abdullah Gül, "Turkey's Role in a Changing Middle East Environment," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, (Winter 2004) p.2.

6. Gül, "Turkey's Role in a Changing Middle East Environment," p.2

7. For instance, the Justice and Development Party in Morocco, al Wasat in Egypt, the MSP in Algeria, and the Islamic Action Front in Jordan.

8. Ayşe Hakim, "The Middle East Needs Turkey's EU membership," 2 October 2005, [www.an-karapost.net/comments.php?id=1775](http://www.an-karapost.net/comments.php?id=1775), accessed on 1 April 2006.

9. An interesting line of inquiry could be to look at the interplay between Turkey's hard and soft power in the region, which is beyond the scope of this article.