

## Turkey's "Demonstrative Effect" and the Transformation of the Middle East

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### ABSTRACT

*A string of uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt followed by those in other countries have rekindled the issue of Turkey constituting a model for reform and democratization in the Arab world, a point raised by many Western and Arab commentators. Independent of this debate, what is lacking in the literature is an analysis of how come there is a "demand" for the Turkish model. This article develops the concept of a "demonstrative effect" and argues that it is this "effect" that makes the Turkish model of interest to the Middle East and that this "effect" is a function of three developments: the rise of the "trading state", the diffusion of Turkey's democratization experience as a "work in progress", and the positive image of Turkey's "new" foreign policy. The concluding part of the article discusses several challenges Turkey has to meet so that its "demonstrative effect" can have a positive impact.*

A string of uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt in the early part of 2011 followed by those in other countries have rekindled the debate over reform and democratization in the Arab world. The Arab world has long been treated as an exception to the "third wave" of democratization that swept Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and parts of Asia and Africa following the end of the Cold War.<sup>1</sup> In 2004 the American administration, to promote a "freedom agenda" and democracy, launched the ambitious Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) initiative. However, this initiative, after having shown some initial signs of hope in 2004 and 2005, very quickly collapsed. The disasters in Afghanistan and Iraq compelled the United States as well as the EU to prioritize stability over reform and democratization and the regimes in the Arab world quickly returned back to old habits of authoritarian and repressive policies.

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Turkey is being shown as a model by the very people who are involved in efforts to bring about reform and transformation in the Arab world

A leading scholar of democracy and democratization in the United States, Larry Diamond, underlines the importance of a “model” in inspiring reform and transformation among Arab countries. He cites the absence of such a “model” in the Middle East as one of a set of factors complicating the prospects

of democratization in the region.<sup>2</sup> Yet recently, prominent personalities ranging from the Tunisian opposition leader Rashid al-Ganouchi to the grandson of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Tariq Ramadan have highlighted the importance of Turkey as a model or example for the transformation of the Arab world.<sup>3</sup> This, however, is not a new development. As the Soviet Union collapsed and the question of reform and democratization emerged in its former republics, the *Economist* announced Turkey to be the “Star of Islam” and a model for the Central Asian republics especially.<sup>4</sup> Roughly a decade later the idea of Turkey as a “model” was raised once again, this time by the American President George Bush when he launched the BMENA initiative. Turkey was officially made a party to this initiative.<sup>5</sup> In both cases Turkey’s “model” credentials were based on Turkey being a secular Muslim country and a democracy with a liberal market. Both of these developments triggered a debate on whether Turkey could or could not be a “model” and produced a rich body of literature.<sup>6</sup>

Actually, the thoughts of neither al-Ganouchi nor Ramadan are new. The Arab world began to take a close interest in Turkey roughly around the time the EU decided to open accession negotiations with Turkey in December 2004. The then minister of foreign affairs of Turkey, Abdullah Gül, likes to reminisce that the number of Arab foreign correspondents covering the press conference of the EU decision was higher than correspondents from other countries.<sup>7</sup> With this level of interest it is not surprising that Arab journalists began to raise the view that Turkey constitutes a model of reform in the Arab world. For example, one such journalist argued that “it will be possible to learn from Turkey’s experience. This will mean that the reforms will come via from within a great Islamic country”. The author went on to argue that reforms attained in this manner would become much more palatable than would otherwise be the case.<sup>8</sup> Another journalist argued that the contest was between the model Turkey was offering in contrast to the one advocated by Osama Bin Laden.<sup>9</sup>

What sets the current debate on Turkey’s role as a model apart from previous occasions is that unlike in the past this time the debate is occurring against a

backdrop of successful uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia that have raised the genuine prospects of actual reform. This time Turkey is being shown as a model by the very people who are involved in efforts to bring about reform and transformation in the Arab world. These developments are again accompanied by a lively debate on why Turkey can or cannot be a model for transformation and democratization in the Arab world.<sup>10</sup> However, independent of this debate, what is lacking is an analysis of how come there is a "demand" for the Turkish model. In other words what explains the growing awareness of the Turkish model, independent of whether the model is applicable or not? What is it that renders Turkey visible to those seeking or demanding reform in the Arab world? What are the channels through which this model is diffused or transmitted? This paper will develop the concept of "demonstrative effect" and argue that it is this "effect" that makes the Turkish model of interest to the Middle East and that this "effect" is a function of three developments: the rise of the "trading state", making Turkey visible through commerce, investment and trade; the diffusion of Turkey's democratization experience as a "work in progress"; and the positive image of Turkey's "new" foreign policy, including the introduction of policies encouraging freer movement of people between Turkey and the Middle East.

### **"Demonstrative Effect"**

Various terms are used to describe Turkey's role in respect to assisting the prospects of reform and democratic transformation in the Arab world. These terms range from "model," "example" to "inspiration". Even the notion of "companion" has been advocated.<sup>11</sup> This paper acknowledges that those who employ these terms do have certain differences in mind. Space precludes a discussion of these differences as well as whether Turkey can or for that matter ought to be a "model", an "example", an "inspiration" or a "companion" or not. Instead, the focus is on how come a range of personalities directly involved in the quest for reform and transformation in the Arab world see Turkey as a model. It is undoubtedly possible to develop various arguments to answer such a question. This paper advocates the view that one answer stems from Turkey's demonstrative effect.

Samuel Huntington in his seminal work on the "third wave" of democratization highlights the importance of the demonstrative effect as a means of showing that democratic change can happen and how it can happen.<sup>12</sup> He refers to the process as a snowballing effect of earlier transitions that allow the "stimulating and providing models of subsequent efforts at democratization".<sup>13</sup> In other words, earlier democratic transitions and experiences set an example for others to fol-

low. Moreover, Huntington notes that the most powerful demonstrative effects are regional ones.<sup>14</sup> He gives as an example of this process the case of the collapse of authoritarian rule in the Philippines as a result of “people power” in 1986 inspiring the mass South Korean protests the following year that opened the way to South Korea’s democratization. The rise of an effective Polish civil society in the late 1980s, for example, inspired neighboring countries that saw communist parties surrender their monopoly on power within months of Solidarity forming a government in Poland in August 1989.<sup>15</sup> The influence of the demonstrative effect is noted especially in the case of the “color revolutions” of the mid-2000s in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>16</sup> A similar process of “spill-over” has clearly manifested itself in the case of Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain and Libya during the early months of 2011.

Actually, it is possible to argue that Turkey’s democratization experience has also benefited from demonstrative effects. For instance, the changes occurring in Eastern and Central Europe affected Turkey. The case of Bulgaria, especially with regard to its treatment of the Turkish minority, had a particular influence on Turkey. One of the difficult and controversial reforms that Turkey faced was the issue of cultural rights for minorities, particularly for Kurds. The fact that post-communist Bulgaria next door had adopted similar reforms for the Turkish minority did indeed attract attention and was hotly debated in Turkey. In a similar manner, Turkey constitutes an example for the efforts of countries of the region and especially in the Middle East to reform. A prominent Syrian academic has noted how Arabs of all political inclinations, ranging from Arab socialists to Islamists, are debating among themselves Turkey’s experience and what it means for them.<sup>17</sup> A survey conducted by the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) in seven Arab countries specifically asked questions that seem to capture Turkey’s demonstrative effect. Overall 61 percent of the respondents considered Turkey to be a model for the Arab world. This is particularly significant considering that some have long argued that Turkey’s secular system prevents it from being a model. Fully 63 percent of the respondents agreed that “Turkey constituted a successful example of coexistence of democracy and Islam.”<sup>18</sup>

### **The “Trading State” Dimension**

There is also an economic dimension to the demonstrative effect. It is not surprising that Turkish democracy has expanded hand-in-hand with the growth of its economy and per capita income. Scholars have long pointed out the relationship between economic development and democracy<sup>19</sup> while research has also

shown a strong relationship between the level of development and the probability of sustaining democracy.<sup>20</sup> Economic development transforms societies in a number of ways. Most importantly it enlarges the middle class, making it difficult to sustain the concentration of political power in the hands of a narrow elite, and encourages social capital to emerge thereby enriching civil society.<sup>21</sup> The Turkish economy for a long time was a closed and import substitution-oriented economy dominated by a small elite closely allied with the state. It was after the liberalization of the Turkish market and transformation of the economy in an export-oriented direction that Turkey began to see a massive explosion in its middle class. Turkey's per capita income increased from just about USD 1,300 (current) in 1985 to USD 2,773 in 1995 and finally almost USD 11,000 in 2008.<sup>22</sup> This was also the period during which the place of the agricultural sector in Turkey fell from about 30 percent of GDP employing 77 percent of labor in the 1960s to 15 and 35 percent respectively by the early parts of the century.<sup>23</sup> Instead the manufacturing sector grew significantly together with the services sector, especially in banking, communication, health and tourism. These are precisely sectors that require better education and professionalism, again strengthening the ranks of the middle class. It is not surprising that these massive structural changes have coincided with growing demands for democratization in Turkey especially in the 2000s.

These changes also coincided with a period when Turkey became a "trading state", that is a state whose foreign policy becomes increasingly shaped by economic consideration and a country in whose GNP foreign trade acquires an important place.<sup>24</sup> Turkey's foreign trade grew from less than USD 20 billion in 1985 to more than USD 330 billion in 2008 and fell to just under USD 300 billion in 2010 due to the world economic recession (Table I). The proportion of manufactured goods in Turkey's exports expanded from about 1.4 percent in 1950 and 18.4 percent in 1970 to 94.2 percent in 2003.<sup>25</sup> Much more significantly, in terms of the demonstrative effect, Turkey's trade with its immediate neighbors increased from about USD 4 billion in 1991 to USD 82 billion in 2008. This is an increase from 11.5 to almost 25 percent of Turkey's overall trade (Table I). Furthermore, Turkey's involvement in its neighborhood has not been solely in trade. Turkish enterprises have also been investing in the region, directly contributing to employment and growth.

As the Turkish economy is increasingly engaged in its neighborhood, there is greater interaction between Turkish business elite and the business people of the region

Table I: Turkish foreign trade and the Middle East

TURKEY	1991			2002			2008			2010			% of Change 1991-2008	% of Change 2008-2010
	Export	Import	Total	Export	Import	Total	Export	Import	Total	Export	Import	Total		
Bulgaria	76	140	216	380	508	888	2.152	1.840	3.992	1.498	1.701	3.199	1748%	-20%
Greece	144	77	221	590	312	902	2.430	1.151	3.581	1.456	1.542	2.998	1520%	-16%
Romania	105	199	304	566	662	1.228	3.987	3.548	7.535	2.599	3.448	6.047	2379%	-20%
Moldova	-	-	-	40	5	45	198	70	268	148	111	259	-	-3%
Russia	611	1.097	1.708	1.172	3.892	5.064	6.483	31.364	37.847	4.632	21.596	26.228	2116%	-31%
Ukraine	-	-	-	313	991	1.304	2.188	6.106	8.294	1.261	3.830	5.091	-	-39%
Azerbaijan	-	-	-	103	138	241	998	525	1.523	1.551	865	2.416	-	59%
Georgia	-	-	-	231	65	296	1.667	928	2.595	769	291	1.060	-	-59%
Iran	487	91	578	334	921	1.255	2.030	8.200	10.230	3.043	7.645	10.688	1670%	4%
Iraq	122	492	614	-	-	-	3.917	1.321	5.238	6.043	1.355	7.398	753%	41%
Syria	264	67	331	267	506	773	1.115	639	1.754	1.849	663	2.512	430%	43%
Neighborhood TOTAL	1.809	2.163	3.972	3.996	8.000	11.996	27.165	55.692	82.857	24.849	43.047	67.896	1986%	-18%
Lebanon	90	7	97	187	42	229	665	179	844	619	229	848	770%	0%
Jordan	158	30	188	117	18	135	461	25	486	572	43	615	159%	27%
GCC + Yemen	650	2.220	2.870	1.334	952	2.286	12.722	4.361	17.083	6.746	3.642	10.388	495%	-39%
N. Africa	524	432	956	938	1.518	2.456	4.424	4.324	8.748	4.779	3.378	8.157	815%	-7%
Egypt	169	48	217	326	118	444	1.426	943	2.369	2.261	926	3.187	991%	35%
Sudan	20	4	24	59	12	71	234	9	243	228	5	233	912%	-4%
Arab World TOTAL	1.907	3.293	5.200	3.041	3.124	6.165	24.299	11.622	35.921	22.478	10.012	32.490	591%	-10%
Israel	79	78	157	805	545	1.350	1.935	1.448	3.383	2.083	1.360	3.443	2055%	2%
EU	7.348	9.896	17.244	20.415	25.689	46.104	63.390	74.802	138.192	52.659	72.215	124.874	701%	-10%
US	913	2.255	3.168	3.356	3.099	6.455	4.300	11.976	16.276	3.768	12.318	16.086	414%	-1%
Sub-Saharan Africa	117	269	386	430	558	988	3.212	2.503	5.715	2.258	2.108	4.366	1381%	-24%
GRAND TOTAL	13.593	21.047	34.640	36.059	51.554	87.613	132.027	201.964	333.991	113.899	185.497	299.396	864%	-10%

\*Source: TÜİK

\*\*In 1991, values for Russia are values for USSR, therefore ex-Soviet countries data is not included.

\*\*\*Arab World Total contains Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, N.Africa countries (Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco), GCC (Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, S.Arabia, U.A.E, Oman), Yemen.

\*\*\*\*Sub-Saharan countries includes all Africa except North-African countries

For example, in 2005 the Ramstore supermarket chain, owned by Koç Holdings's subsidiary Migros, operated 54 outlets in neighboring countries and it ran no fewer than 22 supermarkets and three large shopping malls in Russia alone, an investment valued at around a quarter of a billion USD.<sup>26</sup> According to the Russian *Ria Novosti*, as of May 2010, investment in joint Russian-Turkish projects reached USD 25 billion.<sup>27</sup> In Georgia, Turkish airport construction and management company TAV operates the airports of Batumi and Tbilisi. Turkish construction companies are heavily engaged in the tourism industry in Batumi. Just in this small coastal city of Georgia, there are about 200 Turkish investors reported by the media.<sup>28</sup> In Bulgaria, Turkey's EU neighbor, in late March 2008 the Turkish Prime Minister opened a brand new "glass factory" worth USD 380 million belonging to the Turkish company Trakya Cam. Together with another Turkish glass company Şişe Cam, Turkish investments in the glass production sector are expected to reach USD one billion in the near future.<sup>29</sup> There are numerous Turkish restaurants and bakeries as well as small- to medium-scale businesses operating practically in all the countries surrounding the Black Sea. There is a large and growing Turkish business presence in the Middle East too. Turkish investment especially in the construction sector of northern Iraq is fast growing. USAID estimated the size of the construction market in the region to be USD 2.8 billion, with



95 percent of the market controlled by Turkish companies.<sup>30</sup> Turkish investments in Egypt, especially in the area of textiles, are growing as some Turkish companies move their factories there. Similarly, Turkish companies such as Ülker in the food sector, GAMA in the construction sector, and Yapı Kredi Bank have important investments in GCC countries.<sup>31</sup> Turkish companies are also fast expanding their investments in Syria. According to a October 2010 report, "Turkey has earmarked 180 million euros (247 million USD) in loans for Syria to use for infrastructure projects."<sup>32</sup> Turkish State Minister responsible for Foreign Trade Zafer Çağlayan announced during the *Conference on Investment in the Syrian Coast* organized by the Turkish-Syrian Business Council that Turkish investments in Syria amounted to USD 700 million.<sup>33</sup>

These developments are significant for Turkey's neighborhood for at least three reasons. Firstly, they set an example of how economic success, in the sense of how a transition from a primarily agriculture-dominated import-substitution economy to a globally competitive "one" and democratization has gone hand in hand. Turkish exports and investments make this relationship visible. Secondly, especially as the Turkish economy is increasingly engaged in its neighborhood, there is greater interaction between Turkish business elite and the business people of the region. Inevitably, issues of rule of law, accountability and transparency come up during conversations between business people as well as officials. Similarly, as Turkish companies consider investing in the local economies similar issues and pressures emerge accompanied by demands for setting up representative organizations.

For example, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has been keen to attract Turkish investment and experience into its region in an effort to learn from the experience of Turkish companies.<sup>34</sup> In a similar fashion Syria has tried to learn from Turkey's banking experience as an important step in its efforts to liberalize its economy. A concrete example of the demonstrative effect involves the way in which business people from a number of countries around the Black Sea actually approached Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) to seek assistance in setting up a regional umbrella association to represent business interests in the region and learn from Turkey's business experience. This culminated in a process that led to the setting up in November 2006 of the Union of Black Sea and Caspian Confederation of Enterprises (UBCCE) with its secretariat located in TUSIAD's headquarters in Istanbul. The actual process of the setting up of UBCCE and its subsequent activities have constituted occasions where a transfer of experience and know-how has taken place with regard to doing business in liberal markets and defending business interests in the political arena.<sup>35</sup>

## Turkish Democratization as a “Work in Progress”

The most potent demonstrative effect may be that Turkish democracy is itself a “work in progress”. This closes the otherwise large gap and also hierarchical relationship that inevitably forms between well-established democracies and countries that are receiving democratic assistance. The fact that Turkey is still struggling with consolidating and deepening its democracy enables the Turkish side to relate to their partners much more easily and also vice versa. Turkey, acting as a venue for gathering activists from the region, becomes critical as they can get both firsthand experience from their Turkish counterparts and see the “work in progress” for themselves. A case in point would be the issue of women’s rights and honor killings. Arab and Turkish women activists find it easier to discuss these problems among themselves than with their Western counterparts who will treat the issue as a problem of the “other”.<sup>36</sup> Turkish governmental officials are conscious of the advantages of “work in progress” and they have noted how this makes communication with their counterparts much easier.

This may also explain why when minister of foreign affairs (at the time) Abdullah Gül addressed a meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Countries (OIC) in late May 2003 he received a standing ovation. Gül in his speech took a very critical view of the state of democracy in the Muslim world. He stressed the need for Muslim countries to pay greater attention to human rights and women’s rights as well as to greater transparency in governance. However, his speech was very much framed from the perspective of being part of the membership and “one of them” that needs to improve. This was made clear when he noted that “we should first put our house in order”.<sup>37</sup> During his visit to Iran in February 2011, against the backdrop of uprisings in the Arab world, Gül made references to this speech of his in an effort to highlight the need in the Muslim world to respond to public demands. The emphasis on “we” is critical here in relating to an audience that is meant to be a target of democracy diffusion. Additionally, when Gül’s speeches are studied closely it is possible to recognize the preference for using a discourse that resonates with his audience. He comfortably employs a detailed language of democracy when addressing Westerners compared to an audience from countries lacking a democratic experience. In the latter case the emphasis is put on concepts such as “good governance”, “improving political participation” and “transparency”. It is this ability to resonate with target audiences that is probably the most important aspect of Turkey’s demonstrative effect. A Turkish official who noted how when Western countries become engaged in democratic assistance with some of Turkey’s neighbors



they “sort of put a project down on the table like a brick and say here it is and if you will implement it you will become democratic”. He then added how this approach usually leaves the receiving parties staring at the “brick” in an utter state of puzzlement. In contrast, in the case of Turkey, a sense of “we are in it together” develops.<sup>38</sup>

Turkey's visa-free travel policy also allows the possibility of reinforcing the image of Turkey formed through the media

As will be discussed below, Turkey's visa-free travel policy also allows the possibility of reinforcing the image of Turkey formed through the media. Turkish media and especially Turkish TV series are increasingly recognized as having an important demonstrative effect in the Arab world. They are seen as a bridge between the Arab world and a Western way of life, as depicted in a Muslim but democratic, liberal and secular Turkey.<sup>39</sup> The fact that these series are particularly popular among, for example, Saudi women, must indeed have a demonstrative effect. A survey of Saudi women above the age of 15 held in March 2009 showed that more than 71 percent of respondents enjoyed Turkish TV series. These programs depict Turkish women as having a much more liberal and freer way of life than women do in Saudi Arabia. It is the visa-free travel that gives the Arab world the possibility to come and see what is depicted in these movies and TV series in Turkey for themselves. One other way in which travel offers a channel for a demonstrative effect is the use by some Western non-governmental organizations of Istanbul as a venue for meetings that gather activists from neighboring regions. This is partly done for logistical reasons: Turkey has a liberal visa policy and Istanbul is easily accessible from most countries of the region. However, a more important and pertinent factor is that such meetings can be held much more freely without fear of government surveillance or repression. These meetings do also become occasions when visitors from the region get to experience a lively and critical debate among Turkish participants over the problems of Turkey. Civil society and democracy activists have noted these experiences as examples of demonstrative effects that Turkey has to offer.<sup>40</sup>

Turkish business civil society in the form of organizations ranging, for example, from the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD), the Turkish Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK), the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM), the Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB), TUSIAD, and the Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) have been involved in activities and projects that constitute examples of how democratization offers the business world a chance to shape politics and foreign policy. For

example, a couple years ago TOBB worked very closely with the government in an effort to promote both peace and business between Israelis and Palestinians with respect to their “Industry for Peace” (*Bariş için Sanayi Girişimi*) project. More recently in December 2010, TOBB, together with DEİK, led the initiative for the formation of the “Levant Business Forum”, composed of representatives from Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey, with the aim of encouraging greater economic integration.<sup>41</sup> Another Turkish business organization bringing together representatives of especially small- and medium-sized enterprises, TUSKON, together with the Undersecretariat of the Prime Ministry for Foreign Trade (DTM), has organized yearly trade summits since 2006, bringing African leaders and business people together with their Turkish counterparts.<sup>42</sup>

One last example of a channel through which Turkey’s “work in progress” democracy gets transmitted is Turkey’s higher education sector that is receiving an increasing number of students from its neighborhood. The government also runs a scholarship program that has been incorporated into the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA). In 2009 there were more than 7,000 foreign students studying on scholarship programs. A high-ranking government official argued that this was a unique practice in Turkey’s neighborhood and added that in time these students begin to want to see their country to become like Turkey.<sup>43</sup> Most of the students actually come from countries that lack democratic traditions such as Central Asian countries. Although the government does not run this program with an overt objective of democracy promotion, it recognizes the program’s demonstrative effect as it gives students the possibility to observe Turkey as an open society first hand, with its strengths and weaknesses.<sup>44</sup> This is also recognized by the students themselves. One such student, who held a high-ranking position in the Azeri bureaucracy, recognized the significance of this experience and argued that education in Turkey is contributing to the long term formation of Putnam’s “social capital” in Azerbaijan, which is critical to developing and sustaining democracy.<sup>45</sup> This is significant considering that at least in the case of Taiwan’s transition to democracy it has been noted that the leaders of the democratic movement “adopted Western democratic ideals as well as democratic procedures, institutional design, political techniques and legal frameworks” during their education in the West and applied it at home.<sup>46</sup>

### Turkey’s “New” Foreign Policy

One last factor that supports Turkey’s demonstrative effect in the Arab world is Turkey’s “new” foreign policy.<sup>47</sup> During the Cold War, Turkey’s relations with its

neighborhood were limited and problematic. The 1990s saw economic relations and the movement of people between Turkey and the ex-Soviet world expand. Yet, Turkish foreign policy during this period remained locked into intense conflict with a string of neighbors ranging from Armenia, Cyprus, and Greece to Iran, Iraq and Syria. This had earned Turkey the reputation of a "post Cold War warrior".<sup>48</sup> This situation began to change by the late 1990s paving the way to a rapprochement first with Greece and then Syria. However, the real breakthrough did not come until the arrival of Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power and the "zero problems policy" associated with the current minister of foreign affairs, Ahmet Davutoğlu. This policy saw Turkey's relations with its neighbors improve and expand and was accompanied by a growing interest to seek solutions to the problems of Turkey's neighborhood from the Balkans to the Middle East. The "zero problems policy" has engendered considerable Turkish involvement in regional issues ranging from efforts to mediate between Arabs/Palestinians and Israelis, between Sunnis and Shi'a in Iraq, between Afghanistan and Pakistan, between Bosnia and Serbia, between Iran and the West, and in resolving bi-lateral conflicts such as Cyprus and relations with Armenia. Even if these mediation efforts have not always been very successful it has nevertheless helped to change Turkey's image in the eyes of the Arab world. Turkey has come to be known as a country that "speaks much more softly, multilaterally and cooperatively than ever"<sup>49</sup> and hence has been much more positively received.

Another important aspect of Turkey's "new" foreign policy has been the close relations that the government has developed with Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood plus the bitter criticism it has directed towards Israel in the last couple of years.<sup>50</sup> These developments have triggered a major debate on whether Turkey has been shifting away from the West towards the Middle East. Simultaneously, it has also "ruffled feathers" with some of the leadership in the Middle East as well as inside Turkey.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, these developments have made Erdoğan particularly popular among the so-called "Arab street" strengthening Turkey's demonstrative effect. The "street" very much attributes Erdoğan's policies in this regard to a more democratic Turkey in contrast to a Turkey where the military once enjoyed greater influence.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, in the context of Turkey's "new" foreign policy Davutoğlu's energetic efforts to promote a stable and prosperous neighborhood through encouraging greater economic integration between Turkey and the Arab world need to be highlighted.<sup>53</sup> In July 2010 he led the effort for the establishment of a "Close Neighbors Economic and Trade Association Council" with Jordan, Lebanon

Turkey's decision to encourage "flows of people, trade, and ideas" suggests it is abandoning the "realist view of balance of power, and a zero-sum understanding" of international relations in favor of a "liberal idea of opening and interdependence"

and Syria. The council aims to establish a free-trade area within five years based on the recognition that "free trade agreements contribute to the expansion of world trade, to greater international stability, and in particular, to the development of closer relations among our peoples".<sup>54</sup> Actually, such an objective is not that far from the stated objectives of the European Mediterranean Policy (EMP) and the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP).<sup>55</sup> Whether the council will

achieve its objectives time will tell; however, Turkey already has free trade agreements with Jordan and Syria and the one with Lebanon nears ratification. Turkey has actually signed free trade agreements with all the EMP countries with the exception of Algeria.<sup>56</sup> These steps are clearly in line with Davutoğlu's ambitious vision of an integration project leading to free movement of goods and people from the city of Kars to the Atlantic, and from Sinop to the Gulf of Aden.<sup>57</sup> Such a bold project that has already had a tangible element to it is that the freer movement of people has resonated well with the Arab public.

A more liberal visa policy has been an especially striking characteristic of Turkey's neighborhood policy. It has been argued that Turkey's decision to encourage "flows of people, trade, and ideas" suggests it is abandoning the "realist view of balance of power, and a zero-sum understanding" of international relations in favor of a "liberal idea of opening and interdependence".<sup>58</sup> However, this is a policy that has been extended to parts of the Arab Middle East only recently. The number of the nationals of Arab countries entering the country increased from about 332,000 in 1991 to almost 1.9 million in 2010 (Table II). This constituted only 6.6 percent of all entries into Turkey compared to entries from the EU and the former Soviet bloc countries, which constituted 56 percent and almost 26 percent respectively. The number of Iranians that entered Turkey in 2010 was almost equal to that of those from the whole of the Arab world combined. More than half a million Israeli nationals entered Turkey in 2008; however, this figure dropped dramatically to just under 110,000 in 2010 as a result of the deteriorating relations between the two countries. The big difference between the entries from the Arab world and the rest of Turkey's neighborhood was primarily a function of the fact that former Soviet bloc country nationals, Europeans, Iranians and Israelis enter Turkey visa free or with sticker visas easily obtained at entry points.

Table II: Movement of people into Turkey from the Middle East and other regions between 1995 and 2010

TURKEY	1995		2002		2008		2010		% of Change 1995-2010	% of Change 2008-2010
	Total	% of Total	Total	% of Total	Total	% of Total	Total	% of Total		
Iraq	15.363	0,23%	15.758	0,12%	250.130	0,95%	280.328	0,98%	1725%	12%
Syria	111.613	1,65%	126.428	0,95%	406.935	1,55%	899.494	3,14%	706%	121%
Lebanon	26.831	0,40%	31.298	0,24%	53.948	0,20%	134.554	0,47%	401%	149%
Jordan	25.770	0,38%	33.127	0,25%	74.340	0,28%	96.562	0,34%	275%	30%
GCC + Yemen*	42.862	0,63%	45.828	0,35%	121.214	0,46%	169.865	0,59%	296%	40%
N.Africa**	89.914	1,33%	135.296	1,02%	194.546	0,74%	244.173	0,85%	172%	26%
Egypt	18.237	0,27%	21.583	0,16%	57.994	0,22%	61.560	0,22%	238%	6%
Sudan	1.536	0,02%	2.212	0,02%	8.987	0,03%	6.634	0,02%	332%	-26%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332.126</b>	<b>4,91%</b>	<b>411.530</b>	<b>3,11%</b>	<b>1.168.094</b>	<b>4,44%</b>	<b>1.893.170</b>	<b>6,61%</b>	<b>470%</b>	<b>62%</b>
Iran	349.655	5,17%	432.281	3,26%	1.134.965	4,31%	1.885.097	6,58%	439%	66%
Israel	261.012	3,86%	270.262	2,04%	558.183	2,12%	109.559	0,38%	-58%	-80%
Former Soviet Block Neighbors***	1.487.162	21,99%	2.542.160	19,19%	6.807.875	25,85%	7.228.477	25,25%	386%	6%
EU****	3.182.641	47,06%	7.708.214	58,18%	14.871.907	56,47%	14.747.142	51,51%	363%	-1%
Others	1.151.896	17,03%	1.885.941	14,24%	3.507.402	13,32%	4.564.507	15,94%	296%	30%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6.762.956</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13.248.176</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>26.336.677</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>28.632.204</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>323%</b>	<b>9%</b>

\* Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, S.Arabia, Oman, U.A.E, Yemen  
\*\* Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya  
\*\*\* Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Moldova, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia.  
\*\*\*\* EU-15 in 1995 and 2002; EU-27 in 2008 and 2010. Data is not available for Malta and Cyprus.  
Source: T.C. Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü

This situation is fast changing. In a major and dramatic break from past practice the AKP government began to liberalize visa requirements for most Arab countries. Visa requirements for Moroccan and Tunisian nationals were lifted in 2007 and for Jordanian, Lebanese and Syrian nationals late in 2009. It is still difficult to substantiate the net impact of visa liberalization. However, Table II shows that the increase of entries from the Arab world average 62 percent between 2008 and 2010 and was much higher than the overall increase of 9 percent. Some of these entries were composed of suitcase traders involved in economic activity in a similar way to what happened in the early 1990s when Turkey opened its borders to nationals of the ex-Soviet world. In the case of the former Soviet space, following an initial period of suitcase trade, both the numbers of entries from and trade with the ex-Soviet world exploded. The increase in the number of people entering Turkey from the ex-Soviet world between 1995 and 2008 was just under 400 percent while trade for the same period increased by more than 900 percent. Just as a more liberal visa policy played a central role in the expansion of trade with Turkey's northern neighbors, it would be reasonable to expect a similar expansion in trade with Arab Middle Eastern countries following the liberalization of visas. Lastly, there is also a recognition on the part of government officials that the adoption of a liberal visa policy allows people to travel to Turkey freely and, as one official put it, "see Turkey for themselves and take back with them whatever they

The demonstrative effect is mediated through Turkey's economic performance and its "trading state" policies accompanied by a liberal visa policy permitting a freer movement of people into Turkey

wish from their experience with Turkish democracy and economy".<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, this point was corroborated by a Syrian journalist and long-time resident of Turkey during the uprising in Tunisia. He argued that Tunisians of all political conviction follow and are informed of developments in Turkey. This is the case he argued because tens of thousands of unemployed Tunisian university graduates travel to Turkey for suitcase trade

enabling them to become familiar with political debates in Turkey and learn lessons for Tunisia.<sup>60</sup>

### Challenges and Conclusion

This paper has tried to show the factors that make Turkey a potential "model" or "example" for the advocates of the recent uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. It argued that the concept of the demonstrative effect helps to better understand this process. The demonstrative effect is mediated through Turkey's economic performance and its "trading state" policies accompanied by a liberal visa policy permitting a freer movement of people into Turkey. Additionally, Turkey's "work in progress" democracy has resonated well with the Arab public and intellectuals, at least better than the democracy promotion policies of Western democracies. Lastly, the role of Turkey's "new" foreign policy needs to be highlighted too. This is the case even if Turkey's "zero problems with neighbors" policy recently has met the harsh realities of international politics, especially with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the controversy over the Iranian nuclear program, not to mention the complexities facing the improvement of Turkey's relations with Armenia and Cyprus. "Getting to zero" problems have required more than just good intentions.<sup>61</sup> Yet, by and large, Turkey's foreign policy has been welcome in the Middle East. As Lesser notes, "Prime Minister Erdoğan has enjoyed considerable popularity with the Egyptian public since he has emerged as a visible champion of the Palestinian cause and a sharp critic of Israel. This constituency is precisely the same constituency that had been drawn to Tahrir Square and formed the backbone of the struggle against the regime". Lesser on the other hand adds that Erdoğan's popularity and Turkey's approach was not welcome by the elite leadership that was toppled by the uprisings.<sup>62</sup> It would be difficult to account for Turkey's demonstrative effect without appreciating the impact of Turkey's "new" foreign policy. In many ways Turkey's demonstrative effect can also be seen to be a function of what is popularly called Turkey's "soft power" in the Middle East.<sup>63</sup>



Turan best summarizes the source and impact of the demonstrative effect when he notes that "...the Turkish experience sets an example of what is possible. As Arab populations get exposed to Turkish society through increasing travel, Turkish films and TV serials, businesses and products, and elections that change governments, they see a modern, open and prosperous society." This, argues Turan, "may lead them to demand that their governments take them in the same direction as Turkey".<sup>64</sup> In the meantime the Turkish government, which has traditionally shied away from democracy promotion policies, might need to start thinking about such policies.<sup>65</sup> If reform and transition are indeed going to occur in the Arab world there will be a need for much more systematic and well thought-out assistance than just what the demonstrative effect can offer. Turkey ought to be able to help on issues ranging from the organization of free and fair elections, especially in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the OSCE, to the development of administrative and legal structures supportive of a free civil society. TIKA would be particularly well placed to provide such assistance as well as interested non-governmental organizations. However, there are a couple of challenges that will need attention.

First and foremost Turkey's own reform process will need to continue. After an energetic period of political reform Turkey's reform process has slowed down and concerns have been expressed by an ever growing range of domestic and external actors about setbacks with respect to consolidating a liberal and pluralist democracy. Keyman rightly points to the importance of the continuation and consolidation of reform and democratization in Turkey if positive and constructive foreign policy is to be sustained.<sup>66</sup> Secondly, a grand debate and careful thinking about the difficult exercise of finding a balance between the ethics of supporting reforms in the Arab world and interests associated with stability is needed. This difficulty became particularly conspicuous in relation to the uprisings in Egypt and Libya. In the case of Egypt, the government came out in support of the uprisings and demands for reform at a critical moment and in an unequivocal manner when Prime Minister Erdoğan called unequivocally on Mubarak to heed to the demands of the public and go. The same decisiveness was not manifested in the case of Libya. Many commentators in Turkey and elsewhere have pointed out that Erdoğan's befriending of such leaders as Mahmud Ahmadinejad and Omar al-Bashir and his acceptance of a human rights award from Muammer Gaddafi are difficult to reconcile with an image of a Turkey that supports reform, human rights and democratization. If Turkey wants to sustain its demonstrative effect there will be hard choices to make between upholding universal values and allowing for business, economic and ideational interests.

64 percent of the Arab public surveyed supported the view that it is Turkey's EU membership prospects that makes Turkey an attractive partner for the Arab world

Encouraging economic integration through free trade agreements and freer movement of people in the region is most commendable. However, at the same time in Turkey there needs to be the recognition that the size of the Turkish economy and the comparative advantage that Turkey enjoys in relations to the Arab econ-

omies could open Turkey to accusations of becoming hegemonic. It was not that long ago that in Turkey it was possible to hear cries that the customs union with the EU would create an unbalanced relationship in which the Europeans would be the "partners" and Turkey would simply be a "market" that would be flooded by European goods. In 2008 the total GDP of Arab countries with which Turkey has signed free trade agreements and is aspiring to achieve deeper economic integration with was only less than 55 percent of Turkey's GDP.<sup>67</sup> These countries in 2008 and 2010 ran a foreign trade deficit amounting to USD 2.9 and 4.8 billion. In the long run it may not be possible to sustain such deficits unless Turkey can indeed develop arguments and the evidence that the relationship between the Arab world and Turkey is beneficial to both sides and is of a win-win nature.<sup>68</sup>

A most important issue is relations with the EU. Davutoğlu's aspiration for an integrated Middle East where people and goods can move freely from "Kars to Atlantic" is most welcome and is actually completely in line with the vision of the founding fathers of the EU. However, this integration project should not take place at the expense of the EU for at least two good reasons. Firstly, Öniş rightly notes that independent of the problems that the EU is creating for Turkish accession, "there is a need to adopt a long-term perspective on this issue and maintain commitment to the EU membership process".<sup>69</sup> The importance of an EU anchor for Turkey is also stressed by Keyman as well as Aydın and Açıkmışe.<sup>70</sup> Secondly, the EU will be important for Turkey for purely economic reasons too. The transition to democracy and rule of law in the Arab world will be a painful one. There will be ups and downs accompanied with considerable instability. Turkish business and economic interests will be affected. During at least the transition period Turkish companies will need access to the European market to make up for the losses incurred as a result of the uprisings and the accompanying instability. Furthermore, as Straubhaar notes, a much greater compatibility between the EU economies and the Turkish one in terms of foreign trade, unless the economies of Turkey's neighborhood are significantly transformed, will always create a problematic imbalance in foreign trade between Turkey and its neighborhood.<sup>71</sup>

Hence, independent of what happens with Turkey's accession process it will be important to nurture and reform the customs union.

The need for Turkey's EU anchor is important also because the Arab world wants to see strong EU-Turkish relations. A number of public opinion surveys and statements by leaders of countries in Turkey's neighborhood have underlined that Turkey's added value to the region's stability and economic and political development is intimately tied to the health of Turkey's EU relationship. Maintaining or nurturing stronger relations with the EU would also be especially important in terms of Davutoğlu's vision for Turkey's neighborhood. Davutoğlu, as well as other ministers in the AKP cabinet, have also argued that Turkey is in a way trying to do what the European integration project has achieved in Europe by encouraging greater economic integration and interdependence in Turkey's neighborhood.<sup>72</sup> However, Davutoğlu's ideas are likely to carry much more credibility if Turkey is able and willing to strengthen its relations with the EU. Yes, the EU is mistreating Turkey and some EU member countries are invoking cultural issues against Turkey's membership application that is beyond standard accession criteria. However, Turkey should not allow discourses and policies based on emotions and resentment get in the way of cold rational interests and strategic considerations. The fact that 64 percent of the Arab public surveyed supported the view that it is Turkey's EU membership prospects that makes Turkey an attractive partner for the Arab world speaks for itself.<sup>73</sup> The centrality of the EU to Turkey's relations with the Middle East is also corroborated by how "Middle Eastern elites worry about any sign of Ankara turning its back on its EU accession process."<sup>74</sup>

Just as Turkey needs the EU, the reverse is also the case. The EU will need to open its eyes to the fact that the world is changing, Turkey has changed and the Arab world is about to change and change dramatically. Against this background the EU cannot continue with its Fortress Europe policies. The EU has for too long given too much priority to security concerns over opportunities with respect to its neighborhood. This process of securitizing EU's relations, especially with its Mediterranean neighborhood, culminated in the Schengen visa regime that has created an almost impenetrable "paper wall" around the EU. This regime vastly complicates access to the EU for civil society activists, business people, students, as well as officials and not to mention tourists. Between 2003 and 2009 Schengen visas issued for the nationals of the European neighbors of the EU increased by 188 percent while for the Arab countries by only 7 percent.<sup>75</sup> How can one expect the EU to promote democracy in the Arab world or have a demonstrative effect under such circumstances? A prominent American academic and observer of

The craving for reform in the Arab world and Turkey's emerging demonstrative effect in the region may also give trans-Atlantic partners an opportunity to revive relations with Turkey

European integration, Stanley Hoffman, when discussing the "exclusionary" nature of the EU's identity construction process, observed that the face the EU "presents to the outside world is often unpleasant".<sup>76</sup> The EU will have to start to revitalize the EMP and the Union for the Mediterranean by starting to ease visa restrictions. Undoubtedly, this will

also call for revisiting the failed 1995 commitment to achieve a "free trade area in the Mediterranean by 2010". Trade and movement of people is an area where the EU could benefit from the lessons of Turkey's much more "open door" policy towards the Arab world. Surely, transmitting the values and norms of the EU is going to be considerably easier if people from the region can travel more easily to the EU.

The craving for reform in the Arab world and Turkey's emerging demonstrative effect in the region may also give trans-Atlantic partners an opportunity to revive relations with Turkey. Gordon and Taspınar highlighted the importance of "winning back" Turkey in terms of the aftermath of the deterioration that took place in US-Turkish relations over Iraq.<sup>77</sup> This call in 2008 also coincided with a period when US democracy promotion policies, especially in the Middle East, came under growing criticism. But, at the same time there was a parallel debate on the need for reforming American democracy promotion policies. In this context, Turkey's experience emanating from its demonstrative effect ought to provide opportunities for cooperation. Lesser recognizes this when he notes that "the winds of change" triggered by "the revolutions in Turkey's near abroad" could provide an opportunity for "transatlantic partners to reinvent their troubled security and development strategies" relations and develop a common strategy.<sup>78</sup> However, both the EU and the US, in contrast to the BMENA initiative, on this occasion will need to recognize that Turkey may well have a value-added role and can contribute democracy promotion. This will call for dealing with Turkey more as an equal partner instead of a junior contractor. In return, on the Turkish side there will be a need to make a choice in support of universal values and norms over identity driven preferences. If, as Kardaş notes, Erdoğan's virulent opposition to sanctions or intervention against Gaddafi's regime, which is accused of using indiscriminate violence against protesters in Libya, indeed "reflects not only policy differences but also ideological dissonance with the international community",<sup>79</sup> trans-Atlantic cooperation will be difficult to achieve. This may well not only undermine

Turkey's demonstrative effect but also undermine Turkey's quest for a stable, prosperous and better integrated Middle East and for its own democracy too.

Lastly, there is the issue of Israel. It goes without saying that Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip and its treatment of civilians during the military intervention there in 2008 was simply unacceptable. Many Israelis also accept that what happened on board of the *Mavi Marmara* in June 2010 was wrong. Actually, media reports suggest that the Israeli prime minister was indeed close to issuing the apology that was demanded by Turkey if it were not for his minister of foreign affairs sabotaging the effort. However, it is also difficult to see how some of the rhetoric adopted by Turkey over Israel can serve Turkey's grander objective of promoting a stable and prosperous Middle East. It is doubtful that regional integration in the Middle East would be feasible and meaningful without Israel and without peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. After all, what made Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman such visionaries is that they envisaged an integration program that engaged France's arch enemy, Germany, as a partner. There is no way that European integration would have reached the deepening and widening it has had if Germany had been excluded. Instead of isolating and confronting Israel, Turkey should rise above the current bilateral problems and regain the ground that could help Turkey to play its traditional role in Israeli-Arab relations of confidence building and mediation. The Middle East is in dire need of a country that can enjoy the confidence of both sides and contribute to luring both sides out of the vicious circle they have been caught in for so long. This was best put by the President of Syria, Bashar Assad, when during an interview he noted the importance of Turkey maintaining good relations with Israel if Turkey wishes to have a role in the peace process.<sup>80</sup> Just as Turkey has a role to play in assisting reform and transformation among Arab countries it can also play a role, as modest as it may be, to push Israel to reform its outlook and strategy towards the Arab world and Palestinians. Turkey ought to nurture its demonstrative effect on the Arab world while seeking ways to develop a similar "effect" in its relations with Israel. It is only then perhaps that Turkey's demonstrative effect might have genuine and long-lasting results in terms of democracy, stability, peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

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69. Ziya Öniş, "Multiple Faces of the 'New' Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and a Critique," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2011), p. 59.

70. Fuat Keyman, "Globalization, modernity and democracy"; Mustafa Aydın and Sinem A. Açıkmeye, "Europeanization through EU Conditionality: Understanding the New Era in Turkish Foreign Policy," *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2007), pp. 263-74.

71. Thomas Straubhaar, "Turkey as an Economic Neighbor" in Ronald H. Linden (ed.), *Turkey and Its Neighbors*.

72. The desire to emulate the experience of the EU in regional integration has been noted by İbrahim Kalın, the chief advisor of the prime minister as well as by some EU officials, see International Crisis Group, "Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints," p. 11.

73. Mensur Akgün et al. *Orta Doğu'da Türkiye Algısı*.

74. International Crisis Group, "Turkey and the Middle East", p. ii.

75. Kemal Kirişçi, "Comparing the Neighborhood Policies of Turkey and the EU in the Mediterranean," p. 40.

76. Stanley Hoffman, "Europe's identity Crisis revisited," *Daedalus*, Vol. 123, No. 2 (1994), p. 20.

77. Philip H. Gordon and Omer Taspınar, *Winning Turkey: How America, Europe and Turkey can revive a fading partnership* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008).

78. Lesser, "The Revolutions in Turkey's Near Abroad", p. 4.

79. Saban Kardas, "Turkey Diverges from Western Position on Libya," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 8, No. 44 (March 4, 2011).

80. Interview with Ertuğrul Özkök in *Hürriyet*, November 8, 2009.