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LE&M

JOURNAL ON LAW, ECONOMY AND MANAGEMENT

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The turn of the centuries, even millennia, a time of unprecedented globalization of today's world, military-strategic, economic, political, and cultural information. Current theories of law, economics and management are required to respond to a wide-ranging challenges of globalization. The answers to the challenges of civilization are sought in close cooperation, because today, as never before, law issues, management and economics are closely intertwined with issues of morality and justice, freedom and responsibility of man, the third company millennium. Today's situation is unique in that there is an accumulation of many changes and critical phenomena in all three areas, and nobody knows to predict their cumulative impact. Although the main issue of these days is financial system crisis, this will certainly impact other sectors of the economy, law and consequently the management. That is why the magazine monitors historical as well as current events in law, economics and management in form of expertise together with practical examples. The journal thus provides a comprehensive methodology that can be applied both in simple as well as in most complex cases which experts from scientific research and educational institutions, as well as managers, economists and lawyers in their daily practice can meet.

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An Analysis of the Turkish Foreign Policy towards; and Following the Arab Spring

Sherif Shehata, Igor Kosír, Peter Smeriga

Abstract

The revolutionary wave that spread in the Middle East in 2011 has initiated a revision in the foreign policies of many countries, including Turkey. The potentiality of engagement with the Arab Spring provided Turkey with a historic opportunity to promote its role as an important regional player and inspiration to the emerging regimes. In other words, it was a chance for Turkey to bolster its image as a progressive and pro-democratic model in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). Unfortunately, in the four years following the revolutions that shook the institutional foundations in the Arab world, Turkey faced serious unexpected challenges and predicaments. Due to its support for protests calling for the toppling of the regimes, Turkey was forced to abandon its so called 'zero problem policy' that it had long promoted as a unique tool to enhance cooperation in the region. This new foreign policy approach by Ankara has led to the deterioration of ties between Turkey and several Arab countries, and naturally has impacted relations with western states (Ismail, 2014).

Key words: foreign policy, policy, Turkish

JEL classification: E60

Introduction

The developments taking place in the MENA since 2011 have impacted the foreign policy orientation of many countries, including Turkey which has long been viewed as a key player in this region. The main challenge that faced Turkish policy makers, and especially then Prime Minister Erdogan, was achieving a balance between Turkey's interests and values and their correlation with Ankara's foreign policy. In this context, it is argued that the difficulty in formulating an effective and realistic foreign policy to address the challenges that the Arab Spring presented is a direct result of years of applying the so-called 'zero problems with neighbors' policy that had been adopted by the ruling Justice and Development (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP). The reshaping of this no longer effective zero policy in favor of a rather realistic foreign policy was the only means of the normalizing of relations of the new Arab regimes. This realistic policy however necessitated that Turkey abandon its attempts to influence the domestic developments in these transitioning states (Oguzlu, 2013).

Within the clear shift in Turkey's foreign policy orientation, following the abandonment of its Zero Problem approach, the Arab perception, both on the state and nation level, towards Turkey witnessed a clear shift as well. Turkey's persona in the Arab world had been rather positive and it was praised for its balance between secularism, western tendencies not neglecting its Islamic background. However, following the rise of the AKP to power in 2002, Turkey's policies shifted to a different orientation which was to a large degree of a pro-Islamic nature. Through its zero problem policy and gradually ascending pro-

Islamic tendency, Turkey succeeded in enhancing its ties with many of its neighbors on both political and economic tracks. Meanwhile, within its neighborhood policy, Turkey had communication channels with all players in the region, including non-state actors such as Hamas. Turkey also attempted to sponsor mediation efforts between Israel and Syria in 2008, and on the Iranian Nuclear Program file in 2010. Nevertheless, such diplomatic efforts, despite the propaganda that accompanied them, had never been sufficient to bring about tangible results. In any case, it is undoubted that Turkey aimed to shift its position from a passive observer to an active participant in the dynamics of regional policy making regardless of the outcomes or political achievements (Okzan, Korkut, 2013).

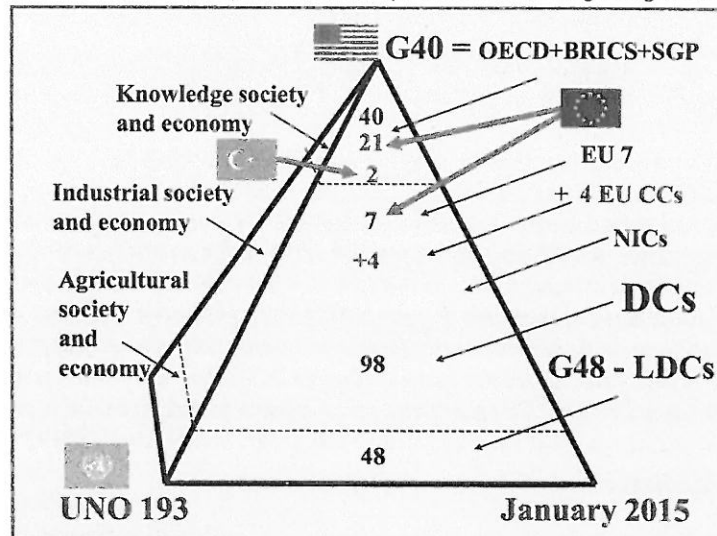
It is noteworthy to mention that prior to the Arab Spring and within the value-based rather than realist approach adopted by the AKP vis-à-vis relations in the Middle East, Turkey did not seek to establish strategic ties with countries that did not share the same type of values. Turkish foreign policy makers however sought to bring about a gradual change in the values of these 'unlike-minded' countries through soft power, and by intensifying economic and cultural relations. Through this indirect soft-power engagement, Turkey believed in its ability to influence the internal political scene in the Arab states and thus encourage other countries to adopt the so called Turkish model. (Oguzlu, 2013)

This Turkish ambition of becoming a role model for the Arab states was however challenged by the events of the Arab Spring which led to the change in the balance of power in the Middle East region. This was most evident in the inability of Turkey to use its strategic weight to influence the changes in the re-

gion. Even more alarming to Turkey's decision makers was the sudden deterioration in ties with Iraq, Syria and Egypt over the past few years, especially where Turkey has been adopting a sectarian approach to deal with the conflicts surfacing in the region. Furthermore, lack of success in reaching a political solution to its Kurdish problem displayed Ankara's own short-

comings in dealing with minority and ethnic issues on its own territory, issues that were raised during the "Arab awakening". In addition, Turkey's miscalculated policy to get involved and influence the developments of the Syrian crisis has had negative effects on Turkey's relations with Syria which it had invested to bolster during the past decade. (Grigoriadis, 2013)

Figure 1: Pyramidal model of the World Economy and Community structure
Position of Turkey within the World Economy and Community structure at the beginning of the knowledge society era



Source: KOSÍR, I.: *Ukraine and European Integration Process*. In ROUET, G. – TEREM, P. (eds.): *Ukraine entre l'intégration et le voisinage. Voisinages Européens*. Vol. 4. [Colloque international franco-slovaque-ukrainien „Ukraine entre l'intégration et le voisinage“, Université de Tchernivtsi, Ukraine 11–12 June 2008.] Bruxelles: Bruylant 2009, p. 87. ISBN 978-2-8027-2867-2.

Legend: Model was updated to the situation of January 2015: G40 is represented advanced (developed) countries, 34 OECD members, 5 members of global coordination group BRICS as well as Singapore, one of the most competitive national economies (SCHWAB 2014, p. 13). G48 is representing a group of the least developed countries (LDCs) within the world economy identified by UNO permanently. They are the poorest developing countries (DCs). In the framework of all DCs there are newly industrialized countries (NICs), too. NICs represent the most successful DCs in industrialization process. A special group of dynamically growing national economies is known as the new global coordination group BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Namely China and India are considered as very perspective globally. During 2001–2008 period it was only a virtual quadrilateral group BRICs identified by Jim O'NEILL of Goldman Sachs (O'NEILL 2001). EU represents now a developing model of heterogeneous international economic integration. EU7 – they are the new EU members (Malta, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia) but not OECD members parallelly (not yet). From 28 EU members there are 21 OECD members parallelly (original EU15 before 2004 enlargement + Visegrád group + Slovenia + Estonia). There are now 6 EU candidate countries (EU CCs). Two of them are OECD members since the first year of its activities – 1961 (Turkey and Iceland). Additional four EU CCs are located in Western Balkans (Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania). Among nations of top mini-pyramid there are all B4WT members (Big Four of the World Trade): China, European Union including its leader of foreign trade activities – Germany, USA and Japan (International trade statistics 2014, p. 29). G40 including the second most competitive economy – Singapore and EU7 countries are building knowledge society and economy, the countries of the middle of the pyramid – the most of the DCs – are building industrial society and economy, the poorest DCs – LDCs – they are still living with heritage of agricultural society and economy.

Reaction of Turkish Foreign Policy to the Arab Spring

Turkey along with many other countries was not ready to deal with the challenges brought about by the Arab Spring. The main difference between each country observing this developing phenomenon was its ability to recalibrate its foreign policy to quickly adapt to the political changes redesigning the political scene in the MENA region. On one hand, while the revolutionary spark and its subsequent regime change in Tunisia was less turbulent, events in Libya and Egypt presented a bigger challenge to foreign policy makers, and especially Turks. Turkey in particular faced a dilemma, especially taking into consideration its political ties with Egypt and economic interests in Libya, making it somewhat reluctant to support sudden regime

changes. In the Libyan case, Ankara initially rejected foreign intervention and expressed support for the Qaddafi regime, while in Egypt's it was surprisingly quick to call for the stepping down of Mubarak and thus support the demands of the Egyptian people (Grigoriadis, 2013).

Turkish foreign minister meanwhile hastily outlined his country's policy towards the Arab Spring identifying the following principles for engagement with the revolutionary events in the region, as follows:

1. Supporting the nations in their demands for basic human rights.
2. Transition towards stable and legitimate democratic political structures can only be achieved through a balance between security and freedom.

3. No contradiction between promoting democracy, even through confronting repressive regimes, and the long established policy of zero problems with neighbors.
4. Rejecting foreign intervention and allowing the people of the region to choose their own future path.
5. Nations in the region are considered Turkey's "eternal brothers" irrespective of their background. (Grigoriadis, 2013)

Based on these principles, Davutoglu who was also the author of the "Zero Problem Policy" identified the basis of Turkey's engagement with the Arab Spring in what was described as a 'bow and arrow' approach. Davutoglu saw that through this approach, the more Turkey pulls the bow's string to the direction of the Middle East, the farther its interests would progress towards the Europe. In other words, this approach established in Davutoglu point of view a strong correlation between Turkey's Western and Middle-Eastern policies. Turkey aimed to achieve a far-fetched goal of joining the European Union by serving the West's interests in the Middle East (Ozpeka, Demirag, 2014).

Nevertheless, the Arab Spring managed, at least in the short-term, to expose the weaknesses, unsubstantiated and poorly outlined foreign policy of the ruling AKP in general and Erdogan in particular. Through a series of back to back setbacks across the revolting Arab States, the limitations of Ankara's foreign policy was revealed. A direct consequence of this weakness was apparent in the quick deterioration in political and economic relations with Libya, Syria and Egypt. Turkey had succeeded to withstand the negative impacts of the global financial crisis in 2008 by strengthening its commercial ties with the Middle East and North Africa as a substitute for a Europe facing economic difficulties. However, following its stances towards the Arab Spring, it is unlikely that Turkey will manage to maintain such high levels of economic cooperation with the Arab states (Onis, 2012).

Turkey's reaction to the developments and ramifications of the Arab Spring was outlined based on the understanding of the ruling AKP party and its vision of what regime would suit best each country in question, thus a lack of inconsistency as will be described in the following section (Yakis, 2014)

Turkey's Inconsistent Foreign Policy During the Arab Spring

Turkey formulated a foreign policy with the neighboring countries in the Middle east over the past decade based on a strategy that did not place democratic ruling as a prerequisite in bilateral relations. From this premise, the events in the Arab world that were inspired by the uprising nations desire to establish democratic regimes, presented a dilemma for Turkish foreign policy which was centered on ethics and self-interest rather than democracy and human rights. Turkish diplomacy was faced with this serious dilemma mostly with regards to its relations with the Libyan and Syrian regimes. It faced a challenge to identify a new course of action in connection to its relations with these two states taking into consideration the serious economic interests at stake which took many years to achieve. Turkish foreign policy was faced with two scenarios,

either to call for reform by exerting pressure on the ruling regimes, or express strong support to the opposition movements (Onis, 2012).

Accordingly the zero problems concept adopted was put to the test following the Arab Spring. In this regard, the main test was this concept's need to maintain stability in its neighborhood and thus preserve Turkey's vital economic interests, as opposed standing against calls for democracy and regime change, which would potentially affect such interests. This means that Turkey had to choose either between the ethics it called for, albeit not giving a priority to domestically, or its self-interests. Adopting a different approach to each country exposed a lack of coherence in its foreign policy. Along the path of this inconsistency, Turkey made what many analysts described as U-turns in its foreign policy trajectory. This was most evident in the positions adopted by the AKP government led by Erdogan to the different developments in Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Iraq. (Onis, 2012)

a) BAHRAIN

When the mainly Shiite population of Bahrain sought to follow the revolutionary course in other Arab Spring countries and revolt against their leadership, Saudi Arabia was quick to form a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) intervention force. This force promptly repressed the low-scale uprising in Bahrain and made sure it would not gain enough momentum to bring about any tangible result or regime change, and the Saudi efforts were successful. The international community, weighing its relations with Saudi Arabia, opted to lend a deaf ear to the events in Bahrain, an approach that Turkey adopted with no hesitation as it could not enter into a political confrontation with a country as influential as Saudi Arabia, especially with its known economic leverage (Yakis, 2014).

In Bahrain, Turkey was rather wise not to provoke the anger of the Saudi rulers who were determined maintain stability in Bahrain at any cost as any regime change in the Gulf would pose a threat to its own stability and could lead to a domino effect in other Gulf States, a development that would benefit mainly Iran. Despite that it was clear that attempting to influence the changes in Bahrain would not directly serve its own self-interests, yet such an individual biased approach to the events in Bahrain, was not in harmony its intended policies towards other Arab states, thus revealing a double standards in its foreign policy. (Grigoriadis, 2013)

b) SYRIA

Prior to the start of the Syrian uprising in January 2011, relations between Ankara and Damascus had been a model in the region within Turkey's so-called "zero problems with neighbors" policy. However due to Turkey's unsuccessful attempts to persuade Bashar El-Assad to implement reforms called for by the Syrian people, relations between both countries deteriorated and Turkey began to support opposition forces and provided them with safe haven on Turkish soil. An incident reflecting this serious deterioration in the bilateral relations was the shooting down of a Turkish fighter jet in July 2012 by Syrian forces, followed by a statement by Erdogan describing Syria a terrorist state. Turkey was also criticized of its adoption of a sectarian

stance by its support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. Such a negative role in the Syrian crisis raised question marks on how committed Ankara really was towards democratic transition and respect for human rights. This unbalanced and inconsistent approach also supported the assessments that Turkey moved towards a sectarian policy by encouraging the rise of a Sunni regime in Syria. In other words, Turkey was viewed as a catalyst to worsening of the Syrian crisis rather than a player in the efforts to resolve it (Grigoriadis, 2013).

Its support of the hard-line Sunni opposition groups in Syria provoked negative reactions from Shi'ite led governments in Iraq and Iran as well as other Shi'ite factions in the Middle East. It can thus be stated that the crisis in Syria provoked a shift in the AKP's zero problems with neighbors policy. After years of attempting to maintain the status quo in the region, Turkey evolved into a revisionist state which was seen as a threat to the future stability in the Middle East (Ozpeka, Demirag, 2014).

Turkey's positive image and reputation thus began to corrode following its involvement as a destabilizing factor in the Syrian crisis., especially with extremist groups such as the Jihadists of the Syrian opposition, and Jabhat al Nusra and ISIS forces capitalizing from Ankara's unproductive policy in Syria. Thus, many analysts deduced that Turkey's miscalculated interference in the Syrian crisis, stemming from its desire to establish a Sunni friendly regime to preserve its own interests, has in fact contributed to the exacerbation of the situation in Syria. (Balci, 2014). Turkey's policies were driven by its narrow assessment that the Al-Assad regime would quickly fall and a domination by the Muslim Brotherhood on Syrian politics would happen. Ankara opted to place all its cards on the Syrian opposition, a prediction that exposed a shortcoming in Turkish foreign policy (Yakis, 2014).

c) IRAQ

In Iraq, Turkey again committed a series of politically wrong assessments that further damaged the trust in its foreign policy. Erdogan accused the Iraqi regime of adopting a sectarian pro-Shi'ite policy while meanwhile supporting attempts by the Kurdish leaders to achieve independence from the Iraqi central government. As was the case in Syria, by continuing to adopt a sectarian-based policy across its borders, Turkey again contributed to the worsening of the situation in Iraq. (Balci, 2014)

To make matters worse, and stemming from its self-interest promotion approach, Turkey began to directly buy oil from Kurdistan without consent from the Iraqi government. In order to achieve this, Turkey abandoned its old idea of refusing to allow Kurdish forces to take control of the city of Kirkuk in Kurdistan due to its large oil reserves. Such a policy which does not respect the sovereignty of Iraq has prompted officials in Baghdad to view Ankara as a destabilizing player in their domestic scene. Iraqi officials have thus expressed their conviction that in pursuing its economic interests, Turkey has become a threat to Iraq's unity and territorial integrity (Softic, 2014).

d) LIBYA

In Libya, Erdogan was initially reluctant to call Qaddafi to step down or to agree to Turkey's participation in an interna-

tional military action to topple the Libyan regime. This hesitation was based on Turkey's keenness not to harm its economic interests in Libya. (Onis, 2012). Ankara's political calculations only took economic factors into account such as the 30 thousand Turkish workers in construction projects valued at \$1.5 billion in Libya. Again these miscalculations prompted Turkey to object in February 2012 to a NATO planned no-fly zone over Libya, with Erdogan clearly refusing any NATO military intervention in Libya (Balci, 2014).

Even as the Arab League approved a no-fly zone over Libya, Erdogan maintained his posture of opposing any foreign intervention Libya. What revealed its wrong political assessments was that despite most countries viewing the need for a regime change in Libya, Erdogan called for a cease-fire based on which Qaddafi would be allowed to undertake political reform. Eventually, Turkey's diplomatic efforts failed to persuade Qaddafi to step down and Erdogan was forced to call upon Qaddafi to step down in May 2012, a shift in Turkey's position that was considered by observers as an attempt of face-saving step by Erdogan (Balci, 2014).

e) EGYPT

At the forefront it must be stated that Turkey was very clear from the start of the Egyptian revolution that it supported the Egyptian people's calls for democracy. Furthermore, Erdogan was one of the first foreign officials to call upon Mubarak to step down. As a sign of the positive and special relations between both countries, former Turkish President Abdullah Gul was also the first head of state to visit Cairo after the ousting of Mubarak in February 2011 (Okzan, Korkut, 2013).

When the Muslim Brotherhood rose to power in July 2012, Turkey considered Egypt as one of its most important partners in the Middle East. However following the fall of the Islamist regime which failed to rule democratically, this perception of Egypt changed in the eyes of the AKP Party. Thus, despite its initially positive reaction to the political changes in Egypt, the fall of the Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt in July 2013 led to a change in Turkey's policies towards Egypt. (Yesiltas, Telci, 2013).

The tensions between Egypt and Turkey took a serious turn when Erdogan began to adopt a very critical hard-line political rhetoric towards the ousting of Islamist President Morsi in July 2013. Erdogan, not having learnt the lesson from Libya, surprisingly did not hesitate to openly express his full support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the deposed President Morsi despite their failures during their one year rule of Egypt. Ever since, Erdogan has continued his negative approach towards Egypt and its newly democratically elected President Abdel-Fatah Al-Sisi, to the extent that Erdogan allocated a segment of his speech at the U.N. General Assembly in September 2014 to questioning the legitimacy of Al-Sisi's rule, a step that was not well received by the majority of U.N. member states and had a negative effect on Turkey's image within the International Organization (Ismail, 2014).

When former President Morsi was ousted following the 30 June 2013 revolution that was supported by the Egyptian army, Turkey was once again the first country to react to the events in

Egypt. However, unlike the revolution against Mubarak which was blessed and supported by Ankara, and the role of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces in leading the transition phase, the revolution against Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood was described by Erdogan as a military coup. Turkey in general and Erdogan in particular became the strongest critics of the regime change in Egypt. As relations between both countries deteriorated, on August 16, 2013, Turkey and Egypt cancelled a planned joint naval exercise in the Mediterranean. This step was followed by wrongful accusations against Egypt of committing massacres against the Muslim Brotherhood supporters. Egypt's interim President Adly Mansour (former President of the Supreme Court and not a military figure) was also quick to declare that Egypt would recognize the Armenian genocide. The escalation resumed until Egypt eventually expelled the Turkish ambassador and downgraded the diplomatic relations to level of *chargé d'affaires*. (Yakis, 2014)

The AKP government under Erdogan's leadership adopted the most hard-line policy towards Egypt as compared to its policies towards other Arab-Spring and their newly established regimes. Due to such political miscalculations, the relevance of Turkey's experience as a secular political model has lost its attractiveness among the Egyptian political elite, especially that Erdogan's unjustified support for the Muslim Brotherhood, now labeled as a terrorist group by many states, including Egypt, exposed AKP as a sectarian-based movement and not a secular-inclined political party. (Onis, 2012)

In this context, it is noteworthy to mention that even during the one year rule of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Turkey's attempts to contribute to the drafting of a secular constitution was not welcomed by the Islamist regime in Egypt. Accordingly, Turkey's moves to influence the political developments in Egypt, during the M.B. rule and after the fall of the Islamist regime, were considered a violation of Egypt's sovereignty. Eventually, the level of Turkey's influence, including soft power, in Egypt has now diminished. Despite such a failure in its foreign policy towards Egypt, the A.K.P. still continues to support the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Stein, 2014).

Main Features of Turkish Policy Challenges and Future Challenges

Turkish Foreign Policy under the AKP rule can be divided into three distinct phases over the last decade. In the first phase, Turkish decision makers espoused a foreign policy model that attached priority to integration and cooperation with neighboring countries that would eventually transform the regional politics from a security-based approach to a relationship based on common values. It was in this phase that former foreign minister Davutoglu introduced the Zero Problem Policy (ZPP) as the cornerstone of Turkey's foreign policy and thus the basis of any strategic engagements within the Middle East (Yesiltas, Telci, 2013).

In the second phase, amid economic glory, Turkey attempted to intensify its engagement with the Middle East countries in an attempt to spread Turkish values in the region. This approach attracted criticism by Turkey's Western allies as well by the domestic opposition in the target countries. In this regard,

criticism was mainly directed towards Ankara's harsh political rhetoric towards Israel, its position towards the Iranian nuclear program as well as its close ties and rapprochement with Hamas. Western critics questioned whether Turkey is in deed a reliable partner in the Middle East or if it in fact prioritizes its interests and ambitions in the Middle East over its Western tendencies (Yesiltas, Telci, 2013).

In the third phase, Turkey's foreign policy attempted to once again intensify relations with the Arab countries with the purpose of reactivating regional integration under its leadership. This was most evident in Turkey's initiative to conclude visa-free agreements with a number of Arab countries, as well as establish Strategic Cooperation Councils on high political levels with key players in the Middle East, in addition to strengthening cultural ties through soft power tools. However, as mentioned above, the Arab uprisings that began in January 2011 challenged Ankara's foreign policy strategy, especially bearing in mind that while Turkey welcomed such changes, it was not prepared to address them. The Turkish leadership was therefore politically unable to respond to these uprisings and rather chose to adopt a wait and see approach in many situations with a tendency to support the demands of the revolting nations. Nevertheless, its engagement with the changes in each country did not reflect a unified, conducive and consistent Turkish foreign policy (Yesiltas, Telci, 2013).

Erdogan was recently elected Turkey's new president, and naturally will carry the challenges he faced as Prime Minister to the Presidency, especially with regards to Turkey's not only inconsistent but harmful foreign policy in the Middle East that has so far damaged Turkey's former image as a role model in the region. Meanwhile, Erdogan's presidency might have the potential to witness a change in Turkey's foreign policy and could thus present Erdogan with a historic opportunity to recalibrate his policies to overcome the mishaps of the past three years, a goal analysts view as over ambitious. (Balci, 2014). In other words, unless Erdogan quickly changes the course of his country's foreign policy, his socio-economic achievements on the domestic level over the past decade will be over-shadowed by the political failures on the regional and international level. (Ben-Meir, 2014)

Turkey's Sectarian Driven Policy

After 2002 and the rise of the AKP to power, Turkey's policy towards the Middle East included bolstering ties not only on the state-level but with the Muslim Brotherhood branches as well. In this context, the AKP views itself a model for the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) branches to follow upon rising to power in their countries. This approach was most evident following the 2011 Arab Spring as Turkey foresaw that M.B. players in Egypt and Syria could adopt a moderate political rhetoric and thus rise to power through democratic elections. Turkey believed that such an outcome would provide it with regional allies sharing the same set of values. The MB's rise to power in Egypt was thus viewed by Ankara as a success for its policy and a first step towards the establishment of loyal Islamic regimes in its near neighborhood. (Cagaptay, 2013)

Turkish foreign policy under Erdogan, specially following the Arab Spring, saw a series of controversial actions and policy

mishaps, and criticism came not only from the local opposition, but from numerous Western and Middle Eastern countries. In particular, Arab countries blamed Erdogan and his AKP of their sectarian approach, with Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Palestine and Yemen, due to the well known ideological relationship between AKP and the Muslim Brotherhood (Softic, 2014).

Turkey's support for the Sunni opposition in Syria while turning its back on the Shi'ite protesters in Bahrain, forced many observers to assume that Erdogan was indeed pursuing a sectarian-based foreign policy. This assumption was further cemented after Erdogan openly criticized Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Shi'ite government in Iraq which led to further worsening of relations between Ankara and Baghdad. The recent turmoil in both Iraq and Syria as a result of the proliferation of the terrorist Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), is currently presenting a serious foreign policy challenge for Turkey (Ismail, 2014) and the means with which it will deal with such a threat will decide the path that Turkey will move along in the future.

The US-led coalition began to launch air strikes in September 2014 against ISIL militants in both Syria and Iraq within the international efforts to combat terrorist Jihadist cells in the region, while Turkey's reluctance to be part of these efforts has placed it under immense pressure from the United States to join the fight against ISIL (Ismail, 2014).

Once again, following Erdogan's hesitation to join the U.S. led coalition against ISIL, and after being subjected to international pressure during his visit to the United Nations in September 2014, the Turkish parliament adopted a motion allowing the government to take part in military actions against ISIL in Syria and Iraq as well as allowing the use of Turkish territory by coalition forces within these efforts. On the other hand, despite Turkey's engagement in the international fight against ISIL, the reasons for the change in its initial position and thus decision to fight ISIL remains under a subject of analysis. In this regard, analysts believe that Turkey is capitalizing on the current turmoil in the region and the threat posed by ISIL to attempt to improve its tarnished image following its misjudgments and wrong policies towards the Arab Spring countries, as well as an attempt by Erdogan to negate the idea of him pursuing a sectarian-based agenda (Ismail, 2014).

Following the fall of the M.B. regime in Egypt, Turkey's ties with this important country have reached its worst state in modern history, with the new regime in Egypt firmly opposing Turkey's continued support of the Muslim Brotherhood terrorist organization. Turkey's hard-line sectarian approach with regards to its unjustified support for the M.B. in Egypt has damaged its relations with Saudi Arabia and other Arab states. Meanwhile the M.B. supported by Turkey in Syria are facing defeat in the battlefield against the Syrian opposition backed by the Saudi's. Such developments leave Turkey with Hamas in Gaza as its main partner in the Middle East. (Cagaptay, 2013)

Eventually, analysts concur that amid such a complicated regional environment which current Turkish policies are unable to align with, the need for a new and revised Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East is called for, especially that Erdogan's strategy is not achieving the results it was designed for. An example of the failure of this sectarian strategy lies in the fact

that his vague approach towards ISIL did not prevent this terrorist group from kidnapping Turkish diplomats in Iraq (Balci, 2014). Erdogan must thus reach the conclusion that all players in the region have arrived to, that the policy of 'zero problems with neighbors' has been a miserable failure, and that his blind support for extremist groups will eventually harm Turkey's own interests. (Ben-Meir, 2014)

Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood

As mentioned above, Turkish policy towards its Arab neighbors was based on an ideological approach, whereby the Muslim Brotherhood, was regarded by Erdogan's as the most worthy winner of the democratization process in the Middle East. AKP shared a historic and ideological relationship with the M.B., a fact that no Turkish leader or observer of the AKP history can deny (Softic, 2014).

As a result of this ideologically biased policy favoring the Muslim Brotherhood over any other party, Ankara soon came into conflict with the Assad regime in Syria, as well as with Saudi Arabia, and its other Gulf allies, except for Qatar, and recently with the new regime in Egypt following the deposing of the Islamist backed President in Egypt in July 2013.

Even the Israeli Defense Minister did not hesitate to publicly criticize Turkey for what he viewed as its support for terrorism by its backing of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. Many observers attribute Erdogan's harsh rhetoric towards Israel due to his dedicated support of Islamic extremism, and his stubborn attempts to spread certain hard-line Islamic values not only within Turkey but in Muslim countries as well. Nevertheless, Erdogan's aspiration to assume a leading role in Sunni world and promote Turkey as the model of an Islamic democracy, following the Arab Spring, was adamantly rejected by most Arab states. (Ben-Meir, 2014)

A Failing Turkish Foreign Policy

Davutoglu's foreign policy, fully supported by Erdogan, as outlined above, guided Turkey's approach towards the Arab Spring and was thus the basis for its unsuccessful engagement with the region. Despite Turkey being praised in the past by some analysts as a potential model for the Islamic world, under his leadership of the foreign ministry prior to the Arab uprisings, it is currently being described as an irresponsible regional player (Stein, 2014).

The terms confused and contradictory are now attached to Turkish domestic and foreign policies specially with regards to its neighborhood. Furthermore, his growing authoritarian style of governing of Turkey is under scrutiny and widely criticized by opposition forces in Turkey that consider such policies as a factor that will eventually lead to polarizing the country (Kirisici, 2014)

Moreover, the "zero problems with neighbors" policy introduced by Davutoglu, no longer praised, is not termed as "zero neighbors without problems". The Arab Spring which was welcomed by Turkey and provided an opportunity for bolstering its ties with the region, has eventually led, due to the inflexible miscalculated Turkish policies, to damaging Turkey's relations with most Arab countries, with the exception of Tunisia and Libya.

What has even made the situation worse is Turkey's espousing of the hard line Muslim Brotherhood against the will of Arab Gulf states and in Egypt, all of which has led to Ankara's obvious political isolation. Turkey currently has been forced to recall its ambassadors in Syria, Egypt and Israel, and has tense relations with the Gulf States due to the A.K.P.'s continued support for the Muslim Brotherhood. Meanwhile, diplomatic ties with Iraq have been seriously damaged following Turkey's support of the Kurdistan Regional Government and its importing of Kurdish against the political will of the Iraqi central government. (Stein, 2014)

In other words, Erdogan's policies toward Syria and Egypt failed mainly since his inconsistent policies toward the Arab uprisings were taken hostage by his populist rhetoric that was primarily targeting a domestic audience. Instead of adopting a well-formulated long-term foreign policy, Erdogan used a hard-line unorthodox popular rhetoric to widen his domestic support as Presidential elections in Turkey were at the door step. It is undoubted that such a rhetoric has in fact strengthened his domestic popularity levels, but it neither improved Turkey's image abroad nor did serve the interests of the Global Muslim Brotherhood (MB). Accordingly, Turkey is in urgent need of identifying the correlation and making a distinction between its short-term domestic goals and its long-term regional and international goals. (Kuru, 2014)

Setback at the United Nations:

a Case Study of Turkey's Failed Foreign Policy

At the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York in October 2014, Turkey failed to win a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) elections. Turkish diplomacy only managed to garner 60 votes out of 193 member states of the UNGA. This failure is indicative of Turkey's deteriorated international status and particularly its tarnished image in the Middle East region. This failure is compared to the success it achieved in 2008 when it received 151 votes for its bid to obtain a non-permanent seat in the same council. Turkey's political victory in gaining such a seat at the Security Council for the period 2009–2010 was seen by then Prime Minister Erdogan as proof of his country's rising political weight on the international scene and naturally reflected the international community's appreciation of Turkey's regional role. (Arslan, 2014)

The recent setback for Turkey's bid for membership to the Security Council clearly outlines the worsening of its relations with many of its traditional regional as well as western partners. As Newsweek reported following the recent Turkish embarrassment at the United Nation, Egypt and Saudi Arabia actively campaigned against Turkey's bid which is proof of their successful diplomatic efforts and depicts their wide international support. Turkey's relationship with these two influential Arab countries has been upset due to Erdogan's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, which is considered a terrorist organization in both these countries. (Arslan, 2014)

As described by a retired Turkish Ambassador, Unal Cevikoz, failure to gain the needed international support for Turkey's U.N.S.C bid was expected as Ankara's policies were not

inline with those of the international community, as compared to the situation in 2008 when its foreign policy was viewed positively where it had established productive and conducive external relations built on mutual respect. He further criticized that Turkey's current foreign policy led to its isolation following the Arab Spring. The sharp decrease in the number of votes between 2008 and 2014 obviously reflects the international community's position towards Turkey's self-centered controversial foreign policy. (Arslan, 2014).

Conclusion

Turkey's ambitions to undertake a leading and inspiring role in the Middle East was associated to what was described by analysts as the 'Davutoglu Doctrine' which emerged from his 'Zero Problem Policy'. The Arab Spring meanwhile presented a historic chance for the translation of this Doctrine into reality. In this regard, Turkey could have easily claimed its leadership in the Middle East had it adapted its policies to the new political realities and changes in the region. However, Erdogan chose to implement sectarian-based policies that led to the deterioration of the regional conflicts. (Grigoriadis, 2013)

Erdogan's plans to place Turkey as a regional power are far from seeing the light as the new political landscape in the new Middle East has stood against Turkey's regional ambitions. Ankara currently has poor relations with most of its Arab neighbors, and faces long-term instability emerging from the situation in Syria. Turkey is also confronted with a very difficult challenge of re-establishing and normalizing its ties with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Emirates (Cagaptay, 2013).

Turkish foreign policy failure is a direct result of an inconsistent and biased approach towards the different revolutionary waves, and its continued support for the opposition in many countries to date. Turkey is also facing serious accusations of adopting a sectarian attitude and allying with hard-line Islamic forces in the region, all of which has compromised its regional and international ambitions. Furthermore, this has exposed the limits of Turkey's capacity to influence political changes in the Middle East (Grigoriadis, 2013).

Erdogan must thus realize, and soon, that the Zero Problems Policy has been a failure, and that a hard-line rhetoric aimed to sustain his domestic grip on power is not sustainable on the long term, and that his unjustified support of extremist groups might damage his own regime. (Ben-Meir, 2014)

The Turkish government, under the AKP and Erdogan, has long adopted an idealistic foreign policy and seems unable to understand the need for a more realistic approach. While gradually starting to support regime change in 2011 against its traditional preference for the preservation of the status quo in the Middle East, its attempts to influence political changes in its neighboring states has been subject to criticism by local opposition groups and considered by foreign states as a foreign policy failure. (Sumer, 2013)

Turkey has thus recently found itself in an undesirable position where it faces total isolation in the Middle East. Analysts therefore do not exaggerate when claiming that Davutoglu's zero problem policy was an utter failure. Currently, Turkey's only real allies in the Middle East are Qatar and Tunisia, as well as Iraqi

Kurdistan (KRG), and other rogue movements such as Hamas in Palestine and a marginalized Muslim Brotherhood, both labeled as terrorist organizations by many states. (Softic, 2014)

Turkey's present Foreign Policy under the AKP and especially under Erdogan continues to provoke wide international controversy. Such controversy is based on a sound assessment of Turkey's political and strategic preferences following the Arab Spring, especially its sectarian based policies and unprecedented support for the Muslim Brotherhood. The unexpected developments in the Middle East are viewed to have to a great extent diminished Turkey's ambitions to position itself as an influential regional power. (Yesiltas, Telci, 2013)

Turkey's policies under Erdogan, particularly those adopted to deal with the developments of the Arab Spring, have proven that they neither productive nor supportive of achieving regional stability. In this regard, examples of such negative policies are Turkish support of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq in order to serve its own strategic and economic interests, as well as covert operations and support of Islamist extremist organizations such as ISIL in order to prevent Syrian Kurds from establishing their own autonomous region. It is premature to predict whether Erdogan in his capacity as newly elected Turkish president will be willing to admit such grave foreign policy failures, or whether he will prefer to pursue his populist rhetoric to ensure a second presidential term in office. (Softic, 2014).

It is thus argued that the Turkish experience had the potential to provide an inspiring model for the regimes emerging from the Arab Spring. However, Turkey exposed its inability to have a positive effect on the developments in the region due to its negative interference in the domestic affairs of the countries in transition. It is thus believed that continuing to pursue its policies to interfere on the domestic and regional political fronts in the Middle East region, will most likely add to further turmoil and instability in an already tense environment. Such attempts to influence the course of political change may lead to divisions and sectarian violence, at a time when the region is in need of concerted efforts to achieve a smooth transition towards democracy and political plurality and institution building. (Onis, 2012)

Yet the prevailing perception is that Erdogan and his A.K.P. seem to be undeterred against the international dissatisfaction with their policies, let alone their foreign policy failures on many tracks which has led to the increasing isolation of Turkey on the world stage. In conclusion, in light of the presence of both Erdogan and his foreign policy curator Davutoglu, and their assumption of leading roles in Turkey's politics, it is unlikely that Ankara will pursue a different foreign policy trajectory in the foreseeable future, all of which might add to the already complex situation in the Middle-East where Turkey's current policies can continue to be a destabilizing factor. (Stein, 2014)

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