

# Beyond a Turkish Model in Transforming the Penetrated Middle East: The Nexus of Domestic Authority and International Prestige

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## Abstract

At a time of Arab uprisings, many set their eyes on Muslim populated Turkey with its successful economic development and nascent democratic political order, as what the peoples of the region can proceed along in their own transition to democracy. Nevertheless, to what extent Turkey's model will bear success in transforming the region into a 'positive peace' environment, to use the term of Johan Galtung, will highly rely on which of the following 'regional powerhood' Ankara will come to pursue: regionally detached, regional dominant or regional hegemon, coining M.Pyrs' typology. Against this backdrop, this article mainly argues that if only Turkey fills into status of a regional hegemon with the acquisition of the elements of domestic authority and international prestige, Turkey may hope to succeed in creating new normative ties - democracy, human rights, the rule of law, etc. - between Europe and the Middle East, thereby, fostering 'positive peace' and stability in the 'penetrated region' as regional hegemon.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Middle East, Positive Peace, Democracy, Regional Powerhood, Authority, Prestige, Model.

## Nüfuz Edilmiş Ortadoğu'da Türk Modeli (ve Ötesi): Uluslararası Prestij-Ulusal Otorite Bağlantısı

### Özet

Arap Ayaklanmaları'nın ortaya çıktığı bir dönemde, Müslüman nüfusu, başarılı ekonomik kalkınması ve olgunlaşmakta olan demokratik düzeniyle, bölge halklarının kendi demokratik geçiş süreçlerinde izinde ilerleyebilecekleri bir ülke olarak gözler Türkiye'ye çevrilmiştir. Bununla beraber; Türkiye modelinin bölgeyi, Johan Galtung'un deyişiyle, bir 'pozitif barış' ortamına dönüştürmek noktasındaki başarısı, büyük oranda Ankara'nın aşağıda belirtilen M. Pyrs'in 'bölgesel aktörlük' (re-

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gional powerhood) tipolojilerinden hangisini takip edeceğine bağlıdır: bölgesel bağlantısız (detached), bölgesel egemen (dominant) veya bölgesel hegemon. Bu bilgiler ışığında, bu çalışma Türkiye'nin ancak dahili otoritenin demokratik yollarla tesisi durumunda uluslararası itibar sahibi olup, bölgesel hegemon statüsünü kazanabileceğini tartışmaktadır. Bu şartın gerçekleşmesi durumunda Türkiye; Ortadoğu ile Avrupa arasında –demokrasi, insan hakları ve hukukun üstünlüğü gibi yeni normatif bağlar yaratma konusunda başarılı olmayı umabilir ve bu sayede 'nüfuz edilmiş' Ortadoğu'da bölgesel hegemon olarak 'pozitif barışın' hasıl olduğu istikrarı getirebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye, Ortadoğu, Pozitif Barış, Demokrasi, Bölgesel Güç, Otorite, İtibar, Model.

النموذج التركي (وغيره) في الشرق الأوسط الذي جرى اختراقه:  
المكانة الدولية – السلطة الوطني

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خلاصة :

في فترة تتابعت فيها الثورات العربية، اتجهت الانظار نحو تركيا التي يمكن لها، بشعبها المسلم وبتنميتها الاقتصادية الناجحة ونظامها الديمقراطي السائر نحو التكمال، ان تكون بلدا يحتذى به من قبل شعوب المنطقة في وتيرة انتقالها الى الديمقراطية. وازافة الى ذلك، فان نجاح النموذج التركي في مجال تحويل المنطقة نحو «سلام ايجابي» – على حد قول Johan Galtung - يتوقف الى حد كبير على اي نوع ستختاره تركيا من تصنيفات «التمثيل الاقليمي» ( regional powerhood)المبين ادناه والذي وضعه M. Pyrs : الاقليمية غير المتصلة (detached) ، الاقليمية المسيطرة ( dominant) ، الاقليمية المهيمنة. وعلى ضوء هذه المعلومات، فان هذه الدراسة تناقش حقيقة ان تركيا لا يمكنها ان تكون موضع اعتبار وتقدير دوليين ولا يمكنها ان تنجح في نيل موقع المهيمن الاقليمي الا في حالة ارتكاز السلطة على اسس ديمقراطية. وفي حالة تحقق هذا الشرط فان تركيا يمكن لها ان تأمل في النجاح في مجال خلق وشائج معايير جديدة ( مثل : الديمقراطية، حقوق الانسان، سيادة القانون ) بين الشرق الاوسط وبين اوربا، وتستطيع بفضل ذلك ايضا ان تخلق «السلام الايجابي» الذي يأتي بالاستقرار كمهيمن اقليمي في الشرق الاوسط.

الكلمات الدالة : تركيا ، الشرق الأوسط ، السلام الايجابي ، الديمقراطية ، القوة الاقليمية ، السلطة ، الاحترام

## 1. Introduction

With the so-called Arab 'spring', the Middle East has entered into a significant transformation process by toppling authoritarian leaders, if not shaken their throne. These political movements have put the region at a cross road. One of these ways heads toward igniting democratic reforms all over the region, while other one comes with multiple power vacuums to be filled in by radical groups, thus turning the process into Arab winter. Such sinister prospect broke out a fierce intellectual debate over how to push the momentum toward a rather democratic path with the help of a role model that which attracts admiration from the countries of the region. Not surprisingly, many set their eyes on Turkey, with its successful economic development and nascent democratic political order, as what the peoples of the region can proceed along in their own transition to "consolidated democracy".<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, to what extent Turkey's model will bear success in transforming the region into a 'positive peace' environment, to use the term of John Galtung, will highly rely on which of the following 'regional powerhood' Ankara will come to pursue: regionally detached, regional dominant or regional hegemon, coining M.Pyrs's typology.<sup>2</sup>

Against this backdrop, this article mainly argues that if only Turkey fills into status of a regional hegemon, it can arise as an appealing democratic model for the Middle Eastern countries, otherwise devolving into a non-democratic, authoritarian form of regional power. Regional hegemony, apart from regional dominants and regionally detached powers, is based around a nexus in between a successfully consolidated domestic authority through democratic means and international prestige, which stems from military and economic eminence. Thus, a regional power, in order to stand as an appealing role model, needs more than an international prestige consisted of military might and economic wealth. Other than these physical capabilities, it also takes a consolidated democracy, a government credible to general public, and

1 This paper relies on Robert A. Dahl's five criteria of democracy, which are: 1) Equal and effective participation 2) Voting equality 3) Enlightened understanding about policy alternatives within reasonable time 4) Control of the agenda 5) Inclusion of all adults as the full rights of citizens. See, Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy*, (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1998).

2 Miriam Prys, "Hegemony, Domination, Detachment: Differences in Regional Powerhood", *International Studies Review*, Vol.12, 2010, pp.479-504.

a constitutional order within the internal body-politics to compel recognition from other countries. Only with the acquisition of the elements of domestic authority and international prestige, Turkey may hope to succeed in creating new normative ties - democracy, human rights, the rule of law, etc. - between Europe and the Middle East, thereby, fostering “positive peace”<sup>3</sup> and stability in the “penetrated”<sup>4</sup> Middle East region.

The first part of the paper will stress upon the nexus between these two phenomena: domestic authority and international prestige. In this same part, it will be forwarded that, for a state actor to gain international prestige, as it is key to qualify a regional hegemony, a domestic political order premised on democracy is of paramount importance. The second part will examine Turkey’s regional powerhood transition from an insulator state to something in-between a regionally detached power and a regional hegemon in the Middle East. It will be argued that with this torn status, Turkey has limited capability to transform the regional authoritarian regimes into democratic regimes. The third part of the paper will illuminate the link between Turkey’s regional powerhood and its pledge to become an EU member. It will be proposed that EU anchor and its democratic reform packages are vital not only for underpinning Turkish state authority domestically, but also, bolstering its prestige internationally. In other words, Turkey’s EU accession, thereby, democracy consolidation process through EU related reforms such as a new civilian constitution and their proper implementations on each and every citizen are imperative for its ascendancy to a regional hegemon. Clearly, this kind of a Turkey will likely to serve as a model for Middle Eastern countries to transform into democratic regimes.

## **2. Regional-Powerhood: The Relevance of Nexus Between Domestic Authority and International Prestige**

The end of “superpower overlay”, a residual effect from the Cold War era, put in motion a convenient environment for the emergence of re-

3 The term “positive peace” is originally coined by the leading peace studies scholar, Johan Galtung, to describe not only the absence of overt violent conflict (negative peace), but also, any groupings in the conflict enter into structural collaborative and supportive relations. Johan Galtung, “An Editorial”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.1, No.1, 1964, pp.1-4. For his further development of the peace concept, see, “Social Cosmology and the Concept of Peace”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.18, No. 2, June 1981, pp.183-199.

4 L. Carl Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East: Old Rules, Dangerous Game* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

gional powers as key actors. They, by taking over the positions left behind by extra-regional powers, commenced on giving a whole new appearance to the close-by regions in a manner conforming to their needs. The part played by regional powers in reshaping a regional order is not necessarily always negative or always positive; they can also be mediocre or trivial.<sup>5</sup> The degree of their involvement in their region more than often comes as a function of relevance of these close environs, and for their key interests. In other words, a regional power would seek influence within the neighbourhood to the extent in which developments within these areas give direction to their security position. In order to have a better grasp on varying contributions of regional powers in a given region, one needs to take a gander at the three idea-type variants of regional powerhood: detached regional powers, regional dominators, and regional hegemons.<sup>6</sup>

In its broadest sense, a regional dominator can be identified as one that commands and forcefully mobilizes tributes from the lesser states.<sup>7</sup> This type of regional power is dependent on its military skills to impose its dictates. In a sharp contrast to a regional dominator, a detached regional power is deprived of either insufficient resources or lacks identification with the region necessary to enforce its will upon neighbouring states. Both power types (i.e. a detached regional power/insulator state and regional dominator) are handicapped by insufficient political capital to alter their immediate neighbourhood into “positive peace” environment. A regional dominator, with its exploitative-domination, alienates other regional states and, thus, worsens the regional instability. An insulator state, on the other hand, is an impoverished regional power that is either unwilling or incapable of achieving means to an end.

Squarely different from these two forms of regional powerhood, a hegemonic regional power is able to muster both will and power needed to take decisive action, producing the consent of smaller states, but, without military menacing. A regional hegemon can accomplish this,

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5 Prys, “Hegemony, Domination, Detachment: Differences in Regional Powerhood”, p.483.

6 Ibid, p.483.

7 Ibid, p.483.

while taking upon itself the regional burdens and procuring the consent of the secondary powers in the production of common goods. Whether a regional power graduates into a hegemonic role is, yet, not solely pre-determined by objective systemic determinants. Rather, some other subjective factors are in play, such as the referred state's self-perception, the provision of public goods and the vitality of said goods to the recipient states' conditions of existence, functional integrity and constructed identity.<sup>8</sup>

A regional power's policy-makers' self-perception is directly related to its "national role conceptions" and/or its policymakers' "own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state , and of the functions, if any, their state should perform in the international system or in subordinate regional systems."<sup>9</sup> To rephrase the same point, a regional power's self-perception is hinged upon its position and relations with others. Therefore, in order for a regional power to be categorized as a regional hegemon, it should regularly refer to the duties or special responsibilities that they perceive for themselves in their relation to States [and also people] in a particular region with which [they] identify.

A regional state, so as to ably realize regional hegemony, must obtain the minor states' regime and/or people's consent by appearing to be a supreme, benign, partner that can bring remedy to economic and security problems that the minor states and their people could not handle on their own. As Prys aptly puts it, "...*regional acceptance* for the respective state's special role and the consequential demands on the power to act in accordance with that responsibility are more suitable attributes for the definition of regional hegemony."<sup>10</sup> [Emphasis in original].

8 Ibid, pp.489-90.

9 Kal J. Holsti, "National Role Concepts in the Study of Foreign Policy", in Stephen Walker (ed.), *National Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis* (Duke University Press, 1987), p.12. For accounts on the dimension of national role conception or role theory in foreign policy analysis see; Naomi B. Wish, "Foreign Policy Makers and Their National Role Conceptions", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No.4, 1980, pp.532-554; Richard Adigbuo, "Beyond IR Theories: The Case for National Role Conceptions", *Politikon*, Vol. 34, No.1, 2007, pp.83-97; Cameron G. Thies, "Role Theory and Foreign Policy", *International Studies Association Compendium Project*, May 2009, available from Internet [http://www.isanet.org/compendium\\_sections/2007/06/foreign\\_policy\\_.html](http://www.isanet.org/compendium_sections/2007/06/foreign_policy_.html) accessed on 15 September 2011.

10 Prys, "Hegemony, Domination, Detachment: Differences in Regional Powerhood", p. 492.

These two elements , a regional power's self-perception and requirement to accumulate consent of regional states/people, have brought us to one of the most important component of a regional hegemon , if not the most important, prestige. In his seminal work entitled "War and Change in World Politics", Robert Gilpin draws attention to the hierarchy of prestige as one of the integral pieces of governance of an international system. His prestige conceptualization by comparing it with the concept of power is as follows:

[...] numerous factors, including respect and common interest, underlie the prestige of a state and the legitimacy of the rule. Prestige is the reputation for power [...] Whereas power refers to the economic, military, and related capabilities of a state, prestige refers primarily to the perception of other states with respect to a state's capacities and its ability and willingness to exercise power [...] prestige involves *the credibility of a state's power* [both domestically and internationally] and its willingness to deter or compel other states in order to achieve its objectives.<sup>11</sup> [Emphasis added]

In Gilpin's writings, prestige in international politics is portrayed as one of an integral function that, in terms of its operation and consequences, intimately corresponds with what the authority performs and produces in domestic politics. From his vantage point, "...prestige, rather than power, is the everyday currency of international relations, much as authority is the central ordering feature of domestic society."<sup>12</sup> He holds the following verdict suitable to apply on both international and domestic spheres. When and if the observer parties (be it other states and/or domestic opinion) invest a given state's power with credibility, such will either help smoother the exercise of this state's power, or render it almost unnecessary to employ harsh power in obtaining desired goals.

Even though R. Gilpin successfully reveals a notional affinity between authority in domestic politics and prestige in international relations,

11 Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 30-31.

12 Ibid, p. 31.

he seems to take no notice of the ways and/or the extent to which these two actually affect one another. The heart of the matter is, a state actor might substantially heighten the magnitude of its influence (international prestige) over other state actors by attuning the course of its domestic body-politic to the democratic principles. To rephrase the same point, a state's international prestige derives not only from its military and economic prominence, but also from the degree to which domestic elites comply with those conventional limitations that a democratically operating political order puts in place. Of the said democratic limitations; independent courts, free elections, minority rights and freedom of speech are of paramount importance to establish a measure of restraint on the acts of domestic authority. These and other democratic principles give a broad-based legitimacy, or legitimate authority<sup>13</sup>, to the ruling elites as to run the country on a consensual ground. Thus, any given state with a consolidated democracy would increase the amplitude of its "power over opinions"<sup>14</sup>, a term borrowed from Classical Realist E.H. Carr, both in national and international theatres.

Immanuel Kant, the founder of "Perpetual Peace Theory,"<sup>15</sup> deliberates that a legitimate domestic authority, operating in democratic limits, also automatically confines the policy-forming cadres to pursuing a non-aggressive foreign policy route.<sup>16</sup> The proponents of "Democratic Peace Theory", assuming the permanence of non-belligerence among democratic states as an unwavering status, claim that foreign policy makers in a liberal democracy would resort to waging war merely against non-democratic states.<sup>17</sup> Even then, the criteria of accountabil-

13 By treating authority as a different kind of power, pioneering sociologist Max Weber proposes three types of legitimate authority (Rational-Legal Authority, Traditional Authority and, Charismatic authority). This paper rests on "rational-legal authority", which depends on the rule of law for its legitimacy. For Weber's authority typologies see; Martin E. Spencer, "Weber on Legitimate Norms and Authority", *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 21, No.2, 1970, pp.123-134; Norman Uphoff, "Distinguishing Power, Authority & Legitimacy: Taking Max Weber at His Word by Using Resources-Exchange Analysis", *Polity*, Vol. 22, No.2, 1998, pp. 295-322.

14 Edward H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p.120.

15 See; Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals* (New York: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983).

16 See, Michael W. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs", *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 12, No.3, 1983, pp. 205-235.

17 Ibid, p. 219.



ity to their own public will keep them in the boundaries of “rationality”, limiting the scope and the length of these wars with achieving specific foreign policy ends.<sup>18</sup> In the process, foreign-policy makers of a democratic state would find themselves deeply ingrained within a domestic political context that prohibits hazardous military conflicts, while fixating the state’s international conduct around enhancing peace and stability with neighbouring nations. The national role conceptions, as a result, shift from being conflictive to cooperative with international prestige outweighing any other venue of foreign policy choice based on direct employment of coercive power.

In short, the nexus of legitimate authority in domestic politics and prestige in international relations is, and should be, considered as an imperative prerequisite for a putative regional hegemon’s capability of transforming its conflict-ridden neighbourhood into a positive-peace environment. In the light of this theoretical framework on regional powerhood and the nexus of domestic authority and international prestige, the following section will underline Turkey’s regional powerhood and its prestige in the Middle East region.

### **3. The Nexus of Domestic Authority and International Prestige in Turkey’s New Foreign Policy Activism Within the Neighbouring Geographies**

Turkey’s new foreign policy activism seems to aim at transforming the political and economic discourse of the Middle East. The current Foreign Minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu, in tandem with his “Strategic Depth Perspective” tends to employ a different term, “the Central Power”, in order to elaborate Turkey’s new self-imposed regional role.<sup>19</sup> Actually, this vision overlaps with Turkey’s ascendancy as a regional power. A confluence of several international, regional, and domestic factors have prompted Turkey to emerge as an autonomous regional

18 Israel, as a democratic state, appears to be the aggressive party of the “Seven Day War” in 1967. However, Israeli strategists had in mind clear and most importantly limited goals in starting preventive aerial and ground strikes against its Arab neighbours. The strategic dictum that motivated Israeli offensive was “No Egypt, No War”, which was geared to eliminate major Arab combatant, Egypt, by invading vast territories only to exchange them later on for a lasting peace. See; Raymond Hinnesbusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 224-229.

19 Alexander Murinson, “The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 42, No.6, 2006, pp. 945-964.

power, thereby enabling her to pursue a new form of foreign policy activism in her immediate neighbourhood.

Internationally and regionally, the George W. Bush administration's failures in Iraq; which not only undermined the influence of the US and its erstwhile Sunni allies (i.e. Egypt and Saudi Arabia) but also left behind a power vacuum in the region that will be filled either by Turkey or Iran – competitively or concordantly.<sup>20</sup> Domestically, Turkey's transformation and EU-related democratization reforms, instituted under the AKP government in Ankara, have played a sizable role in changing Turkey's discourses on security,<sup>21</sup> resulting in a shift in her foreign policy, from "a confrontational line to a win-win discourse."<sup>22</sup> Arguably, more importantly, Turkey's rise as an economic power along with the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) played an important role in the changing rhetoric towards the neighbours.<sup>23</sup> These promising economic indicators have paved the way for the transformation of Turkey into a 'rising trading state'<sup>24</sup> and led the Justice and Development Party (i.e. Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) to change their "national role conceptions", thereby, embracing a new foreign policy in support of Turkey's economic development.<sup>25</sup>

20 Cengiz Çandar, "Turkey's Soft Power Strategy: A New Vision for a Multi-Polar World", *SETA Policy Brief*, No. 38, 2009, p.9.

21 Pinar Bilgin, "Turkey's Changing Security Discourses: The Challenge of Globalization", *European Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 44, 2005, pp.175-201.

22 Mustafa Aydın and Sinem A. Açıkmese, "Europeanization through EU Conditionality: Understanding the New Era in Turkish Foreign Policy", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol. 9, No.3, 2005, pp. 263–74. See also; Mesut Özcan, *Harmonizing Foreign Policy* (Ashgate: Hampshire, 2008), pp. 147–164; E. Fuat Keyman and Ziya Öniş, *Turkish Politics in a Changing World: Global Dynamics and Domestic Transformations* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2007), pp. 81–100; Zeki Sarıgil, "Europeanization as Institutional Change: The Case of the Turkish Military", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 12, No.1, 2007, pp. 39-57.

23 Turkey's GDP (PPP) per capita has increased from approx. 2700 USD in 1980 to 13.400 USD in 2010, while its GDP has increased from 116 Billion USD in the 1980s to 960 Billion USD in 2010. This led the way for Turkey to become the 15th largest economy in the world and the 7th largest in Europe, hence Turkey's membership in the G-20. "Turkey: GDP (Power Purchasing Parity)", *The Index Mundi*, available from Internet [http://www.indexmundi.com/turkey/gdp\\_%28purchasing\\_power\\_parity%29.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/turkey/gdp_%28purchasing_power_parity%29.html). Accessed on 5 July 2011.

24 The concept of trading state is originally coined by Richard Rosecrance. See; Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Book, 1986). For the application of this concept on Turkey, see; Kemal Kirişçi, "The Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: "The Rise of the Trading State", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 40, 2009, pp. 29-56.

25 For an analysis of the AKP's national role conception and its impact on Turkey's foreign policy see; Bülent Aras & Aylin Görener, "National Role Conceptions and Foreign Policy Orientation: The Ideational Bases of the Justice and Development Party's Foreign Policy Activism in the Middle East", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 12, No.1, 2010, pp. 73-92;

Within the post-September 11 era, Turkey has become the single most conclusive showcase for those who always stand for the achievability of a measure of prosperity and democracy in a country even with a predominantly Muslim populace. Larry Diamond, one of the pioneering scholars on democracy/democratization, laid a great stress on the necessity of a predecessor “model”, which, according to him, will give an even stronger impetus to the process of political liberalization within the Arab world.<sup>26</sup> In the same vein with L. Diamond’s opinion, many others within the West, and elsewhere in the world, re-heated their debates on Turkish model.<sup>27</sup>

Following the tragedies of 9/11, an American-tailored initiative, the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) came to central stage, aiming at introducing liberal politics and economics to the Middle Eastern geography. As part of this strategy of democracy promotion, Turkey was quickly pointed out as a paragon of the compatibility between Islam and democracy.<sup>28</sup> However, excitement among Westerners over Turkish model proved to be ephemeral due to shifting priorities from reform to stability as a direct result of situation taking a turn for the worse in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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Dietrich Jung, “Turkey and the Arab World: Historical Narratives and New Political Realities”, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 10, No.1, 2005, pp.1-17; Bülent Aras, “Turkey’s Rise in the Greater Middle East: Peace-Building in the Periphery”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 11, No.1, 2009, pp. 29-41

26 Larry Diamond, “Why are There No Arab Democracies?” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.21, No.1, 2010, p.102.

27 Actually, it is not the first time that Western thinkers have proposed Turkey as a model. In the early post-Cold War years, American think-tanks and Western media frequently cited Turkey as a model for newly independent countries to counter-balance radical Islamist movements. For depictions of “Turkey as a model” in this context, see; “Star of Islam: A Survey of Turkey”, *The Economist*, September 14, 1991; Hugh Pope, “Turkey: Role Model for Soviet Asia?”, *Los Angeles Times*, December 17, 1991; Andrew Mango, “The Turkish Model”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 29, No.4, 1993, pp. 726-757; Oral Sander, “Turkey and the Turkic World”, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 13, No.1, 1994, pp. 37-44; İdris Bal, *Turkey’s Relations with the West and the Turkic Republics: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Model* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

28 For an overview of the Broader Middle East and North Africa see; Jeremy M. Sharp, “The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative: An Overview”, *CRS Report for Congress*, February 15, 2005, available from Internet <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22053.pdf> Accessed on 11 August 2011. For Turkish model arguments see; “Colin Powell’s Interview with Maybritt Illner of ZDF German Television”, April 1, 2004, available from Internet <http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/31016.htm>. Accessed on July 14, 2008; “President George Bush presented Turkey as a model in the future of the Middle East”, *CNN*, June 29, 2004, available from Internet <http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/06/29/bush.iraq/index.html>. Accessed on 4 September 2011. For an analysis of Turkey as role model see; Graham Fuller, “Turkey’s Strategic Model: Myths and Realities”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 2004, pp. 51-64.

Debates on the Turkish model have been re-activated concomitantly with fomenting so-called Arab ‘spring’ or ‘revolutions’, albeit, in this turn, within an international setting and circumstances that are different from the previous ones. As Prof. Kemal Kirişçi puts,

[...] unlike in the past, this time the debate is occurring against a backdrop of successful uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia [and also Syria ] 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 the Arab world.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, prominent figures such as the Tunisian opposition leader Rashid al-Ganouchi, and influential Muslim thinker Tariq Ramadan have already bestowed a privilege on the Turkish model as a benchmark that can guide the transformation/democratization of the troubled Arab region.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Halid El Zafarani, a member of Muslim Brotherhood Party in Egypt, has vowed to establish a new political party denominated with the exact abbreviation of the AKP, Justice and Development Party, and almost completely embarked on the AKP’s present political agenda.<sup>31</sup>

The question that needs to be visited at this juncture is: to what extent the rising regional power Turkey could become a driving force for, or cause a “demonstration effect”<sup>32</sup> on, the Arab-speaking world in order that the latter can maintain a *bona fide* process toward consolidated liberal democracies? The answer to this question hinges upon Turkey’s

29 Kemal Kirişçi, “Turkey’s ‘Demonstrative Effect’ and the Transformation of the Middle East”, *Insight Turkey*, Vol.13, No.2, 2011, p. 35

30 “Tunuslu lider Gannuşi Zaman’a Konuştu”, *Zaman*, February 23, 2011; Tariq Ramadan, “Democratic Turkey is the Template for Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood”, *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, Vol. 30, No.3, 2011, p. 21.

31 “Mısır’da AK Parti kuruluyor!” *CNNTurk*, August 13, 2011, available from Internet <http://www.cnnturk.com/2011/dunya/08/13/misirda.ak.parti.kuruluyor/625989.0/index.html> Accessed on 18 September 2011.

32 While analyzing underlying reasons of regime changes (toward democracy) in the late twentieth century, Huntington proposes “demonstration effects” or that of “snowballing” as one of the five independent variables. This concept simply means that democratization in one country encourages democratization in other countries. For elaboration of the concept and the role it played in the third wave, see; Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Oklahoma: Oklahoma State University Press, 1991), pp. 100-106. For the application of the concept for Turkey in the Middle East, see; Kemal Kirişçi, “Turkey’s ‘Demonstrative Effect’ and the Transformation of the Middle East”, pp. 33-55.

regional powerhood and the nexus between its authority in domestic politics and its prestige in international/regional realm.

After scoring a three-round of consecutive victories over his political rivals, what R.Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's Prime Minister, will do within the near future with his unshakable power makes the heart of ongoing intellectual debates within Turkey's political life. Turkish public nowadays is questioning the ever-stronger one-party rule, the AKP, and its headlong struggle with a declining old-guard, made up of Turkish military and nationalistic-secular political movements. In this context, the debate on constitutional amendments, Ergenekon and Balyoz trials and developments on the Kurdish issue are closely watched.

According to the most recent analyses of Turkish democracy, conducted by *Freedomhouse* and *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, Turkey for all advances made in a host of legal issues is still caught in between democratic improvement and resistance to reform. The reports drafted by both of these institutions pay credit to Erdoğan Cabinet's mettlesome push for reform. On the other hand, the Freedomhouse concludes that these reforms are still far from elevating the democratic maturity of the Turkish state above the line of 'partly free countries': a status underpinned by a "...constitution [that] fundamentally lacks the inclusiveness, the clearly defined rights, and the limitations on state power that are crucial for democracy in a multicultural society."<sup>33</sup> *The Economist Intelligence Report*, coins a different, yet similar, term, 'hybrid', to weigh the underperforming democratic progress inside Turkey's political landscape. To this report, any examination that goes beyond the conventional locus on free elections, unearths that the distance Turkey needs to take is still a long way before one can treat this Country as fully 'free.' This institution demonstrates a gloomy picture that ranks Turkish democracy even below Ghana and Albania, and slightly above Mozambique or Bangladesh.<sup>34</sup>

33 "Freedom in the World - (Turkey 2011)", *Freedom House*, available from Internet <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&country=8152&year=2011>, Accessed on 4 October 2011.

34 "Democracy Index 2010: Democracy in Retreat", *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, available from Internet [http://graphics.eiu.com/PDF/Democracy\\_Index\\_2010\\_web.pdf](http://graphics.eiu.com/PDF/Democracy_Index_2010_web.pdf) Accessed on 14 September 2011, p.12.

The remaining of this work will analyze the negative impacts of the said democratic deficits over the implementation of Turkey's foreign policy venture within the Greater Middle East.

### **3.1. Drifting away from Europe: Turkey's Foreign Policy on the Eve of the Arab 'Spring'**

The EU anchor has always been paramount for Turkey not only to further her own democratization process, but also to bolster Turkey's role as a model for Middle Eastern countries.<sup>35</sup> It should be taken into account that the main part of Turkey's appeal to her neighbours arises from the country's pledge to become an EU member and her ongoing determination to fulfil her Europeanization process as a predominantly Muslim country. As Saul B. Cohen indicates,

No other country is so locationally well-endowed to build bridges with adjoining geostrategic realms and their geopolitical regional subdivisions. If Turkey succeeds in building upon or creating new ties with Europe, the Middle East...it can become a key balancing agent [or regional hegemon] within the world geopolitical system.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, the pace of Turkey's EU accession process and, more importantly, EU related democratization reforms will not only determine the place of Turkey's regional powerhood hierarchy, but also, its potential to accelerate the transition of authoritarian Middle Eastern regimes into democratic ones. The relevance of Europe will be more broadly illuminated within the ensuing lines.

The contemporary Europe represents a successful guideline about how to set up a momentum toward democracy in the vicinity of the Eurozone through non-violent measures, including direct diplomatic engagement or economic omni-enmeshment. Brussels's self-imposed containment in bringing about regime change within the Eastern Europe or Baltics derides the coercive approach of Washington, which

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

36 Saul B. Cohen, "Turkey's Emergence as a Geopolitical Power Broker", *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2011, p. 217.

eventually inflicted upon the US massive financial resources and a vanished international prestige without bearing any fruit within the Greater Middle East. The intensions of Europe are inferred by the recipient regimes, such as Turkey, as justifiable while the Bush Administration's project of democracy promotion almost totally foundered in gaining the Middle Eastern peoples' acceptance.

As previously stated, a democratic societal formation, when also premised upon a well-established free market economy, helps diffuse power into competing political and economic power-blocs. The reflection of political and economic mass of power, whenever decentralized among multiple interest groups, is a foreign policy course—that is immune from leaders' individual defects, ideological dogmas and popular/radical ambitions. A lower-profile appearance in relations with other states endows the international demeanour of this country with a less-intimidating and more benign appearance. Hence the neighbouring regimes find a quality of sincerity, consistency and benevolence within the deeds of the model country, bending toward this role model's societal and political formation.

Looking at the Turkish experience, it is possible to see that following a brief moment of seeming success in settling down regional disputes or coaxing tyrannical rules to gravitating toward a liberal-democratic line—Turkey has come to find its options highly limited. Especially in failing to have a role in easing the relations between Israel and Syria, this was seen very explicitly.

Indeed, Turkey has not fared well in mediating between Tel-Aviv and Damascus as a would-be regional hegemon. Ankara optimistically shouldered such arduous task, boasting the country's unique profile (a Middle Eastern-Muslim nation with formidable ties to the West), to set the pace of events for a lasting peace. In February 24, 2008, former Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, met with his Turkish counterpart in Turkey to discuss the prospects for an indirect contact with Syria.<sup>37</sup> Next month, Turkey's mediation role bore fruit: President Assad stat-

<sup>37</sup> Herb Keinon and Yaakov Katz, "Olmert Hints at Secret Syria Track", *Jerusalem Post*, March 27, 2008.

ed that Erdoğan let him know about the “readiness of Israel for a full withdrawal from Golan Heights in return for a peace agreement.”<sup>38</sup> On May 19-21, all three parties came together in Istanbul to hold indirect talks, with Turkey acting as a mediator in between the two long-time opponents. On September 4, President Assad revealed that Syrian representatives are ready to utter his country’s principles for peace to Turkish mediators as conditions for direct talks with Israel.

The direct talks between the parties however never came about, but the whole process was first postponed ostensibly at the request of both Syrian and Israeli leaders and eventually grinded into halt on December, 2008, as a result of Israeli aerial attacks and invasion of Gaza Strip (for three weeks).<sup>39</sup> Turkey’s response, to what it perceived of an unannounced and out-of-proportion Israeli belligerence, was to immediately suspend its efforts to midwife more Israeli and Syrian rounds of talk. The following year, in Davos, Turkey’s Prime Minister, Erdoğan, heavily chastised Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories.<sup>40</sup> On 11 October 2009, Israel was left out of Anatolian Eagle by Turkey, which caused the US and Italy, too, to withdraw their participation from the drill in protest.<sup>41</sup> This trend of deterioration, in affairs between the two countries, only gained further momentum from then on with the Prime Minister Netanyahu, in October 2009, claiming Turkey as a non-credible broker in Syria talks.<sup>42</sup> Following month when asked whether he would approve any further Turkish mediation to resume the stalled talks, Netanyahu repeated his earlier point that, “the Turkish Prime Minister has not strengthened his image as an objective, fair mediator.”<sup>43</sup> In the same vein, the Minister of Strategic Affairs, Moshe

38 “Al-Asad Reveals Turkish Mediation with Israel”, *Al-Watan*, April 24, 2008.

39 Barak Ravid, “Assad: Direct Talks with Israel Only After Bush Leaves Office”, *Haaretz.com*, July 8, 2008, available from Internet <http://www.haaretz.com/news/assad-direct-talks-with-israel-only-after-bush-leaves-office-1.249280>. Accessed on 7 January 2011.

40 “Stormy Debate in Davos over Gaza”, *Al-Jazeera.com*, January 29, 2009, available from Internet <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2009/01/20091291976879610.html>. Accessed 7 January 2012.

41 Barak Ravid, “Israel Hits Back at Turkey over Scuppered Air Force Drill”, *Haaretz.com*, October 11, 2009, available from Internet <http://www.haaretz.com/news/israel-hits-back-at-turkey-over-scuppered-air-force-drill-1.6319>. Accessed 7 January 2012.

42 Barak Ravid, “Netanyahu: Turkey can’t be ‘Honest Broker’ in Syria Talks”, *Haaretz.com*, October 18, 2009, available from Internet <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/netanyahu-turkey-can-t-be-honest-broker-in-syria-talks-1.5940>. Accessed 7 January 2012.

43 “PM: France could Mediate Syria Talks”, *The Jerusalem Post.com*, November 15, 2009, available from Internet <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=160462>. Accessed on 8 January 2012.



Ya'alon, accused Turkey of hosting a Hamas command post and went on to state that, "How can you trust a government that consorts with Iran and Hamas?"<sup>44</sup>

Arguably, Turkey's international prestige, and status as a role model, has received a powerful blow from her failure to make a standing as a non-biased, consistent and, the most critically, democratic (self-contained) power-broker. Ankara during and after the break-up of the military clashes did little to prove her credential as a neutral party, but soon officially backed Hamas's political causes and openly confronted the other party—Israel. When it comes to consistency, a palpable dissimilitude between these two captivates one's attention: Turkey's persistence on Israel's violation of human rights and invitation made to President Omar al-Bashir, for whom there is an already issued arrest warrant for heinous human right abuses against black minority in Darfur, to attend a conference in Istanbul, in 2009.<sup>45</sup>

In this context, arguments pointing out that the AKP mainly acted in its foreign policy with the aim of absorbing the popular demands of large masses amidst a fomenting economic crisis and narrowing window of economic opportunities are widely heard. According to the *Global Intelligence Report*, in 2010, "The global financial crisis of 2008 came at a time when the pace of economic growth in Turkey had already begun to slow...Erdoğan's recent, increasingly aggressive foreign policy certainly boosts his domestic popularity by enabling him to portray himself as defying the rest of the world."<sup>46</sup> Critically, this path of Turkish foreign policy has predominantly been forged by a small number of individuals within the body of the party while alternative positions are almost totally set aside.<sup>47</sup> As Michael Singh brings it to our attention;

44 Yaakov Katz, "Shin Betz: Hamas Operating in Turkey, China", *The Jerusalem Post.com*, 09 August 2011, available from Internet <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=237108>. Accessed 09 January 2012.

45 "Bar Entry or Arrest Sudan President", *Human Rights Watch*, November 6, 2009, available from Internet <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/11/06/turkey-bar-entry-or-arrest-sudan-president>. Accessed on 14 September 2011.

46 "Geopolitical Briefing: The Dynamics and Dilemmas of Turkey's AKP", *Global Intelligence Report*, August 29, 2010, available from Internet <http://globalintel.live.subhub.com/articles/The-Dynamics-and-Dilemmas-of-Turkeys-AKP>. Accessed on 17 September 2011.

47 For a more detailed discussion see; Damla Aras, "Turkey's Ambassadors vs. Erdoğan", *The Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No.57, Winter 2011, pp. 47-57.

Far from bolstering Turkish influence...deteriorating ties with Israel can only diminish Ankara's standing. Prior to the December 2008 Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza, Turkey -- uniquely among regional states -- enjoyed the trust of both Israel and its Arab neighbours. This status allowed Turkey to serve as a mediator in Israeli-Syrian peace talks from 2007 to 2008 -- the most serious negotiations on that track in years. Turkey has not only sacrificed the trust of Israel since then, but through its outspoken defence of Hamas and Iran, has distanced itself from the positions of Arab states who see Tehran and its proxies -- and not Israel -- as their "principal threat."<sup>48</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

This work's main contention is that regional hegemons, apart from other types of regional powerhood are more of a mass of physical power. So much so that a continual over-emphasis on military and economic strengths is, regardless of the harboured well intentions, might be well inviting unintended (or counter-productive) reactions from the recipient nations, pushing the intimidated neighbour states to relieve their insecurity with the help of counter-balancing strategies. So as to avoid such outcome, a role model is required to willingly restrict itself to meeting the most elemental individual demands of its society, namely political freedom and economic welfare. A domestic political configuration that functions to forbid undemocratic praxis, so argued in this paper, endows a country with international prestige to the extent to which such state entity can establish itself as a regional hegemon with credibility to set the pace of events in nearby realms.

Against this backdrop, it is argued that when juxtaposed against some other prominent states from the same geographical expanse, the Turkish state maintains a clear margin of superiority over (most of) its neighbours, in both of economic and military levers. Ankara is however still far from fully achieving a magnitude of influence or international prestige that warrants the means of power presently available to Turkey's foreign policy-makers. Arguably, the level of democratic progress in-

48 Michael Singh, "The Real Choice Turkey Has to Make When it Comes to Israel", *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 5 November 2010, available from Internet <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1532> Accessed on 9 January 2012.

side Turkish politics scales down the international prestige, or transformative capacity, Turkey has potential to acquire, no matter how much economic prosperity or military might is at Ankara's disposal. Thus, Turkey's "demonstrative effect" on the Middle Eastern countries, and hopes for gaining the status of a regional hegemon, is still far-fetched.

Turkey, in order to become a model to the rest of the region needs to strengthen its domestic authority based on constitutional democratic order. If not, Turkey's foreign policy will drive these two further away from each other: the way Turkey wishes to appear to the rest of the Middle East and the way the peoples of this region come to see Turkey from outside. Much cannot be done about this, until the process of full democratic consolidation inside Turkey, is achieved.

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