Turkey as Normative Power: Connections with the Muslim Brotherhood during the Arab Spring

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ABSTRACT

The debate on normative power has mainly been focused on the European Union. This is partly owing to the fact that its conception is very Euro/Western centric. Yet, it is assumed that the concept is applicable to other actors. The aim of this paper therefore is to examine Turkey and whether its actions embody normative power in Syria and Egypt during the Arab Spring. It applies de Zutter's four-step methodology of identifying normative power. The result is mixed. In the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Turkey tried to be a normative power but failed, due to a lack of recognition. In the case of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, Turkey was perceived as a normative power due to the combination of its Islamic identity, adherence to democracy, and the role of religion in its society. The implications of this are significant, since this paper demonstrates that normative power can travel outside of its Euro/Western centric context. At the same time, it also demonstrates that the norms are different and context specific.

Keywords: Norms, Normative Power, Arab Spring, Islamic Identity, Turkish Model

Normatif Güç olarak Türkiye: Arap Baharı'nda Müslüman Kardeşlerle Bağlantılar

ÖZET

Normatif güç tartışması genel olarak Avrupa Birliği üzerinde odaklanmaktadır. Bu, kısmen kavramın Avrupa/ Batı merkezli olmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Fakat kavramın diğer aktörler için de geçerli olduğu öne sürülebilir. Bu çerçevede, makalenin amacı Türkiye'nin ve Arap Baharı sırasında Suriye ve Mısır'daki eylemlerinin normatif güç özellikleri içerip içermediğini incelemektir. Çalışmada normatif gücü belirlemeye yönelik de Zutter'in dört aşamalı metodolojisi uygulanmaktadır. Sonuç karmaşıktır. Mısır'daki Müslüman Kardeşler örneğinde, Türkiye normatif bir güç olmaya çalışsa da tanınmaması nedeniyle başarısız olmuştur. Suriye'deki Müslüman Kardeşleri örneğinde ise Türkiye, İslami kimliği, demokrasiye bağlılığı ve toplumundaki dinin rolünün birleşimi nedeniyle normatif bir güç olarak algılanmıştır. Makalenin etkileri önemlidir nitekim normatif gücün Avrupa/Batı merkezi bağlamının dışına çıkabileceğini göstermektedir. Aynı zamanda, normların farklı ve bağlama özgü olduğunu da göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Normlar, Normatif Güç, Arap Baharı, İslami Kimlik, Türk Modeli

Introduction

Since the 19th century, there have been multiple forms of regionalism to challenge great power inter-ventions.[1] Having said that, the study of regionalism has been quite limited to the European Union (EU) and seeing the EU as the model that other regions ought to be compared to.[2] While there are some notable exceptions,[3] mainstream scholarship on regionalism has overlooked other, but especial-ly so called 'peripheral regions' such as the Middle East and/or considered them from a Eurocentric perspective. This oversight, as argued by Müge Kınacıoğlu, has not allowed us to consider Turkey's changed self-image under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the different form of region-alism it has promoted as the leader of the Islamic world.[4] Moreover, previous studies on middle and regional powers have predominantly focused on power in material terms, rather than their influence on ideational or normative terms. The EU is the exception to this.

In 2002, Ian Manners introduced the concept of normative power. He argued that the EU acts as a 'normative' rather than 'civilian' power by being able to 'shape conceptions of the normal'.[5] The 'ideational nature'[6] of normative power can be observed by focusing on examples such as the abolish-ment of the death penalty or on promotion of children's rights. For Manners this demonstrates that the EU aims to change norms without seeking clear material gains.[7] For Thomas Diez, reflexivity is the key to being a normative power: without reflexivity, the EU runs the risk of becoming 'a self-righteous, messianistic project'.[8] Portraying the EU as a messiah or saviour could lead to the EU being considered a moralising power rather than one possessing moral authority.[9]

Unsurprisingly, the application of the concept of normative power has remained Eurocentric – which is indeed the case with most works on theories of regionalism.[10] Only a handful of scholars have extended it to actors outside of the EU. Nathalie Tocci[11] introduces a framework to identify the

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1   Pinar Bilgin and Beatrix Futák-Campbell, "Introduction: Globalizing (the Study of) Regionalism in International Relations", Beatrix Futák-Campbell (Ed.), *Globalizing Regionalism and International Relations*, Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2021, p. 10.

2   Alex Warleigh-Lack & Ben Rosamond, "Across the EU Studies-New Regionalism Frontier: Invitation to Dialogue", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 48, No 4, 2010, p. 997; Etel Solingen, *Comparative Regionalism: Economics and Security*, London, Routledge, 2015.

3   See for example; Arlene B. Tickner and Ole Wæver, *International Relations Scholarship around the World*, London, Routledge, 2009; Lily Ling, *The Dao of World Politics: towards a Post-Westphalian, Worldist International Relations*, London, Routledge, 2013; Amitav Acharya, "Regionalism beyond EU-centrism" in Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 109-130; Pınar Bilgin, *Regional Security in the Middle East: A Critical Perspective*, London, Routledge, 2019; Beatrix Futák-Campbell, *Globalizing Regionalism and International Relations*, Bristol, Bristol University Press, 2021.

4   Müge Kınacıoğlu, "The Rise and Fall of an Emerging Power: Agency in Turkey's Identity-Based Regionalism", Beatrix Futák-Campbell (ed.), *Globalizing Regionalism and International Relations*, London, Routledge, 2021, p. 209.

5   Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40, No 2, 2002, p. 240.

6   Ian Manners, "Assessing the Decennial, Reassessing the Global: Understanding European Union Normative Power in Global Politics", *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 48, No 2, 2013, p. 238-239.

7   Ibid., p. 253.

8   Thomas Diez, "Constructing the Self and Changing Others: Reconsidering 'Normative Power Europe'", *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, Vol 33, No 3, 2005, p. 636.

9   Beatrix Futak-Campbell, *EU Foreign Policy Practices towards Russia and the Eastern Neighbours*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017.

10 Thomas Diez and Ian Manners, "Reflecting on Normative-power Europe", Felix Berenskoetter and Michael J. Williams (eds.), *Power in World Politics*, New York, Routledge, 2007, p. 173.

11 Natalie Tocci (ed.) *Who is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor: The European Union and its Global Partners*. Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2008.

normative foreign policy behaviour of different actors. Elisabeth de Zutter,[12] through her four-step analytical framework however, discards the implicit and Eurocentric 'force-for-good' assumption that makes it difficult to apply the concept outside of the EU. For her normative power is identified by juxtaposing the identity of a normative power to that of a civilian power. A civilian power's core norms are to protect its sovereignty and to apply the principle of non-interference and non-intervention. A normative power exports its norms while a civilian power favours status quo.[13] Normative and civil power share the same norms, such as democracy, market-economy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and employ exclusively soft instruments to diffuse these norms. Both seek to change the international system, but 'while a civilian power wants to civilize international relations, a normative power seeks to project its norms into the international system'.[14] As a result, three forms of normative power can be identified: a cosmopolitan normative power (using socialization, persuasion, and emulation), a soft imperialist normative power (implementing incentives), and a despotic normative power (utilizing physical means).[15]

Using Tocci's framework, Emel Dal examines the extent to which Turkey has been pursuing a normative foreign policy in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria during the Arab Spring and concludes that Turkey had a normative foreign policy during specific periods.[16] Nonetheless, she argues that Turkey cannot be considered a normative power, or at least, not yet, because it simply, 'does not possess a cohesive and ambitious Normative Foreign Policy Agenda'.[17] Özden Oktav and Aycan Çelikaksoy argue that Turkey's support for Western intervention in Syria reflected Turkey's ambitions to adhere to the normative aspect of its foreign policy at that time.[18] Turkey was able to practice its humanitarian foreign policy despite a large numbers of Syrian refugees entering Turkey.[19] However, they also drew attention to the fact that by not working with international bodies and by expressing a preference for Sunni Syrian refugees, Turkey's capacity to exert normative power has suffered.[20] Turkey however, does not use norms as an antithesis to the normative power Europe concept.

What these accounts of Turkey as a potential normative power reinforce is that normative power is equivalent with very specific Eurocentric/western centric norms. In turn, this raises the question as to why Turkish support for Western intervention is normative, but being critical of international bodies is not? As Pinar Bilgin and Gülşah Çapan argue, in order to apply IR concepts (for example normative power) outside of a European/Western context, it is important to move beyond the idea of Eurocentrism as a 'problem of geographical location''.[21] Doing so will allow us to become critical when utilising these concepts.

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12 Elisabeth De Zutter, "Normative Power Spotting: An Ontological and Methodological Appraisal", *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 17, No 8, 2010, p. 1113.

13 Ibid., 1121.

14 Ibid., 1122.

15 Ibid., 1118.

16 Emel Parlar Dal, "Assessing Turkey's 'Normative' Power in the Middle East and North Africa Region: New Dynamics and Their Limitations", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 14, No 4, 2013, p. 711.

17 Ibid.

18 Özden Zeynep Oktav and Aycan Çelikaksoy, "The Syrian Refugee Challenge and Turkey's Quest for Normative Power in the Middle East", *International Journal*, Vol. 70, No 3, 2015, p. 412.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., 419.

21 Pinar Bilgin and Zeynep Gülşah Çapan, "Introduction to the Special Issue Regional International Relations and Global Worlds: Globalising International Relations", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 18, No 70, 2021, p. 1-11.

In addition, neither Dal, nor Oktav and Çelikaksoy explore the fundamental factors that underpin Turkey's ambitions to be seen as a normative power. These factors include, first and foremost, the internal struggle between the secular elite, also known as the Kemalists, and the AKP, in both domestic and foreign policies. Second, these studies neglect the significance of the strategic depth doctrine, put forward by Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkey's foreign minister (2009-2014) and then prime minister and leader of the AKP in 2014, which was the basis of Turkey's regional engagements. Third, Turkey's Ottoman history is also relevant for the way Turkish foreign policy is practiced.[22] Finally, neither study compares the norms that underpin Turkey as a normative power with the way those very norms are used by the EU. Addressing these offers a chance to explore the value-based assumptions that underpin norms, and to evaluate whether normative power as it is currently conceptualized can actually travel beyond the EU.

Therefore, the question we address here is: could Turkey be considered as a normative power? The aim of this article is two-fold. It examines whether the concept of normative power can be applied to Turkey. At the same time, it explores how the concept of normative power can be made applicable outside of the EU to make it less Eurocentric. This article considers the time period between 2011-2013 during the Arab Spring and uses two case studies, Egypt and Syria. Under Davutoğlu's leadership, there was an ideological shift within Turkish foreign policy and practice during the height of the Arab Spring. Besides official government papers, speeches and declarations by Davutoğlu and Turkish foreign policymakers and diplomats, newspapers such as *Today's Zaman, Daily Sabah, Hürriyet Daily News, Milliyet, Egypt Independent,* and TV programmes such as the Egyptian TV show *'Dream'* and an Egyptian political talk show are also used as data for the article.

Following de Zutter's four-step framework to normative power spotting, the remainder of the article is as follows. First, it considers Turkey's role in the international system and whether Turkey has helped to redefine the international system. This first step allows us to determine 'the power capacities of the political entity under consideration without any assumption about the self-image of the identity, others' recognition of it or specific practices'.[23] A normative power has to be a significant actor in the international system. Second, it considers the identity and role of the actor. This includes the identification of 'an awareness of power capacities; the construction of particular norms as universal; and a role as norm-diffuser'.[24] Third, it demonstrates that others confirm the given actor's status as a normative power.[25] Confirmation not only concerns the image of the actor, but also examines the recognition of the norms in question, and '(perceived) consistency between role, norms and practice'.[26] Finally, it assesses the impact of the power's norms in terms of their other practices.[27] In both cases, Turkish positions regarding the selected case study countries, and the Egyptian and Syrian positions on Turkey are examined.

This article claims that while Turkey might have seen itself as a normative power and pursued a normative foreign policy during the Arab Spring to influence the Egyptian and Syrian political landscapes, there was just not enough recognition by these two countries to fit the claim. Despite this

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22 Doga Ulas Eralp, *Turkey as a Mediator: Stories of Success and Failure*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2016, p. 15.
23 De Zutter, "Normative Power Spotting", p. 1116.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid, p. 1117.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., p. 1116.

mixed reception, Turkey could be identified either as a cosmopolitan or as an imperialist normative power. In addition, the article demonstrates that the concept of normative power is applicable outside the EU-context.

Turkey's Role in the International System: Material Conditions

The first step in identifying normative power is to reconsider if this potential normative power is a power at all, without making assumptions about its self-perception or others' recognition of this specific perception. De Zutter defines power capacities by economic weight within the global economy and population size.[28] In contrast to Islamic political movements that predated its creation, the AKP decided to adopt a liberal economic agenda.[29] By presenting itself as a conservative centre-right party pursuing neo-liberal policies, it appealed to the conservative values of Turkey's society, while at the same time achieving significant economic success.

While it is hard to precisely establish the military power of a country, as there is contested information on military spending and the lack of parallel that can be drawn from such spending to actual military power, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) shows that Turkey was a significant military actor between 2011 and 2013.[30] In 2012, Turkey was seventh in the world for submarines stocks. It had the second largest stock of tactical and tanker aircraft and the sixth highest defence budget of all North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members. It also had NATO's highest number of armed forces and estimated reservists after the US.[31] Furthermore, Turkey had, 'capable armed forces intended to meet national defence requirements and its NATO obligations'.[32]

Considering Turkey's political stability, military and economic capacities, Turkey could be considered as a powerful regional actor. However, as Nolte argues,[33] beyond just material capabilities, a regional power also considers what role it carves for itself in a region i.e. providing stability, demonstrating leadership, and having the capacity to assume such a role.

Assessing Turkey's hard and soft power, Aylin Gürzel considers Turkey a regional power.[34] She argues that Turkey's economic success has contributed significantly to its rise as a regional power.[35] Although Turkey's soft power has reduced in recent years, due to its incomplete path to democracy and domestic incidents such as the Gezi Park protests in 2013, Turkey's role as regional power has increased since the AKP came to power.[36]

However, Şaban Kardaş laments that while the scholarly discussion considers states such as India, Brazil, or South Africa, Turkey is consistently ignored as a regional power.[37] He blames this on their

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28 Ibid., p. 1115-1116

29 Peter Mandaville, *Islam and Politics,* Abingdon, Routledge. 2014 p. 169.

30 International Institute for Strategic Studies aka IISS, *The Military Balance 2012*, London, Routledge, 2012.

31 Ibid, p. 36, 38 and 467.

32 Ibid., p. 162.

33 Detlef Nolte, "How to Compare Regional Powers: Analytical Concepts and Research Topics." *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 36, No 4, 2010, p. 881–901.

34 Aylin Gürzel,»Turkey's Role as a Regional and Global Player and Its Power Capacity: Turkey's Engagement with Other Emerging States"*, Revista de Sociologia E Política*, Vol. 22, No 50, 2014, p. 96.

35 Ibid., 98-99.

36 Gürzel, "Turkey's Role as a Regional and Global Player", p. 95-99.

37 Şaban Kardaş, "Turkey: A Regional Power Facing a Changing International System", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 14, No 4, 2013, p. 646.

focus on regional security complexes (RSCs), which do not 'allow for a state's membership into multiple RSCs'.[38] Instead, Turkey is 'located at the intersection of different regional systems characterized by geographic, material, and identical markers'.[39] Turkey draws on its geographical location as the bridge between the East and the West, and uses its strong connections with former-Ottoman neighbours to link three continents.[40] Consequently, Kardaş considers Turkey a regional power within different regions, and argues that the country has the material capacity to do so.[41] However, for Davutoğlu, this demonstrates that Turkey is not a country that only focuses on one region, but rather a *central country* connecting different regions. Consequently, *central country* seems a more appealing notion in understanding Turkey's self-perceived role within the international system, than the concept of regional power.

Identity and Role

In order to be a normative power, governing elites must be aware of their capacities. Before the AKP came into power, Turkish foreign policy had been characterized by non-intervention and neutrality.[42] However, the AKP gradually started to ground itself in a more assertive foreign policy. Aaron Stein claims that this change can be traced to Davutoğlu's 2001 publication of *Strategic Depth*, and his vision of 'expanding Turkey's zone of influence in the Middle East, drawing on the opportunities of geography, economic power, and imperial history to reconnect the country with its historical hinterland'.[43] Pinar Bilgin and Ali Bilgiç stress how Davutoğlu focused on a particular notion of geopolitics, namely civilizational geopolitics which is "an understanding of culture and civilization as preordained determinants of international behaviour".[44] This was used by Davutoğlu to emphasize the need for Turkey to abandon its Euro-Atlantic position (which meant conceding to a ''Western civilizational basin'') in favour of focusing on Turkey's ''natural spheres of influence'' in its ''own civilizational basin''.[45]

The expansionary aspects of *Strategic Depth*, or neo-Ottomanism, as the approach is often described, are derived from the Islamic concepts of *Tawhid* (oneness with, or acceptance of Allah) and *Tanzih* (a belief in the purity of Allah). Such pan-Islamism, in which Turkey would play an important role as a natural leader, would be 'useful for resisting what he [Davutoğlu] calls the spread of Western civilization'.[46] Stein also identifies different periods of AKP rule which are useful for understanding Turkey's awareness of its power capacities. Between 2002 and 2011, Turkey established itself as a neutral mediator in several conflicts.[47] In this period, the *zero-problems towards neighbours* initiative was also incorporated in Turkey's foreign policy. Davutoğlu described the *zero-problems* policy as one of the five key operational principles driving Turkey's foreign policy.[48] One might argue that the 'zero-

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., p. 647.

40 Ibid.

41 Kardaş, "Turkey: A Regional Power Facing a Changing International System", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 14, No 4, 2013, p

42 Aaron Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy: Davutoglu, the AKP and the Pursuit of Regional Order*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2015, p. 8.

43 Ibid.

44 Pinar Bilgin and Ali Bilgic, "Turkey's 'New' Foreign Policy toward Eurasia", *Eurasian Geography and Economics,* Vol. 52, No 2, 2011, p. 180.

45 Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy", *Foreign Policy*, 2010, p. 70.

46 Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy,* p. 15.

47 Ibid., p. 16.

48 Ibid.

problems' approach is a sign of diminishing normative power as it entails not judging other countries on normative or other grounds. However, this strategy can also be seen as normative because it challenged Western norms, it especially conveyed a(n) (albeit temporary) norm of how states should relate to each other. Davutoğlu's idea behind this policy was that by improving relations with neighbours and developing economic interdependence, policymakers would start to 'aim for maximum cooperation with our neighbours'[49], thereby improving the prospect of a flourishing region. Turkey abolished visa requirements, increased trade, and discussed political, economic and security issues in detail with its neighbours. Syria is described as the 'poster child' of Turkey's *zero-problems* policy: bilateral trade with Syria tripled between 2002 and 2010, Turkey and Syria signed a free-trade agreement in 2007 and even held a joint military exercise.[50]

This more cautious and neutral foreign policy began to change in 2010. First, the AKP made significant gains and improved its position in domestic affairs. The 2010 referendum granted the government the opportunity to pass several constitutional amendments and brought the military under political control. Overall, these constitutional amendments reduced the power of opponents, i.e. the secular elite, to that of mere foreign policy activists.[51] Another consequence was a more confident AKP, with an increasingly proactive foreign policy.[52]

Second, Davutoğlu, who up until then only acted as an advisor to Erdoğan, was appointed as minister of foreign affairs in 2009. The approach he set out in *Strategic Depth* became feasible.[53] Stein, however, claims that the *zero-problems* policy is often seen as Turkey's support of authoritarian regimes. Essentially it suppresses Muslims, and therefore contradicts Turkey's ultimate goal of becoming a pan-Islamist leader in the region.[54] Yet the policy was justified by the idea that it would benefit Turkey and the region in the long-term. Religious conservative leaders would look at Turkey for political inspiration.[55]

Turkey/Egypt

Turkish awareness of its power became even more apparent at the start of the Arab Spring when Turkey entered the third period of AKP's rule. Turkey had been relatively reluctant to support pro-democratization reforms in other countries, but Erdoğan called for Mubarak to resign seven days after the protests began.[56] Once the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (EMB) came into power, Turkey quickly

49 Ibid.

50 Shashank Joshi and Aaron Stein, "Not Quite 'Zero Problems'", *The RUSI Journal*, Vol. 158, No 1, 2013, p. 28. Aydın, Mustafa and Dizdaroğlu, Cihan, "Levantine Challenges on Turkish Foreign Policy", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Volume 15, No. 60, 2018, pp. 89-103. Özkan, Behlül, "Relations between Turkey and Syria in the 1980's and 1990's: Political Islam, Muslim Brotherhood and Intelligence Wars", *Uluslararasi Iliskiler*, Vol. 16, No. 62, 2019, pp. 5-25.

51 Mandaville, *Islam and Politics,* p. 171, and Ergun Özbudun, "AKP at the Crossroads: Erdoğan's Majoritarian Drift", *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 19, No 2, 2014, p. 156.

52 Eralp, *Turkey as a Mediator,* p. 62.

53 Hüseyin Bağcı and Şuay Nilhan Açıkalın, "From Chaos to Cosmos: Strategic Depth and Turkish Foreign Policy in Syria", Şefika Şule Erçetin and Santo Banerjee (eds.) *Chaos, Complexity and Leadership* 2013. Springer, Cham, 2015, p. 11-25.

54 Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy,* p. 15

55 Ibid., 71-72.

56 Ibid., 57; Ziya Öniş, "Turkey and the Arab Spring: Between Ethics and Self-Interest", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 14, No 3, 2012, p. 45-63

increased its cooperation with Egypt.[57] Not only was the assertive behaviour in the region new to Turkey, it was also a radical break from Turkey's customary position of supporting Western interests.[58] The anti-US and anti-West sentiment became increasingly apparent in Turkish political rhetoric and policies. The AKP rejected US foreign policy and criticised Western policies for supporting Arab authoritarians.[59] This new assertive and confident Turkish foreign policy in Egypt has only been possible because the political governing elite was aware of Turkey's power.

Turkey repeatedly made references to democracy as a universal norm. Six days after the Egyptian revolution started, Erdoğan postponed a trip to Cairo, imploring Mubarak 'to lend an ear to people's cries … adding that no government can survive against the will of the people'.[60] After the EMB won in the election, Turkey claimed to support the Muslim Brotherhood in its efforts to create what Davutoğlu called an 'axis of democracy'.[61] Blaming Western policy for siding with Arab dictators, Turkey was 'opting to 'stand on the right side of history' by supporting the transition to democracy'.[62] Most importantly, the Arab Spring was compared to the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe by the AKP, universalising the concept of democracy by broadening it to non-Muslim States.[63]

The form of secularism that Erdoğan urged upon the EMB, from which the new constitutional basis could derive, is not constructed as universal in this particular case, but is universalisable. When Erdoğan visited Cairo after the EMB's electoral success, he took part in the Egyptian TV show called *Dream*. During the show, Erdoğan declared that he is a Muslim prime minister of a secular state, and that he wanted to see the same role of religion in Egyptian politics.[64] He also took part in the Egyptian political talk show *Al Ashira Masa'an*. Erdoğan reasserted his position on religion in political life and called for, 'Egyptians who view secularism as removing religion from the state, or as an infidel state, I say you are mistaken … It means respect to all religions'.[65]

Despite these interventions by Erdoğan, the AKP's position on the role of religion in Egyptian society is constructed in a particularistic manner because of its focus on Islam. Davutoğlu has a specific understanding of Ottoman history, and for him regional problems as ethnic nationalism and sectarianism can only be overcome by embracing the Islamic concepts of *Tawhid* and *Tanzih*.[66] According to Davutoğlu, the 'source of the Ottoman Empire's strength lay in the legitimacy of its ruler, itself rooted in the embrace of Islam,' and Western political theory is, 'ill-suited to the Muslim world because it arrogantly assumes that individual knowledge can compete with that of Allah'.[67] Furthermore, in Erdoğan's speech in Cairo in 2012, there was relatively little emphasis on democracy and

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57 Eralp, *Turkey as a Mediator,* p. 67.

58 Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy,* p. 61.

59 Ibid., 59-63.

60 Ibid., 57.

61 Anthony Shadid, "Turkey Predicts Partnership with Egypt as Regional Anchors", *The New York Times*, 18 Septermber 2011.

62 Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy,* p. 59.

63 Ibid., 58; Cameron-Moore and Nakhoul "Arab Leaders Must Change or Risk Defeat: Turkey". *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-minister-idUKTRE72T47F20110330, 30 March, 2011.

64 "Erdogan Calls for a Secular Egypt", *Egypt Independent*, 13 September 2011.

65 "Erdogan receives hero's welcome", *The Daily Star*, 14 September 2011.

66 Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy,* p. 14-15.

67 Ibid.

secularism compared to his speech that was delivered a year before, but he put more emphasis on the Qur'an, Islamic civilization, and a return to the Islamic core.[68]

Concerning the economy, the AKP decided to break with the interventionist policies of its Islamist predecessors and pursue pro-capitalist policies. By doing so, it did not challenge the economic interests of the secular elite, thereby creating the basis for considerable growth. Whereas Turkey publicly called for democracy in Egypt, it was more cautious to call for capitalist policies. Traditionally, the EMB favoured an interventionist role of the state in the economy, which might be the reason for Erdoğan heeding the warnings.[69] Therefore, Turkey's conservative but pro-capitalist economic policies are universal, and they have not been adopted in Egypt.

Turkey, however, has been willing to project other norms. Applying the concepts of *Tawhid* and *Tanzih* offered the AKP a possibility to diffuse norms that could put an end to nationalism as the source of Arab political legitimacy, and to offer a new pan-Islamic model.[70] Thus, the AKP not only welcomed the EMB's election in power based on common religious and historical ties dating back to the 1960s, but it perceived their win as a way to improve Turkey's position in the region.[71] The AKP regarded Egypt as the remotest but most powerful part of a triangle in the region, making it vital for Turkey to have close ties with Egyptian leaders.[72]

While Turkey has repeatedly been referred to by Western countries as a model for Islamic countries, the AKP preferred to see Turkey as a form of inspiration rather than as a model.[73] Nevertheless, Turkey has actively assisted the EMB in different stages of their political rise. During the elections, AKP officials provided expertise and trained EMB members on how to campaign. EMB even hired the same public relations company as the AKP.[74] Once EMB was elected, Turkey granted a loan of $2 billion to Egypt, organized high-level strategic council meetings, and began talks on both reducing visa restrictions and on holding joint military exercises.[75]

Finally, once Mohamed Morsi, president of Egypt between 2012-2013, was ousted by the military, Erdoğan responded furiously and called the coup a 'massacre,' thereby straining future relations between the AKP and the new regime.[76] This illustrates the shift from a neutral to a more ideological foreign policy of Turkey. After examining Turkey's self-image as a normative power, the next step is to assess whether the others confirm this image (or the third step in Zutter's analysis).

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68 Eralp, *Turkey as a Mediator,* p. 67.

69 Taha Kassem, "The Rise of Political Islam: Can The Turkish Model Be Applied Successfully in Egypt?", *International Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 2, No 5, 2013, p. 84-85.

70 Ibid.

71 Senem Aydın-Düzgit, "The Seesaw Friendship Between Turkey's AKP and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,* 24 July 2014.

72 Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy,* p. 57.

73 Ibid., p. 17.

74 Eralp, *Turkey as a Mediator,* p. 66.

75 Ibid., 67; Arango, Tim (2012) "*Turkey and Egypt Seek Alliance Amid Region's Upheaval*", *The New York Times,* 18 October 2012.

76 Erlap, 68

Egypt/Turkey

EMB recognised Turkey's insistence on advocating democratic norms at least to some extent. References to Turkey as a model often focus on Turkey's political transition to democracy. Hence, the EMB welcomed the AKP's political expertise during and after elections, which 'clearly displayed what they took as 'model' was the AKP, rather than Turkey'.[77] The Muslim Brotherhood even believed that it could 'come to power via the ballot box and lead a majoritarian procedural democracy',[78] which essentially follows the AKP's model. However, the EMB took some time before embracing democracy. Although Morsi was part of the conservative faction of the EMB, historically the most powerful part of the organization but not the one that advocates democracy, he pledged to form a government for all Egyptians based on democratic values.[79] Furthermore, the 2012 Constitutional Declaration was based on 'the principles of freedom, justice and democracy'.[80] While EMB historically distinguished between a Western and Muslim democracy, in 2012 Morsi declared that 'there is no such thing called Islamic democracy. There is democracy only'.[81]

Turkey's influence on the EMB (Zutter's fourth step), however, has been limited. The EMB rejected the *White Paper* that was offered by the AKP, which outlined the path to democracy.[82] Furthermore, in November 2012, Morsi issued a constitutional declaration that transferred all power to the presidency, resulting in his nickname 'Egypt's new pharaoh'.[83] There are different reasons for this turn. Some argue that this new proactive Turkish foreign policy towards Egypt sparked nationalism from parts of the Egyptian population.[84] Some, however, highlighted the lack of consistency between the role, norms and the way in which they were practiced. Erdoğan's relationship with leaders who gained power through coups such as Omar al-Bashir of Sudan, did not do much for his credibility in Egypt.[85] The new *zero-problems* policy effectively resulted in cooperation with non-democratic leaders. Turkey claimed to advocate democratic norms, but in reality its practice was different.

Initially the EMB welcomed Erdoğan's emphasis on Islam, but not his call for secularism. The Turkish based *Today's Zaman* reported that the Brotherhood's spokesman Mahmoud Gozlan, praised Erdoğan as a respectable leader but insisted that Egyptians want an Islamic state.[86] Although moderates pointed to Turkey as a model, the powerful conservatives under Morsi's guidance opted for a more Islamist direction.[87] They ignored the secular system that the AKP tried to embrace.[88] Their new constitution declared that 'the principles of Islamic law were now to be the main source of legislation,'

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77 Eralp, *Turkey as a Mediator,* p. 66.

78 Ashraf El-Sherif, "The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Failures", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 1 July 2014.

79 *The Experience of the Muslim Brotherhood in Power 2012-2013*, London, 9 Bedford Row, 2015, p. 54; Mandaville, *Islam and Politics,* 131.

80 *The Experience of the Muslim Brotherhood in Power,* p. 75-76.

81 Ibid., p. 32.

82 Ibid., p. 40.

83 Ibid., p. 45-46.

84 Ibid., p. 45-46.

85 Eralp, *Turkey as a Mediator,* p. 68.

86 Ustun, Kadir and Yilmaz, Nuh, *The Erdoğan Effect: Turkey, Egypt and the Future of the Middle East.* Fall 2011.

87 Sebnem Gumuscu, "Egypt Can't Replicate the Turkish Model: But It Can Learn From It", *Carnegie Endowment* for International Peace, 12 January 2012.

88 Ustun, and Yilmaz,*The Erdoğan Effect: Turkey, Egypt and the Future of the Middle East.*

which was interpreted by many as the first step to the direct implementation of *Sharia*.[89] Furthermore, the stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood over its political party faction aka the Freedom and Justice Party, meant that the party was essentially an Islamist political party.[90] By taking on a decidedly Islamist agenda, Morsi chose not to follow the path of Erdoğan but that of Necmettin Erbakan, the former Islamist prime minister of Turkey, who was overthrown by the military because of his Islamist agenda.[91]

Turkey did not entice Egypt to apply market liberalizations (Zutter's fourth step), but the EMB's economic policies were based more on liberal markets than when they had come into power.[92] While this could have partly contributed to the neoliberal system left by Mubarak, most observers agree that EMB moved towards the Turkish pro-capitalist model.[93] This also caused conflicts within the party. Conservatives mostly advocate more interventionist policies, whereas the more liberal Islamist businessmen strive towards a business-friendly, capitalist model.[94] Morsi, who is considered conservative, tried to reduce government spending, but could not.

Turkey/Syria

Turkey's initial hesitance at embracing pro-democratic protests in Syria, changed to playing a more assertive role in supporting and organizing the Syrian opposition. This change demonstrates Turkey's increased confidence. There are different reasons for the delay in support. Syria was seen as the success-story of the *zero-problems* policy. Erdoğan and Bashar al-Assad, the president of Syria, were close friends. They even spent holidays together.[95] Erdoğan put some pressure on Assad to start political reforms to quiet the protests. However, Assad ignored his call for reforms and continued with the violent crackdowns on pro-reformers. For many observers this meant that Erdoğan clearly overestimated his influence on Assad.[96] Turkey's policy in Syria shifted in the autumn 2011 from supporting Assad to backing a fraction of the opposition in exile in Istanbul.[97] Turkey was in fact the main initiator behind the establishment of the Syrian National Council (SNC) which was created in October 2011.[98] At that time the AKP believed in the possibility to organize a successful opposition dominated by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB), Turkey's historical ally in Syria.[99]

The concepts of democracy, pluralism and human rights that are included in the charter of the SMB are universal but not universalised, whereas its focus on Islam is not universally applicable at

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89 *The Experience of the Muslim Brotherhood in Power,* p. 53.

90 *The Experience of the Muslim Brotherhood in Power,* p. 11.

91 Nimrod Goren, "If Only Morsi Had Listened to Erdoğan", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 29 August 2013.

92 Rachel Shabi, "Egyptians are Being Held Back by Neoliberalism, not Religion," *The Guardian*, 2012; Gilbert Achcar, "Extreme Capitalism of the Muslim Brothers", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 2013.

93 Shabi, "Egyptians are Being Held Back by Neoliberalism"; Hansen, Suzy "The Economic Vision of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Millionaires", *Bloomberg*, 20 April 2012.

94 Mohamed El Dahsan, "Where Will the Muslim Brotherhood Take Egypt's Economy?", *Yale Global Online*, 2012.

95 Christopher Phillips, *Into the Quagmire: Turkey's Frustrated Syria*, London, Chatham House, December 2012, p. 2.

96 Ibid., 14.

97 Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy*, p. 86

98 Cengiz Candar, *Turkey's Dual Challenge: The Kurdish Question and Syria*, London, Democratic Progress Institute, 2012, p. 27.

99 Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy*, p. 59.

all.[100] The ties between the AKP and SMB can be traced back to the 1950's.[101] However, Bulut Gurpinar shows that the AKP has been relatively reluctant to openly support to the SMB.[102] Therefore, examining whether Turkey had a norm diffusing role for the Brotherhood is complicated.

Turkey was willing to project its norms in Syria through supporting the Brotherhood and spreading its norms in a post-Assad Syria. While the relation between Turkey and the SNC is ambiguous, the over-representation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the SNC indicates that Turkey has had a significant say in the construction of the SNC.[103] According to Bayram Balci, Erdoğan openly sympathized with the Brotherhood, even when the relationship between him and Assad was strong.[104] He refers to information given by a diplomat to the newspaper *Milliyet*, which stated that Erdoğan was willing to support Assad in suppressing the uprising, if in return, Assad promised to include the barred members of SMB in his government.[105] Furthermore, Balci claims that Turkey 'allowed human rights organizations such as Mazlumder and IHH (Humanitarian Relief Foundation), formally independent, but in reality, very close to the Erdoğan government, to help Syrian opposition hold meetings and more broadly coordinate its activities', thereby supporting the SNB.[106] But the question is whether Syria accepted the Turkish self-image.

Syria/Turkey

The SMB did recognize the AKP as a normative power. However, it considered itself in line with the Islamic-conservative Turkish AKP with an ambition 'to emulate the success of the AKP in Turkey'.[107] In the meetings of the SMB in Turkey, the Turkish political model was frequently referred to as a democratic model that would support all Syrians.[108] The SMB uses the concept of Islamic democracy that is based on 'the importance of free elections and democracy' on the one hand, and on the other hand caring about 'the existence of a government with Islamic sensitivity'.[109] Furthermore, the Political Chief of the SMB, Mohamed Tayfur, argued that 'the most appropriate government model for Syria and the whole Arab world was Turkey's model in force today'.[110] The SMB called for an Islamic civil state, in which the role of religion would follow the example of the AKP, being, 'neutral in the area of religion – neither does it impose religion upon Turkish citizens, nor does it seek to fight religion'.[111] It recognized the norms of democracy, the role of religion in society, and freedom, although the latter is not emphasized by Turkey itself.

100 "Syrian Muslim Brotherhood: Pledge and Charter on Syria", *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 2016

101 Bulut Gurpinar," Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood: Crossing Roads in Syria", *Eurasian Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 3, No 4, 2015, p. 28.

102 Ibid., 30.

103 Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy,* p. 88.

104 Bayram Balci, "Turkey's Relations with the Syrian Opposition", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 13 April 2012.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 Raphaël Lefevre, *Ashes of Hama: The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 147.

108 Gurpinar, "Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood", p. 30.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 Lefevre, *Ashes of Hama,* p. 130.

While sources on the Brotherhood are limited, there is evidence that the AKP has influenced its norms. Turkey has been the main driver behind the SNC and the SMB's role in it.[112] Human rights organizations that were formally independent but in fact close to the Erdoğan government, coordinated and provided assistance in meetings of the Syrian opposition.[113] Furthermore, the Turkish model, with an emphasis on democracy and freedom whilst simultaneously embracing an Islamic identity, are important factors for the SMB. Lefevre argues that while SMB's adherence to democracy remained ambiguous throughout the 20th century, this changed in the 21st century, and it has become based on the AKP-model.[114] Similarly, it moved towards a closer role for religion in society, as the AKP did.[115]

The SMB was considered to be the brainchild of the AKP.[116] However, the proactive foreign policy of Turkey produced a negative effect. The SNC was not inclusive, and because it was seen as a Turkish project, the AKP lost its appeal to the rest of the Syrian opposition. This led to the reorganization of the Syrian opposition in Qatar in November 2012, which resulted in the SNC integrating into the more inclusive National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.[117] Thereby, Turkey did not only lose its appeal to the rest of the Syrian opposition, it also dramatically reduced the political relevance and power of Turkey's ally, the SMB.[118]

Conclusion

Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, Turkey, under the AKP, has pursued an assertive, values-based foreign policy, aimed at establishing itself as a central country in the international system. It showed willingness to diffuse its norms in the case of the EMB. Initial calls for democracy were welcomed by the EMB, who referred to Turkey as a model; however, it rejected the Turkish *White Paper* to democracy, and did not adhere to the democratic standards outlined in the paper. Erdoğan's call for a form of secularism was also not welcomed amongst the Egyptian population. EMB chose an Islamist, rather than a moderate, path. There was also a limited, if non-existent impact of Turkish norms on the Brotherhood's economic policy. The AKP was more cautious in trying to diffuse its pro-capitalist norms.

Syria is a different case. Initially, Turkey supported the Assad regime and tried to persuade him to conduct reforms, especially focused on democracy urging Assad to stop using violence against his own citizens. However, Turkey's normative power identity was not confirmed by the Assad-regime, which did not conduct any of the reforms that Turkey envisaged. The Syrian opposition also did not accept Turkey's norms as Turkey's ally was over-represented in the SNC.

The only case in which Turkey could be considered a normative power was the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. Although Turkey was reluctant to openly support its historical ally, Erdoğan already sympathized with the SMB when he was still supporting Assad. When Turkey switched sides by supporting the Syrian opposition, it was active in organizing meetings for both the SMB and the opposition. In multiple cases, Turkey was recognized by SMB as a model. It was regarded as a successful

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112 Stein, *Turkey's New Foreign Policy,* p. 88.
113 Balci, "Turkey's Relations with the Syrian Opposition".
114 Lefevre, *Ashes of Hama,* p. 129-130.
115 Ibid., 130.
116 Candar, *Turkey's Dual Challenge,* p. 29.
117 Ibid., 54.
118 Ibid.

example of Islamic politics because it maintained its Islamic identity and a 'neutral' role of religion in its society while being democratic.

The focus on Islamic concepts and the Islamic identity when supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Syria shows that Turkey attempted to be a normative instead of a civilian power, but at same time the Turkish understanding of normative power is different from the initial concept put forward by Manners. Turkey openly tried to become a normative power in Egypt but failed due to a lack of recognition. In Syria, it was reluctant to openly support the Muslim Brotherhood, but it was recognized as a model.

Since Turkey did not use material or hard power, it can be argued that Turkey was either a cosmopolitan or imperialist normative power as per de Zutter's classifications. Nevertheless, it has used norms to achieve what it wanted in the region. Norms are norms. While there is not a universal understanding of norms, when an actor accepts the norms of another actor, that is confirmation that the actor applying them functions as a normative power. What we need to explore further is how these norms differ from other norms.

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