

Justice and Development Party and Muslim Brotherhood in the “Arab Spring”: A Failed Post-Islamist Interaction to Transform the Middle East¹

Assist. Prof. Edip Asaf BEKAROGLU

Istanbul University

Faculty of Economics

Political Science and International Relations Department

edipasaf@istanbul.edu.tr

Abstract

This paper aims at evaluating the presumed impact of the “Turkish model” on the transformation of Islamists in the Middle East through a post-Islamist turn by focusing on the interaction between Turkey’s Justice and Development Party (JDP) and Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood (MB). It argues that the process of “Arab Spring” in general and the MB’s government experience in particular played a constitutive role in shaping public and intellectual opinions on the Turkish model. To elaborate on this argument, a media survey and in-depth interviews are conducted. Media survey includes three major newspapers: *Hürriyet*, *Star* and *Zaman*. This media analysis is accompanied by in-depth interviews with nine significant individuals from Turkish political and intellectual elite, who are influential in Islamist circles and the JDP.

Keywords: Justice and Development Party, Muslim Brotherhood, Turkey, Egypt, Post-Islamism, Arab Spring

1. Introduction

There is an oracle about the Arab world. It was told us that if there was free and fair elections in Arab countries, anti-democratic and illiberal Islamists would be the victorious. This fear has ended up with supporting authoritarian regimes to overcome Islamist threat at the expense of democratization in the region (Wright, 1992; Schwedler, 1998). Nevertheless, the so-called “Arab Spring” forced the world to face the oracle. After overthrowing Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Ennahda Movement (*Harkat en-Nahda*) and the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, the MB) were the winners in the elections in these countries respectively. Then the question was how these Islamists would rule. Would they abolish democracy once they have power? Would these new democracies turn into radical regimes threatening Western interests and existence of Israel? Or would the Islamists become “moderate” players of the democratic game? If Islamists play the democratic game successfully, what would be its demonstration effects for other Muslim societies? Do all these represent a “post-Islamist” turn in the Middle East? Unfortunately, answering these questions or testing related hypotheses could not take place because a general trend through democratization has not been realized in the Arab world with an exception of Tunisia case. In other words, the oracle is still there. No new transitions to democracy have taken place. But worse, Egypt’s first democratically elected president Mohammed Morsi was overthrown by a military coup; mass uprisings have been crushed by regimes in Syria, Bahrain or Yemen; and the sectarian and ethnic clashes have reached the peak, some of which turned into civil wars.

In the optimistic atmosphere of the earlier stages of the Arab Spring, an interaction between Egypt’s MB and Turkey’s Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, the JDP) was promising in terms of moderating the MB with the JDP influence, and constituting Egypt experience as a successful coexistence of Islamism and democracy. This could have been a significant development to stimulate Muslim societies because not only Egypt is a leading Arab

¹ I would like to thank Dr. Mustafa El-Labbad, the director of Al Sharq Center for Regional and Strategic Studies, for encouraging me to conduct this research and reading the earlier manuscripts of this paper.

country but also the MB is one of the most influential Islamist movements in the modern Islamic history. For many, this was a possibility for preventing the oracle being realized, not in terms of preventing Islamists coming to power, but increasing the chances for making Islamists congruent and responsible actors of democratic game. Older paradigms, influenced by Bernard Lewis (1990) or Samuel P. Huntington (1993), that constitute two clashing Islamic and Western blocks, were already pessimistic about such expectations. However, in 2000s, a new paradigm has already been on the rise, stressing a “clash *within* civilizations,” differentiating between the extremists and moderates within Muslims, and investing on the latter (Kundnani, 2008: 42). Also among the prominent scholars on Islamism, Arab uprisings were mostly welcome as a post-Islamist wave (Bayat, 2011; Roy, 2011). Since Asef Bayat (1996) announced the coming of a “post-Islamist society,” it is the first time some very promising indicators are occurred for the realization of long awaited post-Islamism in the Arab societies. Post-Islamism, in Bayat (1996: 45)’s words, is “expressed in the idea of fusion between Islam (as a personalized faith) and individual freedom and choice; and post-Islamism is associated with the values of democracy and aspects of modernity.” Indeed, the slogans of Arab uprisings were colored by universal human values rather than an Islamist language, and Islamist movements like MB were not the dominant actors in the events.

At that point, Turkish experience with its Muslim politicians performing in a relatively consolidated democracy and free market economy becomes significant. Indeed, in the earlier days of Arab Spring, not only the analysts were pronouncing the JDP as an example for the Islamists, but also the mainstream Islamist political actors in the region have been making statements that the JDP experience is something to look at and benefit from. For Oliver Roy (2011), the MB, “learned from the Turkish model,” has not played the Islamic revolution game in Egypt, but rather willing to become a genuine player of democratic game. Similarly, Bayat (2011) argued that the “MB’s disinterest in governmental power in a possible post-Mubarak administration seems genuine,” and even if they have the power, there is no reason to worry because the model of governance is the JDP in Turkey. Nevertheless, this interaction between the MB and the JDP ceased to be a constitutive one after a military coup d’état on July 3rd, 2013 removed President Mohamed Morsi, who was nominated by the MB and became the first democratically elected president of Egypt on 30 June 2012. While Turkish policy makers and opinion makers presented Turkey as a regional “playmaker” in the optimistic atmosphere of Arab Spring (Laçiner, 2012), they answered the critics of Turkey’s assertive foreign policy by using terms such as “precious loneliness”² to emphasize the legitimacy of Turkey’s ethical position on the regional matters during the pessimistic days of post-Arab Spring era. In the latter times, many scholars and analysts talked about a “rise and fall of a regional actor” to describe Turkish foreign policy (Ayata, 2015). Interestingly, this “rise and fall” discourse on Turkey’s foreign policy activism goes hand by hand with the MB’s rise and fall in Egypt’s short-lived democracy. Indeed, in the heydays of “Turkish model,” Turkey’s foreign policy activism was on the peak whereas the MB had been enjoying the electoral victories in Egypt. Yet, the troubling times for Turkey became apparent with the military coup in Egypt resulted in losing a very important regional ally. As mentioned above, this also had some implications for the fate of Islamism, where the JDP and the MB’s interaction could potentially make a difference.

Starting from these arguments, this paper aims at evaluating the presumed impact of the “Turkish model” on the transformation of Islamists in the Middle East by focusing on the interaction between Egypt’s MB and Turkey’s JDP. It argues that the process of “Arab Spring” in general and the MB’s government experience in particular played a constitutive role in

² “Turkey not lonely but dares to do so for its values and principles, says PM advisor,” *Hürriyet Daily News*, 26 Ağustos 2013.

shaping public and intellectual opinions on the Turkish model and post-Islamism. To elaborate on this argument, I will analyze Turkish Islamist and non-Islamist perspectives on the MB and the political developments in Egypt during the fall of Mubarak regime in 2011 and MB's electoral victories. For this analysis, I have done a media survey and in-depth interviews. Media survey includes three major newspapers: *Hürriyet*, *Star* and *Zaman*.³ This media analysis is accompanied by in-depth interviews with nine significant individuals from Turkish political and intellectual elite, who are influential in Islamist circles and the JDP.⁴

2. The making of "Turkish model" and Islamism

Turkey's foreign policy has been increasingly active and assertive with the JDP in the government. It is argued that this new foreign policy stands as a complete and deliberate rupture not only from the one-dimensional Western oriented Turkish foreign policy of the Kemalist elite, but also from another one-dimensional anti-Western stance of National View (*Milli Görüş*, the NV) movement (Duran, 2006). The latter aspect is important as it implies a new kind of relationship between the Islamists and the West that has become an important component of Turkish model. For the old-school Islamists, the foreign policy is based on a binary, identity-based world where Muslims and the West are enemies. However, JDP has preferred to have good relations with the global powers, to be the agent of universal values (e.g. democracy, human rights, free market) in the Muslim world, and to play facilitator/mediator role in international and regional conflicts (Dalay and Friedman, 2013: 124, 132). While both the JDP and the old-school Islamists have the ambition of turning Turkey into a regional leader, the former employs a universalistic language (or post-Islamist language) rather than an Islamic one.

Ahmet Davutoğlu, known as the architect of this foreign policy, has several times declared Turkey's ambition to become a regional leader and playmaker. For example, in a parliamentary address on Turkey's United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) role, Davutoğlu argued that Turkey, as "having the closest relations with the countries in the region, is in a position of order establisher."⁵ Or in a press meeting where he evaluated the 2010 for Turkey, he said that "we do not want to be just a military ally of the USA. As a regional and global player, we expect a shared and equal cooperation with the play-maker USA."⁶ Similarly, in his opening speech of the Third Conference of Ambassadors, Davutoğlu stated that "If a new order is to be established, we will be one of the leading countries laying down the headstones of that

³ *Hürriyet* is the most circulated mainstream newspaper in Turkey. *Star* is a pro-JDP newspaper that mostly reflects the official views of Turkish government. *Zaman* is known with its connections with the Gülen movement, which used to support the government in 2011 and yet changed its attitude to quite opposite direction since 2013.

⁴ The interviewees and the dates of the interviews are as following: **Yasin Aktay** (Then the director of the Institute for Strategic Thinking, now a Member of Parliament from JDP, 3 May 2012), **Mehmet Bekaroğlu** (Then the Vice President of Halkın Sesi Partisi, now a Member of Parliament from CHP, 21 April 2012), **Ali Bulaç** (Islamist writer and columnist, 23 April 2012), **Akif Emre** (Chief Editor of World Bulletin and columnist, 25 April 2012), **İbrahim Kalın** (Then the Public Diplomacy Coordinator within the Prime Ministry and now the Chief-Advisor to President Erdoğan, 03 May 2012), **Temel Karamollaoğlu** (Then the Vice President of Saadet Party, 04 May 2012), **Taha Özhan** (Then the Director of SETA (Foundation for Political, Economic and Social research), now a Member of Parliament from JDP, 03 May 2012), **Cevat Özkaya** (President of Research and Culture Foundation (*Araştırma ve Kültür Vakfı*) and Islamist writer, 24 April 2012), **Ahmet Faruk Ünsal** (President of Mazlumder, the Association for Human Rights and Solidarity with the Oppressed and a former Member of Parliament from the JDP, 05 April 2012).

⁵ "Davutoğlu: Türkiye düzen kurucu bir ülke" (Davutoğlu: Turkey is an order-establisher), *Hürriyet*, 23 June 2009.

⁶ Ceyda Karan, "2010'da Türk Dış Politikası Analizi 2" (2010 Turkish Foreign Policy Analysis 2), *Habertürk*, 31 December 2010.

order. We have right, experience and power to do that.”⁷ In another speech during Arab uprisings, he expressed the same way of thought: “We will run the wave for change in the Middle East. We will continue to pioneer this wave of change.”⁸ These ambitious remarks were welcome by many commentators arguing that Turkey’s ambitions are well beyond the Ottoman’s, and Turkey is becoming a “world state” (Kahraman, 2010), Turkey is not anymore a simple mediator, but a “playmaker” (Aras, 2010), and Turkey is experiencing a transformation from being a passive actor to becoming “one of playmakers” (Laçiner, 2012).

For some, the JDP in general and Davutoğlu in particular are accountable for this new foreign policy (Aras, 2009; Küçükcan, 2010). In this perspective, after the short-lived “American world,” mid-size powers like Turkey has a great opportunity to obtain agency in their foreign policies, and the JDP with Davutoğlu, by resurrecting Turkey’s “historical and geographical depth,” enabled Turkey to engage the regional and global actors with a self-conscious “geo-political imagination” (Kalın, 2009). However, this claim for an independent foreign policy should not be confused with opposing or challenging the interests of the USA or other global powers in the Middle East. Indeed, the agency claim of Turkish foreign policy makers emphasizes enhancing Turkey’s regional role while continuing good relations with the USA and the West.⁹ Yet, it is usually underlined that this incentives for policy orientation are enabled by the changes in the international and regional systems (Altunışık and Martin, 2011: 580). In this vein, Ali Bulaç, a leading Islamist intellectual, argues that Turkey returned to the region not just because it already had that desire, but also the Western world desired Turkey to play a role in the Middle East.¹⁰ Bulaç thinks that the USA in the Middle East is like “a bull in a china shop,” and needs Turkey’s coaching on designing the region in a more delicate way. In other word, the USA gave an opportunity to Turkey to maneuver its soft power. For Mehmet Bekaroğlu, a prominent Islamist politician, this role has become more solid with the Arab Spring, where Turkey will lead the Arab world to join the globalization more smoothly.¹¹ Yet, Bekaroğlu also warns that this role is not only about being a “moderate Islamic model” to Arab Islamists, but Turkey also took part in NATO forces in Libya, and wants a military intervention in Syria.

Taha Özhan, on the other hand, underlines Turkey’s capacity problems, and argues that the power ascribed to Turkey is beyond its real powers.¹² Özhan depicts Turkey as “a shop that looks sumptuous outside but lacking goods inside;” however, he adds that this is a power itself. According to Özhan, Turkey’s capacity gap is not becoming a problem for now, but it may be in the future. Akif Emre, an important Islamist intellectual and journalist, also elaborates this capacity problem. He argues that in spite of March 1st,¹³ Turkey has still been trying to play a role in Iraq as a partner of the USA since 2003.¹⁴ For example, it was Turkey who convinced Sunnis to stop resistance and participate in the democratic process in Iraq. However, Emre

⁷ “Yeni dünya düzeninin temel taşı Türkiye’dir” (Turkey is the cornerstone of the new world order), *Yeni Şafak*, 4 January 2011.

⁸ “Ortadoğu’da değişimi biz yöneteceğiz” (We will run the change in the Middle East), *Sabah*, 26 April 2012.

⁹ This framework was outlined by official documents like “Shared Vision and Structured Dialogue to Advance the Turkish-American Strategic Partnership” where both sides, Turkey and the USA, state that “we share the same set of values and ideals in our regional and global activities: the promotion of peace, democracy, freedom and prosperity.” The document is accessible in the webpage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/data/DISPOLITIKA/SharedVision.pdf>

¹⁰ Author’s interview with Ali Bulaç, 23 April 2012, İstanbul.

¹¹ Author’s interview with Mehmet Bekaroğlu, 21 April 2012, İstanbul.

¹² Author’s interview with Taha Özhan, 3 May 2012, Ankara.

¹³ Akif Emre refers to TBMM’s rejection of a governmental memorandum dated March 1st, 2003, that allows the US to use routes from Turkey to invade Iraq. Although it was a motion from JDP government, the rejection caused a peak in JDP’s popularity in the Arab world.

¹⁴ Author’s interview with Akif Emre, 25 April 2012, İstanbul.

thinks that Turkey played within the borders allowed by the USA because its capacity is not enough to settle an order. Emre argues that Turkey gave an image way beyond its actual power. When everything is on its way, Turkey was able to govern this. However, in the times of crisis, Turkey's limits will be more apparent as it is the case in Syria. Nevertheless, Özhan sees a great opportunity for Turkey in the Arab Spring. Özhan argues that a new axis is about to emerge from North Africa to Turkey (with an exception of Syria then). In this axis, people with Islamic credentials will be the new rulers, who will share similar perspectives in major issues. This is a chance for the JDP government because it can very comfortably embrace and work with these people. At that point, the relationship with the MB becomes prominent.

3. The MB and its moderateness in Turkish perspectives

Muslim Brotherhood is one of the most important bases of global interaction between Islamists. Although in 2000s, we have talked about the influence of Turkish Islamist experience on MB, before that, the direction of influence was other way around. It was the MB as an international organization influenced all the Muslims around the world with its ideology and methodology. Mehmet Bekaroğlu argues that, with the translations of the books from Ikhwan, National View Movement in Turkey became more *Ummah* oriented, and started talking about Islamic state more than before.¹⁵ Also, as Yasin Aktay argues, until Ikhwan's influence, Turkish Islamism was intellectually exhausted and not Koran centered.¹⁶ Ünsal thinks that Ikhwan's challenging ideology and struggle were inspiring in a world where Muslims did not know what to do without a caliph and repressed by nation states.¹⁷ MB introduced the strategy that Islamization of the nation states was a way for Muslims. Nevertheless, the MB, as a political failure, did not become a model for the NV. On the contrary, Necmettin Erbakan's strategy to come to power with democratic means has never changed, and Bekaroğlu thinks that this characteristic of Erbakan Islamism in turn influenced the MB. Taha Özhan and Ali Bulaç emphasize that it has not only an ideological interaction, but the MB and NV have had uninterrupted official relationship as well. For Akif Emre, Ikhwan knows the NV parties as the representative of Muslims in Turkey, and as the NV opened itself to the world, it encountered Ikhwan as an international organization. İbrahim Kalın calls this as "shared sentimentality"¹⁸ while Ünsal names as "natural relationship." Simply, the NV leaders were religious people, and if they had relationship in Arab world, it is normal that they contacted with Islamic movements rather than seculars, nationalists, Baathist people.

During the Arab Spring, these older ties between the MB and JDP have been intensified. Turkish media too focused on the MB during the demonstrations. In the earlier stages of uprisings in Egypt, Star and Zaman emphasize how MB hesitated to declare explicit support of the protests until the fourth day ("the Friday of Anger") because of not provoking the regime, and yet how MB's participation grow the size of demonstrations. Hürriyet too mentions MB as a prominent player, but also argues that MB advocates reconstituting the regime according to Islamic law. Hürriyet had frequently cited from the Western media that reports on the hesitation of American and European policy makers to support the revolution, which possibly will end up with MB rule. Especially in the earlier days of the revolution, such comments were common in Hürriyet. For example, there were news with following titles: "Concern in the USA: What if MB comes to power"¹⁹ or "EU to fear from radicals in Tunisia and Egypt."²⁰

¹⁵ Author's interview with Mehmet Bekaroğlu, 21 April 2012, İstanbul.

¹⁶ Author's interview with Yasin Aktay, 3 May 2012, Ankara.

¹⁷ Author's interview with Ahmet Faruk Ünsal, 05 April 2012, İstanbul.

¹⁸ Author's interview with İbrahim Kalın, 03 May 2012, Ankara.

¹⁹ ABD'de endişe: Ya Müslüman Kardeşler gelirse," *Hürriyet*, 30 January 2011.

²⁰ "AB'de, Mısır ve Tunus'ta aşırı iktidara gelir korkusu," *Hürriyet*, 31 January 2011.

The level of MB's moderateness has been an ongoing debate in Turkish media. This issue is discussed usually with regard to Turkey's and JDP's influence on MB especially by Star and Zaman, and usually with supporting material from Arabic and Western media. Star very frequently cites comments that prioritize Turkey's influence on Egyptian Islamists as a calming factor for the West and Israel. For example, in a report with a title "Egypt's new leaders to take Erdoğan as a model," Star shares a comment from Haaretz, which argued that there is no reason to believe Egypt's post-Mubarak leaders will follow Iran's anti-American orientation, but rather they are more likely to take Erdoğan's Turkey as a model.²¹

According to Zaman, an MB representative, Cemal Nassar, states that Ikhwan "does not want an Islamic regime, but a democratic rule," and takes Turkey as an example for this regard.²² Various columnists of Zaman also write about MB as an already moderated group, which has learned from JDP experience and will be the major player in democratic game in Egypt. For example, Şahin Alpay (2011) argues that although MB is a religiously conservative group, its way of doing politics has nothing to do with Iran model or radicalism. He also thinks that playing within the democratic rules will moderate MB further just like JDP, whose ideology in the end has transformed from Islamism to religiously conservative but politically and economically liberal mentality. This ideological transformation, according to Zaman, is showed as an example by Western policy-makers to the Arab Islamists. For example, citing from AFP and Reuters (2 February 2011), Zaman argues that Western countries welcome Turkey's pro-democracy stance and establish parallels between Turkey's democracy promotion and its regional power. Or referring to New York Times, Zaman argues that Western leaders are to show Turkish model, a successful but unfinished experience of marrying Islam with democracy and market economy, as a road map to Egypt (6 February 2011). Zaman also cites a NATO report about Arab Spring which suggests that Arabs in general see Turkey as an appropriate midway between Shiite Iran and Wahhabi Saudi Arabia, and advises to Egyptian politicians to follow Turkish model for establishing a new democratic regime that is Muslim but open to West and friendly to its Coptic minority (6 February 2011).

In a portrayal of the MB, Zaman argues that, contrary to assertions, MB is not an organization for Sharia, but a moderate movement looking for closer relations with the West (5 February 2011).²³ For Zaman, a solid evidence of MB's moderate standing is that it condemns all terrorist incidents including September 11 attacks. Similarly, Aziz Üstel (2011), a columnist in Star, argues that today MB is an organization favoring multi-party elections and being criticized by Al Qaeda leaders in that matter. For Üstel, in Egypt, forming a government with democratic process cannot be realized without the support of MB and the USA should favor it for that role. Indeed, Star reports that the USA was to contact MB expecting that it would oppose violence, respect minority rights and open a space for women in politics. After quoting such remarks from Hillary Clinton, Star argues that MB as the most organized political power in Egypt is likely to show its power in the upcoming parliamentary elections.²⁴

The arguments around Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statements promoting "secular state" in Tunisia and Egypt also covered broadly by all the newspapers. Initial news about this issue argue that Erdoğan's statements were not welcome in MB circles.²⁵ Hürriyet especially pays attention to

²¹ "Mısır'ın yeni liderleri Erdoğan'ı örnek alıyor," *Star*, 31 January 2011.

²² "We are not after Islamic regime; our example is Turkey," *Zaman*, 2 February 2011.

²³ "Müslüman Kardeşler en organize hareket" (Muslim Brotherhood is the most organized movement), *Zaman*, 5 February 2011.

²⁴ "Washington demokrasi için İhvan'la görüşüyor" (Washington meets Ikhwan for democracy), *Star* (2 July 2011).

²⁵ "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood criticizes Erdogan's call for a secular state," Al Arabiya News, 14 September 2011, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/09/14/166814.html>; "Laiklik her dine eşit mesafede" (Secularism is

the MB's reactions to Erdoğan. For example, it brings up the MB spokesman Mahmoud Ghazlan's arguments that Egyptians insist on an Islamic state whereas adultery, a major abuse against Islamic law, is legally permitted in Turkey.²⁶ For Ghazlan, the conditions imposed secular state in Turkey are not relevant to Egypt. Hürriyet also cites Essam al-Arian, the General Vice-President of Freedom and Justice Party (*Hizb al-Hurriya wa al-Adala*, the FJP), who argues that Erdoğan and Turkey cannot come and lead the region because Arab states do not need projects coming from outside. Against such arguments, however, Star reports that the MB refused its critical standing about Erdoğan's comment on secularism. According to Star, MB authorities transmitted Erdoğan that they had no such negative reaction to his secularism statements.²⁷ On commenting the implications of Erdoğan's statement, Ertan Aydın (2011), in his opinion piece, and Fehmi Koru (2011), in his column, argue that Erdoğan promoted a secularism that guarantees rather than suppressing freedom of religion and this is not only a cure to the clashes between Muslims and Copts but also a proper defense to the Western prejudices about Islam's intolerant nature. On the other hand, Cengiz Çandar (2011) argues that Erdoğan's secularism statement directed to not only Arabs but also to the West, and gives a clear message: "With all the moves in the Middle East and North Africa, I present Turkish model against Iran model, and you have no option other than this."

To prove the MB's relative moderateness, Star and Zaman frequently compares it with the Salafis. For example, Star cites some statements from the MB about its position on some particular issues such as alcohol, headscarf or tourism especially after Salafis declared that they would put some measures seriously restricting tourism. According to Star, Essam Al-Arian, the General Vice-President of FJP, stated that they will not make any new arrangements on alcohol, will not intervene into the people's social and private life, will not force any woman to use headscarf, and they expect to attract 20 million tourists.²⁸ Zaman picks up another prejudice against the MB on Israel. Citing from Saad Al-Husseini, a prominent member of MB's Guidance Bureau, Zaman highlights that if the MB comes to power, it will not abolish any international treaties signed by the old regime, including the peace agreements with Israel.²⁹ In the same report, Zaman also includes Al-Husseini's effort to ease the fears from MB's domination in the parliamentary and presidential elections: "In the short run, we will not govern because we will not struggle to win the majority in the elections and will not nominate a presidential candidate." Hürriyet, on the other hand, usually reflects the most well-known prejudices about Islamists by directly translating the news and comments from European or American media. For example, it cites Eric Trager's The Atlantic analysis, where Trager argued that the "moderate Ikhwan myth" has collapsed when MB seemed upset as a reaction to Bin Laden's death, referring him as "Sheikh" and considering the "resistance" in Afghanistan against the US legitimate.³⁰ In another example, Hürriyet cites from Financial Times, where it is argued that Egypt under the MB's influence is likely to be more populist in foreign policy, more anti-Israel, less pro-Western and softer with Iran (02.06.2011).³¹

in equal distance to all religions), Hürriyet, 15 September 2011, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/laiklik-her-dine-esit-mesafede-18735423>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Müslüman Kardeşler Erdoğan'a destek verdi" (Muslim Brotherhood gave support to Erdoğan), *Star*, 16 September 2011.

²⁸ "Müslüman Kardeşler'in hedefi 20 milyon turist" (Muslim Brotherhood's goal is 20 million tourists), *Star*, 28 December 2011.

²⁹ "İhvan: İsrail ile anlaşmalara temelde bir itirazımız yok" (İkhwan: We have no fundamental opposition to agreements with Israel), *Zaman*, 21 February 2012.

³⁰ "Müslüman Kardeşler'in açıklaması kafa karıştırdı" (Muslim Brotherhood's statement has confused), Hürriyet, 04 May 2011, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/musluman-kardeslerin-aciklamasi-kafa-karistirdi-17706187>.

³¹ "Müslüman Kardeşler iktidara çok yakın" (Muslim Brotherhood is very close to power), Hürriyet, 03 June 2011, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/musluman-kardesler-iktidara-cok-yakin-17940110>.

The challenges for the MB after its electoral victory are also widely covered by the newspapers. *Star*, for example, focuses on the FJP's increasingly self-confident attitude towards the military. According to *Star*, The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) implied to dissolve the People's Assembly if the FJP insists on trying to bring down the SCAF-backed Kamal Ganzouri government. Against such threats from SCAF, the FJP, according to *Star*, did not step back; on the contrary, threatened to start a new revolution if necessary against military tutelage on people's will.³² Nevertheless, İhsan Dağı (2012), a columnist of *Zaman*, argues that MB's real challenge will be with handling the collapsed economy. For Dağı, MB leaders has realized that not ideological but a practical and pragmatic policymaking is needed because they see that it is not possible to stay in power unless solving solid problems and producing wealth.

4. Assessing the MB during and after the fall of Mubarak

All the interviewees argue that MB's caution or contradictory moves should be understood when considering its struggle for survival in Egypt. According to Ahmet Faruk Ünsal, Egypt is the country where MB was born, but at the same time faced very oppressive measures against its existence.³³ This oppression caused MB to have some problematic political attitudes. However, Ünsal thinks that this attitude can be described as caution rather than contradiction. Ikhwan's strategy is to take a small step, and if the road is safe, take another step. Ünsal suggests that it makes more sense when considering that the revolution in Egypt is not yet over because it was the Egyptian military overthrew Mubarek, not people. An "arm wrestling", for Ünsal, is still going on between the officers and civilians, and Ikhwan has to be careful on that.

According to Taha Özhan, arguments like "Ikhwan stole the revolution" are not fair, and thinking of a revolution happened in Tahrir is a "liberal myth."³⁴ The colorful pictures of Tahrir was a "cinematographic story" for Özhan because he argues that predominantly MB mobilized the streets and organized millions of people. Özhan says that the army finished Mubarak's regime only when it saw MB's power. Yasin Aktay agrees this: "Maybe it was not MB who started the revolution, but it would have not succeeded if MB did not participate."³⁵ Impact of MB's organization ability was vital, and this scared the regime. Cevat Özkaya employs the "fish in water" metaphor to explain MB's dominance vis-à-vis other actors of Egyptian revolution.³⁶ Ikhwan is the water here, leftists and liberals in Tahrir are fish. Özkaya says that if Ikhwan withdrew from Tahrir, leftists and liberals would be like fish out of water. He also argues that liberal criticisms are unfair because it is the MB having responsibility not liberals, and so far Ikhwan has not done a "grave mistake."

Yet, Akif Emre thinks that the MB's political experience is very poor even if it is a very deep-rooted organization.³⁷ This lack of experience caused MB's lateness to read the picture during the Tahrir revolution. But after participated to the protests in Tahrir, MB behaved wise and did not want to come to the forefront for not giving Tahrir an overwhelming Islamist color in the eyes of Western circles. Emre argues that without Ikhwan, Tahrir could not be as organized and successful as it was for that long period of time. For Emre, MB sometimes contradicted itself, but it is excusable when considering the practical situation. Mehmet Bekaroğlu, on the other hand, argues that MB still has the task of gaining confidence internally and internationally.³⁸ Internally, Ikhwan proved to some extent that it is a politically reasonable actor to talk and

³² "Gerekirse yeniden devrim yaparız" (We make another revolution is necessary), *Star*, 26 March 2012.

³³ Author's interview with Ünsal.

³⁴ Author's interview with Özhan.

³⁵ Author's interview with Aktay.

³⁶ Author's interview with Cevat Özkaya, 24 April 2012, İstanbul.

³⁷ Author's interview with Emre.

³⁸ Author's interview with Bekaroğlu.

negotiate. It has showed the signs of being insightful for the concerns of the important actors in Egypt. However, Bekaroğlu thinks that Ikhwan's effort to gain confidence of international players still continues where the MB's main rhetoric is that it wants to be like JDP. In that sense, Yasin Aktay argues, MB successfully managed the Western perceptions and fears about Egyptian revolution. According to Aktay, MB was aware of the fact that if the Islamist color was dominant in the revolution, a harsher repression would take place, and the West would not question this in terms of human rights or freedom. Ali Bulaç also adds that MB's other concern in this strategy was not offending liberals and others participated the revolution.³⁹ Now however, he argues, Egyptian liberals and nationalists, with the backing from the West, are voicing doubts about MB. According to Bulaç, it is not MB that stole the revolution, but rather the West is trying to steal the revolution by using the liberals in Egypt.⁴⁰ When Ikhwan realized this game, it asserted itself and came into prominence. Understood that a liberal dominance is a vain hope, the West decided to use Egyptian military as a more reliable partner. Bulaç supposes that MB will not clash with the military, but probably compromise, which is an understandable tactic. For İbrahim Kalın, what happened so far was a progress and a great learning process for MB.⁴¹ Kalın especially mentions the relationships between MB and Egyptian Christians. He argues that these relations undermine the typical orientalist approach that Islamists in Arab world are crushing Christians.

There are criticisms for MB as well. Ünsal says that MB's effort to explain itself to the US is understandable, if not legitimate. This was in fact done by the JDP too. Ünsal argues that the MB should realize the source and legitimacy of its real power come from the people, only after that it will turn into a more self-confident player. Another criticism about MB's diffidence comes from Taha Özhan. He argues that MB's major problem is the lack of courage: they fear from winning the elections. MB did not know what to do if they had a parliamentary majority, and hesitated to have power in this critical transitional period. Özhan admits that Turkey encouraged MB to run for all the seats in the Assembly, and nominate a presidential candidate. For Karamollaoğlu, promising not to nominate presidential candidate in the beginning, but then changing that idea was wrong because this move hurt MB's credibility and scared other segments of society.⁴² Aktay, on the other hand, criticizes Ikhwan for not having intra-party democracy as it expels reformists and younger members from the movement very easily. Therefore, Aktay has some doubts on how Ikhwan would rule when it comes to power.

Özkaya is optimistic about MB in power because of its organizational capacity and experience about social service. He also thinks that Mubarak regime's poor performance in terms of providing services is a chance for Ikhwan which has a good will to serve Egyptian people. Surely, serving is not enough to survive. He gives the example of JDP which has served much better than previous governments, but also struggled many different plots aiming at its very existence. Dealing with the establishment and the remnants of Mubarak regime will be the greatest test of MB. Kalın also agrees that negotiating with the army is the most important challenge. There will be a negotiation with the military for delivering the power to civilians. Someone has to do this negotiation, and MB seems to be the only serious actor in the table for this. It will be an arduous process for MB because when there is no negotiation, there would be a deadlock in the political process. On the other hand, if MB negotiates with the military, the grassroots may react and question Ikhwan about betraying the revolution. This requires a masterful political style where the MB would need some help. Hardship is not only about MB's

³⁹ Author's interview with Bulaç.

⁴⁰ According to Bulaç, the West appreciates the popular support and power of Islamists, but does not like they speak of themselves. He argues that the West wishes liberals speak on behalf of Islamists. If Islamists insists of talking, then they should talk with a liberal rhetoric because it is the only legitimate language.

⁴¹ Author's interview with Kalın.

⁴² Author's interview with Temel Karamollaoğlu, 04 May 2012, Ankara

inexperience, but it also stems from the military's traditionally dominant role in Egypt's economy and politics. Özkaya, on the other hand, thinks that the MB has performed well so far. Although they dominated the elections, the MB has behaved very responsibly, which shows a desire for an un-troubled transitional period. Karamollaoğlu considers that MB has been successfully giving the message that if they have power, they will not take hostile measures neither for military or Egyptian society or external powers.

5. Turkey's relations with and the messages to the MB

According to Yasin Aktay, there are many contacts between different circles in Turkey and Egyptian Islamists who follow Turkey closely.⁴³ Aktay acknowledges that lots of mutual conferences, meetings, seminars, training programs and visitations are taking place between two parties. Although this does not mean a direct consultancy relationship between JDP and MB, the latter has a desire to learn from the former's experience. Özhan suggests that the most active country in Egypt is Turkey right now not only as the government but also with the influx of civilians from students to investors.⁴⁴ Özhan says that there are also official contacts besides very intense relations at the civil society level. For example, the political parties running for elections receive not financial but know-how support from Turkey.

What makes JDP attractive for Egyptian Islamists is its success story. Mehmet Bekaroğlu says that Ak Party's successive election victories and ability to stay in power for ten years encourage Ikhwan.⁴⁵ According to Bekaroğlu, rather than winning elections, MB needs tips for successfully staying in power because it has no problem of receiving votes as the recent elections revealed. As cited above from Özhan, Ikhwan's biggest concern is what to do in the government. Both Bekaroğlu and Özhan argue that JDP steps in at this point and stands as an encouraging example for MB and all other Islamists running for power in the region. Özhan argues that for Turkish Muslims have already stripped such fears because they have performed as legal political actors, tasted the gains of legal politics now and then, tested the limits of Turkish state elite, and find their own ways to deal with the representatives of establishment. According to Özhan, JDP has now shared this experience with MB, and advised them to be more courageous, but it is not easy to convince Ikhwan. Actually Özhan admits that if Turkish Islamists talked to Ikhwan in 2000, before JDP's government experience, the mode of conversation would be much different. But after all, Özhan thinks that Turkish success story in itself is the message. Even the mistakes of Turkish Islamists are valuable for Ikhwan.

Yasin Aktay thinks that, in terms of political experience, Muslims in Turkey has a lot to say and offer to MB and other Islamists in the region. The most importantly, Turkish Islamists have transformed Islamist discourse from a sole religious argumentation to a social struggle with claims and projects for social justice. Aktay argues that the successful municipal work of pious Turkish mayors and a strong civil society culture of Turkish Islamists are some significant elements of Turkish experience. According to Aktay, the most important success of Turkish Islamic movement has been to reinforce societal forces and to rely on that society.

For Ünsal, Ikhwan may not be affected by the JDP's programme. Turkish model is attractive for them because of democracy per se.⁴⁶ It is a regime enables Islamist to have power with a peaceful race for government. According to Kalın, the concept of "Turkish model" is not favored by the JDP government because it has patronizing implications and the term itself is

⁴³ Author's interview with Aktay.

⁴⁴ Author's interview with Özhan.

⁴⁵ Author's interview with Bekaroğlu.

⁴⁶ Author's interview with Ünsal.

western originated.⁴⁷ Turkish model in the 1990s had promoted against Iran or Arab radicals, and its secular democratic order was prioritized rather than its Islamic quality. Turkish model in that sense has not meant much for Arab peoples. However, Kalın argues, now Turkish "example" means first democracy and good governance, second, a lively economy, and finally the active foreign policy. All these, enabled Turkey to rebuild a positive image among Arabs.

All the interviewees suggest that messages like being secular are not relevant for Egypt, and do not really resonate well because secularism means "unreligious" in Egyptian society. Aktay argues that, with his secularism statement in Egypt, Tayyip Erdoğan was actually trying to correct older understandings of Turkish model where secularism has been employed by the Kemalist state elite to repress religion. According to Aktay, probably Turkish Prime Minister wanted to emphasize the implementation of a secularism with JDP where it meant protecting religious freedoms. However, Aktay still thinks that any step towards secularism means retrogress in terms of the current relationship between state and Islam in Egypt where making law against Islamic Shaira is forbidden by the Constitution. Giving up from that practice is not realistic for Ikhwan, and because of this reason, it needed to keep a distance with Tayyip Erdoğan's statements. For Akif Emre, however, Erdoğan's emphasis on secularism had a different intention that aimed at easing the fears of the West about Turkey's role in the Middle East.⁴⁸ Erdoğan wanted to say that Turkey is there not as the heir to Ottoman Empire or not pursuing an Islamic integration, but rather Turkey plays as the mediator to integrate the Middle East into universal norms and values. Bulaç also agrees with Emre and argues that Ak Party is only trying to play the teacher representing Western values. As Emre argues, if a Westerner made that remarks on secularism, Egyptians would have just call it infidelity and roll by. But when they hear it from Erdoğan, they are "surprised at most." So Erdoğan was not speaking to MB nor interfering Egypt's internal affairs, but rather aiming at strengthening Turkey's regional role. Ahmet Faruk Ünsal argues that this statement also targets Saudi Arabia, a competitor to influence new Egypt.

Ali Bulaç thinks that in sum JDP has been sending a message to the Islamists in Arab world via MB: Islamism as a political ideology or as a tool to capture the state is over, and now it is time for "conservative democracy." However, Bulaç argues that in a time for excitement of change and revolution, JDP's conservative democracy remains anachronistic because conservatism takes sides with the rich and powerful. Bulaç also admits that Turkey (including JDP) is mentally and physiologically very far from the Middle East while New York or London is more familiar. Kalın also accepts that JDP is not an Islamist party. He has doubts whether there is still an Islamist movement in its classical sense. Kalın argues that the transformation of JDP has been developed parallel with the transformation of Islamism in general. We have experienced a transformation from a nation-state oriented Islamism with a top-down Islamization of society to an Islamic style which emphasizes the bottom-up morality of society. In other words, the focus has changed from state to society. This new political standing or ideology also gives importance to individual rights and liberties within society. During this process, for Kalın, the relationships between the Islamic and universal on the one hand, and Islamic and national on the other hand have been redefined. Islamist used to be reactive to both national and universal values. Now these relationships have changed. JDP, which in the beginning clearly stated that it was not a religious party, has experienced this change very fast. Maybe PM Erdoğan made that secularism statement to underline its break from NV movement, but Kalın argues that it was also a message to wider Islamist networks in Muslim world. JDP has called Muslims world to abandon Islamism as an abstract design to govern, and start thinking about how to establish a realist political movement which has projects about how to

⁴⁷ Author's interview with Kalın.

⁴⁸ Author's interview with Emre.

rule economy, bureaucracy, foreign policy, etc. Akif Emre, however, argues that in the Western circles JDP is associated with Islam or Islamism persistently and intentionally because there is a need to lower the goals of Islamism and presenting it to other Islamists as a better way to go. JDP's leaders are pious Muslims, but not questioning the norms and values of global system and capitalism, and not having problems with the West. In Emre's view, this is presented as a success story, a model to imitate for Islamists in the Middle East. Nevertheless, there may be a gap between the message Turkey tries to give and what MB or other Islamists understand or would like to see. Aktay suggests that many Arabs see an Islamic renaissance in Turkey. For Aktay, this is a favorable perception because it may diminish Arab nationalism, which tends to see Turkish efforts to be active in the Middle East as an imperialist enterprise. At this point, according to Aktay, it is important to support MB, which has an Ummah orientation rather than Arab nationalism.

6. Turkey's expectations from the new Egypt

Most interviewees state that a stronger Egypt would be good for Turkey's interests. For Karamollaoğlu, traditionally Egypt sees Turkey as a competitor, but MB governments can change this, and Egypt would be a good partner for Turkey.⁴⁹ In turn, Turkey would help Egypt to develop faster, to contribute the industrial and commercial development in Egypt. Bekaroğlu answers this question from a different angle, and argues that although Turkey's traditional foreign policy elite would not prefer Egypt as a powerful competitor in the region, Turkish people in general would like to see a democratic Egypt where the rulers are replaced with free and fair elections, and where human rights are respected. Because Bekaroğlu thinks that, in Turkish people's mind, such an Egypt would look after Palestinian cause and cooperate with Turkey in every matter for a stronger Muslim world. Akif Emre argues that JDP and MB share a common foreign policy concern: Make people forget their older regional roles, which they are not really proud of. Turkey used to be known as a frontier of NATO and Egypt as an Arab friend of Israel. Now both countries are to reshape their images. Ünsal also thinks that Egypt's foreign policy regarding Israel during Sadat and Mubarak caused a fundamental legitimacy crisis, which did not give an end to authoritarian regime but alienated Egyptian people from their government. For Ünsal, Turkey has succeeded to move accordingly to the expectations of Muslim peoples, yet at the same time establish flexible and pragmatic relations with the West and Israel. Emre argues that if Egypt also succeeds to produce a new model like Turkey, it will definitely influence the whole Arab world. For Emre, however, a new kind of cold war atmosphere was about to be shaped in the Middle East, and we still did not know what role Egypt would play. There Turkey and Egypt may compete, but this does not have to be an unfriendly competition. According to Emre, all these depended on the Egypt's new president and constitution.

Kalın thinks that Egypt has been the "heart of Arab politics" in intellectual and cultural terms for thousands years, and Turkey appreciates this. For Kalın, the strengthening Egypt only contributes Turkey's regional vision. The idea of getting stronger at the expense of the strength of other regional actors is a Cold War mentality. Kalın maintains that Turkey now wishes all the neighbors and regional actors become powerful in every aspect because only in that way Turkey can realize its vision of resolving regional problems and mobilizing all the human resources with the dynamics of regional actors for a fruitful regional integration. Revival of Egypt, in that aspect, is crucial because it would not only invigorate regional economy but also politically lead Arabs and bring a vision to fill the disorder in the Arab world. While Kalın

⁴⁹ Author's interview with Karamollaoğlu.

thinks that no single country alone can lead the whole Arab world, yet the Arab Spring has a potential to awaken each Arab country to contribute to this regional vision.

Taha Özhan also believes that a stronger Egypt would only strengthen Turkey. He argues that it is a historical fact that Turkey has been more powerful when it is backed by south, and direct its energy to west. He uses the "bow" metaphor to explain this cooperation. Özhan says that if you draw the bow as much as you can, the arrow goes further, faster, and its impact would be better. He argues that if the bow was drawn from Cairo, Turkey will be much stronger. Egypt's rise, Özhan thinks, would also normalize the region because it would balance Saudi way of "sectarian incitement" with its moderate Sunni perspective. However, to realize all these, Egypt needs to repair her relations with Iran. For Aktay, Turkey's regional integration efforts will help Egypt to recover its power. Aktay argues that "jealous policies" of old school leaders are not applicable in the new world because the rise of increasingly demanding urban middle classes necessitates to use the sources more rationally than the Cold War's ideological irrationality. Turkish model, according to Aktay, proved the power of this perspective, and if Egypt follows, it would be a great potential for the region.⁵⁰ While sharing these positive perspectives, Ünsal argues that, in deep inside, Turkey feels superior vis-à-vis Egypt because of the Ottoman past and current level of development, and this feeling may lead Turkey to estrange Egypt in short run.

7. Conclusion

Turkey, with all its advantages and disadvantages, has an ambition to become a regional leader. Turkey's disadvantages are clear as most of the interviewees mentioned: It suffers from the lack of hard power comparing to Iran's military force, Saudi Arabia's money or Israel's development level. These diminish Turkey's capacity to have an independent foreign policy and bargaining power. Turkey, on the other hand, has certain advantages such as being the heir of Ottoman and standing as the only stable Muslim democracy in the Middle East. However, these advantages may potentially become handicaps for Turkey. Perceiving Turkish foreign policy activism in the Middle East as neo-Ottomanism may end up with nationalist reactions among Arabs. Or, being a Muslim democracy can be associated with pro-Western values, and trigger anti-Western sentiments among Islamists. However, Turkey with JDP government since 2002 have employed a very balanced language; so that, it has not offended Arab peoples and Islamists. Only recently, the above mentioned disadvantages has become more apparent especially with the crises in Syria and Egypt.

One important capital of JDP has been its Islamic credentials that somewhat established natural ties with the mainstream Arab Islamists who were the most likely candidates for power during Arab uprisings. So-called "Turkish model" also gains its strength via these ties. This paper studied the interaction between Turkey and Arab Islamists by focusing on the Turkey's perceptions of and messages to Egyptian Islamists, namely Muslim Brotherhood. I expected that these perceptions and messages provide us some clues about Turkey's regional vision and fate of Islamism. Turkish foreign policy makers anticipated that if the interaction between JDP and MB proceeded, it had a potential to transform the whole Middle East where Turkey could rise as a regional leader and establish a regional integration in line with its interests. Some of the interviewees argue that global powers also have promoted this until recently. Nevertheless, it is understood from the media analysis and interviews that JDP's (official or unofficial) advices to the MB to act stoutly vis-à-vis the remnants of Mubarak regime and military in the democratic game have not been compatible with the socioeconomic realities and power

⁵⁰ Yasin Aktay thinks that if Syria was transformed more peacefully, the regional integration would take place very swiftly.

relations in Egypt. The MB was convinced that it could easily attain the JDP's gains, which have been achieved over sixty years of democratic experience in Turkey. This seemed to be a strategic mistake, not only ended up devastatingly for the MB, but it also partially contributed halting the Arab Spring together with Turkey's prospects to be a regional leader.

Apart from this, it is still important to understand what Turkish model has proposed to the MB in terms of Islamism. Basically the JDP represents a transformation in Islamism with regard to having a new type of relationship with the West. As it is well known, Islamism traditionally has had an antagonistic manner against the Western world and the values associated with it. To fight against the West, classical Islamism employed a strategy that can be formulated as taking the Western technology (which makes the West powerful) but not taking its culture (which degenerates Muslim world). The JDP has redefined this way of looking at the West. First of all, the mode of relationship is no more expressed with the concept of fighting, but cooperating to be as powerful as the West. The second redefinition is about what constitute "the Western technology" and "the Western culture." The old-school Islamists thought that democracy, individual liberties, and market economy were the components of the Western culture. The JDP, on the other hand, places all these into the basket of "the Western technology," and argues that adopting these values will strengthen the Muslim world. Although the JDP considered Arab Spring as an opportunity to spread this understanding of Islamism (or post-Islamism), the eruption of Syrian conflict and coup d'état in Egypt have dramatically changed the course for Turkey. Since then, Turkey has lost diversity in its regional and global relations, which ended up decreasing JDP's transformative power and demonstration effect in terms of post-Islamism.

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