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IDEATIONAL AND MATERIAL POWER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN THE ROLE OF TURKEY AND THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

Nathalie Tocci
Elena Maestri
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Cover photo: Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal, fourth left and his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu, fourth right, and other foreign ministers pose for a group photo, during the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Foreign ministers meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, Saturday, January 28, 2012.

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IDEATIONAL AND MATERIAL POWER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

THE ROLE OF TURKEY AND THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

MEDITERRANEAN PAPER SERIES

JUNE 2012

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FOREWORD

NATHALIE TOCCI

The southern Mediterranean region is undergoing profound change. Tunisia is tentatively moving toward democracy, Morocco is engaging in reform, reform-laggard Algeria, while staving off widespread unrest, also appreciates that change has become a prerequisite of stability, while Libya remains deeply enmeshed in chaos, with the National Transitional Council still struggling to gain a firm grip over the country's territory. The domestic determinants of this fluid picture will make the difference. But in this rapidly changing panorama, outside-in dynamics are equally important. As the Mediterranean changes, old and new regional and international players are reacting, vying to gain, retain, or remould their sources of influence over a region in flux. Of these, particularly critical are the roles of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Turkey, on which this report focuses. The roles of the GCC and Turkey in the post-Arab Spring Maghreb are both very different and deeply intertwined.

The GCC's engagement with the Mediterranean is direct and tangible. As Elena Maestri discusses at length in her contribution to this report, the GCC's role is both ideational and material. Ideationally, the GCC is gaining influence in the Maghreb through its deep and direct support for Islamist groups, and in particular for Salafi groups. The roles of Saudi Arabia and Qatar stand out in this respect. Saudi support for Salafi groups, alongside Islamic organizations, such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the non-governmental Islamic World League, and the Fiqh Muslim Congress, is not new. More recent is Qatar's sponsorship of Salafi groups, through, *inter alia*, the International Union of Muslim Scholars, a recently established transnational Islamic network joined by several prominent North African clerics exiled in the Gulf. In different ways, both Saudi and Qatari influence is being felt, impinging on the growing organizational strength of Salafist groups, many of which, having opted to enter parliamentary politics,

are gaining significant political strength. Notable in this respect, is of course the case of Egypt. Interestingly, intra-Gulf tensions, particularly between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, do not seem to play out in the Maghreb, where a division of labor is underway. Hence, Saudi Arabia — as custodian of the two Holy Mosques — maintains a rather subdued and cautious approach, whereas Qatar occupies the international limelight, actively engaged as it is through mediation, assistance, and the media in pressing for political change in the Mediterranean.

Ideational influence through support for Salafi groups is compounded by the growing material influence exerted through Gulf investment in the Mediterranean. Ideational and material sources of influence are not unrelated, with Salafi ideology, unlike the reformist currents of political Islam (e.g., the Muslim Brotherhood in all its incarnations), backing Gulf Arab Islamic capitalism far more explicitly. However, Gulf investment in North Africa has been erratic. On one hand, it has been spurred by the abundance of sovereign wealth funds and the desire to counterbalance investments in the East with an Arab Mediterranean dimension. On the other hand, GCC investment has been dissuaded by the weak rule of law structures and rampant corruption in the Mediterranean. It is against this backdrop that the GCC recommended a five-year development plan to Morocco in September 2011. In a post-Arab Spring context, as the GCC continues to vie for an economic role in the Maghreb while seeking to deepen its political influence on the Arab Spring, Maestri argues that we may begin to see a changing composition of Gulf investment in the region. Specifically, while continuing to engage in traditional sectors of Gulf investment, namely hydrocarbons, real estate, manufacturing, and financial services, the GCC may also turn to investments in micro and meso sectors such as agribusiness, renewable energy, and textiles. As opposed to the macro projects of the

past, the latter may contribute far more to sustainable development in the region.

Turning to Turkey, Serhat Guvenç and Soli Özel depict a more indirect and intangible role, marked by the Turkish ambition to act as a model and order setter in the Mediterranean. Indeed, while in the Mashreq, and particularly in Syria and Iraq, Turkey's presence is direct and highly tangible, the Maghreb remains further removed from direct Turkish interests. Material power is, however, not absent. In this respect, Libya stands out, where Turkish-Libyan historic connections, business interests, and accompanying movements of persons were significant.¹ This resulted in Turkey's initial resistance against NATO's intervention in Libya. In a post-Gaddafi context, those business and investment links are rapidly being restored. In the rest of the Maghreb, Turkish economic interests are not absent, but neither are they comparable to those of the Gulf. In view of the deepening collaboration between Turkey and the Arab Gulf, both politically in Syria and economically through growing trade and investment links, Maestri notes the potential for GCC-Turkish cooperation in spurring sustainable development in the Mediterranean. Specifically, she pinpoints agriculture, which has already witnessed considerable Gulf-Turkish cooperation, with Turkey being amongst the top recipients of recent Saudi investment in this field, and where the two together could usefully work together in the Maghreb.

Ideationally, Turkey aspires to act as an order setter for the reconfiguring region. Much has been said about the Turkish model in the aftermath of the Arab spring.² As Guvenç and Özel aptly point out, in the Mediterranean, rather than Turkey acting as

a model, it is the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) that has been depicted — generally outside Turkey — as a possible model for reformist Islamist parties in the Mediterranean. Indeed the AKP, as a highly successful election-winning catch-all party, is looked upon with interest by Rachid Gannouchi's Al-Nahda in Tunisia, by Abdelillah Benkirane's Justice and Development Party in Morocco, and to a lesser extent, by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. AKP cadres and experts meet regularly with these actors, advising them on organizational and campaigning matters. In this respect, we note an interesting connection between the Gulf Arab and Turkish dimensions of ideational power. Whereas the former's comparative advantage and focus lie with emerging Salafi groups, the latter concentrates its more diffuse forms of influence toward mass reformist Islamist parties.

Moving forward, how can the European Union (EU) and the United States usefully capitalize on the emerging synergies between Turkey and the GCC in spurring political change and sustainable development in the southern Mediterranean? Both the EU and the United States must be given credit for responding to the Arab Spring in the Mediterranean — far less, of course, in the Gulf — with a view to putting democracy and sustainable development at the forefront of their policy agendas, and reviewing, enhancing, and at times replacing their policies toward its south. Much remains to be done however. The shift at Europe's southern shores is historic, and its outcome far from assured. Neither can the EU and the United States adequately respond to this change alone, nor can they do so by tweaking at the margins of their existing policy instruments. For a paradigmatic change in the transatlantic response that rises to the challenge of the historic change underway, both must become genuinely open to receiving the input of local, regional, and extra-regional actors. Turkey and the GCC stand out in this respect. But what could such cooperation entail?

¹ As reported by Guvenç and Özel, the first prime minister of independent Libya was in fact of Turkish origin.

² See Nathalie Tocci (ed.), *Turkey and the Arab Spring: Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy in a Transatlantic Perspective*, IAI-GMF Mediterranean Papers, October 2011.

Politically, the EU and United States may be better placed to focus their diplomatic interventions in support for universal norms grounded in international law, whether related to human rights, fundamental freedoms, transparency, accountability, or the rule of law. When resting on the solid turf of international law, the EU and the United States, whose reputation in the region is far from spotless, would be less the object of criticism. Turkey and the GCC, by contrast, could capitalize on their closer ties with emerging political actors, speaking out more openly on political topics. A prominent case in point regards Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's praise for secularism in Cairo. True, Erdoğan's remarks were scorned by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and reviled by the Salafi al-Nour party. But without doubt, the Egyptian reaction would have been far more virulent had an EU or U.S. official uttered the Turkish prime minister's words. The fact that a leader broadly viewed as Islamist at home was calling for secularism, conferred a degree of legitimacy on Erdoğan's words that EU or U.S. officials would be hard pressed to achieve. Indeed, who better than Erdoğan can argue that there is nothing to stop a devout Muslim from ruling a secular state?

Another interesting avenue for cooperation regards political party support. Here too, synergies could be imagined between, on one hand, Turkish and Gulf ties with, reputation amongst, and assistance to emerging regional actors, and, on the other, transatlantic, and specifically U.S., know-how on political party development. For Turkish or Gulf experts and activists to engage in training and dialogue activities in the framework of experienced U.S. political party development programs may be a fruitful way forward. These synergies may be of interest not only for Islamist groups, but also for emerging secular groups. Many of these youth groups, having been at the forefront of the revolts by relying on the Internet and the social media, are now struggling to establish more traditional forms of political

organization, which are necessary to win elections and take part in government.

Economically, the United States, and particularly the EU, have the knowledge to engage in the economic governance reforms needed for the southern Mediterranean to be put on the fast-track to sustainable development. But neither do they have sufficient resources to invest in an age of austerity, nor, once again, do they often have the credibility to effectively promote sustainable development. In this vein, Maestri calls for integrative partnerships between the EU, Turkey, the GCC, with the collaboration of the United States. These partnerships would see joint investment and knowledge transfer in key sectors such as agribusiness, gas, renewable energy, and textiles. These joint investments would contribute to promoting a more socially responsible economic role, which addresses the economic, human, and environmental needs in post-Arab Spring North Africa. Joint action could also be pursued in sectors such as power transmission, interconnections, and tourism.

As for knowledge transfer, one could imagine the participation or collaboration of Turkey and the GCC in EU TaieX and Twinning programs, in which the EU engages in exchanges and training to support capacity building within different governance structures in the neighborhood. Bringing Turkey and the GCC into these programs, on the supply rather than demand side, would have two principal advantages. First, Turkey and the GCC could bring their own experience to bear. In the case of Turkey, areas such as banking, housing, or small- and medium-enterprise promotion come to mind, where Turkey has relevant expertise due to its recent reforms on these matters. In the case of the GCC, interesting avenues for joint action include Islamic banking, both with reference to wealth management and retail banking, and the petrochemical industry, both downstream and upstream, in view of the global role played by

the Saudi Arabian Basic Industry Corporation (SABIC). Second, by bringing non-EU member states into these programs, the EU may gradually shift its focus away from the export of the *acquis communautaire*. *Aquis* export is one of the EU's most notorious professional biases which, while reasonable in Europe's eastern neighborhood where the prospect and aspiration of membership, albeit distant, exist, is problematic when it comes to the South. In other words, by collaborating with Turkey and the GCC in the pursuit of these programs, the

EU's promotion of good governance could start to have less to do with the technical exportation of the *acquis* and more to do with a genuine response to the governance needs of its neighbors.

For all this to take place, establishing the appropriate forums for strategic dialogue is essential. This dialogue ought not to be *ad hoc* and sporadic, but regular and multi-layered, including top, sectoral, and civil society levels.

1 THE GULF IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

ELENA MAESTRI

Throughout history, Gulf ties with the Maghreb have been weaker than with the closer Mashreq territories. In light of the Arab Spring, however, new dynamics are emerging in Gulf relations with the Mediterranean region. Diplomatic, economic, and socio-cultural contacts have increased distinctly. Notable in this respect are the official visits of the emir of Qatar to Tunis, of the Tunisian minister of foreign affairs to the Emirates, and of the Tunisian prime minister to Riyadh, all between January and February 2012. Alongside this, there have been a series of agreements and memorandums of understanding aimed at enhancing Gulf development assistance to the area.¹

When focusing on the role of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the post-Arab Spring Mediterranean, the nature of its involvement — most notably by Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia — needs to be explored in the light of two factors: Islam and economics. Alongside this, the GCC's role in the Mediterranean can only be properly grasped against the backdrop of the evolving structural reality of the GCC region itself, with its specific political, cultural, religious, and social traits.

In internal Gulf debates, tradition, socio-economic development, and modernity underpin the need to come to terms with new models, paradigms, and discourses, such as political reform and human rights. Yet, each society is also seen as striving to preserve its cultural-religious heritage and transmit it to the members of its social group, or at least to those who belong to certain strata of the population. In the eyes of the GCC leaderships, it is exactly this cultural-religious heritage that, by leveraging growing economic interests and networks, can also contribute to promoting political

reform. Not having it, however, leads to social and political chaos. This belief is not simply rooted in the desire for regime protection; it has deep roots in the Arabian-Islamic-tribal political and religious culture shared by the GCC member states, an aspect that is often neglected both in the West and in the Southern Mediterranean.

The Arab Spring in the Maghreb, while skipping stagnant Algeria, brought about important changes, though in very different ways and degrees in Tunisia, Libya, and Morocco. As such, GCC leaderships could not but rethink their policies toward the region. The “Islam factor” and a pragmatic approach aimed at creating better prospects for business emerge as the two main drivers of GCC foreign policies in the Mediterranean. In view of this, the Gulf Arab states have become more exposed than others to being perceived as an intrusive foreign power in North Africa.

If religious ties are strong and relevant, nobody can deny some important cultural differences between the Gulf and the Maghreb. A typical Islamic-tribal paradigm pertains to the Gulf, which has contributed to transforming society from a community-based order into a post-traditional, but not yet modern, political-societal order. In this sense, neo-traditionalist methods in the Gulf's post-traditional liberalized autocracies give the political, institutional, and social evolution of the area a distinct flavor amongst the variegated Arab and Islamic panorama.² The resulting internal dynamics in the political, social, and economic fields have definitely been quite different from the ones in the Maghreb, both in republics like Tunisia and in a monarchy

¹ See “Red carpet welcome for Qatar's Emir in Tunis,” *Gulf Times*, January 14, 2012; UAE for fruitful, progressive ties with Tunisia,” *Khaleej Times*, January 21, 2012; *Okaz*, February 21, 2012.

² See G. Nonneman (2006), *Political Reform in the Gulf Monarchies: from Liberalisation to Democratisation? A Comparative Perspective*, Sir William Luce Fellowship Paper No. 6, Durham Middle East Papers No. 80, p. 4.

like Morocco.³ And yet, the post-Arab Spring Mediterranean is seen as a potentially important partner for the GCC.

The “Islam Factor”

Southern Mediterranean countries, affected by deep social disparities and serious economic mismanagement, coupled with high corruption levels, have witnessed the progressive expansion of an Islamic network of Arab Gulf-supported charitable activities in the last decade. This has intertwined with rising popular support for some Islamist Salafi groups and the strengthening of political Islam throughout the region.⁴ On one hand, funding from GCC member states and, above all, from Saudi Arabia, cannot be decoupled from the growing ideological influence of the religious-political thought generally defined as *Salafiyyah*. On the other hand, one cannot forget the relevance of other kinds of locally deep-rooted Islamist thought, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and, in the case of Libya, the Senussi Sufis, who are likely to gain more supporters in the country’s post-revolutionary environment.⁵

Saudi Arabia, as the custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, has been reinforcing its role in the Islamic world — and North Africa is no exception — by conducting a foreign policy supported by Islamic organizations, such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the non-governmental *Rābitah al-‘ālam al-islāmi* (Islamic World League), and the Fiqh Muslim Congress. Most recently and most surprisingly, the small and wealthy Qatar

has been positioning itself as the second most active GCC supporter of a Salafi-inspired Islamic framework and network, followed closely by the UAE and Kuwait. Despite their traditional tribally rooted competition, Saudi Arabia and Qatar seem to proceed both toward enhanced ideological Salafi convergence, confirmed by the rising personal contacts between Qatari and Saudi scholars and preachers in the last few years, and towards a careful “division of labour” in the post-Arab Spring environment.⁶ Within this perspective, no doubt, the custodianship of the two Holy Mosques of Saudi Arabia continues to influence the foreign policy of the kingdom, which is generally much more cautious than Qatar at the international level, while sharing, most of the time, similar goals.

Salafiyyah is far from a monolithic movement of Sunni fundamentalism. A “knowledge-based” Islamic thought, which is developing stronger links with a peaceful wing of Salafiyyah, has been emerging as one of the key elements in the post-Arab context. With reference to North Africa, the financial and political support for an Islamic *nahdah* (renaissance) by Gulf Arab actors, as an expression of Salafiyyah and Hanbalism — the most traditionist juridical school in Sunni Islam — is well exemplified by Qatar’s initiatives at the start of the state-building process in post-Gaddafi Libya. These initiatives have to be understood in the context of the Islamic reformist discourse, which is developing as a means to find appropriate formulas to combine modernity/democracy with Islamic teachings. In the light of the substantial ideological Saudi-Qatari convergence within the Salafiyyah, the support of the two for one local Salafi group or another is often determined purely by the personal contacts of the members. The personal relations of the exiled Libyan cleric Ali Al-Salabi with the Salafiyyah network in Qatar, for instance, was a

³ The development of North Africa, with its ethnic, cultural, and Islamic religious specificities — including the Berbers, the Islamic brotherhoods, and Sufis — and carrying the weight of the Arab nationalism, is distinctly different from that of the Gulf.

⁴ See P.C. Salzman (2011), “When They Proclaim ‘Islam is the Answer,’ What is the Question?: The Return to Political Islam,” *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, Vol.2, No. 2, p. 152.

⁵ See M. Alpini (2011), *How is Civil Society Doing in Libya?*, INEGMA, September 20, 2011.

⁶ See S. Colombo (2012), *The GCC Countries and the Arab Spring. Between Outreach, Patronage and Repression*, IAI Working Papers 1209, Rome.

factor explaining Qatar's support for Salafi elements in the new Libya, a position openly criticized by some secular members of the National Transitional Council.

As an intellectual-dogmatic-religious-juridical movement, the peaceful Salafiyyah in the Gulf is very different from the militant Salafiyyah opposition, which spread to the Middle East from Syria and Jordan in the 1960s and early 1970s. During the very last years of the 20th century, the Arab world witnessed the strengthening of the peaceful and moderate reformist wing within the composite Salafiyyah movement. This wing, propounding knowledge, education, and culture as the true way to encourage all Muslims (even the most tepid) to respect the principles of Islam, has been developing increasingly closer links with GCC societies, both at the official level and among influential and rich men and women in the private sector. These segments of society are viewed as being more likely to react in a "constructive way" to Western policies towards the Muslim world, in particular after 9/11, and to the threats to their security posed by violent Islamist militant groups. Education (*Tarbiyyah*) and knowledge have been given more emphasis.⁷ This reformist peaceful Salafi thought has been gaining support from the Saudi government and other Gulf Arab States as an interpretation that makes it possible to contrast the more radical and militant organizations and to fight terrorism, while remaining true to a radically pure form of Islam. There is no doubt that the Salafiyyah thought in the Muslim world — in its multiple incarnations — represents new dimensions of knowledge and leads to new forms of social organization espousing both modern and traditional knowledge.

The emergence of Salafist groups as political actors in North Africa has led to an increasing diversifica-

tion of the Islamist camp in the area. The Gulf Arab Islamic capitalism, an expression of a well-defined Salafi ideological dimension against economic collectivism, can certainly end up clashing with the Islamic socialism of the reformist wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. Salafi networks, in this sense, are bound to be increasingly seen in North Africa as the main supporters of an aggressive and intrusive Gulf Arab Islamic capitalism, which is not perceived as contributing to economic sustainability *in loco*. And yet, one cannot ignore that many North Africans exiled in the Gulf, while being associated with the Muslim Brothers, have been developing close links with Gulf Arab Salafi scholars as well, contributing to the emergence of a conservative wing within the Muslim Brotherhood, closer to the Salafi approach.

The cultural-religious involvement of the GCC in North Africa can only be properly assessed in the light of this evolving Islamic thought. A newly built transnational Islamic network, joined by some North African clerics exiled in the Gulf, has been developing between the two regions over the last decade. Within this network, connecting Islamic authenticity with contemporary issues, there has been a gradual institutionalization of collective *ijtihad* (interpretation of the Qur'an and of the Tradition of the Prophet, or *Sunnah*), a crucial and hotly debated point in any reform process within a Sunni Islamic context. During his exile in Qatar, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, a prominent Egyptian Islamic scholar originally linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, contributed to creating this integrated network of Islamic scholars, which started reaching out to North Africa from the Gulf through exiles living between the GCC and Europe. Al-Qaradawi's promotion of the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) in 2004 was perfectly in line with the flexible Salafi approach, which had been strengthening at government levels in both Qatar with Sheikh Hamed and in Saudi Arabia with King Abdullah. The IUMS contrasted with the more

⁷ See V. Fiorani Piacentini (2003), "Il neo fondamentalismo. La dottrina del jihad fra opposizione e sostegno," *Per Aspera ad Veritatem*, Vol. 9, No. 25.

conservative forces, which kept opposing change and reform.⁸ In this context, it is easier to understand Qaradawi's open support for the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, as expressed in *al-Jazeera*. While the Gulf Arab media concurred to strengthen the image of the GCC in the post-Arab Spring environment, aid coming from Gulf Arab charities and NGOs seems to have been rising in parallel with official Gulf Arab governments' assistance packages, strengthening the financial support for Islamic institutions and groups within the composite local Salafi context.

These developments within Islamist politics have shaped official GCC policies toward North Africa, illustrating the urgent need to make Islam more responsive to modern and global issues, beyond possible intellectual, political, and doctrinal differences. Against this backdrop, the case of IUMS is significant: it is a forum in which the multifarious voices in the Islamic world are represented, and which strives to bridge gaps through dialogue. It is exactly this Islamic network that has provided Qatar with winning cards both in its growing activism as an international mediator and in its involvement in Mediterranean affairs.⁹

In Tunisia, although Al-Nahda's electoral victory has been defined as a triumph without a majority, one cannot overlook the fact that many voted for the party in view of its commitment to Islamic

teachings.¹⁰ In Morocco, the new prime minister, Abdelillah Benkirane, is also the secretary general of the reformist Islamic Justice and Development Party, which reconfirms the prominent role of political Islam within the country's political development.

The "Islam factor" can also explain some differences in Gulf Arab reactions to the Arab uprisings in North Africa, as the ideological conflict between the "progressive Islamism" of Gaddafi and the Gulf Arab Salafiyyah was no secret. Finally, going beyond symbolism, Islam provides the platform for a political approach to the Arab Spring favoring the recourse to mediation, whenever possible,¹¹ and to avoid any interference which could trigger *fitnah* (civil strife undermining a country's social fabric), radicalization, and sectarianism.¹²

"Business Is Business"

On the flip side of the ideological drive underpinning Gulf engagement with the Mediterranean are mundane and highly pragmatic business interests. The failure of most regional groupings in the Arab world that emerged during the last century can largely be ascribed to the fact that they were more ideologically than business-oriented. Develop-

⁸ Tim Niblock's analysis of the flexible line of interpretation of ibn Abd al-Wahhab's thought, strengthening in Saudi Arabia against the most rigid and restrictive line, is very accurate. See T. Niblock (2006), *Saudi Arabia, Power, Legitimacy and Survival*, Routledge, Abingdon.

⁹ IUMS members include Rashid al-Ghannushi, the Islamist leader of the Tunisian Al-Nahda party; Salman al-Awda, a Saudi Salafi who opposed the Saudi regime in the 1990s; Muhammad Husain Fadl Allah, a prominent Shi'a religious authority in Lebanon; and Jalal al-Din Haqqani, key figure in the Taliban movement. See M.Q. Zaman (2010) "Bridging Traditions. Madrasas and their Internal Critics," in A. Shryock, *Islamophobia Islamophilia. Beyond the Politics of Enemy and Friend*, Bloomington and M.Q. Zaman (2010), "Evolving Conception of Ijtihad in Modern South Asia," in *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 49, No.1.

¹⁰ See A. Noura (2012), *Tunisia: Elections...And then What?*, Arab Reform Brief, Arab Reform Initiative (ARI), January.

¹¹ The importance of mediation in Islam can be traced back to the time of Prophet Muhammad and early Islam, when settling disputes by arbitration was considered of great value for the community of believers (*ummah*), a principle further elaborated by the classical orthodox doctrine.

¹² Initiatives liable to cause *fitnah* have been jointly condemned on several recent occasions. Condemnation of *fitnah* has always been very clearly expressed in orthodox Islamic doctrine, not by chance re-emphasized during the international meeting of the 'ulama', held in Mecca in April 2011, and by the Secretariat of the Muslim World League. See *Al-Alam al-Islami*, April 11, 2011. The strong stance against the possibility of *fitnah* with reference to Libya, for instance, was reiterated by the International Union of the "Ulema" addressing the risk of dismemberment of the country. See Al-Qaradawi's web site in Arabic, "*Ittihad al-'ulamā yad'u al-sha'b al-libiy ila al-istimsāk bi-l-wahdah*" [the Union of 'Ulema' invites the Libyan people to keep unity], March 21, 2012.

ment and economics, however, have never been neglected in the evolution of the GCC, and have contributed to the member states' more pragmatic and flexible approach to both domestic and foreign policy. In spite of a general reluctance to embark upon political liberalization, the Gulf has openly embraced economic globalization,¹³ thanks to the last oil boom, which provided them with some of the largest Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWFs) (see Table 1) in the world.¹⁴

This contributed to enhancing Gulf interests at both government and private levels in exploring investment opportunities beyond Western markets. Asia became a favorite destination of investment flows in the financial, real estate, tourism, and agribusiness sectors, due to its greater absorption capacity. At the same time, the GCC also turned to the Mediterranean as a destination of its external economic activities. The political desire to counterbalance the Gulf's turn toward Asian markets — in particular China and India — partly explains the rising Gulf FDI toward various Arab Mediterranean countries included in the so-called Med-11 group (see Table 2).¹⁵

Table 1 – The Largest GCC Sovereign Wealth Funds

Assets under management, \$ billion

UAE	Abu Dhabi Investment Authority	\$627
	Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Investment Company	\$58
	Abu Dhabi Mubadala Development Company	\$27.1
	Dubai Investment Corporation	\$70
	Ras Al-Khaimah Investment Authority	\$1.2
Saudi Arabia	SAMA Foreign Holdings	\$532.8
Kuwait	Kuwait Investment Authority	\$296
Qatar	Qatar Investment Authority	\$85
Bahrain	Mumtalakat Holding Company	\$9.1
Oman	State General Reserve Fund	\$8.2

Source: SWF Institute

The perception of potentially business-friendly environments within that group enhanced Gulf investment flows first toward the Mashreq — in particular Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt — and shortly thereafter, although to a lesser extent, toward the Maghreb, with Tunisia and Morocco at the forefront. These investments have been considerably diverse, expanding from hydrocarbons and real estate to manufacturing and financial services. However, GCC business actors have been put off by low standards of transparency, red tape, and high rates of corruption.¹⁶ This meant that beyond a generally growing interest in the area, Gulf Arab economic involvement in the Mediterranean has been rather discontinuous, with peaks in investment flows in 2006 and 2007 and significant drops in the following years.¹⁷ On the eve of the Arab Spring, a new peak was in the offing. In 2010, for instance, only a few months before the start of the uprising in Tunisia, the Gulf Finance House of

¹³ See S.Y. Al-Issa (2005), "The Political Impact of Globalisation on the Arab Gulf States," in ECSSR (ed.), *The Gulf. Challenges of the Future*, Abu Dhabi, p. 117.

¹⁴ See A. Quadrio Curzio and V. Miceli (2010), *Sovereign Wealth Funds: A complete guide to state-owned investments funds*, Petersfield, p. 49.

¹⁵ Med-11 indicates the 11 Mediterranean countries neighbouring Europe and included in the EU's Mediterranean policy platforms: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey.

¹⁶ These problems in North Africa have been frequently lamented in the GCC Chambers of Commerce in recent years.

¹⁷ See <http://www.animaweb.org>.

Table 2 – Net FDIs Flows from the GCC Region into Med 11 (2006-2010)

€ million

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Bahrain	61	1,518	408	128	945	642
Kuwait	1,610	4,292	2,802	2,182	790	511
Qatar	219	844	1,331	917	724	1,840
KSA	2,356	4,039	2,581	1,233	1,935	492
UAE	2,823	9,886	11,874	3,751	2,355	1,861
Oman	-	-	-	373	-	-
GCC	7,069	20,579	18,996	8,584	6,749	5,346

Source: ANIMA

Bahrain made its biggest FDI announcement in Tunisia to launch Africa's first offshore financial center in the Tunis Financial Harbour, with an investment of €2,100 million; Qatar Telecom (Qtel) also invested €1,100 million in Tunisia. In 2010, Libya attracted the attention both of the Qatar Investment Authority and of Qatari Diar, which planned an investment of €657.7 million in the country to redevelop the waterfront in Tripoli. Also in Libya, the UAE's Al-Maabar launched the joint venture development project of Al-Waha, with an investment of €132 million.¹⁸ All these initiatives came to a halt with the uprisings in 2011.

The role played by Qatar and the UAE in NATO's military operation in Libya and the following proactive Qatari role in post-Gaddafi Libya point to the fact that the Gulf's economic clout in North Africa is increasingly intertwined with political and security interests. All of this is confirmed by the recent unanimous recognition of the GCC's main strategic objectives: a) to protect its members against all internal and external threats and risks; b) to achieve sustainable economic growth and promote human development; and c) to reinforce

its presence at the international level in order to effectively confront international threats.¹⁹ In view of this, the southern Mediterranean countries have become part of a complex regional context that requires concerted efforts by the GCC alongside the EU, Turkey, and the United States. Boosting security and preventing chaos from spreading are indicated as major goals by top GCC officials.²⁰

The GCC decision to consider including Jordan and Morocco in the organization came in May 2011 in a surprise announcement that inevitably generated skepticism as well as new hopes in the region. While there seems to be a clear rationale for Jordan's membership, given its geographic contiguity with Saudi Arabia, Morocco's membership is far more questionable. But despite divergent political views on this enlargement proposal, a hard-nosed economic approach seems to prevail. In fact, there is a clear awareness that an enlargement of the GCC to the Arab Mediterranean would be ill-advised without taking into consideration economic and labor market issues, particularly in

¹⁸ See B. De Saint-Laurent, J. Lapujade and Z. Luçon (2011), *The Mediterranean between growth and revolution. Foreign direct investments and partnerships in MED countries in 2010*, ANIMA Investment Network, Study no. 21, p. 48.

¹⁹ Points clearly indicated at the GCC summit in November 2011 and emphasized in a speech of the GCC Secretary General, Abdul Latif Bin Rashid Al Zayani, in Abu Dhabi in January 2012.

²⁰ See interview with Ambassador Dr. Saad Alammam, GCC's Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, in *Arab News*, December 18, 2011.

view of the existing plan to transform the GCC into a Gulf Arab Confederation. In this sense, achieving greater economic union among the six GCC members requires a rigorous process of accountability and consolidation within the Council so as to avoid the risk of weakening the economic bloc.²¹ All this seems to suggest that the invitation to Morocco, while being politically driven, cannot be decoupled from economic considerations: on one hand, the rising levels of trade and investment between the two sides spur an ever more stable and sustainable business environment. On the other hand, structural economic weaknesses both of Morocco and of the Gulf Arab states represent clear deterrents and discourage Morocco's membership. Nevertheless, a GCC projection toward the Mediterranean, through stronger strategic economic links both with Arab partners and with the EU and Turkey, takes on unprecedented importance in the Gulf Arab perspective.²² It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the GCC recommended a five-year development plan to Morocco in September 2011.²³ The implementation of this plan was presented as a precondition for any process aimed at building a privileged partnership between Morocco and the GCC. Morocco's economy is recognized by Gulf Arab operators as being one of the most open and with the highest potential in the Maghreb, in spite of its persisting structural imbalances.²⁴

Securing neighboring markets is, in fact, viewed as a priority. Beyond the large-scale projects involving

the banking and finance sectors and major industries — petroleum refining, petrochemicals, and metals extraction and processing — the role of small and medium-sized enterprises in key sectors such as agribusiness, gas, renewable energy, and textiles is also crucial in Gulf-Mediterranean relations. A cooperative approach aimed at translating human, material, and financial potential into economic power is recognized as a major challenge within Gulf business circles, while more socially responsible investment is also debated as essential to addressing human and environmental needs in post-Arab Spring North Africa. Here, the mega urban projects supported by GCC investors in the past proved totally unable to respond to local needs of economic sustainability and fuelled criticism of Gulf capitalist initiatives from Tunis to Rabat. The Dubai urban model was unscrupulously promoted by some Gulf companies, often aggressively adapting to local levels of corruption. In this respect, Tunisia, with Ben Ali's *laissez-faire* model, was more negatively affected than Morocco, which instead inserted greater regulation in the management of these projects.²⁵

The perceived need to create business links based on more socially responsible investments is now rising. GCC investments in agricultural and manufacturing sectors, for instance, have already proved to be quite promising in Turkey, one of the top recipients of recent Saudi investments in these fields. Food security and water balance will indeed be among the priorities in the Gulf in the coming years, with Saudi Arabia already being a major food exporter to the other GCC states. Pursuing sustainable agriculture can certainly enhance Gulf involvement in Mediterranean agriculture markets,

²¹ *Al-Watan and Arab News*, May 12, 2011.

²² This perception clearly emerged in the Workshop *The EU and the GCC Countries in the Southern Mediterranean* at the Gulf Research Meeting 2011, University of Cambridge, July 6-9, 2011.

²³ A similar development plan was submitted to Jordan as well.

²⁴ See S. Colombo (2011), "Morocco at the Crossroads: Seizing the Window of Opportunity for Sustainable Development," in S. Colombo and N. Tocci N. (eds.), *The Challenges of State Sustainability in the Mediterranean*, Rome.

²⁵ See P.-A. Barthel (2006), *Tunis en projet(s). La fabrique d'une métropole au bord de l'eau*, Rennes.

considering their potential to develop (see Table 3).²⁶

Power transmission and interconnections linking national electricity grids beyond the GCC with those of other Middle Eastern and North African countries is an equally important issue discussed in the Gulf. Achieving integrative partnerships would develop synergies within a multilateral approach and, in this field, it would make it possible to set up a continuum of interconnections from the Gulf to Europe through a Mediterranean electricity grid. This would have a major impact on sustainable growth for all parties involved, as markets can exploit hourly and seasonal differences in energy peak load demand.²⁷

Finally, tourism remains a crucial sector for cooperation. SWFs from Abu Dhabi, Qatar, and Kuwait recently signed new agreements with Morocco, pledging almost \$3 billion to help Rabat fund major development projects in tourism, and providing around \$2.5 billion in Wessal Capital for the establishment of a Moroccan-led investment firm to fund investment opportunities proposed under Morocco's tourism development plan by 2020. Compared to Morocco, Tunisia still needs to regain investor confidence, in this critical sector of its economy in particular. The Al-Nahda government, while trying to charm the West by insisting on its moderate Islamism,²⁸ decided to sell \$500 million worth of treasury bills to Qatar,²⁹ while Ben Ali, who was given asylum in Saudi Arabia,

²⁶ As shown in Table 3, according to the estimates of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), the total agricultural land of Libya, Tunisia and Morocco combined is about 557,490 square km against 412,230 square km in Turkey.

²⁷ See N. Abi Aad (2011), *Energy in the Mediterranean. Synergies between Europe and the Gulf*, paper presented at the Gulf Research Meeting, Cambridge 6-9- July, 2011.

²⁸ *Al-Hayat*, January 29, 2012.

²⁹ *Gulf Times*, January 29, 2012.

Table 3 - Agricultural Land in the Arab Mediterranean Countries and in Turkey, 2005 (square km)

Algeria	411,500
Egypt	35,200
Jordan	10,120
Lebanon	3,880
Libya	155,850
Morocco	303,950
Palestine	3,720
Syria	140,080
Tunisia	97,690
Turkey	412,230

Source: OIC

was officially prevented from engaging in seditious activities from the kingdom's soil.

Further GCC involvement in Tunisia cannot be decoupled from the present government's ability to promote real economic growth to foster the emergence of a collaborative democratic society and to counter social tensions. That is considered a prerequisite for creating an attractive business environment for GCC interests, as attested to by the UAE's February 2012 call to international donors to provide coordinated financial aid and technical support to post-Arab Spring countries, so as to attract foreign investments and provide greater employment opportunities and basic services for their citizens.³⁰

Conclusion

Regional and international stabilization emerges as the main goal of the GCC at the current juncture. The Gulf Arab leaderships' support for new governments in North Africa is therefore linked to the perception that economic-financial forces can help stabilize the political and security contexts in the

³⁰ *Khaleej Times*, February 10, 2012.

region. Business, however, increasingly intertwines with the “Islam factor,” leading to a new form of Islamic capitalism. Such capitalism emanates from the growing and increasingly global Gulf Arab Islamic financial institutions, which seek further opportunities in the Mediterranean, a region still considered underdeveloped both in terms of Islamic project financing and infrastructure, but rich in natural and human resources.³¹

Against this backdrop, the rising international dynamism of Gulf Arab state and non-state actors could more effectively contribute to development and sustainability in the Southern Mediterranean, provided an “integrative partnership model” is adopted in coordination with the EU, Turkey, and the United States. All these parties share an interest in ensuring that economic growth in the region can help the political transition process: the GCC role as a prominent financial Islamic power in the Southern Mediterranean is a reality that cannot be ignored, and yet it needs to be accompanied by other actors that are able to provide knowledge and training in relevant sectors for economic development. The existing opportunities to deepen multilateral economic cooperation should not be missed at this crucial and extremely delicate stage, and the support both of the EU and of the United States is crucial in this respect.

Therefore, the implementation of sustainable development projects in post-Arab Spring North

³¹ See African Development Bank (2011), *Islamic Banking and Finance in North Africa. Past Development and Future Potential*.

Africa cannot be decoupled from the pursuit of strategic dialogue, in which the GCC, Turkey, and the EU have a direct role to play, in coordination with the United States. The establishment of joint initiatives, starting from business and investment, might help to create new convergences, reducing the tendency of each actor to talk past rather than to each other. Socially responsible projects in North Africa, promoted both by investment and knowledge transfer, should be conceived within “integrative partnerships,” which can eventually contribute to the sustainability of post-Arab Spring North African states.

Gulf Arab dynamism in the Southern Mediterranean can become truly constructive only if cast within such a broader framework. In this spirit, besides large-scale projects involving top industries, SMEs have a positive role to play, in spite of all the constraints they may face. Agri-food, for instance, is emerging alongside other micro-sectors, such as medicine, engineering, tourism, real estate, and textiles, as a promising field for multilateral approaches, considering its growth potential both in terms of FDI and partnerships.

From this perspective, going beyond aid packages by pursuing socially responsible investment projects becomes a great challenge as well as an essential element to respond to those human and environmental needs. These needs cannot be addressed in the region without an appropriate, and yet still lacking, broader regional and international strategy of support.

2 TURKEY: MODEL, ORDER-SETTER, OR TRADE PARTNER?

SOLİ ÖZEL AND SERHAT GÜVENÇ

Turkey was as surprised as any other country when the self-immolation of the street vendor Muhammad Bouazizi triggered a revolutionary upheaval in Tunisia that then spread throughout the Arab world. Undoubtedly, most Arab countries had experienced social unrest, mass protests, and even strife in previous years, but until the advent of the Arab uprisings, none resulted in regime change. As such, the historical importance of the events that began in Tunisia was not at first fully appreciated by an international community long accustomed to the lethargic stability of the Arab world. While the French government, clueless as it turned out to be about the dimensions of this social mobilization, offered to send security forces to its former colony, other countries expected the turmoil to subside. Even Turkey, which saw itself as a country with particular sensitivities about the region and presented itself as a “wise state” that could foresee troubles and would find proper remedies for them, was caught off-guard.

In a speech addressing Turkey’s ambassadors from around the world two weeks after the Tunisian revolt began to unfold, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu failed even to mention these developments. Nor could he predict that the Tunisian events would not be confined to that country. Indeed, what started in Tunisia would shake the entire Arab world, trigger transformative change in North Africa, repressive counterrevolutionary force in the Gulf, and a still unresolved bloody struggle in Syria and to a certain extent in Yemen.

Once the historical nature of the revolutionary upheavals became clear, the Turkish government unequivocally took the side of the peoples, even if expediency produced zigzags in Libya and permitted only a milder comment on Bahrain. For the West, an important part of evaluating the Arab uprisings was naturally their potential impact on their relations with these countries, given that on one hand, like all revolutionary mobilizations they

were prone to radicalization and, on the other, Islamists were potentially the strongest and best organized political movements throughout the region. This is, in broad brushes, the background to the third edition of a debate on the “Turkish model” in the past 20 years.

To a certain extent, as we argue further in this paper, the “Turkish model” has remained in the imagination of the West since the days of the Republic’s founding fathers. However, the forcefulness with which the “model” was evoked in the past 20 years strongly correlates with transformative developments in world politics. The first time the model was discussed publicly was in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the creation of new Turkic and mostly Muslim republics. The concern then was the integration of these countries into the European system, making sure they would not radicalize, be Islamically oriented or regravitate toward Moscow. The Turkish model, therefore, was one that accentuated the secular nature of the political order and to a lesser extent its pluralist attributes.

The second time the “Turkish model” was brought forth was after the attacks on September 11, 2001 against the United States. The Turkish experiment of a capitalist, secular democracy was thought to be the most appropriate antidote to the jihadist dystopia of al-Qaeda that captured the imagination of the Arab peoples in particular.

Finally, the “Turkish model” became all the rage in the second half of 2011, reflecting, as in the previous episodes, a concern about the likely adverse effects of the transformations in the Arab world on Western interests.

Turkey: A Model or an Order-Setter?

A “model” implies a rather inactive role for a country and emphasizes its soft power. In practical terms, it means that a country can become a source

of inspiration for others to voluntarily emulate or follow. What enhances a country's influence and image abroad is the attractiveness of its ideas, values, and practices, rather than merely its foreign policy activism. Simply put, being a model for other countries is the ability to shape others' preferences and choices without coercion.³²

As such, the debate on the "Turkish model" long predates the Arab uprisings or even 9/11. We suggested earlier that it was closely linked to considerations about Western interests. This is why the debate was also a major element in discussions over Turkey's EU membership. Supporters of Turkey's membership frequently referred to the likely impact of Turkey's own transformation through EU accession on others, particularly in the Middle East. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton became the first political leader to emphasize such wider repercussions of Turkey's admission to the EU. On November 8, 1999, he outlined his vision of Turkey:

*"I believe the coming century will be shaped in good measure by the way Turkey, itself, defines its future and its role today and tomorrow. For Turkey is a country at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia; the future can be shaped for the better if Turkey can become fully a part of Europe, as a stable, democratic, secular, Islamic nation."*³³

At that time, a "success story" was needed to prove that Islam was not necessarily at odds with liberal democratic and economic values. Turkey, as a predominantly Muslim-populated country, was poised to provide an example of successful integration into the global political and economic systems. Those who advocated Turkey's EU membership on such grounds scored a point when almost a

month after Clinton's speech, Turkey was declared a candidate state "destined to join the European Union" at Helsinki in December 1999. Later, then Turkish Foreign Minister İsmail Cem confided that a "success story" in the form of Turkey's EU candidacy was needed not only by the West but also by the "rest" of the Muslim world, since even the Saudis quietly welcomed the EU's decision on Turkey.³⁴

In the post-9/11 era, the idea of framing Turkey as a success story was also picked up by some EU leaders. For instance, then German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer argued in a BBC interview in 2004 that: "to modernize an Islamic country [Turkey] based on shared values of Europe would be almost a D-Day in the war against terror."³⁵ This line of thinking probably made even more sense after the spectacular victory of the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP, Justice and Development Party), a party with Islamist roots, in the 2002 Turkish elections. Having sprung from the Islamist National Outlook tradition, whose ideology featured a heavy dose of anti-Western, anti-EU elements, the AKP surprisingly embraced Turkey's EU agenda as soon as it formed the government. Given the party's ideological roots, though, this represented a pragmatic move that was not necessarily predicated on the old "Westernization" paradigm. As Altunışık argues, "traditionally, Turkey has defined itself as a modern secular state with its ideological commitment to the West... The AKP, on the other hand, has developed a new and rival identity...that places Turkey in a different civiliza-

³⁴ S. Güvenç's interview on January 8, 2004, at İstanbul Bilgi University, Kustepe, İstanbul.

³⁵ Quoted in S. Güvenç, "Turkey in the EU? The Long Countdown to D-Day," in *Turkey: Between the European Union and the Middle East*, Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv University, 2006, p. 49. Ironically, İsmail Cem called the day when Turkey's candidacy was decided the longest day — another reference to the allied landing in Normandy. İ. Cem, *Türkiye, Avrupa, Avrasya: Avrupa'nın "Birliği" ve Türkiye*, İstanbul, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009, p. 185.

³² J. Nye Jr., "The Changing Nature of World Power," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 105/2, Summer 1990, p. 181.

³³ Quandt Lecture, Georgetown University, November 8, 1999.

tion — that is, Islamic — and yet in harmony with Western civilization.”³⁶

The pursuit of EU accession enabled the AKP to build and maintain a relatively broad-based domestic reform coalition for the political and economic transformation of the country. This program included the curbing of the Turkish military’s power. In a way, the AKP banked heavily on EU conditionality when introducing otherwise controversial political and to a lesser extent economic measures that facilitated a profound domestic power shift of revolutionary proportions at the expense of traditional elites.³⁷

While the accelerated reforms cleared the way for the long-awaited EU decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey in 2005, the strings attached to the decision and the emphasis in particular on the “open-ended nature of the negotiations” dampened Turkish optimism regarding the credibility of the EU promise. Changes in leadership in two key EU member states, Germany and France, coupled with Greek Cypriot EU membership, caused the negotiations to run out of steam within a couple of years. The weakening of the external anchor for reforms and the AKP’s overwhelming victory in the 2007 elections emboldened the AKP to pursue an ambitious and somewhat independent foreign policy, guided by Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu’s “strategic depth” doctrine. This stylistically dramatic change in Turkish foreign policy, which contained many elements of continuity, took place against a background of impressive economic

performance under consecutive AKP governments.³⁸

“Strategic depth” features a strong element of rejection of what it considers to be the blind pursuit of Westernization in Turkish foreign policy. It considers Turkey’s involvement in the “post-Ottoman space” a necessity and criticizes Ankara’s previous policies for having totally abandoned that area. The essence of Davutoğlu’s critique of traditional Turkish foreign policy lies in two extreme choices he believes Ankara had made between absolute domination and absolute abandonment of its former colonial space.

Turkish foreign policymakers did not care to articulate coherent strategies in dealing with former Ottoman territories at least until the Cyprus crisis of 1964. The need to recruit international supporters to its stand on Cyprus accounted for Ankara’s turn to the Arab Middle East. Otherwise, as jealous guardians of their own national sovereignty and territorial integrity, Turkish policymakers usually shied away from high-profile activism in Middle Eastern problems. The Sèvres Syndrome — i.e., the fear of disintegration conditioned by the Ottoman experience — dictated an extremely reserved stand in most external interventions in the region, as each was carefully evaluated

³⁶ M. Benli Altunışık, “Worldviews and Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 40, Spring 2009, p. 188.

³⁷ D. Bingöl McDonald, “The AKP Story: Turkey’s Bumpy Reform Path towards the European Union,” *Society and Reform in Central and Eastern Europe*, Vol. 33, 2011, p. 530-534. See also B. Saatçioğlu, “Revisiting the Role of Credible EU Conditionality for EU Compliance: The Turkish Case,” *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 31, Fall 2011, p. 23-44.

³⁸ Most, if not all, of the key elements of Turkish foreign policy of the AKP era were already pronounced or put in place by the late İsmail Cem, who expressed the intention to “use Turkey’s cultural and historical affinities as major inputs to [its] international relations” during his tenure as foreign minister. Cem argued that Turkey enjoyed five major assets including history, culture, a thriving economy, domestic stability and peace, and the Turkish model itself. Taking advantage of these five assets, Ankara would place “special emphasis on Turkey’s historical geography” and pursue economies of scale for improving trade relations and finally seek to improve relations with its neighbors. On this final account, he set forth the rule of thumb: “if one step comes from the other party, we will respond by two.” İ. Cem, *Turkey in the New Century*, Nicosia, Rustem Publishing, 2001, p. 57-59. See also, G. Kut, *Türk Dış Politikasında Çok Yönlülüğün Tarihi: Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Devamlılık ve Değişim*, Boğaziçi University-TÜSİAD Foreign Policy Forum Research Report, 2010/2.

through the prism of potential ramifications on Turkey's own security.³⁹

Whether this new line of thinking implies a neo-Ottoman foreign policy is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it certainly meant a revived interest in those former parts of the Ottoman Empire that had been allegedly "totally abandoned" by previous governments. Davutoğlu's objectives also marked the pursuit of a more activist, assertive, and at times independent foreign policy. Integral to this new approach is the primacy accorded to economic, trade, and business opportunities in regions adjacent to Turkey. The idea is to develop an extensive and expansive network of economic and trade links with Turkey at its hub. This new orientation indeed reflects the priorities and interests of rising economic actors, the so-called Anatolian Tigers or Islamist Calvinists. Hence, nearly a decade of AKP rule in Turkey resulted in a gradual and visible shift of emphasis away from security by military means and hard power to security through prosperity and soft power. Some observers believe this shift underpins Turkey's transformation from a national security state to a trading state.⁴⁰

Unquestionably the intellectual brainchild of Professor Davutoğlu, the "strategic depth" doctrine called for Turkey's role as an order-setter at the regional and more ambitiously at the global level. Turkey's short-lived ascendancy to regional prominence lay partly in the AKP's success in accepting the regional status quo. The AKP governments thereby built good relations with authoritarian leaders in many Middle Eastern countries from Syria and Iran to Libya despite the AKP leadership's rhetoric on the urgent need for political, economic,

and social reform in the Middle East. However revisionist this rhetoric might have sounded, it was preferable to U.S. revisionism through direct military interventions in the Middle East at that time. Ankara seemed to be supporting change, but only through accommodation and evolution rather than intervention or revolution. Moreover, in the decision calculus of some authoritarian leaders of the region, Turkey's EU candidacy might have figured prominently as Ankara gradually aligned itself more with mainstream EU positions than U.S. positions in the Middle East for a while.

However, in a number of international issues, Turkey began to differ substantially from its NATO allies and EU partners, most prominently on Iran's nuclear program and the Darfur genocide in Sudan. As for the former, Ankara officially did not (and still does not) question the peaceful or civilian nature of Iran's nuclear program. Its position on the issue remains predicated on this acknowledgment. As for the latter, Turkish leaders refused to call what happened in Darfur a genocide. After the International Court of Justice issued an arrest warrant on him for war crimes and crimes against humanity, Sudanese President al-Bashir's intended, but never materialized, visit to Istanbul for the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 2009 risked to widen the rift between Turkish and Western positions on the matter.⁴¹ Furthermore, Turkey's tough stand and language toward Israel over Operation Cast Lead in Gaza in 2009-10 and the *Mavi Marmara* incident in 2010 paid off in terms of rising popularity for Turkey and Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan on the Arab streets. In contrast, it precipitated a debate in Western capitals on whether Turkish foreign policy was shifting away from the West.

³⁹ For a much earlier and concise articulation of Davutoğlu's strategic depth doctrine, see A. Davutoğlu, "Türk Dış Politikasında Stratejik Teori Yetersizliği ve Sonuçları," *Yeni Türkiye*, Vol. 3, 1995, p. 497-501.

⁴⁰ See K. Kirişçi, "Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy: The Rise of the Trading State," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 40, Spring 2009, p. 29-56.

⁴¹ Prime Minister Erdoğan ruled out genocide claims on the grounds that "no Muslim could perpetrate a genocide. See "Sudanese President al-Bashir cancels Turkey visit," *Hürriyet Daily News*, November 9, 2009.

Before the Arab uprisings, an order-setting role as conceived by Davutoğlu seemed to be well within reach. In some studies, Turkey was accorded a “managerial role” along with two other “great powers” of Europe (EU and Russia) in managing (or giving shape to) Europe’s neighborhood.⁴² “Emancipated” from domestic (i.e., military tutelage) and external (i.e., EU external anchor) constraints, Turkey under the AKP could sustain itself not only as a model but could contemplate acting as an order-setter for its neighborhood.

Eclipsed by the heated debate on whether Turkey was shifting its axis, a significant development went largely unnoticed when Turkey gave its assent to the new NATO Strategic Concept, which provided for deployment of a ballistic missile defense system in November 2010 at Lisbon. That no specific country was identified as a potential threat in this context could not conceal a significant change of mind, if not heart, about Iran in Turkish foreign policy. In a way, through its decision in Lisbon, Turkey renewed its commitment to the Alliance and reinvented itself as a NATO member.

In two previous instances, Ankara had taken initiatives on Iran’s nuclear program in defiance of Washington’s preferences. First, Turkey collaborated with Brazil in securing a nuclear fuel swap deal with Iran around the parameters originally provided by the United States. Washington slammed the deal by pushing tougher sanctions on Iran through the UN Security Council where Turkey was holding a rotating seat. Turkey, along with Brazil, voted against the U.S.-sponsored resolution despite President Obama’s last minute call to Prime Minister Erdoğan, where the U.S. leader pleaded with the Turkish prime minister to abstain. Probably, the Obama administration dropped hints about the potential consequences of another direct Turkish challenge to the U.S. stance on Iran’s nuclear

program. In a way, Ankara made its bid for more autonomy or independence in its foreign policy and was reminded of the limits of autonomous or independent action. A month after the NATO summit, the self-immolation of Bouazizi in Tunisia triggered a wave of uprisings in the Arab world that changed the entire regional and international context for Turkey.

The Arab Uprising: The Turkish Model Back on the Agenda

The Arab uprisings have given a new lease on life to the debate on the Turkish model. The model country itself was caught almost totally unprepared for the dramatic wave of change that enveloped the Middle East within a year from Tunisia and Egypt to Libya and Syria. A survey of how Turkey responded to each case can be useful to assess the effect of Turkey’s policies and preferences in North Africa or the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in general. The parameters of its initial response may be indicators of Ankara’s priorities in each case of the Arab Spring.

In the case of Tunisia and Egypt, Ankara acted relatively quickly and threw its lot with the social forces for political change in these countries. Already popular on the Arab street, Prime Minister Erdoğan vocally invited authoritarian leaders to step down in response to popular will. His blatant call on Egypt’s Mubarak to resign involved serious risks because the fate of the Tahrir Square uprising was anything but certain at that point. Nevertheless, the first two cases proved to be relatively easy to handle compared to what was to follow in Libya and then Syria. For years, in fact, Turkey had made serious political and economic investments in the latter two countries. In the case of Libya, Turkish contractors’ works worth billions of dollars and the safety of about 23,000 Turkish workers were in question. Turkey was caught between a value-driven commitment and an interest-driven option. Ankara

⁴² I. Krastev et. al., *The Specter of a Multipolar Europe*, European Council on Foreign Relations, London, 2020, pp. 43-53.

hoped to talk Gaddafi out of power. As it turned out, Ankara or Erdoğan himself did not enjoy that sort of influence over him. It was the first case of failure in converting the new Turkish political elite's popularity among the public first into leverage over the authoritarian rulers of the region and then into major policy outcomes.

In retrospect, the Turkish government misjudged the whole situation in Libya. Prime Minister Erdoğan spoke against UN sanctions or a NATO campaign, prematurely ruling out external intervention. When the French and British-led air bombing campaign was launched, Ankara did a U-turn on NATO's involvement to avoid being sidelined. The Libya case reminded Turkey and the AKP in particular of the merits of multilateral frameworks in promoting the national interest in the face of competition from a stronger actor like France. Another lesson learned was the limits of unilateralism in foreign policy for a middle power like Turkey.

The subsequent uprisings in Syria reaffirmed the lessons of Libya as regards to the limits of Ankara's ability to persuade authoritarian leaders to accommodate political change at home. One immediate impact of the Syrian uprising was the rephrasing of an oft-quoted principle of Davutoğlu's strategic depth doctrine: zero problems with neighbors. After the AKP gave up hope on authoritarian leaders, the principle was modified to "zero problems with neighboring peoples," reflecting the shift of focus from rulers to the people in the Middle East. In a similar frame of mind, the second "Friends of Syria" meeting was held in Istanbul this time called "The Friends of the Syrian People" meeting. On his way to a NATO ministerial meeting in Brussels on April 18, 2012, Davutoğlu raised the issue of Syria. Clearly, Ankara does not want to deal with Syria on its own. In the meantime the tension between the two neighbors mounts as a

border incident in April 2012 that left a number of Syrian refugees and two Turks wounded shows.

Turkey's Likely Impact on North Africa?

A few general observations may be in order in regards to Turkey's impact on the Mediterranean in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. First is the return of the Turkey-as-a-model paradigm. The talk about a shift of axis in the West quickly disappeared in the early stages of the Arab uprisings and gave way to renewed debate on the Turkish model. In a way, the model made a full circle during AKP's near decade in power. This time around, though, the EU connection is much weaker than in the first half of the 2000s. It is also difficult to argue that U.S. and, to a lesser extent, European enthusiasm for the Turkish model is shared by the rulers and rising political actors of the MENA region. Some Islamist movements, poised for ascendance to power, have been compelled to pay lip-service to the Turkish model, mostly for international audiences. Arguably their true identification is with the AKP since it managed to acquire power, manage a complicated country, and keep in generally good terms with the West alongside a strong quest for autonomy in the realm of foreign policy. Furthermore, as the AKP consolidated its power by winning all the fights it fought with the republican establishment, it also began to inject its worldview, cultural preferences, and social practices onto the wider society. In other words, the AKP offers the only known case of power consolidation by an Islamist party through democratic means in the Muslim world.

The applicability of the Turkish model in the Middle East has been contested and questioned on a number of accounts including the *sui generis* nature of the Turkish modernization experience.⁴³

⁴³ See for instance, Ö. Taşpınar, *An Uneven Fit? The 'Turkish Model' and the Arab World*, Analysis Paper No. 5, August 2003, The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings Institution.

Some observers argue that Turkey represents at best a work (or a model) in progress and that without fixing the flaws in its democracy, it cannot serve as a model at all.⁴⁴ Its potential to serve as a model for Islamist parties in the MENA region is moderated by the unique features of the Turkish experiment itself. To start with, despite its rejection of the traditional Turkish claim for an organic presence in the West, the AKP itself is a product of Turkey's Westernization experience. Moreover, its policy preferences reflect that reality and cannot automatically be adopted by its counterparts in other countries. For instance, Gumuscu argues very persuasively that AKP's neo-liberal economic policies cannot be emulated by the Freedom and Justice Party established by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt whose economic vision emphasizes corporatism and import-substitution over export promotion.⁴⁵ Finally, the AKP is indeed facing the dilemma that Turkey almost always faces. Its modernization has already gone too far to be easily emulated by other countries. Its rulers, whatever their ideological inclinations or preferences, must find an equilibrium between democratic practices and secular principles. Precisely for this reason, Prime Minister Erdoğan's underlining of secularism in his public addresses in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia did not go down well with the Islamist movements in the region, including with the Muslim Brothers of Egypt. Before his Cairo speech, Erdoğan and his party were considered too Islamist by the liberals in those countries. After the Cairo speech, he probably sounded too secular to the Islamists. Finally, one ought to keep in mind a particular attribute of the Turkish experiment that is not present in the Arab or North African cases and that accounted for much of Turkey's own transformation. Turkey is

an integral part of the European economy through trade and investment. The fact that it has been a member of NATO and had an association agreement and then a customs union agreement and an accession process with the EU facilitated both its economic and democratic evolution. In other words, Turkey's domestic dynamics that pushed for economic liberalization and democratization were fortified by the presence of the EU frame of reference, European markets, and decades-long interaction between pluralist systems, even if Turkey's own was not necessarily up to par with European standards.

Turkey does indeed have much to offer to southern Mediterranean countries. The Ottomans left Libya only in 1911. Among the Ottomans who were last in Libya was the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who fought in the Tripolitanian War against the Italians. Ties were never severed, and it is of great significance that the first prime minister of the newly independent Libya was a retired Turkish high bureaucrat who was actually born in Libya in Ottoman times. Libya under Gaddafi also loomed large in Turkish foreign policy during the Turkish military intervention in Cyprus in 1974. Gaddafi's government supplied Turkey with crucial aviation grade gasoline and aircraft spare parts when the military operation drained Turkey's thin logistical resources. Hence, Turkey's historic links with Libya run deeper and are far less burdened than with any other country in the region. In Libya, major Turkish contractors have already picked up their work again where they left off before the revolt, since the projects they were undertaking were of critical importance to the Libyan government. In Libya as elsewhere, the AKP government developed or established close ties to the more Islamically oriented elements in the opposition. Civil society organizations close to the government have been encouraged and have remained active both during the revolts and in the aftermath of Gaddafi's demise. However, given

⁴⁴ N. Fisher Onar, *Turkey Inc.: Rethinking the Model's Regional Role*, Sada, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 29, 2012.

⁴⁵ Ş. Gümüşçü, "There is no 'Turkish model' for Egypt," *The Daily Star Lebanon*, January 17, 2012.

the absence of order, let alone law, in Libya, any influence beyond the economic would be limited until the power struggles are over and a functioning system is erected.

In Morocco, the namesake of the AKP won the elections and formed the government. In that particular case though, the king moved ahead of the curve and drafted a new constitution before elections took place, and thereby preempted the Islamist party from shaping the framework of a more democratic order. As Lise Storm from the University of Exeter argued in a recent workshop organized by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Istanbul, the debate on the Turkish model in Morocco is very limited. In fact, she claims, it is not even an issue on the broader agenda.

To begin with, Morocco is a monarchy and Turkey a republic. The Moroccan king sets the limits of permissible political action. None of the parties seem to have pushed for genuine political reform either. Storm also argues that when Prime Minister Benkirane refers to Turkey, he does so as a party leader, thereby making clear that he seeks inspiration from the AKP rather than from Turkey as a whole. The AKP's appeal stems from the fact that the party successfully implemented its agenda and changed the political system according to its priorities and views, all the while performing superbly in the economic realm. So even though there are links between the two Justice and Development Parties in Turkey and Morocco, Turkey's impact on Moroccan developments would be limited and possibly confined to providing economic management knowledge, sharing of experience in good governance and the like. On a final note, the Moroccan Constitution defines the country as a product of its multiple identities geographically, ethnically, and religiously, a far cry from the Turkish debate on defining Turkey or Turkish citizenship. Morocco just recognized Tamazigh (Berber) as a second

official language. That, too, is a far cry from the Turkish case, where the status of Kurdish is still not recognized. So in terms of liberal modeling on these two issues at least, Morocco appears to have nothing to learn from the Turkish model.

Tunisia is a different story. The leadership of *En-Nahda* has been particularly warm toward the AKP, and during the elections, the Turkish party shared its electoral campaign knowledge with its Tunisian counterpart. Rashid Ghannouchi visited Turkey and the closeness of the political leaderships is unmistakable. Still Tunisia's frame of reference and experiment are very different from that of Turkey as well. Popularity in the streets and among the leadership does not necessarily translate into emulation, even if this were possible. Turkey's options in a place like Tunisia are mainly through its economic and governance experience, the desire of Turkish businesses to establish trade and investment links (the trade between the two countries is merely \$1 billion).

Storm argues that in Tunisia as in Morocco, the desire is for building an indigenous model. The struggle between more secular forces and *En-Nahda* will necessarily lead to a particular balance of forces. For Ghannouchi, references to Turkey, or more accurately to AKP, may be necessary to enforce his secular credentials, but at the end of the day, the result will have truly Tunisian colorings.

In short, even though the Turkish model has its limitations, the Turkish experiment can still inspire and Turkey can share its knowledge with the new aspiring democracies that face colossal challenges of economic development in an age of economic crisis in European economy. What renders Turkey unique is the fact that it is a secular, democratic, economically globalizing country with a Muslim population, and institutionally a part of the Atlantic Alliance and the West. Its task is to maintain the

balance between these attributes and continue its success story. The developments since the advent of the Arab Awakening and particularly since the American withdrawal from Iraq severely tested Davutoğlu's ambitions to make Turkey an "order-setter" for the region. Ankara had to face its limitations and learned the hard way that its quest for autonomous/independent action was indeed being challenged. In this context, it may be more appropriate to listen to the words of President Abdullah Gül, who, as a realist, put forward Turkey's mission in a recent speech at the War Academy. Gül pointed to the absence of the norms and institutions of governance or mechanisms of economic cooperation and integration in the region, in stark contrast to Europe. He then made a case for the creation of regional institutions like the OSCE, NATO, the EU, and the Council of Europe as part and parcel of a regional security architecture and a regional human rights protection mechanism. In other words, he calls for a new order for the Middle East, largely

inspired by the European model and that reflects the Turkish experience.⁴⁶ Turkey's real impact on the regional dynamics may thus evolve as a function of its role in the diffusion of such norms and institutions to the rising actors of the region. Polls suggest that Turkey's popularity stems from its closeness to Europe and its economic performance, more than the political inclinations of its rulers. Undoubtedly, having an Islamist (or post-Islamist) party in power makes the example more attractive. But this attractiveness can only be secured for the longer term if Turkey remains faithful to its liberal-democratic path and uses its republican history not as a dumping ground but as a sounding board for determining what is right and what is wrong.

⁴⁶ *Sayın Cumhurbaşkanımızın Harp Akademilerinde Yaptıkları Konuşma*, İstanbul, April 5, 2012, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/371/82551/harp-akademileri-konferansinda-yaptiklari-konusma.html>.

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