

## Turkey as an Alternative Model for the Arab Spring Countries

Hanefi Yazıcı<sup>1</sup>

Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University  
Balıkesir, Turkey.

### Abstract

*Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, whether or not the “Turkish Model” will be the best democratic model for the countries in the Middle East has become one of the crucial discussion issues. However, it has caused misperceptions because of the misinterpretation of the model. This article claims that the full application of the “Turkish Model” to Middle Eastern countries is not possible due to cultural and political differences, however, despite these differences, the “Turkish Model” is a good alternative for several areas such as the state-religion relations, economic development, and advanced democracy. The first part of this article addresses the differences between the Arab Uprisings and the Gezi Park Protests in Turkey. The second part assesses whether Turkey is changing its axis under the rule of AK Party. The third section evaluates that the crisis in Syria is different from other Arab Spring countries. The fourth section analyzes the new Turkish Foreign policy for the Arab Spring countries. The last section evaluates the military coup in Egypt and tries to understand whether the Arab Spring will turn into Arab Winter. In this respect, it is obvious that the reasons which provoked the Arab Spring must be analyzed in details. Therefore, the paper assumes that foreign policy is not independent from domestic affairs and aims to analyze the Arab Spring countries in terms of relations among secular and Islamic blocks in the region..*

**Keywords:** Arab Spring, Turkish Model, Middle East, Arab Awakening, foreign policy, protests

### 1. Introduction

The Arab revolutions in 2011 have brought a new opportunity for Turkey to play a key role in the Middle East since some religious groups in Turkey had close relations with the opposition groups in Arab countries such as the Muslim Brothers in Egypt. Therefore, the Arab Awakening provides Turkey some opportunities in the Middle East. However, it is really one of the most controversial issues whether Turkey can be a role model in the Middle East considering its complicated structure. Moreover, according to some opinion surveys most Arabs on the streets prefer Turkey as a role model instead of the Western countries (Salem 2012: 3).

As Fuller emphasizes the Middle East is hungry for leaders of genuine vision and models of competent governance and Turkey is the best equipped to offer both (Fuller 2014: 372). He states that there are a number of reasons to remain optimistic about the Turkish model since Turkey provided economic success, civilian control of the military, ability to accommodate religious and ethnic diversity, and clear success at the ballot box. It is undeniable that Turkey is a remarkable success story in many areas such as political, economic, and cultural. It might be really a model for Arab Spring countries to establish democratic political systems in the ashes of decades of dictatorship. Turkey has become a model of democracy and pluralism, and seems a guiding spirit for other religious oriented parties looking forward to participate in their emerging political systems. The country is an inspiring model and Istanbul is one of the most open cities of the world.

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Hanefi Yazıcı, Asst. Prof. Dr., Department of Political Sciences and International Relations, Faculty of Economics and Administration Sciences, Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, Balıkesir, Turkey.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Hanefi Yazıcı, Department of Political Sciences and International Relations, Faculty of Economics and Administration Sciences, Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, Balıkesir, Turkey.

It is well known that Turkey has had several considerably free and fair elections and its economy has been developing for the past 15 years (since AK Party came to power). At present Turkey stands with Brazil at the top of the list of developing countries.

That's why its political and economic rise has been the positive role of religion within the country's political and cultural systems. In the Arab League summit, Erdogan told that Egypt should become a secular state and it was a powerful message to the region maintaining the secular order of the state that Turkey must be assessed as a possible model for Arab countries in transition. Many Arab countries have not experienced secularism except Tunisia and it seems that Arab societies have to find their own models and it might be considered that Turkey is really an inspiring story.

## **2. Foreign Domestic Policy Casualty**

It is assumed that in terms of international relations there is a necessity of scientific analysis about the changing process of Arab political movement which constitutes of a ground of this article. So, it is considered that it is crucial to examine the reflections of these theoretical approaches to demonstrate the uncertainty of explaining the changing process of the political and diplomatic background of the Arab spring and the effects of regional actors in order to enlighten the future events.

However, in theoretical studies in changing domestic policies of the Arab countries and regional balance of power between the democratic and authoritarian regimes it is argued that the issue of Turkish model is highly effective. In the Middle East, it is well known that Great Powers have always preferred to implement Realist perspectives for the Balance of Power (BOP) in the region. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that from time to time, the states change their perspectives and now the competition to change the Balance of Power in the Middle East between the US and Russia affects also their domestic policies. For example, Obama promised to withdraw the soldiers in Iraq and won the elections. However, recently the Obama administration has supported authoritarian leaders and military coup as in Egypt to establish governments for their own interests during the Arab Spring. Therefore, this article assumes that foreign policy is not independent from domestic affairs and asks how we can understand Turkish- Middle East relations in terms of relations among secular and Islamic blocks in Turkey. Foreign policy of a state in the international system can be seen as dependent on domestic policy. It is true that the difference between foreign and domestic policy is confused and both have a different character based on the particular processes. Domestic policy seems to be more concrete than foreign policy (Moravcsik 1993: 16-17). For instance, a regime can categorize particular interests to the citizens and also can comprehend the effects of its actions. Then it is easier to use military force in the internal environment since public can legitimate but in the external environment, it is too difficult because foreign policy reflects the realities of the international relations. That's why, it is incredible for a state to practice isolationism in the international system.

It is crucial that analysis of foreign policy should be discussed as polyhedral and multifaceted to deal with most difficulties in the international arena (Neack 2008: 189). In this regard, new coalitions or opponents appear in the light of these new policies and turns into intermestic policy. Then domestic issues might reflect as if they are the issues of external politics (Grove 2007: 2). Moreover, this foreign policy takes an active role in identifying the power relations over the state (Balci 2011: 6-7). Robert Putnam invented *Two-level game theory* (Putnam 1988: 434) and he stated that there is a pressure on the government from international community as well as domestic groups. The government plays a key role and in order not to lose support of the major domestic groups, the government tries to gain as much as possible on the international arena. Furthermore, the government cannot ignore minor domestic groups and tries to satisfy their needs implementing specific regulations (Mingst 1995: 230).

What is the relationship between domestic and foreign policy? Successful politicians keep position of public support as a means of maintaining government department. Political parties and governments try to reflect the opinions and values of the majority of their citizens. Therefore, they determine the relationship between foreign and domestic policy on populism that is they share similar ideas. The US foreign policy has been based on nationalism concept throughout history as in the case of the events of 9/11 that caused Islam phobia. The US foreign policy has devised aggressive strategies in Afghanistan and Iraq to protect the American people. Moreover, religious factors also affect foreign policy as in Israel-Palestine conflict. Most Muslim countries support Palestine whereas the US and Western countries support Israel. As seen, the Palestine issue both affects the domestic and foreign policy of Israel and Arab countries including the Great Powers.

Acceptability in domestic politics is vital for the head of government and his main aim regardless of the kind of system is to rule the country. Foreign policy is conducted with domestic and foreign policy. Domestic politics influences foreign policy decisions and if a policy is not accepted at home, it cannot succeed in the international environment. There are other factors that affect foreign policy such as rationality and individual perception (Fearon1998: 289-313). It is clear that Turkey's regional foreign policy is shifting from a unilateral to multilateral policy day by day. It is reflected by economic relations instead traditional security based policy. In the eyes of Özkeçeci-Taner the key factors to understand new Turkish foreign policy after the Cold War are due to the different competitive ideas and conflicts between the secular and religious groups (Özkeçeci2005: 260). While in the past many academicians in political science ignored writing about religious groups in their articles, recently most of them have written about the competition on Turkish foreign policy between the secular and religious groups (Göle 2000: 91-117). It is argued that foreign policy does not reflect national interests of a state, contrary to what is believed, it is the continuation of fighting for power between the existing power blocks in that state (Balcı 2012: 157-170). Furthermore, foreign policy is a constructed fact rather than grounding particular objective bases (Kemal İnat & Burhanettin Duran 2006: 1-39). For instance, when the studies about Turkish foreign policy before 1990s are analyzed, it is obvious that for Realists national interests outweigh other factors, however after the 1990s, for Constructivists identity occupies a significant place (Bozdağlıoğlu2008: 55-76).

Foreign policy is a kind of discursive and practical performance (Balcı 2007: 70). In addition, foreign policy is functional, particularly for the opponent groups to strengthen their identities and make a stand against hegemonic power (Campbell1998: 65). As obvious, corrupt military and political élite in some Muslim countries co-operated with the West in order to destroy democratic processes in their countries (Davutoglu1997-1998). When it comes to Turkey, as Davutoglu stated Turkey saw herself surrounded by enemies which weakened her foreign policy so far, as an old proverb expresses this mentality of domestic and foreign policy of Turkey in the past: "Turks have no friends other than Turks." Turkey recovered from this psychology by means of Zero Neighbor Policy (Turhan2007: 26). Before AK Party era, Kirisci described Turkish way of thinking as Hobbesian: "The international environment has traditionally been seen as anarchical and therefore creating the imperative need to be militarily strong and to be prepared to use military force for 'win-lose' outcomes" (Kirisci 2006).

Fuller also claims that: "While the republic did face genuine external enemies, Kemalist ideology tended to incorporate a fear of external powers and conspiracies as a key element in its world outlook. This paranoia toward the outside world helped both to preserve Turkey's domestic power and to justify an authoritarian approach to guarding the nation against external threats" (Fuller 2008). In addition, thanks to the Zero Problems with Neighbors' Policy, Turkey could decrease the military's power – an institutional guardian of Kemalist hegemonic block in the country, in politics through legal and institutional changes (Oguzlu 2012: 1-16). As known, to weaken secularists and military dominant role in domestic politics AK Party supported the process of joining EU and secular block failed against AK Party policies harmonized with the West through a candidate member of EU (Sarıgil 2007: 50). Therefore, it is argued that the Europeanization reforms in Turkey are partly designed to bring about the demilitarization of Turkish politics (Bilgiç 2009: 812-815). Moreover, the EU policy of AK Party found global acceptance and caused other opponents become marginal (Tocci2005: 80). When the EU replaced its policy of nation state rationality by multiculturalism after the Cold-War led tremors upon the secularist block in Turkey (Polat 2006: 515). In conclusion, as clear domestic policy affects foreign policy of a state, for instance, if Republican People's Party ruled the country instead AK Party, current Turkish foreign policy would be different. RPP would have better relations with Assad regime and new Egyptian regime after the military coup under the power of General Sisi. Some RPP parliamentarians visited Assad in Syria and Sisi in Egypt and discussed the details of problems that is a socialist party ruled Turkey foreign policy would be different from the policy of the AKP government. However, the AK Party governments preferred to establish relations with the peoples of the region instead the authoritarian regimes like the West particularly the US.

### ***3. Arab Spring and the Gezi Park Protests***

To understand the issue of Arab Spring it is also vital to examine social constructivist approach otherwise it is not possible to know the backgrounds of the regional developments in the Middle East. After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, social constructivism has become significant approach in the international relations as other traditional international theories failed to explain the new complex developments such as ethnical, religious, and cultural clashes in international politics (Wendt 1999: 1).

According to Wendt, *common knowledge* requires *interlocking beliefs* and individuals of the group do not have to have same ideas in their heads as long as they act on behalf of the group. The *Gezi Park* protests motivated different groups and it is a good example related to the common knowledge theory of Wendt. On 28 May 2013 Turkey was grasped by the street protests to prevent the demolition of some trees in Gezi Park in Taksim Square. The protesters in Istanbul ranged from *seculars* to *environmentalists* and from *leftists* to *religious* people who care environment and have different backgrounds, however they declared their demands to opine not only about the environments (they acted as if they were environmentalists) but also the decisions of the government as in constructing the Third Bridge and the new airport, which is the third biggest in the world.

Nevertheless, it is not true comparing the Gezi Park event with the Arab Awakening because the political system is particularly different. Although some consider Erdogan as an authoritarian leader, nobody can call him as a dictator as he won all free elections and majority of Turkish people support him currently. It might be considered that the Arab Awakening is probably going to establish a process of democratization, however, the GeziPark protest is a reflection of developing democracy in the future.

#### **4. Is Turkey Shifting its Axis?**

Since Justice and Development Party (AK Party) came to power in Turkey, a new foreign policy, zero problems with neighboring countries such as Iran, Iraq and Syria, has been followed and it has recently met some unexpected challenges caused by the Arab Spring (Davutoglu 2008: 77-96). For example, before Arab Spring for Turkey, Syria was considered as an important country for the Arab market in the Middle East, and a model partnership with Syria was thought to affect other countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt. Turkey aimed to establish better relations with regional countries to expand welfare in the region.

After Syria and Turkey officially signed the agreement of visa, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem said it was a historic event and Davutoglu called that day as a festival for both countries. Davutoglu said that they were to sign different agreements in the near future to give a message to the region to achieve the cultural and economic integrity to develop the relations with the Middle East and neighboring countries. Whenever Turkey develops its relations with the countries in the Middle East some commentators in and out of Turkey announce that Turkey's axis is shifting. That seems a kind of Cold War reflex dictating Turkish authorities to keep the distance between Turkey and the Middle Eastern countries. As a result of "*zero problems with neighbors*" policy Turkey not only improved its political and economic relations with Syria but also helped Syria not to be isolated from international community (Ulutaş 2009: 13).

As Davutoglu declared, one of the strengths of Turkish foreign policy is the process of reconnecting with the people in the region with whom Turkey shared a common history. Therefore, Turkey will not take steps that will hurt the feelings of the neighboring countries' people for short-term political interests. He claimed that Turkey pursues *a value-based foreign policy* paying attention to defend national interests. Davutoglu stated that Turkey's value-based approach and emphasis on democracy have reinforced its policy toward the uprisings in the MENA region. First, Turkey supported the people who demanded basic rights such as freedom of expression and other political freedoms. Second, Turkey emphasized that a balance between security and freedom can lead to the transition towards legitimate democratic political structures. Third, Turkey believed that there is no contradiction between its emphasis on democratic demands, and its foreign policy of zero problems with neighbors. Fourth, Turkey expressed its opposition to foreign intervention because the people of this region have to decide about the region's future. Finally, Turkey considered the people of this region as its eternal brothers without discriminating their sectarian background.

Davutoglu also claimed that Turkey does not want to see structures like Cold War in the region to prevent divisions across sectarian lines such as Shiite versus Sunni. That's why Turkey made several efforts to propose a peaceful transition in Syria and Libya but, Bashar Al-Asad and Moammar Gaddafi failed to call for political reforms and in Libya the transition could be accomplished by NATO intervention and unfortunately the people of Syria are now experiencing a humanitarian tragedy. According to Davutoglu Turkey will try to stop the bloodshed and bring justice.

#### **5. The Conflict in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya are Different in Syria**

The Arab Spring, which started in Tunisia in 2010, has reshaped the Middle East and North Africa. The incidents in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria have led to administration changes and reform processes in certain countries.

Meanwhile, the Arab Spring has been underway in Syria for a long time, i.e. since March 2011. The world, which has been approaching the events experienced in Syria with more caution, particularly after the intervention of NATO in Libya, has been observing the process attentively (Yazıcı 2012: 40).

Russia wanted to break the *containment policy* of the USA to become the unique hegemonic power in the region. Accordingly, Russia monitored every development in the Middle East, whereby conducting the processes in observation of its own benefits. The course of the incidents ignited by the Arab Spring in Syria developed differently than in the other countries. The possibility of the replacement of the former administrations by pro-West governments has caused anxiety that Russia will lose its influence in the region. Therefore, Russian leaders fear that these *Western-backed revolts* against the authoritarian governments of the Middle East might encourage similar resistance among their own people.

It was surprising that the waves of Arab Spring reached Syria after a long time. The first demonstrations on the streets showing the face of public disobedience started just after the fall of Mubarak. The state security forces treated the people in Dara'a excessively cruelly and behaved unfairly over a period of time, especially because of their religious beliefs. For example, a group of teenagers imitated the people in Egypt and noted down rude, humorous, and political pictures on the walls of public buildings. Immediately afterwards secret agents took the kids in charge and tormented them (Doran & Salman Shaikh 2011: 230).

After a while, the protests suddenly increased and just after Friday prayers, the people rushed out of the mosques and demonstrations erupted in different cities all of a sudden. In August 2013, the regime fired chemical rockets at several areas around Damascus, and killed about one thousand people. Naturally, the opposition and Western powers blamed the government and Asad blamed the opposition, and it is surprising that Asad agreed to remove and destruct chemical weapons since Russia convinced him after dealing with the US. It actually reflects the prestige and soft power of Russia in the international community.

Finally, Arab uprising against an autocratic ruler has mushroomed into a proxy war in regional and world powers. While Iran and Russia have supported the Asad government and helped it against the rebels, the opposition has been supported by Turkey. It is clear that a political solution can figure out the conflict in Syria since none of the groups might defeat the other. The Arab League and the UN tried to declare ceasefires and start dialogue but all attempts have failed so far. The US and Russia conducted a conference in Switzerland to implement the 2012 *Geneva Communiqué*. It was devised to establish a transitional government in Syria. Unfortunately, Putin had to reject and claimed that the Asad regime used chemical weapons in Syria and considered that it would be nonsense for a government to use such tactics while winning.

However, facing the prospect of US military intervention, Asad agreed to remove and destruct Syria's chemical weapons arsenal. There is also humanitarian crisis in Syria and millions of people had to leave Syria and most of them are women and children. Unfortunately, only Turkey in the West is trying to struggle to cope with one of the largest refugee exoduses in the history. Europe only was able to save a few thousands of Syrian refugees after the long term shameful meetings without sharing the burden of Turkey since Turkey welcomes at least more than three million refugees. Turkey tries to help millions of Syrians and it is unfortunate that most of the refugees cannot access to adequate drinking water, a number of people are unable to meet their basic food needs, and millions of children are out of school. Today only Turkey calls international society for humanitarian assistance in Syria and it is obvious that great powers particularly the US have to take initiative to stop the tragedy in the region.

### **6. Turkish New Foreign Policy and the Arab Spring**

What role can Turkey play in the MENA Region? What can the aspiring democracies of the Arab world learn from Turkey? How relevant is the Turkish experience to the future of democracy in the Arab World? Even though Turkey had cultural and historical ties with the Middle East during Ottoman period, after the collapse of the Ottomans, Turkey followed different politics from the Middle East countries.

Generally, Turkish governments except AK Party turned their faces only into Europe and ignored the Middle East in their foreign policy. Independence, Western orientation, and catching up with the level of contemporary civilization were main principals of Turkey and it was believed that Islam hinders modernization. Secularism was used as a preventive measure against Islamic extremists and it was thought as a prerequisite for deserving a European identity.

As soon as the caliphate was abolished, secularism became one of the cornerstones of young Turkey. Supporters of the secularism believed that Turkey might only catch up with the level of contemporary civilization rejecting Islamic principles and so the elites of Turkey wanted to cut ties with the Arab countries.

There are several factors that affect Turkey's foreign policies in the Middle East such as the conflicts with Syria and Israel about Hatay and the Palestine respectively and also the PKK and the Iraq war are other major factors that determine Turkey's policies in the region. To be able to understand the causes of changes in Turkish foreign policy, it is better to focus on *Strategic Depth, Davutoglu's chef d'oeuvre*, which is composed of four denominators (Davutoglu 2011: 232). Davutoglu asserted that by using its geopolitical and geostrategic position, Turkey can become a regional as well as a global actor. As part of this vision, the government has pursued a policy of ending its long-term hostilities with its neighbors, mainly in the Middle East, which the Ottomans had once ruled.

It is crucial to see some reasons why the Turkish image improved in the Arab world (Salem 2011). First, the AK Party government tempered the anti-Islamic secularism and rebuilt Turkey's links to its regional past. Next, Turkey stood against the USA during the invasion of Iraq and Turkey stood against Israel after The Gaza Flotilla incident. Recently, not only in Turkish media but also in international media it has been discussed whether Turkey has a crucial role for the democratization of the Arab countries or not. Turkey can be an attractive model for the Arab countries for several reasons. Turkey is a considerable alternative both as a Muslim and as a secular state in a democratic system. However, by democratic movements and secularism many Arab state and Iran see Turkey as a challenge for their autocratic and undeveloped economic system.

Fuller agreed that Turkey is becoming a model precisely because Turkish democracy is beating back rigid state ideology and the country's developing democratic spirit (Fuller 2002). In the eyes of Fuller, the new Turkish model is based on serious utilization of democratic process; a willingness to act not just as a Western power but as an Eastern power as well; a greater exercise of national sovereignty supported by the people; a greater independence of action that no longer clings insecurely to the United States or any other power in implementing its foreign policies; considerable progress toward the solution of a burning internal ethnic minority (the Kurdish) issue; and a demonstrated capability to resolve the leading challenge to the Muslim world today: the management and political integration of Islam. This newer model is much better for Turkey, better for the region, and better for Europe and the world (Fuller 2004: 51-64).

However, some popular columnists and thinkers claim that Turkey cannot be a suitable model for the Arab countries as it is shifting its axis from the West to the East. For instance, Bari Weiss interviewed with Bernard Lewis in *The Wall Street Journal* on April 2, 2011 on government traditions of Muslim culture. Lewis thought that in Turkey due to the agenda of the government (AKParty), the movement is toward re-Islamization. Moreover, Thomas Friedman wrote in *The New York Times* that in the past while Turkey was modern and secular, at present the Islamist government focused on joining the Arab League instead the European Union. At present, Turkey's popularity on Arab streets has increased and it is argued that Turkey will become a regional power in the near future in the MENA region. For that reason, Turkey must act very carefully for regional and especially international issues considering Ottoman period experiences with the MENA region. It is a well-known fact that political coalitions in this region might change easily and quickly, friends might become hostile towards soon.

It is true that the Arab Spring particularly in Syria and Egypt will relatively cause some crucial problems for Turkey. Before the Arab Spring Turkey had really good relations with Syria, however it might be considered as a milestone for Turkey's zero-problems policy since the honeymoon was over as soon as the street demonstrations appeared in Syria. Moreover, the refugees rushed into the border putting pressure upon Turkey. After that Turkey had to change its zero-problems policy with Syria to force the regime accepting transition into a democratic state due to its national interest. Changing strategy was simply because potential sectarian civil war could easily affect Turkey therefore it is not surprising that Turkey felt responsible to stand by protesters against the atrocity of the Asad regime.

As Turkey is a Muslim country represented in Western institutions such as NATO and EU, it has an opportunity to speak on behalf of the Muslim countries as a member of both the West and the Muslim world. Turkey, as a secular and democratic country, can find alternative solutions to prevent religious conflicts in the Middle East, which makes Turkey more suitable model than the developed Western countries such as England and France.

## 7. Military Coup in Egypt and the Future of Arab Spring

The intervention of army was a *military coup* and the ousting of Morsi was unacceptable for Turkey in contrast to the US, which refrained from using the word coup. *Davutoglu* described the event in Egypt as unacceptable and he gave an interview in *Hurriyet Daily News* dated July 27, 2013 that a leader who came to power with the support of the people can only be removed through elections. He also added that it is unacceptable for democratically elected leaders, for whatever reason, to be toppled through illegal means, even a coup.

Surprisingly, Obama did not use the word coup and suggested that the military ended a political crisis due to economic difficulties. Obama spoke carefully and did not use the word coup. *Kerry* also speculated that Egypt's military was *restoring democracy* and was asked to intervene by millions of people who were afraid of chaos and violence. As obvious, the *White House* rejected to describe removal of Morsi as a *military coup*. According to the law, the U.S. must cut aid to a country that has had a coup, apparently, lawyers told Obama to ignore the law *Section 508* of the Foreign Assistance Act (Hudson, 2013). According to the Act, none of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available pursuant to this Act shall be obligated or expended to finance directly any assistance to any country whose duly elected head of government is deposed by military coup or decree. As obvious, neither of the leaders directly addressed the coup except Turkey, therefore, it might be inferred that Turkey deserves to be a model instead the Western countries, particularly, with its democratic institutions.

So far, optimists and pessimists have seen the Arab Spring from different perspectives. For some, the Arab Spring is a revolution but, for others, it is another strategy of Western imperialism in the Middle East. It is obvious that democratizing the Arab countries without transforming their social and economic infrastructure is really impossible. Moreover, as the West particularly the US do not support the peoples on the streets any future coalition in the region seems impossible. For instance, a coalition between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian army is not possible particularly after the military coup supported by the US and the West even it relatively turned the Arab Spring into Arab Winter in the Arab world such as Libya and Egypt. While the West tries to turn the Arab Spring into Arab Winter, the leaders of many Arab countries do not care about the issue. That's why, whenever Erdogan calls international community to take a concrete step to stop civil wars in the region, the mainstream media including some opposite Turkish media consider him as a dictator who tries to become a leader in the Muslim world which manipulates and covers the poor situation and innocent victims in the Middle East. The West also manipulates the media showing Turkey alone in the region, indeed they are trying to make agreements with authoritarian leaders.

As well known, the Arab Spring is a process and not finished yet, Turkey, supporting popular sovereignty instead authoritarian leaders like Sisi in Egypt, might be a model for the Arab Awakening as a secular, democratic, and Muslim country. The West, particularly the US have always supported the authoritarian leaders instead people in the Arab world. They exactly turned the *Arab Spring* into *Arab Winter* manipulating and changing the selected governments through military coups. It happened in Syria, when they realized that Muslims have a chance of ruling the country they did not support Free Syrian Army, instead they gave weapons to the terrorist groups and approved non democratic Asad regime. What is the reason of that negative image for Turkey in the West, although the Turkish government helps and accommodates millions of refugees without caring their identities whether they are Yazidis, Kurds or Armenians? It might be possible that the West only sees oil and their interests in the Middle East as hundred years ago, when it comes to Turkey, it is not wrong to think that Turkey will be a role model for the region with its democratic institutions and receiving the people in need with open arms only for humanity will be remembered in the future as Jewish people still cannot forget the same generous behavior of Ottomans when they were in trouble and kicked from Spain, the Ottomans welcomed them for humanity. Therefore, it is also possible to infer that Turkey might bring peace and tolerance of the Ottomans back to the Middle East hundred years later as a continuing state of the Ottoman Empire.

## 8. Conclusion

Arab Spring uprising in Syria against Asad has mushroomed into a brutal proxy war. Iran and Russia have encouraged the Alawite-led government of Asad and they gradually increased their support providing military advisers and subsidized weapons. Furthermore, Russia has been launching air campaigns against Asad's opponents without caring whether they are women or children. Turkey alone cannot stop this brutal proxy war in Syria but became a symbol of humanitarian assistance in the region for all people in need.

To conclude, whether Turkey is a suitable role model for the Middle East or not is a controversial issue because unfortunately most people consider that through their own ideologies, that is, secularists and opposites of AKP government claim that Turkey cannot be a good model while most others who support AKP policies believe that Turkey is the best alternative with its Ottoman experience in the region, but the ones who hate Erdogan never think Turkey as the best alternative while others who are impartial or religious consider the opposite.

Indeed, as Talip Küçükcan states Turks and Arabs have many common interests that shape their current relations and their future also lies in the Middle East region. For instance, in the recent visits of Erdogan in Algeria and Davutoglu in Erbil, people on the streets whether Arab or Kurdish applauded Turkish leaders in front of the mosques after Friday Pray, that is, Turkey is not alone on the streets instead peoples of the region respect Turkish leaders for their mutual interests in the future even they admire them more than their leaders.

As the period of dictatorships ends, it is the historical moment and it is high time the Arab people blamed the West for the manipulations. Consequently, they have a significant responsibility carrying out necessary democratic reforms to implement in the region., and Turkey is expected much to support this historical transformation without caring the unfair manipulations of the West -particularly the US- to replace the elected governments through military coups as in Egypt. Nowadays, the media try to show that Turkey is alone but, since the history notes down the ones who supported the peoples on the streets, Turkey will have a great honor at least just because of the prays of the innocent oppressed refugees. How about the US, recently Kerry has declared that they will have to negotiate with Asad that they will act as usual without caring peoples' blood on the streets instead, they will care about oil on behalf of their national interests, and people will continue reading manipulations on the mainstream media as if Turkey is alone in the world. However, few weeks ago international community witnessed some pictures of people in Syria hugging Turkish soldiers during the latest operation called *Fırat Kalkanı*(Operation Euphrates Shield) to fight against terrorist groups in Syria. It might be incredible for the West to see local people kissing other countries' soldiers in their own lands; however, when it comes to Turkish soldiers it is different because most people in Syria consider that only Turkey might bring real peace to their country as Ottomans did in the past.

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