

Yossi Alpher, Nilgün Arisan Eralp, Seçil Paçacı Elitok, Rana Deep Islam,  
Ayhan Kaya, Fuat Keyman, Ghassan Khatib, Ziad Majed, Almut Möller,  
Dorothee Schmid, Thomas Straubhaar, Nathalie Tocci

# Europe, Turkey and the Mediterranean

## Fostering Cooperation and Strengthening Relations

Europe in Dialogue 2012 | 03



## Europe in Dialogue

Europeans can be proud as they look back on fifty years of peaceful integration. Nowadays many people worldwide see the European Union as a model of how states and their citizens can work together in peace and freedom. However, this achievement does not automatically mean that the EU has the ability to deal with the problems of the future in a rapidly changing world. The European Union must continue developing its unity in diversity dynamically, be it with regard to energy issues, the euro, climate change or new types of conflict. Indeed, self-assertion and solidarity are key to the debates shaping our future.

“Europe in Dialogue” wishes to make a contribution to these open debates. The analyses in this series subject political concepts, processes and institutions to critical scrutiny and suggest ways of reforming internal and external European policymaking so that it is fit for the future. However, “Europe in Dialogue” is not merely trying to encourage an intra-European debate and makes a point of including authors from non-EU states. Looking at an issue from different angle or from afar creates a shift in perspective which, in turn, renders Europe’s development more meaningful as it engages in critical dialogue with other societies.

Europe, Turkey and the Mediterranean  
Fostering Cooperation and Strengthening Relations



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**Editors:**

Armando Garcia Schmidt, Joachim Fritz-Vannahme

**Managing editors:**

Christian-Peter Hanelt, Julia Seiler

**Language editing/Translation:**

Barbara Serfozo, Berlin

**Layout:**

Dieter Dollacker, Berlin

**Cover photo:**

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## New Proposals for Cooperation in the Mediterranean

Christian-Peter Hanelt and Julia Seiler

The remarkable developments underway across North Africa since December 2010 continue to captivate observers worldwide. Tunisians, Egyptians and Libyans have successfully ousted dictators and are pursuing their desire to live in freedom, dignity and justice. Citizens and leaders in these countries have been eager to organize elections and draft constitutional processes. But they still need to deliver internal security and provide solutions to socioeconomic inequalities.

### From Morocco to Turkey

In spring 2011, as these changes were underway, the Bertelsmann Stiftung held in Rabat, Morocco, its 13th Kronberg Talks. The conference focused on recalibrating Europe's relations with its southern neighbors in light of the ongoing upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. In the Europe in Dialogue volume, *The Future of the Mediterranean – Which Way for Europe and North Africa?*, published on the eve of the conference, the Bertelsmann Stiftung asked renowned scholars and activists from North Africa to offer their opinion and suggest actions Europe could – and should – take in order to support transformation processes in the region.

Europe's quite late reaction to the Arab Uprising as well as the financial crisis, however, have limited the EU's capability to act as transformation partner. Cooperation with an effective partner would support Europe's efforts and help restore its credibility in its immediate southern neighborhood.

## Turkey as a regional soft power

Turkey has for decades been a valuable partner for Europe. It also enjoys a solid reputation and considerable influence among Arab and predominantly Muslim countries. Since 2001, Turkey's new foreign and domestic policy approach has facilitated its rise as a regional power and key actor in the Middle East. Turkey intensified its relations with the EU and its individual member states despite the stop-and-go EU accession process. At the same time, it began looking eastward, strengthening ties with its direct neighbors and other ascendent regional powers such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Having experienced a severe economic crisis itself in 2002 and 2003, Turkey emerged from the global financial crisis relatively unscathed, deepening its business and trade relations with Europe and countries across the region from Russia to (Central) Asia.

In 2001, Turkey's AKP (Justice and Development Party) successfully integrated Islamist forces into an official party and the parliamentary system. Following its electoral success in 2002, the governing AKP implemented sound economic policies leading Turkey out of severe financial crisis. Indeed, continued economic growth throughout the following years helped the party win another electoral mandate in 2007.

In response to EU accession conditions, the AKP-led government implemented several reforms in the early 2000s aimed at increasing transparency and strengthening minority rights, the latter to a limited extent only. The government even placed further constraints on the traditionally strong influence of the Turkish armed forces – a noteworthy development in a region where civilian control over military institutions is common. Parallel to the military's retreat from political affairs, civil society organizations flourished. Motivated by the prospect of EU membership, various institutions and organizations have fought for individual and political rights, such as freedom of expression, women's rights and political participation.

Despite continued shortcomings in areas related to freedom of expression and minorities' rights, the positive developments witnessed in Turkey have made the country a pioneer in a region dominated by non-democratic regimes. In order to respond capably to the regional developments unleashed in 2011,

Europe must look eastward for a strategic partnership. The Bertelsmann Stiftung was thus very pleased when the Istanbul Policy Center of the renowned Sabancı University invited us to hold the 14th Kronberg Talks in Istanbul in May of 2012 to discuss politics and development in the Mediterranean with a focus on European-Turkish cooperation.

### **14th Kronberg Talks and Europe in Dialogue**

Since the 2011 Kronberg Talks in Morocco and its related edition of Europe in Dialogue, we have broadened our approach and examined the tasks that lay ahead: transformation processes in the Arab World, regional conflicts in the Middle East, and the opportunities and challenges inherent to migration across the Mediterranean. These issues call for sustainable and well-coordinated cooperation among several actors from different regions, each with different backgrounds, experiences and abilities. It is therefore important we maintain a continued dialogue in which each party involved can express itself open and freely. This edition of Europe in Dialogue aims to provide authors from Europe, Turkey, the Arab world and Israel the opportunity to voice a variety of opinions and perspectives on European-Turkish cooperation in the context of the Arab Uprising.

### **Transformation partners**

The future of revolutionary Egypt, Tunisia and Libya continues to capture global attention. In Libya, where the situation remains unstable, long-running struggles and societal cleavages that predate Muammar al-Qadhafi's rule continue to shape developments. Whereas things look quite promising in Tunisia, establishing a constituent assembly in Egypt has proved to be a sensitive issue between the military council, Islamist and secular parties. Secular forces have driven revolutions, and elections are bringing Islamists to power: these developments present a new challenge for Europe. How will Islamist parties shape their foreign policies, in particular their policies toward Europe? The EU, for its part, having called for expanded political participation and democratic elections in these countries, must acknowledge the Islamists' electoral victories if it is to remain credible. The example of

Turkey illustrates how Islamist parties might successfully manage a state economy while maintaining strong ties with the West.

Contributors Almut Möller (DGAP; Berlin), Ziad Majed (American University of Paris), Nilgün Arisan Eralp (TEPAV, Ankara) and Nathalie Tocci (IAI, Rome) explore these issues, elaborating on the opportunities and obstacles inherent to cooperation between Turkey and the EU in supporting developments in the Arab world. The authors agree that Turkey's diplomatic skills, regional influence and its know-how in managing a staggering economy are valuable contributions to a partnership that targets transformation. Indeed, Turkey is well-positioned to shape things positively given its history, predominantly Muslim population, and ongoing experience with political transformation. Ziad Majed discusses within this context Turkey's flexible foreign policy as facilitative of a collective European-Turkish initiative.

Europe, by contrast, has established specific policy instruments and institutions in order to support development in its southern neighborhood. One such instrument, the EU's customs union, is often highlighted as a potentially effective means of supporting transformation in the region. Advocating stronger foreign policy dialogue between Turkey and the EU, Nathalie Tocci calls for the establishment of institutional mechanisms through which a specific European-Turkish dialogue might take place. In addition to these points, the authors also address potential stumbling blocks to Turkish-European cooperation, in particular the stalled EU accession process and the EU's internal divisions. Noting the divisive impact of the euro crisis on the EU, Almut Möller suggests here that a "two-speed" Europe could provide individual European member states the opportunity to strengthen relations with neighboring countries. Pointing to Turkey's popularity among its Arab neighbors, Nilgün Arisan Eralp warns against the dangers of Turkey being perceived as a dominant or hegemonic power among its Arab neighbors. Given this and other factors such as stalled reforms in Turkey, she underscores the need for institutionalized dialogue if joint efforts are to succeed.

## **Conflict resolution**

Reflections on the Arab Uprising must consider other regional developments, such as the international struggle for change in Syria, the dispute over the Iranian nuclear program and the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Contributors Fuat Keyman (IPC, Istanbul), Dorothee Schmid (IFRI, Paris), Ghassan Khatib (bitterlemons.org, Ramallah) and Yossi Alpher (bitterlemons.org, Tel Aviv) take on these issues in discussing Turkey and the EU as regional players in conflict resolution. Taking stock of individual countries' priorities, they identify possible areas for fruitful EU-Turkish cooperation. In her contribution, Dorothee Schmid points out how the EU and Turkey, despite their shared interests of stability and security, do not necessarily share the same objectives. They differ, for example, in their (foreign) policy approaches to the plight of Cyprus or the Kurds, and in their handling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Focusing on this latter point, Yossi Alpher also suggests that a stronger EU-US effort to get Turkey and Israel closer together could be helpful. Ghassan Khatib, who criticizes Europe for prioritizing short-term strategic goals at the expense of establishing genuine stability in the Mediterranean, illustrates how Turkey's reputation for trustworthiness tops that of Europe. He sees in regional partnerships with institutions such as the Arab League an opportunity to undergird with greater credibility both Turkey and Europe's efforts. Underscoring Turkey's unique position, Fuat Keyman reminds us that citizens in Arab countries are reluctant to accept a democratization process initiated by outside actors or controlled by military forces.

## **Opportunities and challenges posed by migration**

The third issue addressed in this Europe in Dialogue edition deals with migration and the opportunities and challenges it poses for Europe, Turkey and the Mediterranean. Countries in both Europe and the Mediterranean are increasingly interlinked through the effects of countless migration processes. Some 20 million people in the EU (4% of Europe's total population) do not have European citizenship. According to the most recent eurostat figures (Statistics in focus 34/2011), Turkish and Moroccan nationals represent the largest number of foreigners living in the EU. The number of asylum-seekers

in Europe has increased by 19 percent in 2011. According to the UNHCR, the number of Tunisian nationals seeking asylum in Europe increased ninefold for the same period, while claims by Libyans rose fivefold and claims by Syrian nationals increased by an alarming 68 percent. By March 2012, 17,000 refugees from Syria were registered in Turkish refugee camps.

Contributors Rana Islam (Berlin), Thomas Straubhaar and Seçil Paçacı Elitok (HWWI, Hamburg) and Ayhan Kaya (Bilgi University, Istanbul) address the situation of migrants in Turkey and the EU and the perception within Arab countries of Turkish and European migration policies. Highlighting problems of integration and issues of public debate, they explore the attendant economic, political and cultural advantages to migration, calling for a more open and positive attitude towards migrant populations. They emphasize the benefits of circular temporary and regulated work migration in decreasing illegal migration and reducing the demographic gap in Europe. Rana Islam criticizes the effects of security interests in shaping migration policies in many European countries, which does little to mitigate the right-wing extremism faced by an increasing number of immigrants in Europe. Ayhan Kaya suggests that Turkey, as an important net migration country, could play a key role in regulating circular migration. He therefore calls for an improved Turkish immigration policy and the need for a public debate on migration. Thomas Straubhaar and Seçil Paçacı Elitok, noting Turkey's prospective shift from being a labor exporter to a labor importer country, support the idea of a comprehensive, far-sighted migration policy for Turkey and Europe.

We would like to express our thanks to all those who have supported us in compiling this edition. We thank the authors for contributing their ideas and time to this edition and the conference. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to Ahmet Evin and his team at the Istanbul Policy Center for their energetic and invaluable support. Ahmet Evin proved integral to the process with his valuable input and recommendations of Turkish scholars. We thank as well Barbara Serfozo and Mehmet Beşikçi for their editorial efforts with the English and Turkish versions of this edition, and Dieter Dollacker for his support with layout and graphics. Last but certainly not least, we want to thank Ruth Martens, who supported us during the editing process with valuable comments and contributed to this introduction.

Before passing the baton to our authors, please allow us to briefly highlight some of the recommendations offered here on how the EU and Turkey might support sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

## Key points at a glance

### Transformation partners

- In order to support transformation in Arab countries and the resolution of regional conflicts, Europe and Turkey should act in accordance with their respective strengths. Whereas Europe has the necessary expertise and established institutional frameworks for multilateral cooperation (i.e., European Neighborhood Policy, European-Mediterranean Partnership, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), enlargement policy and transformation partnerships), Turkey is a flexible and credible actor in the region. It is a valuable source of inspiration for its neighbors, thanks to its own experience with democratization and development.
- Existing institutions of cooperation (UfM) should be strengthened to support the dialogue between various actors and carry out measures targeting capacity-building.
- Carefully planned and implemented investments, free-trade agreements and the expansion of the customs union to the southern Mediterranean countries could support economic and migration policies.
- Second-track diplomacy should foster civil society cooperation parallel to official or intergovernmental agreements.
- Paying better attention to the needs specific to a country will help prevent regional NGOs from being overburdened.

### **Conflict resolution**

- Europe and Turkey should avoid double standards: security and economic interests should not be prioritized over human rights and democracy.
- Europe and Turkey should be more adamant in seeking peaceful solutions to the Middle East conflict and the controversy over the Iranian nuclear program.
- Cooperation with regional actors like the Arab League is essential in order to avoid perceptions of hegemonic powers afoot in the region.

### **Migration across the Mediterranean**

- Differentiating accurately between Islam and Islamism is crucial to fostering sound foreign policies and sensible integration debates. Reflecting upon commonly used terminology will help battle stereotypes and right-wing extremism from taking hold.
- Europe should establish a common, far-sighted and strategic migration policy instead of a fortress policy.
- Circular migration policies and a target-oriented migration policy could help mitigate illegal migration. Turkey, as an important transit country, could play a crucial role in these efforts.
- Migrants' countries of destination could benefit from providing immigrants a good educational framework.



## The Possibility of a “Transformational Partnership” between Turkey and the EU: Will “Opportunity” Become Reality?

Nilgün Arisan Eralp

Although both Turkey and the European Union have accepted the need to respond to the turbulent transformation process in the Arab world – albeit with a certain amount of delay – they have not yet approached the region jointly, an alternative offering the opportunity to craft a more effective, value-based and forward-looking strategy (Soler i Lecha 2011: 27). Indeed, the EU and Turkey as yet lack any institutionalized process of dialogue regarding the transformation in the Arab world, much less a combined strategy. However, the two have both a historical responsibility and a present-day opportunity to act together by combining their energies and potential in the design of a new policy toward the region. The transformation in the Arab world will not only check the attractiveness and transformative power of the post-enlargement EU and change the dynamics of Turkey’s relationship with the Union, but will also test the new role Turkey has sought for itself in the Middle East (Krastev 2011: 1).

### Turkey’s present instruments and strategies for supporting Arab countries undergoing transformation

In examining Turkey’s present efforts to support Arab countries undergoing transformation, instruments are more clearly discernible than strategies per se. The main factors driving government behavior in this area include the country’s newly active foreign policy within its region and its increasing attempts to “lead by example.” The regime’s guiding idea seems to be to serve as a “source of inspiration” or to provide a “demonstrative effect” (Ülgen 2011b: 1).

As Daniel Dombey pointed out in a *Financial Times* article titled “Turkish Diplomacy: An Attentive Neighbor” on 26 February 2012, “not since the fall of the Ottoman Empire nine decades ago has Turkey played a more active role in the Middle East and beyond.” This active policy, which has also been described as a “sea change” (Tocci and Walker 2010: 1), started with Turkey playing a more significant role as a regional mediator, followed by a diplomatic activism enhanced by economic and trade links and a liberal visa policy toward nearby countries (Soler i Lecha 2011: 27). The declared objective was to promote a stable and prosperous neighborhood through encouraging greater economic integration between Turkey and the Arab world (Kirişçi 2011a: 43), putting a special emphasis on the free movement of people.

This essentially autonomous foreign policy has been shaped by a number of broad international currents, including the end of the Cold War and the world’s emerging multipolarity, the events following 9/11, the U.S. invasion of and withdrawal from Iraq, the fragile nature of global economic system, the exclusion of Turkey from Europe’s architecture by some EU member states and the subsequent stalling of EU accession negotiations, and finally the vacuum in the region created by the reduction of U.S. influence. All these factors have redefined Turkey’s geopolitical situation and increased the regional emphasis in its foreign policy (Kardaş 2011: 34).

However, in the environment created by the recent transformations in the Arab world, conditions have become less conducive to autonomous action (Özel 2012: 4), especially as the number of cases necessitating multilateral action and assistance (such as Libya and Syria) has increased. This has again brought Turkey closer to its Western partners. The rising number of other actors competing for influence in the region, with Iran and Russia serving as prominent examples, has played a significant role in this rapprochement.

In this context, although Turkey has adopted a pro-democracy position vis-à-vis the transformation in the Arab world, it lacks an explicit strategy toward this end. Yet even in the absence of such a strategy, Turkey has exerted a definite appeal for countries going through uncertain transformations. Affinities in the areas of religion and culture have played a crucial role in this regard, although other important factors are also in play.

A recent survey covering 16 Middle Eastern countries by the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), an Istanbul-based think tank, showed Turkey to be the most highly regarded country in the eyes of the people of the region (Akgün and Gündoğar 2012: 21). Interestingly enough, in survey respondents’ citation of the country as a model for the region, as its future economic leader and as the country that contributes most to peace, Turkey’s Muslim identity was only the third most important factor, behind the fact of its democratic rule and its working economy.

Turkey’s “demonstrative effect” operates through its economic performance and liberal trade policies, accompanied by its liberal visa policy (Kirişçi 2011: 46). On the other hand, being “a country with a predominantly Muslim population which can fully implement the core values driving the Arab Spring: democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities” clearly plays a crucial role (Verheugen 2012: 3). To a considerable extent, Turkey owes the establishment of these values within its domestic sphere to its EU accession process, which has served as an important catalyst in the country’s recent political, economic and social transformation.

It is hence clear that Turkey’s appeal in the region is an important instrument, and that the country’s EU accession process has played a significant role in the construction of this appeal, alongside the country’s own economic performance and political model. In order to convert this appeal to political leverage within the region, Turkey should share its experience in areas such as political reform, economic reform and institution building, thus contributing to economic growth and sustainable democratization in the region.

## Where could the EU and Turkey cooperate?

The European Union has long struggled to promote democratic reform and economic modernization in North Africa and the Middle East, typically by engaging in regional cooperation and trade liberalization in the form of bilateral association agreements. Although it largely failed to achieve its regional objectives, the EU has been motivated by the belief that establishing

EU norms and practices in the Mediterranean would reduce the significant economic and political gap between the EU and countries in the region (Soler i Lecha 2011: 27).

Since 1995, when the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) was created, the EU has implemented specific policies geared toward the Mediterranean region; however, these have not included policies similar to the EU project itself.

From the EMP's initiation in 1995 to the 2004 incorporation of Mediterranean countries into the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the 2008 launch of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) as a replacement for the EMP, and even in the case of the "Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean" of 2011, the European Union has struggled to find a successful framework and strategy for relations with its Mediterranean partners. The various efforts have in many respects sought to complement one another: The ENP focuses on EU's bilateral relations with each partner, for example, while the EMP and its successor UfM have provided forums where all the countries can meet together.

Unfortunately, these policies have not successfully closed the region's income and democratic-governance gap with the European Union. Indeed, they even served to strengthen authoritarian regimes (Grant 2011: 1), resulting in a loss of credibility for the EU in the region. The main weakness of the UfM and its predecessor EMP was a focus on states or governments, with comparatively less emphasis on private sector and NGO development. On the other hand, ENP has focused extensively on improving the economic environment rather than putting any significant emphasis on the promotion of democracy, human rights or the rule of law.

Consequently, the European Union has decided that in creating a regional policy better adapted to the current circumstances, it should offer more in terms of "money, markets and mobility," while implementing stricter terms of conditionality (Grant 2011: 2).

Taking all these past weaknesses into consideration, the EU has responded to the transformation in the Arab world with 2011's "Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean." The

emphasis of this program is on democratic transformation and institution building through person-to-person contact, as well as urban and rural development through the improvement of educational and health systems. Further areas of engagement include the protection of fundamental freedoms, constitutional and judiciary reform, and the fight against corruption (Schumacher 2011: 109). The approach taken to implementation is one of “more for more and less for less,” in the sense that delivery of aid is to be conditional on performance in the areas of democracy and human rights. In other words, unlike in the past, the EU aims this time to associate a strict conditionality with its aid.

Despite its weaknesses, the EU’s greatest asset at the moment is the rich expertise regarding the North Africa and Middle East region acquired through the pursuit of its previous policies. There is wide consensus that these policies have enabled the EU to acquire financial and institutional resources that Turkey lacks. Conversely, Turkey enjoys a level of popularity within the Arab public that the EU has lost over the last decades. It would thus be wise for the EU and Turkey to combine their strengths, as both parties have an interest in fostering economic development as well as a sustainable pattern of broader development within their joint neighborhood. This gives the two parties a foundation on which to build working cooperation in the region.

Although the European Union has not itself been regarded as a political model within the Arab world, European or universal values have played a significant role in establishing Turkey as a source of inspiration. Arab protesters do not regard European societies as a model for imitation, but during the uprisings they have demanded that important European values and norms such as democracy, freedom and an end to corruption be respected – all of which have to a certain extent been established in Turkey through the country’s EU accession process. These are also the norms that the European Union has long aspired to institutionalize in these countries. The primary areas of engagement within the EU’s new strategic approach to the area – specifically, protection for fundamental freedoms, constitutional and judicial reform, and the fight against corruption – have long been important constituents of Turkey’s own transformation process, again due to the EU

accession process. For this reason, Turkey's appeal in the region gives it the potential to fill Europe's "credibility gap" (Soler i Lecha 2011: 27).

In the above-noted TESEV survey, respondents were asked whether a Turkish accession to the EU would benefit the Union in the region overall. "Sixty percent of respondents said Turkish accession would have a positive effect on the EU's regional role" (Akgün and Gündoğar 2012: 22).

Hence, cooperation between EU and Turkey would seem to have the potential to create a positive political and economic transformation in the Arab world, particularly if the parties can strengthen reformist forces in the Arab countries by developing projects that aim at grassroots-level capacity building. Turkey's business community and civil society can play an instrumental role toward this end. The declared willingness of the EU and Turkey to cooperate more closely in their foreign policy toward the region shows promise in this sense, although there has as yet been no sign of a joint strategy or even the establishment of a process of working dialogue on the issue.

While Turkey's recent economic and political transformation process offers a very good showcase for the establishment of EU norms in the region, the country's customs union with the EU could also be very useful (Ülgen October 2011: 2). If this experience could be extended to the region as a whole, replacing the EU's free trade agreements with individual Arab countries, it might initiate a process of economic integration able to trigger much-needed economic growth in addition to political transformation.

## Possible obstacles to successful partnership

Although the prospect of an EU-Turkey strategic partnership vis-à-vis the Arab world holds strong potential for the stimulation of sustainable democratization and economic growth, significant obstacles to any such cooperation may yet stem from the EU, from Turkey and/or from the relations between them.

Internal EU problems such as the euro crisis, persistent threats to the Union's economic and financial foundations, and the potential collapse of the Schengen system (Soler i Lecha 2011: 29) could disrupt an otherwise successful partnership between Turkey and the EU. The EU financial crisis might easily limit the amount of money allocated to new policy toward the Arab world. On the other hand, the (already extant) risk of an immense inflow of illegal migrants and the specter of Islamic fundamentalism could easily result in widespread objections within the European public to the provision of additional EU support to the Arab world.

Another potential impediment to efficient partnership between EU and Turkey stems from shortcomings in the construction of EU's foreign policy. EU countries in many cases lack consensus, making it difficult to arrive at a joint strategy. Unless there is efficient coordination of member state policies, bilateral problems between Turkey and any individual member state could undermine joint activity between the broader Union and Turkey toward the Arab world.

Turkey's vulnerability as a source of inspiration is another factor that could become a serious disruption in any partnership between the EU and Turkey. This vulnerability stems both from the slowdown in Turkey's domestic political reform process and the instability of its economic performance. Turkish democratization is still a work in progress, and has suffered serious recent setbacks, particularly in the areas of fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. If such a situation were to persist, it would seriously undermine the country's transformative power in the region. In addition, the Turkish economy's sensitivity to rising oil prices and dependence on the performance of EU economies both comprise risk factors in the country's ability to assist Arab countries during the difficult period of transformation.

Turkey's fragile democratization process is closely linked with its EU accession process, which has been stalled for several years. In principle, the initiation of accession negotiations constitutes the beginning of an irreversible process in which the candidate country's membership prospects become gradually clearer over time. However, this has not been the case for Turkey (Arısan Eralp 2011: 1), as half of its negotiation chapters have been blocked for political reasons. Although Turkey has been engaged in accession

negotiations for more than six years, joining the EU has domestically become almost a non-issue, with the accession debate today having very little effect on internal transformation processes. This situation presents the most serious risk to foreign policy cooperation with the European Union “unless there is a boost to accession negotiations, or at the very least, EU movement toward visa liberalization with Turkey” (Soler i Lecha 2011: 29).

More broadly, Turkey itself should seek to avoid repeating the mistakes of the European Union’s previous Middle East and North Africa policies, which were torn between upholding Europe’s values and its interests, and ultimately failed to deliver the promised “money, markets and mobility.” As noted by Charles Grant, “many EU leaders perceived an inevitable contradiction between Europe’s values and its interests, and chose to prioritize the latter” (Grant 2011:1). Turkey should avoid falling into this trap, and avoid behaving as a regional superpower seeking to dominate others. Any such behavior has the potential to remind neighbors of the negative legacy of Turkey’s imperial past (Verheugen 2012: 3). Rather, it can play an important role by serving as a source of inspiration that offers assistance, shares best practices and gives guidance.

## Looking ahead

As the Arab world’s transformation evolves in the direction of creating economically prosperous and democratic countries, it is increasingly obvious that this process can best be helped through transnational cooperation (Bishara 2012: 19). Given the complicated and uncertain nature of the transformation in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the scope of the opportunities at stake, both Turkey and the European Union feel a responsibility to help restore respect for human rights, support a sustainable democratization process and contribute to economic growth in the region. A successful regional policy partnership between the EU and Turkey would strengthen both parties’ positions. However, the significant potential underlying any such partnership can be realized only if dialogue between the parties is institutionalized. If this fails to take place, each party will be “torn between being a relevant actor in the region and a simple spectator that



continues to be overwhelmed by local and regional political developments” (Schumacher 2011: 108).

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## Crossing Borders or Introvert Union? The Euro Crisis and the EU's Relations with its Southern Neighbors

Almut Möller

A year and a half into the Arab awakening, the European Union is facing a dual challenge. The first challenge has to do with the Union itself: The financial, economic and sovereign debt crises and the loss of competitiveness of a number of EU member countries have called into question the Union's prosperity, its economic and social cohesion, and even its attractiveness for both its citizens and potential new members.

The second challenge to the European Union is an external one, resulting from the Arab awakening and the changing political landscapes in the southern Mediterranean. Since early 2011, EU countries have been facing a new order emerging in their southern neighborhood – an order that at least for the time being hardly looks “ordered.”

In this essay I will examine the links between these challenges, and explore what impact the internal state of the European Union has on its external relations with its southern neighbors. While both the internal and the external challenges entail a great deal of uncertainty and even risk, I will argue that they also offer opportunities for a true renewal of the Union's relations with its neighbors – a renewal that may help the EU continue to deliver on its promise of peace and prosperity for its citizens.

### The impact of the Euro crisis on the EU's internal cohesion: Toward a new “two-speed” Europe

As of the time of writing, in the spring of 2012, there is cautious optimism within the EU's capitals that the most acute symptoms of the sovereign debt

crisis in Greece and other euro zone countries have been successfully addressed. Apart from addressing immediate crisis issues, EU countries agreed to reinforce existing rules and establish new ones aimed at limiting future accumulation of sovereign debt, which was widely (though not unanimously) considered one of the main roots of the crisis.

However, even after two years of great distress, the EU and its members cannot simply slip from crisis mode into a state of “normality.” While austerity has been the word of the day for the last two years, the challenge now is to reestablish growth, jobs and competitiveness. In this task, several questions remain outstanding: How can EU members strengthen the Union so that it again manages to compete successfully in a globalized world increasingly shaped by emerging powers? Is what has been branded the “European model” – knowledge-based economies committed to social cohesion and environmental sustainability – still affordable? Now that the most acute crisis phase seems to be over, these fundamental issues remain to be addressed.

Although the answer to the crisis has become “more Europe, not less,” EU nation-states remain hesitant to give up or share additional competences in economic and social affairs at the supranational level. And throughout the crisis, centrifugal forces have intensified across the European Union. The United Kingdom and the Czech Republic, which decided not to sign the new “Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union” adopted in March 2012 – the former country even forcing other EU members into a legal solution outside of the Lisbon Treaty – are the most vivid examples, but clearly not the only ones. Across the Union, euroskepticism is on the rise, and anti-EU campaigns are gaining ground.

It is fair to ask whether the Union of 27 members has reached the limits of its governability. It will clearly be even more difficult to steer the Union in the future. It was against this background that 17 members of the euro zone ultimately decided to act on their own, and in the course of the fall of 2011 agreed to move toward a “real” fiscal union. For now, the steps being taken in this direction look rather timid, but they will set a course for further activity in the years to come. Under the pressure of the crisis, the euro zone has finally started to complete its dysfunctional economic and monetary union.

Eight non-euro members declared that they want to stay as close as they can to the euro zone “core,” but this cannot mask the fact that being “in” or “out” of the euro zone matters. And it will matter even more in the future, when new modes of governance within the euro zone show their impact. Consequently, there is a risk that the gap between the “core” and the periphery, between the “ins” and the “outs” of the euro zone, will increasingly widen.

How much asynchronicity can the European Union of 27 members handle? Clearly, the internal coherence of the EU-27 will be challenged by this development. But the prospect of a two-speed Europe might not be such a bad thing for the relationship between the European Union and its neighbors. A looser periphery within the EU might create new opportunities for the *external* periphery of the Union.

A two-speed EU might actually be able to deal much better with the countries in its neighborhood than the EU-27 does at present, because the neighbors could more easily become part of a wider European Union essentially defined by the common market.

However, much depends on whether the EU continues a policy of introversion as a response to the crisis in the years ahead, or instead embraces its changing southern neighborhood with fresh ideas for closer cooperation.

## External relations in times of austerity: Toward an ever more introverted Union?

How will the crisis impact the European Union's foreign policy? First and foremost, the Union has lost a great deal of credibility and attractiveness over the last two years, not only among its own citizens but also in its neighborhood and around the world. The European Union was once viewed with great interest from both inside and outside its borders, and the prospect of neighborly relations – or in Turkey's case, accession to the Union – was a policy offer that appealed to many leaders and citizens in the southern neighborhood.

Today, many depict the European Union as obsolete, torn apart by widening internal gaps and deficient institutions. Within the Arab neighborhood, many forces formerly in the opposition blame the EU for having prioritized stability interests over its avowed values, cooperating with and thereby perpetuating the power of the old regimes.

European foreign policy must currently operate within the context of this perception. And indeed, its effects have already begun to limit the clout of the EU's external action (see the findings of the European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2012, published by the European Council on Foreign Relations).

Furthermore, efforts to strengthen EU foreign policy, an objective declared by EU members only recently to be a high priority, have lost momentum. EU governments are largely focused on economic and financial issues, and foreign policy has all but fallen off the radar. Of course, this is not to suggest that EU members altogether lack a foreign policy at the moment. But the impetus to strengthen joint EU approaches has lost steam in many of the EU's capitals, despite the promises of the Lisbon Treaty.

EU members' intervention in Libya, complicated by Germany's March 2011 U.N. Security Council opposition to military action, is a good example. So too has been the hesitance to further develop the foreign and security instruments laid down in the Lisbon Treaty (for instance, by engaging in permanent structured cooperation), or the apparent lack of vision in making use of the new External Action Service. EU governments currently appear rather unimaginative when it comes to EU foreign policy – precisely at a point in time when creative thinking is needed with regard to the Union's southern neighborhood, which has begun a transition toward a new, largely uncertain future.

Is it only a question of time before the dust settles over the euro crisis and EU governments again devote more time and resources to a Union foreign policy? Unfortunately, this is far from assured. It is not only the euro zone countries most affected by the crisis that have started to make serious budget cuts. In states across the European Union, austerity measures have been adopted that will mean less money available for expenditure on foreign and defense issues in the future. While this development will indeed require that

more rather than less cooperation take place at the EU level, politically speaking the pressure on EU governments to cooperate has not yet been high enough to compensate for the national cuts.

Clearly, this is not a promising development with respect to the EU's foreign and security policy vis-à-vis its southern neighborhood. For example, if another Libya-like scenario in the southern neighborhood were to emerge, EU countries *are not* currently able to plan and carry out military interventions on their own. Even more importantly, they probably will *not be* able to do so in the future. Moreover, the United States has become much more selective in its engagement in the Middle East and North Africa region. The EU's security relationship with Turkey retains considerable potential, but has not yet launched properly.

In engaging with its southern neighbors, the European Union has had recourse to a number of specific foreign policy instruments carried out largely by EU institutions – notably the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) – rather than by national governments. These include enlargement policy (in the case of Turkey), the country-specific European Neighborhood Policy (covering Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria and Tunisia), and the interregional approach of the Barcelona Process/Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

However, none of these policy approaches has proved particularly successful so far. For a number of reasons within both the EU and Turkey, the prospects for Turkish EU membership have changed rather dramatically since the launch of accession negotiations in October 2005. As a response to the Arab awakening, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was revised in 2011 (see the joint communications of the High Representative and the Commission “A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean” of 8 March 2011, and “A New Response to a Changing Neighborhood” of 25 May 2011).

According to these documents, the Union wants to focus its southern ENP on three “Ms”: money, mobility and markets (for a comprehensive overview

of the measures taken by the EU following the Arab uprisings see “The EU’s Response to the Arab ‘Spring,’ MEMO 11/918, 16 December 2011).

But even though the European Union has increased its overall level of spending, loans and investment in its southern neighborhood since 2011, numbers suggest that this will not be enough to raise the southern ENP to a qualitatively new level. Promises of mobility (in the form of legal migration) and market access are even more questionable for the time being. Visa liberalization is a sensitive issue within the EU, and only time will tell if the proposed deep and comprehensive free trade agreements (DCFTAs) will ever be realized, or will significantly improve southern Mediterranean countries’ access to the EU’s common market.

Finally, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was largely invisible when the Arab awakening started to unfold, and has remained so ever since, despite the growing need for a regional forum for exchange between EU countries and the southern Mediterranean. It is fair to argue that the UfM was never meant to be a political forum, but was rather aimed at facilitating expert cooperation on practical issues such as cleaning up the Mediterranean. However, if there had been a flourishing Euro-Mediterranean expert community at the end of 2010, it might have been able to play a bigger role over the last year and a half in facilitating dialogue and setting up new projects.

Thus, while one has to acknowledge that after the initial stumbles of some of its members – most prominently, France – the EU did develop a response to the Arab awakening rather quickly, it is questionable whether the two documents of March and May 2011 live up to their promise of being a *strategic* response.

## Crossing borders: Fresh ideas for the Mediterranean neighborhood

A strategic response to the Arab awakening and to the changing context of EU-Turkish relations would require a depth similar to that of the European Union’s response to the fall of the Berlin Wall. At that time, the Union



adopted enlargement as the strategic tool used to transform the central and eastern European countries, most of which are today EU members.

This is not to suggest that the European Union should offer the ENP countries the kind of membership it once offered to Hungary, Poland or Lithuania – and indeed, to Turkey.

But the Union's response to the changes in its southern neighborhood should take a longer strategic view than what has been adopted by the EU's institutions to date. This is where the member state governments have to come in. This is a time for politics, not for the regulatory approaches on which both enlargement policy and the ENP are based.

The question I want to put is in fact rather simple, and bridges the European Union's internal and external challenges: To what extent can the EU find solutions to its internal malaise through new modes of cooperation with its southern neighbors? Trade, technology, energy, security, demographics and natural resources are only some of the issues that necessarily underlie any such debate. The question is whether, two years into the European crisis, the EU and its members are willing and capable of engaging in fresh, bold, out-of-the-box thinking.

For the last decade, the narrative regarding the southern Mediterranean has been predominantly negative, focusing largely on security concerns. Despite the neighborhood's uncertain future (and giving particular credit to those countries that have embarked on a process that may yield more open political systems and societies), can the European Union's members develop a positive narrative for their neighborly relations with the south Mediterranean? Crossing the conceptual borders that limited the old neighborhood models and developing a new vision for cooperation might give the stumbling Union a much-needed boost.

For the southern neighbors in turn, it might be useful to start thinking of the European Union in a new way: As a result of the crisis, the EU is no longer a monolithic bloc (which in fact it never really was). During the course of 2011, the Union cemented and even accelerated its move toward a "two speed" Europe, with the euro zone forging ahead toward fiscal union. Let us assume for the moment it will succeed. This allows the other 10 EU members

to form a periphery with different levels of ambition. In this context, the European Union's neighbors should take the opportunity to think (or rethink) where they want their place to be in terms of relations with the new European Union.

## Turkey, Europe and the Arabs Next Door

Ziad Majed

The “Turkish model” of governance for export to the Arab world has become the subject of a growing number of conversations. This is due to Turkey’s experience with, on the one hand, a strong military that once played a decisive political role and, on the other, a party with an Islamic identity elected to govern the country according to an agreed separation between religion and the state.

Following the outbreak of the Arab Spring, Tunisia and Egypt organized their first-ever free, multiparty elections. Elections in Morocco, organized at the same time, resulted in an electoral breakthrough for the Muslim Brotherhood. Comparisons between these countries and Turkey thus increased in parallel with growing talk about the Turkish democratic experience, the moderation exercised by the Turkish AKP, the ruling party, and the need to draw lessons from Turkey’s experience.

The following pages are an attempt to explain how Turkey’s role as a non-Arab actor in the region has evolved to represent an alternative to the region’s other non-Arab actor, Iran. It is also an exploration of what may inspire Arab-Turkish relations, especially in terms of improving Turkish-European cooperation within the Mediterranean basin.

### The Middle East, 2003 – 2010

For a number of years, the influence of Arab states in the formulation of policies and alliances within the Middle East has eroded while the roles played by Iran and Turkey in this regard have expanded. This shift took place as America began to play a more direct role with the Iraq war in 2003. However, in the last three years, America’s engagement in the region has diminished as the U.S. military has begun to withdraw its troops from Iraq, and the Obama

administration has proved unable to revitalize the stalled peace process between Palestinians and Israelis.

By contrast, during the period from 2003 to 2009, Iran appeared to be advancing its political interests and expanding its influence throughout the region. The Islamic Republic benefited from the rising price of oil over several years, using these dividends to develop its armaments and launch a “civil nuclear program” with supplies purchased from Russia. It also benefited strategically in geopolitical terms from the Americans’ overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan on its eastern border and the Iraqi Ba’ath regime on its western border. Tehran was thus liberated from the burdens of dealing with two hostile neighboring regimes which, at the same time, enabled it to adopt in its strategy the presence of Iranian allies with specific social and sectarian bases in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Particularly in Iraq, this guaranteed Iran not only direct access to the court of the Americans but also the ability to deepen their political and security problems. All of this was done with the goal of fortifying Iran’s bargaining position with Washington more generally and, with an eye to the post-withdrawal scenario, of becoming an active partner in any transitional administration. In addition, through its alliance with Syria, its support for Hamas and Islamic Jihad and its organic relationship with Hezbollah, Iran became a key player in the Arab-Israeli conflict with a foothold on the shores of the Mediterranean. The July 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon attests to this fact. Iran’s presence, reinforced both politically and militarily, was consolidated.

Consequently, Tehran began to pursue a doctrine of containment for the adversaries and enemies of its nuclear program. It did so by threatening retaliation through some of its allies if attacked and by creating points of tension or conflict in several areas. Iran also proceeded to expand its influence within Lebanon via Hezbollah, which imposed its political interests on the national government.

The paradox of Iran’s ascendancy is that this became in itself a drain on Iran’s expansionist capacity by posing a threat to a number of regimes in the region. It definitively ended the attempts of a number of states to maintain fair relations, albeit frigidly, with it. Iran’s growing influence in the Middle East also exacerbated sectarian tensions, raising the specter of “Persian Shi’ite

attempts to dominate Arab Sunni land,” a commonly repeated argument in many of the region’s capitals hostile to Iranian policies.

If we look at the escalating international sanctions and threats against Tehran due to the failure of negotiations over its nuclear program, and if we take into account the severe economic crisis and the renewed rift inside the regime between the Supreme Leader Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad, we can conclude that Iran’s expansion in the region is difficult to sustain. It has reached its climax, and it is no longer capable of expanding its political investment to additional areas.

It thus appears that the United States and Iran have each lost some of their competing influences in recent years and that a new regional power could play a more important role. This is where Turkey emerges as a serious contender.

## Turkey: the key actor?

Turkey, as a secular Muslim state at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and as a member of NATO, is of considerable economic, geostrategic and political importance. Many Turkish officials believe that Ankara, in building on this importance, must gradually assume a greater role in those areas left vacant by Washington and Teheran. Their faith in the use of “soft” power may explain the increased and extensive Turkish activity observed in the Middle East in recent years.

In what has been called the “zero problem approach,” Turkey has for years cultivated good relations with most neighbors and regional actors as it pursued a balancing act domestically (between the ruling party and the secular military institution) and internationally (between states such as the United States and Iran and Syria). In the game of equilibriums, it has repeatedly sought out room to maneuver, even if within narrow margins. For example, as its relations with Israel have deteriorated, especially since the Israeli military attack against the “Gaza Freedom Flotilla” in 2010, Turkey maintained its alliance with the United States and tried to afford it greater attention. Efforts to work with Iran in finding a solution to the nuclear dilemma are balanced with attempts to coordinate with Saudi Arabia on other regional matters. Whereas Turkey’s

security policy toward the Iraqi Kurds is restrictive, there is openness toward Baghdad. And finally, Turkey, as a Sunni nation (governed by a leadership with a Muslim Brotherhood background), is aware of the fact that it can exercise greater influence in Arab countries and in Palestine than can Iran.

Turkey has generally remained cautious in its regional engagements and is keeping its options (and “lines of retreat”) open, apparently waiting to see what the tensions between Iran and the United States yield. While waiting for an outcome on that front, Turkey continues to work on its relationship with Europe, despite the recently closed door to Ankara’s EU accession.

Nevertheless, it is the developments in the Arab world in 2011, beginning with the revolutions in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, but particularly in Syria, which have presented the Turkish leadership with new challenges. The political map of the region is being redrawn, particularly in the Mediterranean states, and this development has reached Turkey’s southern border. All of this has compelled Turkey to reassess its various positions and begin developing a new Middle Eastern policy that necessarily considers several issues.

First, the Muslim Brotherhood has been able to claim electoral success in more than one country in the region. This has prompted discussions about the need to draw from the experience of the Justice and Development party in Turkey. Egypt and Tunisia are currently two states where these discussions could apply.

Second, NATO’s intervention in the war in Libya with a U.N. mandate to protect Libyan citizens raised several issues and opportunities for Turkey. By taking on an active role in defining the mission, and as the intervention evolved into ending the al-Qadhafi regime, Turkey entered into a new phase in its relations with Libya.

Third, events in Syria demand a carefully considered recalibration of Turkish diplomacy. The Syrian regime has responded to a popular revolution with brutal repression, taking the lives of thousands within a few months. The violence of the regime has brought the country to a breaking point. Syria shares not only a long border with Turkey but close economic ties as well. The conflict therefore threatens Turkish interests directly, not only in terms of security and finance, but also with respect to the Kurdish issue. A regime

change in Damascus would demand close attention and adroit follow-up on the part of Turkish leaders in order to ensure good relations with any new Syrian leadership, given the effects such a change might have on the conflicting interests of other parties (i.e., Russia, Iran, the EU, United States, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the latter being a very active mediator). Although Turkey has severely condemned the Asad regime, opened its cities to opposition conferences, and established refugee camps for Syrian civilians (and one for military personnel escaping service in the Syrian army), it still appears hesitant in practice. Turkish leaders have proved unable in some ways to accurately assess behind-the-scene activities in Damascus.

Fourth, Qatar's political and economic ascent, at times in competition with Saudi Arabia, is affecting regional power dynamics. Leaders in both Doha and Riyadh, however, agree on the need for a radical approach to the situation in Syria and have interests in the Asad regime being toppled. Given the strategic relevance of Persian Gulf dynamics to Turkey, Turkish leaders cannot afford to take a very different position from that of the Gulf Cooperation Council's two most active states if it wants to coordinate politically with them.

Fifth, Turkey is linked with Russia by a number of mutual interests related to natural gas and central Asia. There are occasional tensions between the two countries as a result of competition or a lack of mutual understanding on some issues, of which Syria currently figures prominently.

Sixth, Turkey has not abandoned its orientation toward Europe, though it has eased its rush westward in the face of repeated rejections of EU membership. Turkey is linked to the European continent by important economic and political relationships, large Turkish communities in European countries, and Mediterranean interests. Despite tensions with France, these fundamental interests remain one priority for the Turks.

Seven, and finally, Turkey is linked with the United States of America via NATO. The conditions of its membership in the alliance have not been modified but clearly strained by recent Turkish-Israeli tensions. Turkey depends on its relationship with the United States if it wants to play a more effective role in the Palestinian issue.

## Cooperation within the Mediterranean

Cooperation within the framework of the Mediterranean basin is, therefore, of critical importance to Ankara and all other capitals. Given Turkey's unique capacity to act flexibly in its relations with countries around the Mediterranean, cooperation would enable it to play an essential role that is commensurate with its economic and demographic weight. Every effort to consolidate a Turkish-European partnership would help make the Mediterranean a calmer place. However, doing so requires special care with respect to a number of prominent issues.

- The issue of religion and the state. This issue, which affects most Arab countries and Israel, should be addressed in a manner demonstrating respect for pluralism, tolerance as well as religious, ethnic and cultural diversity
- The issue of human rights. Demonstrating respect for human rights, as formulated by ratified international agreements, should be a condition for economic cooperation and development and investment projects. Human rights encompass public and private freedoms in recognition of the political and cultural rights of all components of a society. As such they apply to Kurds in Syria, Iraq and Turkey, and to all ethnic and religious groups in North Africa and in several other Mediterranean states.
- The issue of women's rights. Women are subjected to discrimination in all Arab countries. This should be countered with support from international treaties, and by encouraging governments to adopt policies and legislation that can strengthen the participation of women in political and economic decision-making processes. In addition, governments should be encouraged to eschew legalized discrimination of women by changing, for example, laws regulating personal status and citizenship.
- The issues of immigration, racism and integration. The combination of increasing migration and growing economic crises has exacerbated problems associated with integration and racism. Northbound immigration flows will be limited only if investment in the southern states is improved and employment opportunities in these countries are expanded. In addition, improving the conditions of migrants and providing assistance in integration will help counter mounting social tensions.



- The role of the military in politics. It is important to support throughout the region a political culture in which the military is subject to the authority of elected political officials. In many Arab countries (and previously in Turkey), military forces have played crucial roles in political decision-making processes. The emergence of new political elites and the organization of free and fair elections should replace all traces of the coups and eras of martial law that once controlled lives throughout the region.
- Independence of the judiciary and anti-corruption. The reconstruction of constitutional institutions should be accompanied by judicial reform in order to guarantee the judiciary's independence from political authorities. Doing so will allow the judiciary to confront the corruption that has damaged economies and public morale in many countries.
- Syria. It is difficult to imagine a stable Mediterranean if there is no transitional phase in Damascus guaranteeing the end of despotism and the introduction of democratization. Europe and Turkey have an interest in cooperating to find a solution in Syria. Their positions so far have been clear in condemning the Asad regime's abuses of human rights, but this should lead to more measures that protect the Syrian population.
- Palestine/Israel. A joint Turkish-European effort to renew serious peace talks that are based on U.N. resolutions and lead to the creation of a viable Palestinian state is important for the stability and prosperity of the entire Mediterranean basin. For more than 65 years, the conflict in Palestine and the occupation of Palestinian territories have been the source of tensions, frustrations and injustice. It is time to reassess the different approaches to the conflict and its resolution.

Indeed, the Mediterranean countries today – those along its shores and their neighbors – stand before a great historical moment. Full cooperation in favor of justice, peace and economic development will bear fruits today and for many years to come. Europe and Turkey alike can play leading roles in these efforts.



## Turkey-EU Cooperation in the Arab World

Nathalie Tocci

Talk about foreign policy cooperation between Turkey and the European Union is not new. For years, broad convergence between the two parties' views and visions of the neighborhood has made a joint strategy a worthwhile endeavor to explore. Yet never has there been an alignment of the stars like today. The historic transformation underway in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has rendered EU-Turkey foreign policy cooperation imperative. Above all, the Arab Spring has strongly underscored the fact that neither the EU nor Turkey can act effectively alone in confronting today's extraordinary challenges.

With this in mind, this paper sketches out the broad contours of potential EU-Turkey foreign policy cooperation in the Arab world, addressing the fields of diplomacy, aid, trade and security. In areas such as diplomacy, assistance and trade, there could be a useful division of labor between the two parties. In the field of security, as currently demonstrated by the unfolding drama in Syria, joint action would be warranted instead.

Turkey's EU accession process is badly stuck. Negotiations were launched in 2005, but since then a mere 13 out of 32 chapters have been opened. Most remaining chapters have been blocked either by Cyprus, France or the European Council as a whole. In turn, all momentum has been lost, with no chapter having been opened since June 2010. Matters are getting worse, as Turkey has threatened to interrupt political dialogue with the Union as Cyprus' EU presidency approaches in the second half of 2012, and as intercommunal talks on the eastern Mediterranean island near a point of breakdown.

Despite this dire situation, time has never been riper for EU-Turkey cooperation in their shared neighborhood. In particular, the historic transformation in the Arab world has made joint EU-Turkey action in the southern neighborhood imperative. On the one hand, Turkey's regional role

and the synergies between Turkey and the EU are as critical as ever. Whereas the EU has developed aid, trade and diplomatic instruments for supporting transformative change in the neighborhood, it lacks the credibility that a resurgent Turkey has acquired in recent years. Moreover, Turkish foreign policy seems to have entered into its “third wave” (Lesser 2011). Whereas Ankara still vies for strategic foreign policy autonomy (Kardaş 2011), the Arab Spring has demonstrated that it cannot freelance effectively in its unstable backyard.

Hence, despite ongoing tensions, the prospect of EU-Turkey foreign policy cooperation has become more compelling in light of the Arab Spring, as the two parties find themselves sharing strategic interests relative to the manifold challenges facing their shared neighborhood. But assuming such cooperation is both desirable and possible, what could it consist of?

## The elements of a joint EU-Turkish strategy for the Arab world

### The institutional framework

The first hurdle to overcome would be that of establishing the appropriate institutional mechanism to engage in foreign policy dialogue. EU-Turkey dialogue has suffered as a result of Turkey’s ailing accession process. Until the passage of the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, Turkish officials met regularly with the EU troika. When Turkey’s accession negotiations were still moving (slowly) forward, Turkey also used to meet with individual EU member states at the intergovernmental conferences that opened and closed negotiations over accession chapters. In those years, Turkey also enthusiastically aligned its foreign policy positions with the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). But as the EU-Turkish relationship soured, opportunities for Turkey and the EU to discuss foreign policy became few and far between (Ülgen 2011a).

To remedy the situation, High Representative Catherine Ashton and Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu have recently established regular talks, coupled with an annual four-way meeting between High Representative Ashton, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu, Commissioner Stefan Füle and Minister for European Affairs Egemen Bağış. There has also been talk of Davutoğlu's participation in the EU's Gynnich foreign affairs meetings.

These talks should be intensified and conducted under the CFSP chapter of Turkey's accession talks. However, they should also be brought up to the level of heads of state – for example, through annual summits – as well as down to sectoral levels, between Turkish ministries and agencies and EU directorates-general, the External Action Service and the Political and Security Committee of the Council. Turkish and European civil society organizations engaged in the neighborhood should also be brought into the dialogue.

## Diplomacy

When it comes to diplomacy, there could be a useful geographic and thematic division of labor between Turkey and the EU. Geographically, the EU would concentrate its diplomatic efforts on the Maghreb, while Turkey is bound to focus more on its immediate neighbors in the Mashreq.

Thematically, the European Union may be better placed to advocate universal norms grounded in international law, particularly in areas related to human rights, fundamental freedoms, transparency, accountability and the rule of law. When backed by the solid force of international law, the EU, whose reputation in the neighborhood is far from spotless, would be less subject to potential criticism. For its part, Turkey could focus its diplomatic interventions on more specific political topics, particularly those for which its own experience gives it greater legitimacy. A notable example is Prime Minister Erdoğan's praise for secularism during his visit to Cairo in the fall of 2011. True, Erdoğan's words were scorned by the Muslim Brotherhood and criticized by the Salafist al-Nour party. But the Egyptian reaction would likely have been far more vehement had an EU official offered the same words. The fact that the figure calling for secularism was a leader broadly viewed as

Islamist at home conferred on Erdoğan a degree of legitimacy that EU officials would be hard pressed to obtain.

Following the same line of reasoning, one could imagine retired Turkish military officials advocating the democratic oversight of the armed forces in the neighborhood, or Turkish business persons calling for export promotion policies in the region. A variety of Turkish actors could thus send diplomatic messages to neighboring countries which, while coordinated with the EU, would differ somewhat from those of EU actors and might be better received precisely because of the “incompleteness” of Turkey’s ongoing democratization process (Kirişçi 2011).

### **Assistance**

With respect to aid in support of the Arab Spring movements, we could imagine bilateral EU-Turkey action in the area of governance assistance. The EU Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) and Twinning programs might prove useful models, whereby the EU would engage in exchanges and training to support capacity building in various regional governance structures. Turkey could be brought into these programs, acting as an additional reservoir of expertise on which to draw.

Turkey could bring to bear its own experience in a number of areas where it has undertaken reform. Ülgen cites a number of promising examples (Ülgen 2011b). One is the banking sector, in which Turkey (unlike the European Union, but like other states in the neighborhood) was bedeviled by problems of clientelism before 2001, but has since engaged in a radical overhaul of the sector that has included effective regulatory mechanisms. It is no coincidence that Turkey has already been involved in assisting Syria with its own banking reform. A second example is that of urban planning and housing, critical areas both in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia which have experienced revolts, and in countries such as Algeria which have not. Again, having experienced an urbanization process and youth bulge similar to those in other neighborhood states, and having overcome related housing problems through the work of its Mass Housing Authority, Turkey could bring its expertise to bear in these areas more usefully than could the European Union. A third example is that of

small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) promotion, necessary in the MENA region where undoing state capture of the economy and promoting an independent private sector both represent significant future challenges. Here, the experience of the Turkish chamber of commerce, TOBB, could be usefully integrated with EU programs. TOBB, in fact, was instrumental in establishing the Levant Business Forum, which represents business organizations from Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

Moreover, by bringing in non-EU member Turkey, the EU Twinning and TAIEX programs could downplay their focus on the export of the *acquis communautaire*. *Acquis* promotion is one of the EU's main professional biases. While reasonable in the eastern neighborhood, where states typically aspire to EU membership, compatibility with the *acquis* cannot be taken for granted in the southern Mediterranean. By including Turkey in its programs, the EU may be nudged to move away from merely exporting the *acquis* and toward responding more effectively to the governance needs of its neighbors.

## Trade

Differences between the east and south also apply on the issue of trade. Whereas negotiating deep and comprehensive free trade agreements (DCFTAs) seems an appropriate way to upgrade relations with neighbors in eastern Europe, the same does not necessarily apply to the south. Proceeding along the DCFTA path may prove excessively complex and costly for the southern neighbors, and in the medium term would do little to induce intraregional trade.

An alternative proposed by Ülgen would be that of extending the EU-Turkey customs union to the southern Mediterranean. However, this would mean exporting Turkey's difficulties within the EU customs union to countries with an even lower level of development. Hence, like Turkey, the southern Mediterranean countries would lose their ability to determine their external trade relations autonomously. This might prove costly for the poorly competitive southern economies, as they would see a substantial lowering of their most-favored nation (MFN) tariffs vis-à-vis the rest of the world. But participating in the EU-Turkey customs union would mean that by simply

signing one agreement, each MENA country could be a part of a customs space that included not only the EU and Turkey, but all of the country's neighbors as well, inducing intraregional trade as well as EU-sourced and other external FDI. However, any such endeavor should be prepared carefully through a transition period of a decade or more, during which the southern Mediterranean countries, supported by the EU, would gradually lower their tariffs vis-à-vis the rest of the world and concomitantly work on enhancing their competitiveness.

## Security

Security cooperation between Turkey and the European Union would focus on specific crises in the neighborhood. At the time of writing, Syria stands out as a prime case in which EU-Turkey security cooperation is taking place, alongside the United States and the Arab League. As the crisis unfolds and the international community converges on an appropriate form of action, the precise modalities of the EU's own participation will have to be settled, a question that will in turn hinge on whether and to what extent it is possible to forge intra-EU consensus. Hence, it remains to be seen whether the EU will act through High Representative Ashton or through a core group of member states (as in the case of Iran or Libya).

Yet irrespective of the form of EU participation, the establishment of a contact group on Syria – the Friends of Syria – featuring some 70-odd countries including the EU, Turkey, the United States and key members of the Arab League, highlights how a joint security strategy in the neighborhood is already being forged. Spearheaded by Turkey and its transatlantic partners, the Friends of Syria group is exploring possible modalities of humanitarian intervention, potential support for the Syrian opposition and prospects for international consensus on the way ahead. The work of the Friends of Syria group could act as an important precedent for EU-Turkey security cooperation if and when other crises erupt in the neighborhood.



## Looking ahead

Though earlier efforts at EU-Turkish cooperation have proven to yield mixed results, the historic transformation today underway in the Middle East and North Africa has made EU-Turkey foreign policy cooperation imperative. Above all, the Arab Spring has made it clear that the EU and Turkey can achieve their joint strategic interests more effectively by working together to confront today's extraordinary challenges.

With this in mind, this paper has sketched out the broad contours of potential EU-Turkey foreign policy cooperation in the Arab world. Broadly speaking, such a strategy could include public and private diplomatic interventions, assistance, trade and security cooperation. In some areas, such as diplomacy, assistance and trade, there could be a useful division of labor between the two. In the field of security, as currently being demonstrated in Syria, joint action would be warranted instead.

This is not to underplay the many obstacles that hinder foreign policy cooperation between Turkey and the European Union, foremost among which is the dire state of EU-Turkey relations today. But responding effectively to the shift of tectonic plates underway in the neighborhood is a challenge that neither can afford to neglect.

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## Turkey and the Arab Spring in Light of Regional Conflicts<sup>1</sup>

E. Fuat Keyman

More than a year after its first stirrings, the Arab Spring rages on across the Middle East with undiminished momentum. Following the fall of the authoritarian governments in Tunisia and Egypt last year, the revolution claimed the tyrannical regime of Muammar al-Qadhafi in Libya last fall. Yet even as the storm closes in on Syria's Asad regime, which has committed some of the 21st century's worst atrocities and human rights violations, the future for the Arab Spring countries remains deeply uncertain. Will they be successful in their transition to democracy, or are they destined to fall into the chaos of political and economic instability? Is there an alternative model of political and institutional development, and if so, where might be this be found? This latter question has drawn attention both inside and outside the region toward Turkey, but has also demanded further examination: In what specific ways, for example, might Turkey contribute to advancing and enhancing the creation of responsible and democratic governance in these countries? Is it possible for Turkey and the European Union (EU) to work together in a coordinated and collaborative fashion to positively affect the Arab Spring movement? In this paper, I suggest that Turkey's dynamic economy, deepening entrepreneurial culture and secular democracy can indeed serve as a model or "locus of aspiration" for the Arab Spring. Moreover, if Turkey and the EU can work and act together, Turkey's ability and capacity to play its expected roles would be immensely increased.

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Cana Tulus and Onur Sazak for their valuable contributions to the process of writing and editing this paper. Without their hard work and excellent editing, this paper would not have been possible.

## Historical context: The multiple crises of globalization

In a world disoriented by a multiplicity of global crises, answers to the above-noted questions are not to be found easily. Globalization is undergoing what is not only a severe, but also a multifaceted crisis. The world is witnessing the simultaneous decline of the West and the rise of the rest. More importantly, as Charles Kupchan correctly suggests, the world is becoming “no one’s world.” The ongoing shift of power at the global scale is creating tendencies both toward multipolarity and multiple modernities; multipolarity in that “rather than embracing the rules of the current international system, rising powers seek to adjust the prevailing order in ways that advantage their own values and interests,” and multiple modernities in the sense that there is both an increasing disjuncture between modernization and Westernization and the existence of “a politically diverse landscape in which the Western model will offer only one of many competing conceptions of domestic and international order” (Kupchan 2012: 4).

The Arab Spring thus broke out at a time when the multiple crises of globalization have begun to align themselves with the emergence of “no one’s world.” The powerful revolutionary movement has already eliminated some of the world’s most enduring authoritarian regimes. Yet it has also created a power vacuum in the region. Moreover, the lack of experience with democratic governance in the Middle East poses a significant challenge in terms of laying the groundwork for democratization. In the absence of indigenous models for self-rule, reformers will eventually turn to time-tested models and global best practices

## Models of transition to democracy

In order to smooth this process, it is of critical importance to analyze how and in what ways a transition to democracy can occur and be implemented. The transition from authoritarian regimes to democracy has occurred in a variety of regions since the 1970s, and has always been a painful process. Each of the various episodes offers lessons that may shed light on recent developments. The transitions in Southern Europe (Greece, Portugal, Spain)

in the early 1970s, the successive transformations in Latin America (Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Mexico) in the 1980s, and the similar experiences in Eastern and Central European countries in the 1990s all created different modes or models of transitioning to democracy from either military or authoritarian regimes. Within these models, the Southern European and the Eastern/Central European experiences were able to draw on the European Union as an anchor. Countries within these regions have today gone through the integration process with the EU, ultimately becoming full members. Moreover, the South European, Latin American and Eastern/Central European cases all involved an exposure to globalization and the global economy, which played a positive role in these experiences.

By contrast, the Arab Spring is occurring both without an anchor such as the European Union, and against a backdrop of pressing security, economic, social and ecological challenges that have introduced considerable uncertainty into global affairs, and which have collectively given rise to crises of globalization that have taken multiple forms. From an economic perspective, the global economic crisis has led to a serious financial meltdown, a global recession and widespread unemployment. On the security front, the specific issues related to the Arab Spring, including the regime change or regime restoration problems in Syria and Libya, are naturally of great significance within today's international relations. Yet these issues are themselves affected by questions that collectively constitute a global security crisis, including the future of Iraq after the withdrawal of the U.S. armed forces and the increasing risk of its disintegration, the broader uncertainties associated with longstanding Middle East conflicts, the increasingly thorny problems posed by Iran, the Afghanistan and Pakistan security risk zones, and violence and terrorism in general.

Global challenges stemming from climate change, energy and resource scarcity, and food insecurity constitute a crisis of civilization, the third pillar of the looming global crisis. The crisis of hegemony and shifts in the global distribution of power – trends combining the current lack of global leadership and the crisis of modernity – constitute the last and crucial element of the global crisis (for further details, see Keyman 2013, forthcoming). In this environment characterized by risk and instability, the Western powers have

been unable to respond effectively and constructively to the recent developments in the Mediterranean and broader Middle East region.

Although it was an essential facilitator of democratization and the transition to free-market economic systems in Eastern and Southern Europe, the European Union is unable to play this role alone in the context of the Arab Spring. In the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the prospect of EU membership proved to be a valuable carrot for formerly socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe to undertake a swift democratization and market liberalization. Moreover, civil society in these countries had already been developed to a certain degree. At that time, the EU was faring much better financially, and could readily commit resources in the form of structural reform packages to the encouragement of democratization in countries such as the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary.

The favorable climate of the 1990s has vanished, however. Brussels today has been shaken by the severe global economic crisis and the metastasizing sovereign debt problem. Major EU actors' recent attempts to respond to the Greek financial meltdown have demonstrated the constraints on Europe's capacity to mobilize its resources and rally public support behind efforts to resolve even the most pressing issues. Although the Greek situation now appears contained, the possibility of spillover – and political aftershocks – still haunts Italy, Spain and Portugal, and reinforces concerns as to the future of the EU. Furthermore, the prospect of EU membership cannot be employed as an incentive encouraging revolting Arab nations to engage in reform.

Significantly, the Arab Spring also demonstrated the declining capacity of the United States, which showed a quite limited response to the territorially broad and diverse uprisings. Many observers argued that the United States failed to address the diversity of the events appropriately, at least in terms of developing effective strategies to contribute to the advancement of democracy and good/responsible governance in these countries, and more importantly, to reduce human tragedy, as in the case of Syria. For Woodrow Wilson Center scholar Aaron David Miller, it has not been a spring but rather an “Arab Winter” for the United States, precisely because of this decline in the nation's capacity to respond to the uprisings. Miller identifies in particular the U.S. failure to engage Egypt and Tunisia in a compelling way, which in turn has

directly affected the United States' ability to engage with other Arab countries over the longer term. While the United States did back the overthrow of authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, it lacked a concrete means of showing its engagement and support. After the escalation of the uprisings, in the middle of the Arab Spring year, for example, President Barack Obama briefly mentioned in a speech that direct U.S. involvement in the region would remain selective. The new political and economic situation in the region demands a new American approach, in which it would act in concert both with Western European partners and regional powers. Each of these actors have a duty to the newly liberated communities of the Arab Spring to use their resources to promote democratic governments, the rule of law, fundamental rights, and the creation of a stable political and economic environment.

The decline in U.S. and European capacities has created a power vacuum that has enabled regional actors such as Turkey to have increasing impact within the Arab Spring countries. According to recent research by groups including the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV), as well the assessments of scholars such as Joshua W. Walker, Turkey has been the “ambiguous winner” and the “rising star” (for Steven A. Cook and Şaban Kardaş) of the Arab Spring. In this atmosphere, Turkey is expected to play a strategic role in the region while simultaneously addressing global challenges, by means of a “proactive foreign policy.” Turkish foreign policy has approached the Arab Spring by locating it in a broader global context, arguing that the transition to democracy in this region would enhance not only regional but also global peace and stability. In doing so, Turkey has positioned itself not with the existing authoritarian regimes but with people demanding political and economic change.

## Why and how Turkey should respond to the Arab Spring

In 2012, the United States will hold presidential elections, an event that already has begun to focus political debate and interest. In Europe, the sovereign debt crisis has been and will remain in 2012 the primary or even sole political concern. With superpowers and other great powers thus turning inward to focus on domestic issues and problems, all eyes have turned to

Turkey as a potential model, or at least a locus of aspiration, for the Arab Spring countries. The country's image as a secular democracy with a Muslim population has encouraged observers and analysts to champion Turkey as a model for aspiring Arab democracies. The strong diplomatic and economic relations that Turkey has established with the region under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government have reinforced this perception.

Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's "zero problems with neighbors" policy has been instrumental in improving Ankara's political, economic and diplomatic relations with Turkey's neighbors and other key states in the region. However, the Arab Spring has brought change and transformation in its wake. Conflict and resistance, human tragedy and increasing risks of civil war have resulted as well as peaceful regime change. In other words, the events in the Arab world, as well as the recent negative developments in Turkish-Iranian and Turkish-Armenian relations, have made the "zero problems with neighbors" policy difficult to sustain. Nevertheless, Turkey wants to maintain this policy as at least one of the principal elements of its proactive, constructive and soft-power-based foreign policy strategy. Indeed, despite growing skepticism as to the viability of the "zero problems" policy, many Arab states have come to regard Turkey's impressive growth rate and the improvements in its citizens' economic wellbeing under the AKP's neoliberal economic policy as a source of awe and inspiration. Driven by strong domestic growth, Turkish investments in the broader Middle East and North Africa – and recently in sub-Saharan Africa – have strengthened the country's economic and diplomatic relations with these states, winning the hearts and minds of people in these regions while presenting them with an alternative development model. For example, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received a rock star's welcome when he visited Egypt in 2011, thanks to Turkey's reputation as a key Arab ally. While there, he promoted economic opportunities as well as improved Turkish-Egyptian relations.

Turkey has also thrown its full political and diplomatic weight behind the peaceful solution of some of the most complex conflicts in the region. Between 2004 and 2008, it involved itself – albeit without success – in the efforts to secure peace between Israel and Palestine, as well as between Israel and Syria, by arranging a number of high-level meetings in Istanbul. Although



Turkish efforts seem to be frozen in the aftermath of Israel's Gaza raid in 2008, and particularly following the murder of nine Turkish civilians by Israeli special forces on the Mavi Marmara in 2010, Ankara remains actively engaged on this issue. Furthermore, in January 2011, Turkey hosted a high-profile summit to discuss the issue of Iran's nuclear ambitions. Dubbed "the Istanbul talks," the conference brought together the five permanent members of the U.N Security Council plus Germany – known as the P5+1 – with a delegation from Iran. Istanbul has also served as an attractive venue for international conferences discussing the future of newly liberated Arab countries such as Tunisia and Libya. Since the beginnings of the Arab Spring last year, influential politicians, human rights activists and opinion leaders have repeatedly met with their Western counterparts at these high-profile Istanbul summits. As a consequence, in a recent symposium on conflict resolution and peace building, Ahmet Davutoğlu alluded to an ambition to name Istanbul as the United Nations' conflict-resolution hub.

Without doubt, the abovementioned values (despite problems concerning political rights and freedoms), Turkey's secular democratic governance system and its dynamic free market economy have served as inspiration for enthusiasts proselytizing on behalf of adoption of the Turkish model by Arab revolutionaries. However, one must be extremely careful not to confuse Turkey's positive contributions to the region with an ambition to impose its own model. Indeed, nothing could be farther from the truth, for a number of reasons.

First, Turkey itself is reluctant to impose its own model on the aspiring Arab countries. Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, the Turkish government has clearly communicated that it has neither the desire nor design to take on a nation-building role in these countries. On numerous occasions, it has rejected claims that it has sought to preach on behalf of a Turkish model of democratization. It has committed to providing structural help as it deepens its economic and commercial relations with these countries; however, it has rejected any assertions that it is pursuing a hidden agenda of recreating its former Ottoman sphere of influence. Nevertheless, it will not shy away from using its soft power to inspire these nations to achieve the level of economic development it has itself reached and sustained. Moreover, Ankara

understands that respect for each country's national interests and sovereignty is essential.

Second, the Turkish model is a product of unique circumstances; its adoption by incipient Arab movements would not guarantee institutions identical to those in Turkey. The country's experience with secularism and laicism is endogenous to its own reform process, which has been ongoing since the early 1920s. Turkish democratization has been significantly influenced by efforts to reconcile military power with democracy, and a secular system with a religious orientation. However, this constructive tension has also served as a model for economic success, and has helped establish a functional culture bridging East and West.

Third, the Arab Spring countries are themselves reluctant to accept the Turkish model – or any other model – per se. The Turkish model in particular is still viewed as originating from an outsider, and as incompatible with the realities and peculiarities of the region. The majority of Arab revolutionaries see the debate over alternative models through the prism of the Ottoman legacy in the Middle East. Certain countries such as Egypt may feel indifferent or even appreciative toward this legacy, yet the majority of people on the Arab Street oppose any design imposed from outside, whether Turkish or otherwise. Finally, most Arab Spring actors recognize that the Turkish military has had a destabilizing impact on the democratization process. Given the victories in Tunisia and Libya against military-backed regimes, and the ongoing contest for power between the Egyptian people and the military custodians of the government, the last thing these movements want is a democratization process “assisted” by the military. However, this perception may change if Turkey approaches the Arab Spring in coordination and collaboration with the European Union, presenting itself not only as a dynamic and transforming country, but also as a country moving toward full EU membership. In this case, its contribution to the region's democratic transition may become more effective, and the perception of any such contribution by the region's peoples and governments might improve.

In fact, Turkey can still provide substantive assistance to the democratization process within its neighborhood. Moreover, Turkey's most significant contribution will likely come as it shares its experience in the areas

of economic recovery and sustainable development. In both areas, Turkish-EU cooperation is crucial. Over the last decade, Turkey has transformed its private sector, made its markets more transparent and competitive, and implemented the financial and market regulations necessary to increase foreign investors' confidence. By the same token, the state has undertaken effective reforms to strengthen its social services. Today, the quality of health care and the population's access to education services are vastly improved as compared to the 1990s and 1980s.

Based on this experience, Turkey can offer effective solutions to some of the current economic ills of the Arab Spring countries. As Kemal Derviş suggests, the Arab Spring countries need policies that eradicate the old practices of rent-seeking capitalism and reliance on discredited state bureaucracy (Derviş 2011). More importantly, "a truly competitive private sector has to be unleashed," and "neither the old statist left, nor the rent-seeking, crony capitalist right had policies to respond" to this need (ibid). In this respect, Turkey can use both its expertise with free markets, which has developed significantly since the 1980s, and the last decade's experience with responsible growth to help guide the Arab Spring countries. Indeed, it is within these areas of economic development and democracy that Turkey holds the greatest potential for making a lasting contribution to the Arab Spring.

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## Tensions in the Middle East and North Africa: Can Turkey and the EU Come Along?

Dorothee Schmid

Turkey and the European Union (EU) are each important stakeholders in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, both face the challenge of adapting to a post-revolutionary situation, and of engaging in a satisfactory way with new actors on the ground in such a way as to ensure their own security and advance their own interests in the medium term.

Europeans and Turks were in fact caught similarly off guard by the suddenness and brutality of the Arab revolts. Although in some senses they faced the same difficulties in dealing with their wavering Mediterranean partners, their reactions were not similar or coordinated. This was partly due to the deteriorating quality of their mutual political relationship, as a consequence of Turkey's stalled EU accession process. Yet other important factors must also be taken into account. Turkey and the EU are not natural partners in the Middle East, a region that has long been a focus of European external policies, while Turkey has only recently performed a remarkable comeback in the hearts and minds of Arab people, after decades of a voluntary lack of contact. Divergences in views and interests between Turkey and the EU should thus not be underestimated.

At present, regional stability appears to be a chief concern for both players. Persistent unrest and violence in a number of countries could degenerate into civil wars, or reignite interstate conflicts. With transition processes still under way, it remains very difficult to set out new cooperation practices or to devise sustainable security arrangements on anything other than a case-by-case and temporary basis. Neither Turkey nor the EU can afford to remain inert vis-à-vis such hazardous prospects. Yet it remains to be seen whether the Middle

East, which has long served as a showground for the competition of influence, could become an area where efficient cooperation can be established in the field of conflict prevention.

## The Middle East's role in the EU – Turkey relationship

The Middle East has historically played an important role and been consistently exploited by both sides in the context of the EU/Turkey relationship. Turkey has earned its place as a Western ally in the Middle East as a member of NATO since 1952. It took on a role as the Eastern pillar of the alliance during the Cold War, and to this day is considered by the American government to be a primary strategic partner in the region. For its part, the European Union treated Turkey ambiguously for a considerable period of time. While the Turks expressed their interest in joining the European Community at an early date, negotiations for full membership were opened only in 2005. Until that point, Turkey was included in the perimeter of the EU's Mediterranean policies, where it never felt at ease.

When the accession process started, Turkey rapidly identified the Middle East as a bargaining chip with which to foster diplomatic rapprochement. It then insisted on its geographical proximity to and cultural affinities with the region, underscoring its theoretical capacity to mediate and handle security issues. Such a discourse resonated with the change in style and ambition of Turkish foreign policy observable in the period starting with the fall of the Berlin Wall and heightened when the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) took the reins of government in Ankara in 2002. Under Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's guidance, Turkey rapidly gained a reputation in the region as a soft power of the benign type, focused on the promotion of peace and prosperity in the neighborhood. Turkey's diplomatic overtures to Arab countries and to Iran looked particularly remarkable given its decades-long hostile or defensive behavior toward these states.

In recent years, Turkey has presented itself as a bridge between the Muslim East and the West, later sophisticating this argument into the "Turkey as a model for the Middle East" leitmotiv. Once the EU accession process slowed

down – approximately from 2006 on – Turkey began taking a more aggressive approach to its role in the Middle East, in an attempt to challenge the EU's inefficiency in coping with strategic developments in the region. Some of Turkey's initiatives then gradually yet explicitly diverged from the EU's positions, notably in the case of Iran's nuclear program, with Turkey opposing sanctions and trying to broker a parallel political arrangement. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Turkey entered into open diplomatic confrontation with Israel following the attack on the ferry Mavi Marmara off the Gaza coast (2010). From this point on, rather than being an ideal place to advance diplomatic cooperation between the EU and Turkey, the Middle East seemed to become one of the areas where the political rift between the two was most evident.

## Rising tensions: A comparative assessment of EU and Turkish stances vis-à-vis the Arab Spring

### **Shared concerns, parallel interests?**

In order to reflect on the potential for convergence and increased cooperation in the future, it is necessary to assess the forces driving regional commitment on both sides, introducing the differences between concerns and interests.

EU and Turkey obviously share some apprehensions as to the stability and security of the MENA region. Such traditional concerns were notably strengthened by the succession of revolts in 2011 and their consequences in political, economic and more broadly strategic terms. The unexpected and rapid process of regime change that started almost simultaneously in a series of Arab countries has not yet reached an end. These changes have produced both internal unrest and regional, systemic instability, which could affect the course of international affairs far beyond the Middle East itself – for example, pro-democracy protesters in places as distant as China, Russia and even Europe have since claimed to be following the Arab example. On a regional scale, the security threat is fuelled by the reignition of old disputes and the

possible emergence of new ones. The risk of an intensification of violence is multifaceted, including:

**At the intrastate level**, with different possible degrees of gravity: plain civil war, as in the case of the battle against Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi's regime conducted by the Libyan insurgency in 2011 with the help of NATO forces; looming civil confrontation, as in the case of Syria, where the opposition's struggle against Bashar al-Asad's authority is now taking the form of military operations, leading to reckless repression; or a significant degradation of internal political consensus, as in the case of Iraq, where the current escalation of sectarian hostility may lead to political disaggregation.

**At the interstate level**, with the reactivation of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, aggravated by uncertainty regarding peace agreements signed between Israel and neighboring Arab states; the prospect of a confrontation with Iran following potential Western intervention to prevent an attack against Israel brings further concern.

Europeans and Turks do not necessarily assess the potential consequences of the crises listed above in a similar way. Their appraisals of the situation and definitions of their individual interests are marked by their own geographical contiguities, the quality of existing relations with neighboring countries and the availability of effective means to act.

In purely security-focused terms, the risk associated with wars in the region is not as immediate for the EU as it is for Turkey, a country located very close to several hotbeds of crisis. Turkey is on the front line, and is expected to play an indispensable role in any solution to the Syrian crisis; in reality, as it shares an exceptionally long (822 km) border with Syria, it is very vulnerable to any degradation of the situation there, due to a combination of ethnic (presence of Kurds), economic (roads to Iraq passing through Syria) and strategic (relationship with Iran and with Russia) factors. Difficulties associated with local unrest in all forms seem more distant for the EU. Such events might bring to the fore political forces committed to a radical ideological struggle against Western values, possibly increasing the level of the terrorist threat. European economic performance could also be affected if political crises spill over into oil- and gas-exporting countries such as the Gulf States or Algeria.



The most concrete worry in fact expressed is that regional disorders would raise the number of unwanted migrants to Europe.

Speaking in terms of interests, the EU and Turkey's ambitions may not automatically converge. Both claim to pursue a "neighborhood" approach in the region, but the label means different things to each party. The success of Davutoğlu's "zero problems with neighbors" policy depended on the establishment of a fragile chain of political equilibriums, with the objective of consolidating Turkey's influence in the region. The economic side of this soft power rested on the signing of a series of free trade and free circulation agreements with Arab countries, with the aim of securing the country's energy needs and opening new export markets to compensate for the EU's economic slowdown. Turkey has openly expressed its ambition of building a Middle Eastern bloc of countries inspired by the EU model, and its visa diplomacy has challenged the EU's comparatively restrictive regime regarding migration. Finally, a few important obsessions on the Turkish national agenda, such as the Kurdish question, cannot be easily shared with European allies, while Cyprus remains a lasting bone of contention with the EU.

### **Responding to the Arab Spring: Instruments and reactions compared**

The European and the Turkish responses to the Arab uprisings were determined by these partly contrasting concerns and interests. In practical terms, Turkey's major goal was to live up to the expectations of its followers in the region, while the EU essentially felt constrained to reorganize its old system of cooperation with Mediterranean countries on an emergency basis.

Turkey's rising profile as a regional power made it a natural protagonist in any serious scenario of change. Its growing economic and political clout and its cultural aura created a responsibility to act. The Arab Spring was for the country a moment of truth; Turkish diplomacy had to adjust its objectives, quickly assess the consistency of the protests and make drastic choices in order to avoid landing on the wrong side of history. The country's reaction came in two parallel channels. The first was passive: Turkey's popularity within the Arab public was confirmed by the debate on the relevance of the "Turkish model" for Arab political transitions, even if Turkish authorities tactically

downplayed this, saying that Turkey was not a “model,” but rather a “success story” and a “source of inspiration.” The second channel was active diplomacy, including political declarations (Prime Minister Erdoğan was the first political leader to advise Hosni Mubarak to leave office), proposals of mediation (at the beginning of the Libyan crisis, later in Syria), intervention (ultimately joining the NATO coalition in Libya) and aid (providing budgetary support to the new Libyan authorities after the war). Turkey’s advantage in such a chaotic context was clearly its flexibility and the very complete range of its external instruments, that could be mobilized in support of changing strategies.

On the EU side, the Arab Spring appeared as a long-awaited moment for an aggiornamento of the EU’s much-criticized Mediterranean policies. Europeans had the advantage of precedent, as their analysis of the region’s political deficiencies since the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), later the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), had strongly emphasized economic and social issues, which in turn appeared to have been key triggers for the revolt in Tunisia. Similarly, one should not forget that the rule of law, democracy, accountability and the role of civil society were all principles enshrined in the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995. The EU’s credibility has suffered as a result of its incapacity to implement such principles through regular cooperation programs; however, the “wait and see syndrome” Europe has been suffering from may in fact turn into an asset. The legal bases for EU/MENA cooperation remain, and a new set of guidelines were issued in spring 2011 to efficiently address the dire financial problems of the post-revolutionary environments.

## **Working together or testing one another: Achieving at least minimal efficiency in times of crisis**

### **Common objectives for complementary profiles**

What type of objectives could the EU and Turkey share in the MENA region? Both sides have declared their support for the rights of the people and

for democratic values. Yet the EU remains embarrassed by its past record of complicity with authoritarian regimes, while the Turkish model may today be failing in Turkey itself, where the state of some basic freedoms has become a cause for concern. In the economic realm, Turkey appears primarily as a business player, not yet as a donor. It is the issue of regional security that thus presents the most promise in terms of potential common action, particularly in the realms of conflict prevention, by contributing to smooth political transitions and working to prevent violence from degenerating into civil wars.

Each party's natural modes of activity can to a certain extent complement the other's. The EU has built up a solid institutional frame, while Turkey is more capable of flexible intervention, notably drawing on its exceptional networking capacity. Socializing and mediating remain Turkey's major strengths, including with actors such as Iran whose relationships with the EU have progressively deteriorated. In addition, Turkish popularity ratings are still high in the region, while the reputation of some EU member states – notably France – has eroded. Managing reform and institution-building programs over the long run is a strength of the EU, yet Turkey has recently demonstrated a remarkable ability to target aid in a reactive way, as for instance with its support for the organization of elections and training of new (Islamist) Arab elites. When political pressure or military intervention appear as last-resort necessities, the advantage of efficiency seems by contrast to lie more with European states, who may build temporary coalitions with the Turks, as in the Libyan case.

### **Constraints and principles for joint action**

Turkey's frustrated EU candidacy casts a long shadow across any attempt at strategic rapprochement. Turkey's warning that it might completely freeze its relationship with the EU during the Cypriot EU presidency in the second half of 2012 is not encouraging in that regard. While Turkey views any European demand for joint action in the MENA region as an opportunity to weigh in on the accession process, some European states, notably France, insist on delinking diplomatic cooperation from accession in order to avoid such constant bargaining.

In the future, Turkey's effective contribution to the framing of European policies will depend substantially on its capacity to agree on appropriate political directions with leading EU member states. At present, the institutional formalization of EU-Turkey cooperation does not seem realistic. As an example, the currently strained Franco-Turkish relationship has blocked mutual consultation on the Syrian crisis. Confidence-building measures will be necessary if repeated logjams are to be avoided in the future.

While the face-to-face EU-Turkey relationship does not seem very productive today, triangulation with the United States might be a more promising way to foster security cooperation in a larger frame. Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, Washington has indeed pushed Turkey to the front line, and has attentively sought to keep its allies working together. The Libyan crisis showed in the summer of 2011 that the EU and Turkey can in fact overcome their divergences and agree on a pattern of joint intervention. Despite tension due to bilateral disagreements between the Turks and several other NATO member states (France, Cyprus), the alliance remains an arena where the Americans can mediate and discipline everyone into dialogue and common action.

### **Areas and avenues of cooperation**

Global exchanges of views concerning the future of the Middle East are certainly needed in order to advance the cause of consistent cooperation, and could act as a confidence-building measure. Yet they remain difficult to organize at the official level. Parallel or second-track diplomacy engineered by civil society organizations and think tanks is very useful in keeping contact active between Turkey and its EU counterparts.

Nonetheless, information sharing and consulting processes at the state level must be maintained at all costs, with or without the mediation of the United States. Ad hoc meetings and conferences, such as those convened to discuss Syria, seem to be the most adequate system for the time being.

Finally, in considering synergies at the level of financial cooperation agencies, pursuing joint activity between the Turkish International Development and Cooperation Agency (TIKA) and Europe's DevCo might

be a practical way to foster political agreement in the longer run. Moreover, humanitarian assistance will definitely be a field where joint action could be plausible in the future, given Turkey's geographical location and its specific skills in that field.

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## Coaxing the EU and Turkey to Engage with the Middle East

Ghassan Khatib

A number of signs in the last several years have indicated that Europe's attention to and involvement in the Middle East is on the rise. In parallel, and for different reasons, Turkey too has become more engaged in the region. This concurrence raises a question: Might the two parties be interested in coordinating their involvement so as to improve both sides' understanding of the relevant issues, and to make action by each in the region more effective?

The Middle East is going through a phase of revolutionary change that will have far-reaching consequences. These changes and the consequent instability are of great concern to the international community, especially to neighboring nations such as Turkey and the European states. The dramatic developments underway also come at a time when the failure to end Israel's illegal occupation and the parallel obstruction of the Palestinian struggle for freedom and independence have already exacerbated Middle East insecurity.

The European Union and European states, especially if they are able to agree on a unified policy on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, are positioned to play a political role beyond that of simply funding the Palestinian Authority. Historical, religious and geographic factors are driving Turkey to expand its role in the region as well.

The experience of the Arab Spring has thus far demonstrated that the Arab League cannot alone play a successful mediating role within intra-Arab and broader Middle East conflicts. The League itself has asked for international contributions to these efforts, and Europe and Turkey are natural candidates in this regard. However, neither Europe nor Turkey has to date fulfilled their individual potentials in the Mediterranean neighborhood. Nor have they sought to work together in addressing these conflicts.

In comparison to the United States (which has a decidedly negative regional reputation following its war in Iraq and other interventions), Europe's regional credibility is high, giving it the potential to contribute effectively. By the same token, many of the rising forces in Arab countries admire Turkey and view it as a model for their own societies. Turkey's support for Palestinians after Israel's 2008 – 2009 offensive in Gaza markedly increased the country's stature among Arabs.

Given their unique but shared positions, then, can Turkey and Europe join forces to serve as mediators across the current spectrum of Middle East conflicts, ranging from the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories to the new conflicts and obstacles related to the Arab Spring? Also, does either have much room to maneuver, given the powerful influence of their trans-Atlantic ally, the United States?

## What does the Arab world need from its northern neighbors?

The Arab world is going through the second most important phase in its modern history. The first critical phase occurred roughly half a century ago, when the Arab people revolted to throw off the mantle of European colonialism. The current phase appears to be completing that revolution, with citizens driven by poverty, unemployment and oppression to seek social and economic justice and democratization.

At this stage of the ongoing upheavals collectively dubbed the “Arab Spring,” it remains too early (and risky) to assess their outcomes or even to carry out a comprehensive analysis. The various processes are still ongoing, and may yet be in only the early stages. Moreover, these processes differ greatly from one country to the next.

The citizen-led revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt were very different from the armed regime change that dispatched the Qadhafi regime in Libya. Likewise, Yemen's uprising has its own unique characteristics, and the ongoing confrontations in Syria belong in a category of their own. As a result, it is



difficult to extrapolate broadly; the needs of Egyptians are different from those of Syrians, Yemenis or Bahrainis.

However, now that Egyptians and Tunisians have succeeded in overthrowing their respective leaders and have begun a democratic process based on free and fair elections, it is clear that economic and social development will be needed to sustain this process. Economic growth, reductions in unemployment and poverty, and ultimately improvements in the standard of living will all be critical drivers in this regard.

A statement by European Bank of Reconstruction and Development chief Thomas Mirow, published by AFP on March 16, 2012, offered concise reflection on what Europe can do to aid this process: “Across the whole of the southern and eastern Mediterranean region, we have the capacity to invest eventually as much as €2.5 billion (\$3.27 billion) a year,” the bank president said, announcing plans to support Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.

Syria, on the other hand, has very different needs, at least at the moment. The country has been caught up in – and has become a victim of – regional and international competition for hegemony. While the Syrian people are struggling for freedom, dignity and improved standards of living, regional and international players are backing the parties to this struggle for very different, self-interested reasons.

Arabs are sensitive to foreign interference. One of the most difficult challenges for those seeking to provide assistance at this delicate juncture is that of navigating between the genuine desire to help and the ambition to control, attain hegemony and exploit.

As Arabs evaluate international intentions in their region, a key criterion is any potential partner’s attitude toward the Palestinian people and their cause. It is difficult, for example, for the average Arab to understand criticism of Russia and China for vetoing international censure of the Syrian regime when that criticism comes from the same country (the United States) that vetoed a resolution criticizing the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land. Such double standards weaken the credibility of any intervention.

Iraq is another factor driving instability in the region. Lying between Iran and Syria, it holds a very significant strategic location. Its current government has a vested interest in the perpetuation of Syria's regime. Thus, it is imperative to keep a close eye on the rising sectarian tension in Iraq. More broadly, the Kurdish issue serves as a common denominator linking Syria, Iraq and Turkey; any special status Syrian Kurds might achieve will have a spillover effect in Iraq, where the question of Kurdish status is already a delicate one.

Any efforts by Europe and Turkey to exert a positive, useful influence in the region must also take the Iranian factor into consideration. As it competes for Middle East hegemony, Iran's strategy involves influence both on states and non-state actors. Neutralizing Iran's influence would require ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory and finding a solution to the Palestinian problem, among other requisites.

## How Europe and Turkey can help

In this international context, both Europe and Turkey are well positioned to offer aid on issues related to the Arab Spring and Israel's ongoing occupation. Despite its colonial history, Europe possesses enough credibility to play a constructive role. Arab countries' strongest commercial and business ties are with Europe, and Arab public opinion perceives Europe to be a more balanced broker than the United States.

Turkey enjoys an even better reputation, while sharing elements of its religious and historical heritage with the Arab world. Moreover, its recent principled positions in support of Palestinians after Israel's Operation Cast Lead in Gaza solidified its reputation as a friendly country. Many Arabs today see the Turkish model as a source of possible inspiration in their own democratic development. Turkey's success in combining an Islamic identity with democracy and sustained economic development has raised its stature in Arab eyes.

How might Turkey and Europe coordinate their efforts to assist the Arab world during this difficult transition? Turkish-European relations are themselves fraught with their own East-West tensions. Nevertheless, the two

parties have common interests in the region that can be expanded if the following principles are observed.

First, constructive dialogue must be maintained with all significant parties to these conflicts and confrontations. This includes governments and opposition groups, not excepting Islamists and revolutionary movements, especially those generated by the youth.

Second, double standards should be avoided and a coherent policy developed. Europe and Turkey must deepen what are today relatively balanced positions if they are to enhance their roles in helping to achieve legitimate Arab Spring objectives such as democratization and social and economic development.

Third, Turkey and Europe each must remain faithful to their own ideals, avoiding the American mistake of promoting democracy at home while abandoning democratic movements in the Arab world. There is no good reason to pursue contradictory policies; even the selfish goal of maintaining good economic relations with regimes that obstruct democratization and social and economic development is self-defeating in the long run, as this corrodes key relationships and promotes a lack of public trust.

In this process, the European Union and Turkey should also closely and collectively coordinate their activities with the Arab League. In spite of the difficulties facing the League, encouraging Arab states to act collectively is very important for the region's long term outlook – not only because it will facilitate future Arab coordination, but also because this serves to neutralize public sensitivities over “foreign intervention” somewhat.

Europe and Turkey should also increase the frequency of economic and cultural exchanges with Arab countries currently in transition. This helps foster democratization and contributes to the economic development critical to the consolidation of change and the maintenance of stability.

Official policies should differentiate between Islam as a faith and the extreme radical political forces that manipulate Islam to forward their particular agendas. Europe in particular must increase its efforts to uproot the Islamophobia that has become prevalent there.

Finally, Europe and Turkey – and for that matter, the rest of the international community – should in a serious and direct manner take up their responsibility to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including East Jerusalem, thus correcting the injustice done to the Palestinian people more than 65 years ago.

Europe and Turkey can and should help in this regard by helping to realize a two-state solution that enables Palestinians and Israelis to coexist in peace and security, within recognized borders. Among other actions, this would require helping the Palestinians in their efforts to build their country and its institutions. In addition, it would require convincing Israel to halt the practices that currently interfere with the two-state solution, particularly the policy of expanding illegal settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and elsewhere.

## A historical opportunity

The world, including Europe, bears some responsibility for the challenges faced by parts of the Arab world over the last century. Through most of the first half of the 20th century, Arabs were under the direct control of outsiders, first of Turkey and then of colonial European states. Throughout the century's second half, the Arab world was entangled in Cold War calculations, as powers from the East and West competed for hegemony over the region.

During this period, the West was mostly selfish, opportunistic and short-sighted in its approach to the region. In order to maintain control and reap strategic and economic benefits, it discouraged democratization, respect for human rights, and social and economic development. This policy backfired to a colossal extent.

In his landmark speech in Cairo in May 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama alluded to this mistake, saying that “tension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims, and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations.” Yet only three years later, many Arabs believe these comments to have been mere lip service, lacking any foundation in subsequent policy changes. As a result, the U.S. government has squandered its chance for

change, and today suspicion remains high. Many Arabs thus question the intentions behind Washington's approach to the Arab Spring.

This deep divide opens the way for others to take the lead. Can Europe and Turkey successfully engage the Arab peoples during this historical opportunity, grounding their involvement in support of newly articulated popular aspirations? Or will they continue to disregard genuine and long-term Arab interests in the pursuit of their own short-term goals?



## Turkey, the EU and Regional Conflict Resolution: An Israeli View

Yossi Alpher

This article looks at interactions between Israel, the European Union and Turkey with regard to regional conflict in the Middle East. It describes the issue areas, analyzes the relevant policy approach of the government of Israel and offers ideas for new Israeli departures.

The primary conflict areas identified by the Israeli security and political establishments in the region are, first and foremost, the threat posed by Iran's nuclear and regional/ideological ambitions, followed by "overflow" issues from neighboring Arab revolutions – particularly Egypt and Syria – that could affect Israel-Arab peace and regional stability. Interwoven with these is Israel's interaction with hostile non-state actors: the Palestinian question, and jihadi terrorism by Shi'ite Iran/Lebanese Hezbollah and Hamas, al-Qaeda and other Sunni groups. Israel's discovery of large natural gas deposits in its territorial waters, a small portion of which are disputed by Lebanon, hints at another potential conflict zone that could also involve Cyprus and Turkey. Indeed, there is a Turkish "angle" to nearly every one of these issue areas.

One notable feature of this "ranking" of conflict areas is the relatively low priority currently assigned in Israel to the Palestinian issue. Ostensibly, this reflects the looming dominance of the perceived Iranian threat, along with a preoccupation with Arab Spring-related issues. Clearly, this is the way the government of Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu would like Israel's threat assessment to be perceived, with the Palestinian issue downgraded to a manageable problem, however persistent, even as additional settlement "facts" are created daily. This situation is also a byproduct of three years of mismanagement by the Obama administration, as well as the apparent assessment by Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas that direct negotiations have lost their usefulness and that an alternative approach has to be found. In

European and Turkish eyes, the low level of attention being paid to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict almost certainly appears strategically skewed, insofar as the Palestinian issue informs and interacts with the Iranian, regional revolutionary, peace and terrorism issues, and accordingly should be awarded a higher priority.

In the Israeli view, the Iranian threat is by no means limited to Tehran's nuclear aspirations. Iran has surrounded Israel with missiles and rockets in Syria, Lebanon (Hezbollah) and the Gaza Strip (Hamas). This reflects Iran's ambitions in the "Shi'ite" Levant (Shi'ite regions of Lebanon and the Alawite regime in Syria), backed by its heavy influence in Shi'ite-dominated Iraq, as well as an aspiration to deter Israel from attacking it. As a consequence, the dangers of accidental escalation between Israel and Iran's proxies and allies are at least as great as that of an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear infrastructure, which appears to be on hold as long as U.S.-led sanctions, spurred on by Israeli threats to resort to force, seem to be effective and direct talks are being held between Iran and the five plus one powers.

Further, the chaos and unrest in Syria have unleashed a series of threats by President Bashar al-Asad, his influential cousin Rami Makhlouf and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah to attack Israel preemptively in order to divert regional and international attention from the Syrian revolution. However low its probability, this threat too has to be taken seriously by Israel. Any and all of these scenarios could escalate into regional war.

A more manageable scenario of conflict management potentially involving Israel, Turkey and possibly Europe could be engendered by some sort of minimalistic Israeli intervention in Syria. Israel currently understands it is not a candidate even for humanitarian intervention on the ground in Syria, simply because its motives would in every conceivable instance be interpreted by all its neighbors as malevolent: as an attempt to conquer Arab territory. Hence the intervention would be counterproductive for all concerned. Israel appears to appreciate that, barring extreme provocation, its forces must not set foot on Syrian soil, precisely in order to avoid giving Asad a pretext for attacking Israel as a diversion. Israel has already announced preparations for the possibility of absorbing Syrian refugees fleeing from the fighting to the Golan, and has offered to provide indirect humanitarian aid.



Yet beyond the contingency of countering an attack from Syria or southern Lebanon, it is not difficult to conceive “worst case” scenarios in which Israel feels impelled to intervene more proactively. If, for example, the Asad regime is losing its grip on vital military ordnance that could be captured and used irresponsibly by al-Qaeda forces, other radical Islamist rebels or a breakaway military faction – chemical warheads and missile delivery systems, for example, of which Syria has a huge stockpile – one could conceive of an Israeli decision to bomb these installations. Turkey, too, would presumably be sensitive to this contingency and weigh preventive action. Without close Israeli-Turkish cooperation, matters could easily get out of hand.

Obviously, contingencies pitting Israel against Iran and/or Syria are of vital relevance to Turkey, which borders on both and has played a major role in supporting the Syrian opposition. Turkey's relations with Iran have also become increasingly tense in recent months, over the Syria issue, Iraq-related issues and Iran's nuclear program. Ostensibly, Israel and Turkey are on the same side of what is increasingly becoming a Sunni-Shi'ite divide, and should be interested in coordinating their policies.

In reality, this is not the case. The necessary Israeli-Turkish strategic and diplomatic coordination demanded by any of the instances noted above does not currently appear to be an easy prospect. In Israel's perception, there are two reasons for this development, which is deeply regretted by virtually all circles in Israel. One is Turkey's insistence on seeking regional influence at Israel's expense by capitalizing on the Palestinian issue and supporting Hamas Islamists who preach Israel's destruction. A second, related and broader explanation is that Turkey's drive to expand its presence throughout the Middle East is based primarily on affinity with like-minded Sunni Islamists that are emerging as the dominant political force in the revolutionary Arab world – leaving little or no room for a productive strategic relationship with Israel.

During the course of 2011, the government of Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu seemingly missed an opportunity to apologize to Turkey for the death of nine Turkish citizens in the May 2010 Mavi Marmara incident, an act some hoped might have restored the relationship to its status quo ante. That Netanyahu actually rejected the counsel of some of his own strategic advisers

and did not offer such an apology reflects his assessment that the pro-Arab and pro-Islamist underpinnings of Turkey's approach to the region are dominant. An Israeli expression of regret would do little to alter Ankara's basic approach, and would be construed by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as a triumphant humiliation of Israel. But this decision ignored the acute need for Israel to find some sort of accommodation with a regional player as dominant as Turkey.

Key Israeli policymakers are apparently laboring under a mistaken vision of Turkey as a country whose real destiny is to be a natural regional ally of Israel simply because it is not Arab and has a past history of disaffection with the Arab world. This approach looks back to the two countries' strategic/military alliance that commenced in the 1950s, within the framework of Israel's "periphery doctrine." It is totally at odds with the current reality of Turkey's regional approach.

Any prospect of Turkish-Israeli strategic coordination in the near future is overshadowed by a number of existing and potential conflict situations wherein Israeli and Turkish interests are seen to conflict: Israel's threat to attack Iran's nuclear infrastructure; the Palestinian issue; possible Israeli responses to acts by an Egyptian government dominated by political Islam; and Israel's growing alliance with Cyprus (reportedly including Israel Air Force landing rights at Paphos) and Greece – both EU members – regarding the exploitation of Mediterranean offshore energy resources that are disputed by Lebanon (Israel's maritime exploitation zone) and Turkey (Cyprus' zone).

This last issue of energy discoveries poses several intriguing challenges. Within two or three years, Israel will become an exporter of natural gas and can look forward to far greater wealth and economic power than ever in its history. Will its Mediterranean drilling sites and installations, exploited in collaboration with Cyprus, become yet another arena of conflict, or will its economic clout enable it to mitigate conflict? Notably, too, within a decade or so, thanks to a massive desalination effort, Israel will be capable of exporting water to its thirsty neighbors, thereby creating yet another economic factor in potential future conflicts or conflict resolution.

Perhaps the greatest lacuna in Israel's regional strategic behavior is its failure to adopt a proactive attitude toward the Arab revolutions. Instead, it has preferred a passive "keep your powder dry" approach that the Netanyahu government has departed from only under duress, as in its cooperation with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt regarding violence in and from Sinai, and its participation in pre-negotiation peace talks in Jordan at least in part to bolster the faltering status of King Abdullah II.

In contrast, despite the virtual collapse of its "zero conflicts" policy, Turkey appears to have cultivated its strategic interests regarding Arab revolutionary developments far better than Israel, by leading the opposition to the Asad regime in Syria and advocating its own successful model of integrating political Islam with democracy. (By way of instructive comparison, Saudi Arabia has also responded far more successfully than Israel to threats to its interests perceived to be associated with the Arab Spring, by using a combination of force, dominant influence and financial largesse to maintain a relative quiet in neighboring states Bahrain, Yemen and Jordan.)

Israel's fears of being surrounded by revolutionary Arab political Islam are legitimate, but its response has proven uninspired, leaving it vulnerable to additional revolutionary change in the region. Examples of areas where Israel could and should become more proactive in order to project a positive profile toward regimes old and new include peace talks or some alternative strategic departure with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), engaging Egypt and Hamas over Palestinian reconciliation, and discussing Syria with Turkey.

The deadlocked Palestinian issue, in particular, threatens to explode or deteriorate in some unexpected way. Palestinian political paralysis, coupled with the Netanyahu government's not-so-hidden agenda of expanding settlements to a point where a viable two-state solution is impossible, seemingly ensures that the parties, if left alone, have little chance of achieving significant progress. Here the Israeli peace camp, the Quartet and Turkey should be paying closer and more positive attention to PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas' United Nations initiative. After two abortive attempts at the highest level to resolve all final status issues in accordance with the Oslo framework (Camp David in 2000 and the Olmert-Abbas talks in 2008), Abbas

appears to have understood that the Oslo formula has run its course and needs to be replaced with an alternative paradigm.

International recognition of a Palestinian state by the United Nations, the Quartet or some other international entity offers an intriguing possible way forward, insofar as it would reformulate the conflict into one between two states and award priority to solution of the most relevant issues – the post-1967 questions of borders, security and twin capitals in Jerusalem. Even if the pre-1967 narrative issues of refugees and holy places remain unresolved, a huge step forward toward stabilizing and managing the conflict would be achieved, enabling Hamas to be integrated more easily into the process. Such an approach – indeed almost any alternative to the current stalemate – would require a far higher level of international involvement than is currently the case.

Israel's perception of Europe's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict focuses on policy disunity within the European Union and the EU's consequent seeming inability to express a dynamic and forceful position. To the extent that the EU and specific European countries seek to pressure the Netanyahu government, Jerusalem capitalizes on this disunity. Current Quartet peacemaking efforts, spearheaded by the EU, appear to both Israelis and Palestinians to be increasingly useless, and risk undermining confidence in the Quartet in general and Europe in particular. They should be reevaluated in light of the need for an alternative paradigm for Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. The year 2012, in which the Obama administration is not undertaking any risky peacemaking efforts due to electoral considerations, is the perfect opportunity for the Quartet to undertake such a re-evaluation.

In parallel, the government of Israel seeks opportunities for strategic cooperation with specific European countries that are less critical than the EU as a whole or that share Israeli threat assessments, such as the United Kingdom and France regarding Iran, Greece and Cyprus regarding Turkey and energy, and the Central European countries in terms of their support for the Israeli position in the conflict. One particularly sensitive potential point of disturbance in the European-Israeli relationship is Germany's growing dissatisfaction with the Netanyahu government, seen through the prisms of its increasingly central role as the economic anchor of the European Union on

the one hand, and its self-imposed constraints regarding Israel in view of its Holocaust history on the other.

At the end of the day, most European countries take their cue regarding the Middle East conflict from the United States, where Israel's influence is relatively strong. Washington has also tried to use its regional clout to improve Turkish-Israeli relations, but with little success. Here we must underline the potential significance of the approaching U.S. elections for the future of American influence over the Israel-EU-Turkey triangle: A re-elected President Barack Obama, for example, might adopt a more forceful role than previously.



## Turkey as an Emerging Destination Country for Immigration: Challenges and Prospects for the Future

Ayhan Kaya

Turkey is a multiethnic, multicultural and multid denominational country, home to approximately 50 different Muslim and/or non-Muslim ethnic groups, including Sunni Turks, Alevi Turks, Sunni Kurds, Alevi Kurds, Circassians, Lazis, Armenians, Georgians, Jews, Greeks, Arabs and Assyrians. However, despite the last decade of democratizing reforms, the Turkish state has not given full official recognition to the ethnically and culturally diverse nature of Turkish society since the republic's foundation in 1923. The country's ethno-cultural and denominational heterogeneity results from diverse waves of migration that have swept across Anatolia throughout its history. New migratory flows have again turned modern Turkey into a destination country for immigration. This paper discusses the state of contemporary immigration flows to Turkey as well as the challenges and opportunities they present.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Turkey was heavily agrarian. However, the subsequent mechanization of the agricultural sector and the rise of industrial production radically changed the country's population dynamics, resulting in considerable internal and international migration. Indeed, data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) shows a threefold increase in urban population numbers from 1927 to 2010.

Turkey has recently become a positive net migration country, in part due to a rise in transit and return migration. The country is also an increasingly attractive destination for international direct investment.

## Net migration trends in Turkey

The number of incoming migrants in Turkey is almost equal to the number of emigrants leaving the country. Emigration no longer poses a significant challenge for Turkey from a demographic perspective, with the exception of persistent concerns about brain drain. According to the World Bank, Turkey's 2010 migrant population numbered 1.4 million individuals, or around 1.93 percent of the total population. The net immigration rate for the year 2010 was nearly 0.06 percent (World Bank 2010).

Irregular migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan have been using Turkey as a transit route since the 1990s (Kirişçi 2003; İçduygu 2009). According to Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs statistics, about 561,000 irregular migrants were apprehended between 2000 and 2008. Turkey is also a destination point for human trafficking in the Black Sea region, with victims typically coming from Moldova, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan. Turkey has long been a destination country for immigrants mainly from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, who seek new work and a new life in Turkey itself, or regard the country as a stepping stone to employment in the West (İçduygu 2009; Danis, Taraghi and Perouse 2009). Istanbul has become home to many recently arrived international migrants, though these communities still have a comparatively low profile. Kaiser and İçduygu (2005) identify eight different categories of migrants in Turkey from the European Union alone.

Turkey serves as an important stepping stone for transit migrants from more distant countries. Between 1995 and 2009, authorities apprehended 794,937 irregular immigrants (IOM 2010). Political developments in the region including the Iranian revolution, turmoil in the Middle East, the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War turned Turkey into a de facto country of first asylum. Migrants from the region are expected to make up the largest component of this flow well into the future (Frenzen 2011).

It should be noted that Turkey grants refugee status only to European asylum seekers. Until recently, it has ranked among the top three countries globally in the facilitation of non-European refugees' resettlement, with the main countries of destination being the United States, Canada and Australia



(IOM 2008: 31). Migration policies have been shaped by the country's efforts to become a member of the European Union, which in turn has created pressures for revision of its immigration and asylum policies (Kirişci 2009). As of the time of writing, the Turkish government's negotiations over a readmission agreement with the European Commission were currently in their final stages (Council of the European Union 2011).

## Turkey's growing soft power in the region

Migrants originating from Middle Eastern countries, African countries, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and elsewhere choose Turkey because of the availability of informal jobs, comparatively high wages (relative to their countries of origin), geographical proximity, existing social networks and the country's flexible visa system. For instance, unlike European countries, no visa is needed for North African migrants to enter Turkish territory. Some North African migrants see arrival in Turkey as an initial step toward entering the European Union clandestinely, ultimately by crossing the Turkish-Greek border. Attracted by the opportunities offered by the big cities in Turkey, some of these migrants even choose to stay in Turkey.

Today, the Turkish economy is booming, having weathered the recent global financial crisis better than most European countries. With a large and dynamic population, the country's economy grew an average of 6.0 percent per year from 2002 through 2007 – one of the highest such sustained rates of growth in the world. GDP declined during the 2008 – 2009 crisis but recovered quickly in 2010 (with a growth rate of 6.8%). The per capita income (on a purchasing power parity basis) is €10,350 (2009 figures).<sup>1</sup>

The volume of Turkey's trade with its neighbors increased from \$4 billion to \$82 billion between 1991 and 2008. Turkish entrepreneurs are today driving a

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all data are from Turkey's official statistical institute, TUIK ([www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr)).

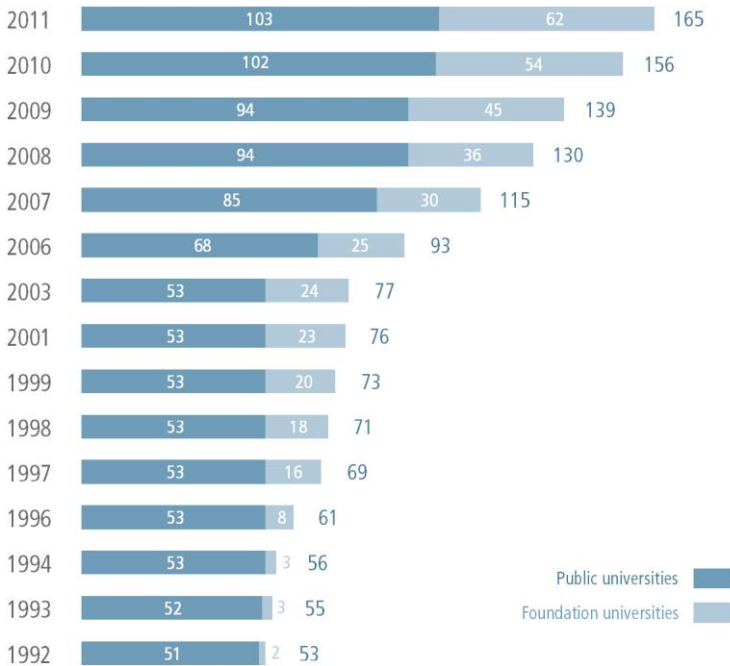
flow of investment into neighboring countries and regions including Iraq, Bulgaria, Georgia, Russia, Central Asia, Syria, Lebanon and now Greece through various business associations such as the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD), the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD), the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey (DEIK), the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), the Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON) and the Turkish Exporters' Assembly (TIM). Furthermore, Turkey's free trade agreements with Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, which conform with Europe's Mediterranean policies and the European Neighborhood Policy, have also contributed to the increase in trading volumes with the country's neighbors.

Turkey is becoming a soft power in the region, with growing ability to affect the ways in which other nations act, think, imagine and perceive the world. This influence takes places through a variety of channels, including the ideological instruments of the state (popular culture, media, church, education institutions). The decision to lift visa restrictions with neighboring countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Iran also bolstered Turkey's political and cultural impact in the region. The Muslim world's high regard for Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to Turkey and the spread of popular Turkish culture (such as soap operas) offer further examples of the country's growing influence. In a manner similar to counterparts such as the Goethe Institute, the British Council and the Cervantes Institute, branches of the Yunus Emre Institute disseminate Turkey's culture and language around the region.

Higher education is one of Turkey's fastest-growing sectors; as of 2011, the country had 103 public universities and 62 universities operated by private foundations (Figure 1). As the supply of classroom seats today exceeds domestic student volume, Turkish universities are now expanding their focus to neighboring countries. Turkish universities also attract students from the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa. On the instructional side, the quickly expanding community of foundation-run universities is attracting foreign scholars and researchers as well as those of Turkish origin. Because English is the language of instruction in most of these universities, as well as in some of

the country's public universities, international researchers and scholars have increasingly been willing to pursue at least a portion of their career in Turkey.

**Fig. 1: Number of public universities and universities operated by private foundations in Turkey (different years)**



Source: Higher Education Council, <http://www.yok.gov.tr>

## Return migration

Prior to the official termination of temporary circular migration policies in European countries in 1974, an estimated 2 million migrants of Turkish origin were involved in a cyclical form of temporary migration. After 1974, inward bound migration increased in the form of family reunification. Return migration continues even today (Table 1).

**Table 1: Return Migration to Turkey from Germany, Austria and the Netherlands (2003 - 2008)**

	Germany	Austria	The Netherlands
2003	35,612	2,470	1,125
2004	37,058	2,684	1,992
2005	34,595	2,976	1,987
2006	33,229	3,338	2,189
2007	32,172	3,329	2,335
2008	38,899	3,269	2,291

Source: Eurostat 2011, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

Note: These figures include all German, Austrian and Dutch citizens migrating to Turkey regardless of whether they are ethnically Turkish or of non-Turkish origin. However, returnees who lack German, Austrian or Dutch citizenship are not included.

The return migration of the 1990s and 2000s has been quite different from that of the 1970s and 1980s. Typical early returnees were either engaged in cyclical labor migration or were participants in one of a number of assisted remigration programs, as in 1984. Today, return migration for transmigrants has become a process of constant mobility between their previous country of residence and the country of origin. The profile of returnees or transmigrants migrating to Turkey is quite diverse, encompassing not only Turks, but also Assyrians, Kurds, and even Rums repatriating to the homeland of their parents.

## Public discussion of Turkish migration policies

Turkey currently lacks a full-fledged immigration policy or legal framework, although the government introduced such legislation in 2011. The European Union is affecting the course and content of these policies (Özğürümez and Şenses 2011). Indeed, the EU's impact has been very visible in the readmission agreements signed by Turkey with Syria (2001), Greece (2001), Kyrgyzstan

(2003), Romania (2004) and Ukraine (2005). Readmission agreement negotiations remain underway with Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, China, and Bulgaria, while Turkey has drafted and submitted proposed agreements to Egypt, the Russian Federation, Belarus, Georgia, Israel, Sudan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia. In addition, in 2008 the Ministry of Interior established an Office for Migration and Asylum (<http://gib.icisleri.gov.tr>), tasked with generating and implementing migration policies in collaboration with academics, NGOs, international organizations, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the European Union.

Migration policy is rarely a subject of significant public debate in Turkey. Yet the public did take notice of a new law that came into force on 1 February 2012 making it more difficult for foreigners to live and work in Turkey without a residence and work permit. Foreigners used to exit Turkey officially after their 90-day visa expired, and then immediately reenter with a new 90-day visa. However, the new law allows foreign citizens entering the country with a tourist visa to stay in Turkey for only three months, and no longer allows immediate reentry (Ziflioğlu 2012). Those affected are primarily nationals from the Middle East, Armenia, Georgia, Central Asian Turkic Republics and southern Mediterranean countries who filled informal labor market demand (mainly as caretakers, housecleaners, “suitcase trader” merchants, etc.) following a 2007 law that made it harder for Bulgarian and Romanian labor migrants to live and work in Turkey.

## Impact of immigration on Turkish society and culture

Created from the remnants of an empire, Turkey is historically a multicultural and multidenominational country. However, the state’s difference-blind republican policies have to this day explicitly and implicitly defined Turkish citizenship on the basis of the Sunni-Muslim-Turk trinity, in such a way as to include Muslims who are ethnically Turks and/or religiously Sunni (such as Kurds, Alevi, Circassians, Arabs, etc.), while effectively excluding non-Muslims from the implied nation. However, the last three

decades have seen tremendous social and political change associated with various global and local challenges such as the rise of a politics of identity (particularly on the part of Kurds and Alevis), political Islam, Europeanization and of course globalization. Turkey is also shifting its political and economic perspective toward its neighboring countries.

Because Turkey is gradually becoming a destination country for immigration, Turkish citizens will more routinely encounter a greater diversity of people in the near future. Central and local administrations seeking to manage ethno-cultural and religious diversity will have to concern themselves with the growing number of allochthonous immigrant populations as well as with the country's autochthonous minorities. Hence, there is a pressing need for the state and ruling political parties to display strong political will toward the management of diversity on the basis of respect, recognition and human rights.

## Problems with the EU's externalization of migration controls

From a strictly demographic perspective, European countries appear to need to find ways to increase their population rather than preventing immigrants from coming in. Accordingly, a "zero tolerance" migration policy toward the Euro-Mediterranean region is neither feasible nor sustainable in the medium and long term. A fortress policy of zero immigration can only lead to structural conflicts between European and southern Mediterranean countries, and helps to create non-institutional mediatory labor market actors that operate outside the legal framework (for further analysis of the Euro-Mediterranean migration issues, see Piperno and Stocchiero 2006). The growth of irregular transit movements across the Sahara desert to and from the Maghreb countries (Libya, Morocco, Tunisia) and along dangerous maritime smuggling routes to Italy, Malta and Spain are partly a consequence of this restrictive immigration policy. The same applies to the transit migratory route through Turkey, Greece and Italy. The majority of transit migrants who arrive in the European Union countries originate from Senegal, the Gambia, Mali, Congo, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire,

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, China or Iraq, and pass through Morocco, Algeria, the Canary Islands, Tunisia or Turkey in transit.

The decision by European countries to “externalize” border controls, giving transit countries a primary role in the containment of migratory flows, is not a sustainable solution. Thus, a different approach is needed to manage the migratory processes originating from the southern and eastern Mediterranean basin. One component of a new migration management strategy could be the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade zone; this would conform to the strategic goals of the EU’s Barcelona Process and improve opportunities for the circulation of goods and capital between the EU and its neighboring countries. Additionally, European Union countries should engage in the active management of migratory flows by means of policies enhancing the role of migrants as catalysts for local development in their countries of origin.

## Challenges and prospects for the future

Turkey’s growing regional economic, political and cultural impact has made it an attractive destination for migration not only for people originating from the Middle East, the southern Mediterranean and the Caucasus, but even for those coming from European countries. The Europeanization of Turkey’s foreign policy, domestic politics and economy has smoothed the way for the development of friendly relations between Turkey and its neighbors. The fact that Turkey is becoming even more multicultural will require additional reforms in the fields of migration, integration and citizenship. Policymakers and the broader society will have to focus on these issues more closely in the near future; but indeed, positive signs already indicate that the country is willing to do so.

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# Migration from Turkey to Europe: Betwixt and Between?

Seçil Paçacı Elitok and Thomas Straubhaar

## Turkey-EU migration in historical context

Due to its geographical location linking Europe, Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), Turkey has throughout its history been host to significant migratory movements, serving both as source and destination for emigration and immigration, and as a transit corridor for migrants with destinations elsewhere (Kirişçi 2003; Tolay 2012). Massive internal migration movements within Turkey have been and remain periodic occurrences, mostly from rural to urban areas, from smaller to larger cities, and from the east to the west of the country. Following the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, migration policy was regarded as a nation-building tool, and was designed specifically to foster a homogenous (Turkish-speaking and Muslim) identity (İçduygu and Sert 2009).

### Diverse patterns of immigration

One of the most significant migration movements in the initial years of the Turkish Republic was the population exchange between Greece and Turkey (1922), in the course of which approximately 1.5 million ethnic Greeks left Anatolia, and 500,000 Muslims and Turks immigrated to Turkey. The stream of people of “Turkish descent and culture” from other Balkan regions continued through the following years, encouraged by authorities. The second mass immigration flow to Turkey took place during World War II, when roughly 100,000 Jews escaped from Europe and found temporary asylum in Turkey. In later years, after the regime change in Iran in the late 1970s, almost 1 million Iranians moved to Turkey, as did about 510,000 Iraqi Kurds between 1988 and 1993. Finally, nearly 1 million migrants came to Turkey following the collapse of the Soviet Union (Kirişçi 2003). Today, Turkey receives migrants

primarily from neighboring regions (Europe, the Soviet Union and MENA); these individuals have various skill levels, stay for different durations and hold a wide range of immigration statuses. However, immigration to Turkey is increasing overall. Migrants from MENA in particular have been drawn to Turkey by its improving living standards and employment opportunities (especially in informal sectors). The Arab Spring of 2011 – 2012 also triggered migration to Turkey from the MENA region.

### **Emigration**

Turkish emigration to Western Europe was initiated by a recruitment agreement, the so-called guest worker program signed by Turkey and Germany in 1961 (similar agreements were later negotiated with other Western European countries). The flow of Turkish migrants to Germany proved a boon to both countries. It solved the labor shortages created by Germany's booming economy after World War II, and it eased an excess labor supply associated with an economic recession in Turkey in the early 1960s. The guest worker program came to an end in the mid-1970s due to the oil crisis, yet the emigration of Turks to Europe continued in the form of family reunification. Other destination countries (i.e., Russia and the Middle East) have also become important in the intervening years.

### **Transit and illegal migration**

Turkey's flexible visa regime (especially toward Middle Eastern countries) has made it a hub for undocumented migrants and irregular flows. Migrants intending to go on to final destinations in Europe often use Turkey as a transit corridor. Asylum seekers and refugees too may lose an initially official status and fall into illegality. As a result of the geographical limitation clause in Turkey's asylum policy, which allows non-European refugees to stay in Turkey only temporarily, most asylum seekers whose applications are rejected become illegal migrants. This is of particular importance for the European Union, as the common Turkish-EU border ensures that any transit through Turkey has a direct effect on immigration patterns within the EU.

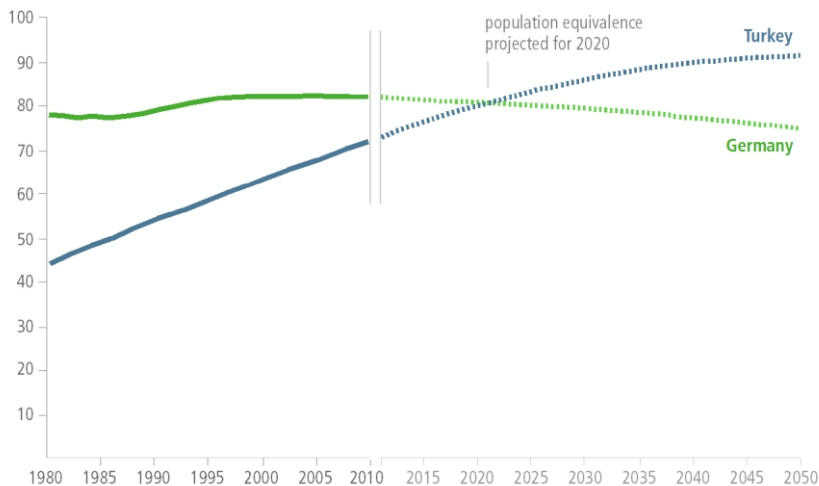
## Future perspectives on Turkey-EU migration patterns

In the context of Turkey's accession to the EU, "potential migration" from Turkey and its impact on European labor markets has become an issue of significant concern within the Union. Three factors play a crucial role in this regard: Turkey's growing population and comparatively young labor force; the gap in living standards between Turkey and the EU; and the Muslim identity of Turkish immigrants.

### Population development

Germany currently has the largest population of any EU member state. However, this will likely change in the future, particularly if Turkey joins the Union. Figure 1 illustrates this point: In 2012, at the time of writing, Germany's population numbered 82 million, compared to Turkey's smaller population of 74 million. According to the mid-range projections contained in the United Nations' World Population Prospects report, the two populations will reach near equivalence in 2020. The Turkish population is ultimately projected to grow to about 92 million, while the German population will shrink to about 75 million (Figure 1). Consequently, Turkey might have surplus labor supply and Germany might have excess labor demand in the future. However, Turkey's fertility rate and population growth rates are currently in decline, while employment opportunities in the country are on the rise. Both factors might lower the incentives for emigration over time.

**Fig. 1: Total population in Turkey and Germany (millions, 1980 – 2010; UN medium-fertility variant used for 2011 – 2050)**



Source: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision, <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>

From a political point of view, if Turkey joins the European Union, it will be quite costly for other members in terms of voting rights. From the migration point of view, Turkey represents a potential remedy for demographic decline in Europe.

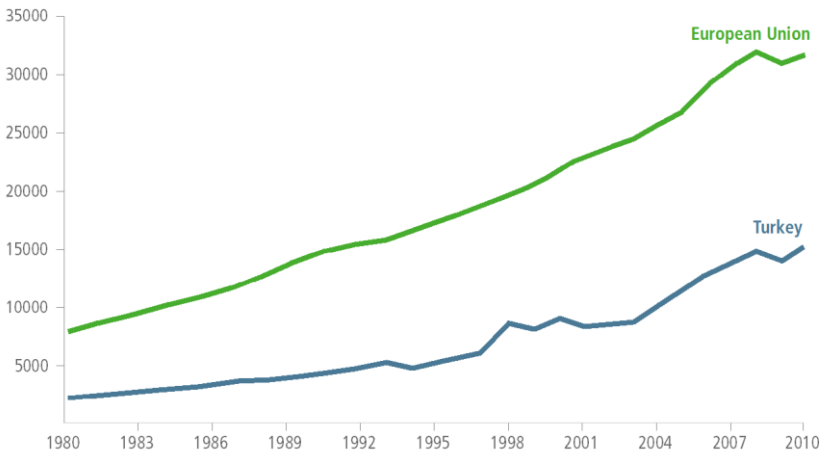
### Living standards

A significant gap in average living standards currently exists between Turkey and the European Union (Figure 2). In comparing per capita gross national incomes (GNI) measured on a purchasing power parity basis, this gap can be seen to have declined in percentage terms between 1980 and 2010. However,

GNI in Turkey remains at about half the EU level today. This difference has several implications.

Even given projected convergence with EU living standards in the future, especially if Turkey becomes an EU member state, the gap in living standards will likely remain large enough to stimulate emigration from Turkey to the EU for the next few decades. However, individual decisions to emigrate follow a logarithmic relationship to differences in living standards, not a linear one. This means that there may be a strong individual propensity to migrate under conditions of large income differential, but that migration propensity becomes much weaker as the income gaps narrow. In coming decades, it is thus likely that rapidly rising living standards in Turkey will lead to lower levels of emigration.

Fig. 2: Per capita GNI in Turkey and the European Union (PPP \$, 1980 – 2010)



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators;  
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD>.

Note: In this figure, GNI is converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity (PPP) rates. U.S. dollar PPP has been used to reflect the gap in actual living standards between Turkey and the euro area.

## **Europe's Christian values and the Muslim identity of Turkish immigrants**

The Muslim identity of many Turkish immigrants has become a growing source of concern in Europe in recent years. The issues of religion and culture have often taken center stage in EU membership negotiations with Turkey.

As this trend has developed, Turkish migrants in Europe have increasingly been perceived as being "Muslims." The events of September 11 indisputably increased fears of Muslim extremism and gave rise to Islamophobia on the part of some non-Muslims. In addition, a growing conservatism within the Turkish diaspora has been reflected in the increasing number of Turkish migrant ethnic and religious associations. Turkey's internal politics have also evolved in consonance with the religious tendencies of Turkish communities in Europe. This has led to questions as to whether Europe's secular identity and Turkey's Muslim tradition can comfortably coexist.

### **Unfounded fears?**

As previously noted, migration flows from Turkey to the EU are expected to continue in the coming decades. This is one of the primary reasons why EU countries (especially Germany) continue to restrict the movement of Turkish workers. Yet are these fears justified by either theoretical projections or empirical evidence?

The main methodological difficulty in estimating the "migration intention" of Turks migrating to the EU lies in the uncertainty surrounding Turkey's prospective EU accession, which would pave the way for free movement of labor. Current estimations of "migration intention" suggest a migration potential of between 0.5 to 4.4 million Turkish migrants.

However, these estimates may not adequately account for people's social and cultural ties to their local environment. Though these represent significant practical obstacles to migration, they have commonly been underestimated from the perspective of theoretical economics, and have not been sufficiently integrated into structural migration (forecasting) models.

Erzan et al. (2006) suggest that EU membership could increase economic growth in Turkey, which would decrease the number of people attracted by



the prospect of emigration. After the European Union's Eastern enlargement, migration flows increased temporarily, but subsequently fell back. Something like a migration hump is thus also the most realistic scenario for EU-Turkish migration following Turkey's EU accession. An increase in migration flows would likely follow the grant of free movement rights, but these flows would in turn decrease over time.

Future migration flows from the European Union to Turkey will also be determined by a variety of factors (income differentials, unemployment, migrant networks, migration policies, religion, culture, etc.). As Istanbul is likely to become an increasingly attractive site for international business, expatriate workers and professionals will be correspondingly motivated to migrate to Turkey for work. In addition to foreign professionals, the potential for migration on the part of highly skilled migrants educated in Germany but with a Turkish ethnic background is and will be significant.

Turkey's role in managing migration flows from the Middle East and the ex-Soviet Union countries is of considerable importance today. In this context, migration from the Middle East is expected to retain its importance in the near future, perhaps even increasing as a result of changes to Turkey's visa policies. Current forms of migration such as contract-dependent labor migration and marriage migration will persist in the near future, whereas asylum seeking may decline (particularly if a solution to the Kurdish dispute is found). If the Kurdish minority is successful in gaining autonomy rights, Kurds may be motivated to migrate internally from western cities back to the villages in the country's eastern regions. The potential for migration from Turkey to the Middle East is relatively weak, due to the tendency of employers in the region to favor their own citizens.

## Challenges and opportunities<sup>1</sup>

Illegal migration constitutes one of the most significant challenges Turkey faces in its relations with the European Union. Kirişci (2008) emphasizes the increasing importance of managing illegal migration for Turkey, seeing this as both challenge and opportunity. He contends that the European Union's treatment of migration as a security issue has adversely affected EU-Turkish relations, and has generated mistrust on both sides. According to Kirişci, the EU feels that Turkey is not doing enough to combat or prevent illegal transit migration. Yet for its part, Turkey has no interest becoming a buffer zone for irregular migrants to the EU.

In line with EU regulations, Turkey recently began a reform of its asylum law, visa regulations, illegal migration policies and efforts to combat human trafficking. The 1994 Asylum Regulation and 2006 Circular specifying asylum procedures and the rights and obligations of refugees and asylum seekers are being revised. Turkey is party to the U.N. Refugees Convention of 1951, but has not yet lifted geographical limitations that prevent non-Europeans from being granted refugee status. If Turkey is successful in improving its immigration and asylum policies, then the challenge of migration can be transformed into an opportunity. For example, the reforms could improve its chances for successful EU accession. From a security perspective, cooperation and dialogue between Turkey and the EU with respect to illegal migration would be beneficial to both sides (Kirişci 2008: 126).

Turkey should also pursue economic reforms in order to reduce the effects of migration push factors such as low wages, economic instability, unemployment and inadequate working conditions. Turkey's approach in the 1960s – that of considering migration as a remedy for unemployment and remittances as a significant source of foreign currency – should be replaced by a more realistic and contemporary future strategy.

<sup>1</sup> See also various contributions in Elitok/Straubhaar 2012.

Current migration policies in Europe give clear evidence of an increasing interest in circular and temporary migration. This trend can be considered an attempt to find an alternative to the traditional guest worker programs that are today deemed “unsuccessful,” with three main perceived advantages:

- **Low or zero risk of permanent migration:** It is assumed that when migration is temporary and/or circular, the “risk” of permanent migration is either low or zero, meaning that European countries will save on “integration” costs. However, even short-term migrants have integration needs, in both the work environment and their social life.
- **Flexible labor markets:** Europe also intends to create more flexible labor markets, in which short-term shortages are met by seasonal workers. However, Europe’s structural and long-term demographic problems (chiefly associated with an aging, shrinking population) cannot be alleviated solely by short-term migration. Various studies argue that Europe’s long-term needs will ultimately have to be met by migrants. In this regard, migration is mandatory for Europe’s future at all skill levels. Furthermore, flexibility may easily be misused by employers, as it may reduce the bargaining power of migrants who come to be preferred because of their low wages.
- **Irregular migration reduction:** Policymakers hope that circular and temporary migration programs will serve to reduce illegal migration. However, this may require the institution of excessive bureaucracy and monitoring programs, since the return of migrants is not guaranteed, and even circular or short-term migrants have the potential to become illegal by overstaying their visas.

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## From a Policy of Fear to a Policy of Potential: Migration in a Cross-Mediterranean Context

Rana Deep Islam

The U.K.-based Asian Dub Foundation, a rap group originally born out of a community project, released one of its most politically charged songs in 2003, entitled “Fortress Europe.” The lyrics are as follows:

“We got a right, know the situation // We’re the children of globalization  
// No borders, only true connection // Light the fuse of the insurrection  
// This generation has no nation // Grassroots pressure the only solution  
// (...) // Tear down the walls of Fortress Europe”

The words shed light on the band’s negative perception of Europe and its treatment of foreigners and migrants. Indeed, the entire song illustrates the *Zeitgeist* that served as the background to debate during the first decade of the 21st century. Leftist circles in particular have seen Europe as erecting a bulwark aimed at keeping out the dangers that lurked outside its borders. And indeed, ideas characterizing mainstream discourse during this time – especially that of an alleged “clash of civilizations” that seemingly challenged the survival of the Western hemisphere – were taken up even by experts, decision-makers and public figures. Islam as a religion and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as a region were identified as the main sources of insecurity threatening the West in general and Europe in particular. Significantly, the five key challenges formulated by the European Security Strategy can be found in this region: international terrorism, regional conflicts, failing states, weapons of mass destruction and organized crime.

Against this backdrop, approaches to the MENA region were given a security-focused rationale. An examination of the action plans created as part of the European Neighborhood Policy speaks volumes: Following a trend of securitization, Europe’s decision-makers considered economic deprivation and social segregation to be the sources of radicalism and religious extremism. The EU’s offers of economic cooperation, administrative assistance, political

reform and trade preferences between the Union and its Mediterranean “partner states” were all seen as instruments aimed at increasing Europe’s security. Under this conception, the more prosperous Europe’s neighborhood became, the lower would be the risk of an inflow of instability and insecurity. With this security-centered perspective, migration too turned from a social phenomenon into a political factor with significant relevance to security.

However, migration from the Middle East and North Africa clearly displays a double-faceted character. There is an external dimension which comes to the fore through the steady migratory pressure from this area. However, a separate internal dimension is reflected by all those EU citizens and habitants with a family background of migration, who have lived in Europe for two, three or even four generations.

## How Europe lost its guiding compass

More than 60 years ago, the European integration project was created as a political response to the continent’s post-war devastation. Integration seemed to be a way of safeguarding against intolerance, xenophobia, extreme nationalism and chauvinism. The logic behind the idea was plain and simple: Enmity among European societies would be abandoned once and for all, exchanged for the bonds of cooperation and common institutions. However, the EU’s success has ostensibly turned into its greatest danger. Europe’s younger generations know of war, hunger, unrest and devastation only through textbooks. Memories of the two world wars have seemed to fade across the continent. During the Cold War, Europe’s war-torn history was depicted as its own “other,” and was used as a projection ground for the formation of a collective European identity. Today, we return to geopolitical thinking in sketching patterns of in-groups and out-groups (Diez 2004). Foreign peoples, civilizations and countries are increasingly characterized as Europe’s “other,” from which the continent needs protection.

Unsurprisingly, we have witnessed the rise of right-wing parties all over Europe. In 2000, Jörg Haider and his Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) became part of that country’s government coalition, sparking outrage among

European politicians. The European Union even imposed sanctions on Austria as a reaction against FPÖ's participation in government. However, times have apparently changed, as the same right-wing populism that triggered public opposition 10 years ago seems far more normal nowadays, whether it be in the form of the National Front (Front National) in France, the Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang) in Belgium, the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei), the Pro Germany Citizens' Movement (Pro Deutschland) in Germany, the Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid) in the Netherlands or the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna). Right-wing radicalism seems to have regained widespread public support.

All the above-mentioned parties share an ideology that includes a critical and offensive stance toward Islam. The 9/11 terrorist attacks, the bombings of London and Madrid, and the cartoon crisis all reinforced anti-Islamic sentiments among European people that have been reflected in these parties' electorate success. However, this mistrust and skepticism toward Muslim people is deeply linked with structural and societal factors, namely insufficient, malfunctioning or even a complete absence of integration willingness among migrants and EU citizens with a migration background.

Muslims in Europe are predominantly from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey by origin. This is why the role of Islam and Islamophobia in Europe is strongly intertwined with the issue of migration from the MENA region (see also European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia 2006). The two issues form two sides of the same coin. The fear of an alleged "Islamization" of Europe has been aggravated by highly publicized and opinion-shaping debates over the construction of mosques (see for instance the Swiss referendum banning the building of minarets), honor killings, the juvenile delinquency of children of foreign descent and urban/suburban riots as seen in France' banlieues or the United Kingdom. Public rejection of Islam and Muslim migrants therefore does not arise from nowhere, but rather from seemingly comprehensible day-to-day experiences, reflecting the subtle fear of what is presumed to be a foreign infiltration. For many Germans the prospects for Turkey's EU membership bid are decided not in Brussels but on the streets of the so-called problem neighborhoods (Problemkiese, a term

describing broken societies in urban neighborhoods) in Berlin-Neukölln and Berlin-Kreuzberg.

EU-wide resentment against people with a southern Mediterranean background is not expressed solely by right-wing parties. Indeed, it has become clear that the political mainstream is increasingly campaigning for support from this part of the electorate. In 2011, the heads of state and government of France, the United Kingdom and Germany publicly and almost simultaneously declared an end to the era of multiculturalism (Laurence and Vaisse 2011). However, none of the three politicians explained their concrete understanding of multiculturalism, or what kind of integrated society they wanted to see accomplished instead. By failing to dig deeper into the details of how we might be better able to live together in harmony, the whole debate appeared to be just a cheap public-relations move by the governing elites aimed at reaching out to a far-right constituency.

The German government's contribution to the integration discourse culminated in 2011 when Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich declared that Islam did not belong to Germany. Such statements are hardly helpful in encouraging migrants to integrate, as they might have a different view on how appropriately to welcome people with a foreign background. Seeing that most are in fact living well-integrated lives, creating jobs, paying taxes and contributing to Germany's prosperity, it is legitimate to consider confrontational rhetoric of this kind as nothing less than a slap in the face. What Friedrich did was an act of "othering" – letting a specific group of people know that they will not be a part of German society, no matter how hard they try.

Decision-makers need to realize at last that integration begins with an integrative choice of words. Indeed, it is true that elements within migrant communities all over Europe have seemed to have had difficulties in adopting the societal principles of the majority population, as reflected by their comparatively higher unemployment rates and the statistics on migrants' representation in higher education (for the German case, see Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2011, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2009). These problems need to be discussed in a transparent manner, and must not be simply brushed under the carpet. However, at the end of the day,



the ultimate goal must be to make genuine improvements in the living conditions of people irrespective of their ethnic descent, not simply to gain votes from the far right side of the political spectrum.

## The demographic bomb is ticking

With regard to the external perspective, migration from the MENA region has been the exception rather than the rule since the 1970's and the oil-price shock. Though asylum seekers and migrants, especially from sub-Saharan countries, are using Northern African routes to reach European soil, only about 10 percent of all EU-bound migrants are of MENA origin (Gubert and Nordman, 8, 62). Nonetheless, the pressure exerted by migration from the Middle East and North Africa remains comparatively high, a tendency that has been reinforced by the Arab Spring uprisings that have swept across the region. Though Western observers were surprised by the protests' rapidness and virulence, the demographic realities underlying the unrest have been known for years. According to the Arab Human Development Report, 54 percent of the Arab population is below 25 years of age (United Nations Development Programme 2010). This youth bulge has given the region the world's second-fastest-growing population (Commission of the European Communities 2008, 6). At the same time, the unemployment rate among this younger generation is 24 percent. With these forces acting in conjunction, it was only a matter of time before civil unrest erupted (Roudi 2011). Behind these figures is the face of the young Tunisian vendor named Mohammed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire to protest a lack of economic opportunity and persistent harassment by corrupt authorities. His self-immolation was the trigger for a regional uprising that has been calling for change since 2011 (Fahim 2011).

Hopes that the Arab Spring would begin a reform process bringing democracy and the rule of law to the region have not yet been realized. Toppling autocratic systems was only the beginning; the process of transformation will take many more years. The establishment of sustainable governing systems that represent all elements of society will be a lengthy and painful struggle. The MENA region will therefore remain an area of instability

and geopolitical volatility. Among other indicators, this fact is reflected by the growing number of people seeking to emigrate to Europe. At the beginning of 2012, Eurostat declared that asylum applications to the EU had increased by nearly 25 percent. The highest growth was registered among applicants from Tunisia and Libya, which respectively saw sixfold and fivefold increases (Eurostat 2012). This trend will in all probability gain in strength before it wanes. This is true too of the massive labor demand, which will only increase. Simply in order to maintain the current unemployment rate, southern Mediterranean countries will need to generate 25 million new jobs in the next 10 years (World Economic Forum/OECD 2011, 9). As this today appears an insurmountable challenge, Europe must face the issue of work-related migration originating from the Middle East and North Africa as one of the main issues for any future Mediterranean agenda.

## What needs to be done

If the European Union is to live up to its self-proclaimed image of being a global power, it must actively help shape events in its southern neighborhood. Though an Arab Marshall Plan has been proposed, such ideas have not yet been matched by practical policy action. Overall, it is imperative that the EU stop treating MENA countries solely on the basis of security-related considerations. Indeed, many challenges do emanate from this region. But it also offers huge potential and opportunities which are of mutual interest. Because of this, European states would be better advised to deal with migration in its double dimension. The inflow of MENA migrants is inevitably connected with the way European societies are able to integrate preexisting migrant communities.

## The added value of targeted labor migration

As seen above, the youth bulge is leading to a generational lack of employment in MENA countries. At the same time, it is obvious that many European states suffer from a shrinking labor force due to a low fertility rate and increased life expectancy. This situation is leading to a distinct job vacancy

rate, which amounted in 2010 to 1.5 percent. In Germany, this figure reached as high as 2.6 percent (Eurostat 2011, 68). The labor shortage is being felt primarily within the service sector, especially in wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants, and transport and communication (World Bank/European Commission 2009, 37). Thus, the labor markets on the two shores of the Mediterranean at this point seem to have natural complementarities. A regulated labor migration from MENA to the European Union could help lower the demographic surplus in southern Mediterranean societies, while simultaneously mitigating the negative macroeconomic consequences of Europe's own demographic gap. Working as an element of EU's neighborhood policy, a Mediterranean job agency could take care of filling European job vacancies with adequate candidates from MENA countries. As opposed to Frontex, any such agency must not aim at protecting the EU's external borders, but rather at opening them up in order to actively promote and channel the inflow of migrants.

### **Diversity as an asset**

A change in attitude among EU decision-makers will be an important prerequisite for any integrative cross-Mediterranean migration. Political and public discourses about migration, both in its external and internal dimensions, are still predominantly characterized by negative images and stigma. Instead, leading public figures within the European Union must begin to deal with migration issues in a deliberately positive fashion. Advantages and opportunities need to be given more weight than disadvantages and risks. The goal must be to manifest a Europe-wide philosophy and identity of *Willkommenskultur* (welcoming culture), which ought in turn to be internalized by every EU resident.

### **Standing up against right-wing populism**

In order to change the overall climate, which determines the ability to achieve a positive stance toward MENA migrants, EU politicians must deal with the growing levels of far-right sentiment. What stands out most today is the evident complacency among European decision-makers. Though it is hard

to name EU member states in which right-wing populism is not represented in either parliament or government, the political elite has remained almost entirely silent on the issue. This passive attitude has created the impression that the European political mainstream is resigned to the participation of right-wing parties in the political system. This form of inaction must come to an end. As Stéphane Hessel writes in his “Time for Outrage!” it is a citizen's duty not to react with indifference to societal trends that conflict with the normative foundations of European society, in this case the tolerance and respect for human dignity that should prevent discrimination on the basis of people's ethnic and religious backgrounds. One step forward might be the establishment of an annual EU council involving heads of state and government, gathered specifically for the purpose of marginalizing the impact of right-wing parties and their xenophobic ideologies.

### **Strengthening dialogue through an Islamic conference**

As noted above, many migrants and EU citizens with a family background of migration are of MENA origin. Though they must not be reduced simply to their Muslim beliefs, it is important to foster a debate on how Europeans want to interact with Islam and its growing role in society. However, it is crucial that instead of simply talking about the issue, a dialogue is conducted with the religion and its representatives. One means of fostering such an exchange would be the inauguration of an Islamic Conference, following the German model of the Islamkonferenz. Through this means, European politics would finally recognize Islam as a part of European society. The delicate relationship between the state and Islam, questions of secularism, and the goal of promoting a better integration of the religion into society all need to be discussed in a forum of this nature.

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## Authors

**Yossi (Joseph) Alpher** is a consultant and writer on Israel-related strategic issues, and is coeditor of the *bitterlemons.net* family of internet publications. From 1981 to 1995 he was associated with the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, ultimately serving as director of center. In July 2000 (during the Camp David talks) he served as Special Adviser to the Prime Minister of Israel, concentrating on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

**Nilgün Arisan Eralp** holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Middle East Technical University, a Master's degree in Economic Development from Leicester University and an MSc in European Studies from London School of Economics. Ms. Arisan Eralp worked as an advisor from 1987 to 1996 to several senior public authorities, including the Ministry of State in charge of EU Affairs and Deputy Prime Ministry, and the Prime Ministry of Turkey. From 1990 to 1992, she worked as an expert for the State Planning Organization, Directorate General for EU Affairs. In 1996, Ms. Arisan Eralp coordinated the "Information Network Project for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises on Customs Union," which was jointly financed by the Economic Development Foundation (İKV) and the European Commission. Between 1997 and 2000, Ms. Arisan Eralp served as the Head of Department of Policies and Harmonization in the Directorate General for the EU Affairs at State Planning Organization. After leaving this position, she served as the Director of National Programme in the Secretariat General for the European Union Affairs (EUSG) until 2009. Throughout this period, Ms. Arisan Eralp has been a Member of the Academic Board at the European Research Centre, Ankara University on behalf of the EUSG. She has lectured at several universities on the EU and on Turkish-EU relations, subjects on which he has published extensively. Ms. Arisan Eralp has been the Director of TEPAV EU Institute since 2009.

**Seçil Paçacı Elitok** holds a PhD in economics from the University of Utah, where she specialized in economic growth, development economics and international trade. Throughout her graduate studies, she worked as an instructor in the Economics Department of the University of Utah before joining the Maltepe University (Istanbul), where she had the opportunity to participate in research projects on migration, coordinate the Erasmus program, while enriching her teaching portfolio. She received the Higher Education Teaching Specialist (HETS) designation from the University of Utah in December 2006. She joined the Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI) in June 2009 as a Marie Curie research fellow in the context of the EU Marie Curie Research Training Network TOM (Transnationality of Migrants) and worked as a senior researcher for the Migration Research Group (MRG). Her main research interests include international migration with a specific focus on migration from and to Turkey as well as high-skilled migration and remittances. She is currently a research fellow at the HWWI.

**Christian-Peter Hanelt** is a Senior Expert at the Bertelsmann Stiftung on Europe and the Middle East for the “Europe’s Future” program. Mr. Hanelt has been managing the Stiftung’s “Kronberg Middle East Talks” for more than a decade. Having studied political science, history and Arabic sciences in Kiel and Damascus, Mr. Hanelt holds an MA in Political Science from the Christian-Albrechts University in Kiel, Germany. He has worked as an editor and reported for German television’s SAT.1 on developments following the Kuwait war and the beginning of the Middle East peace process. He has been engaged in activities promoting literacy in Egypt and in the education of journalists in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. His areas of expertise include the Israeli-Arab Conflict, EU-Gulf Relations (GCC), Iraq and Iran, and sociopolitical and economic development in the Arab world.



**Rana Deep Islam** is currently a PhD candidate in international relations at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg. His research interests include EU and Turkish approaches toward the Middle East and questions of integration and migration in German society. Rana Deep Islam is also a lecturer at the Universities of Potsdam and Chemnitz. In 2011, he served as a fellow at the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies at Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C. In addition to having worked for the European Parliament in Brussels, he has held positions at the School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. and with the Executive Committee of Germany's Social Democratic Party in Berlin. He holds an MA from the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium.

**Ayhan Kaya** is Professor of Politics and Jean Monnet Chair at the Department of International Relations at the Istanbul Bilgi University. As Director of the European Institute, his focuses include: European modernities and identities, in particular Euro-Muslims in Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands; the Circassian diaspora in Turkey; the construction and articulation of modern diasporic identities; and tolerance and multiculturalism. He received his PhD and MA degrees at the University of Warwick. His most recently published book is *Islam, Migration and Integration: The Age of Securitization* (London: Palgrave, 2009); other relevant publications are as follows: *Circassian Diaspora in Turkey* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2011), *Belgian-Turks* (Brussels: King Baudouin Foundation, 2008, co-written with Ferhat Kentel), *Euro-Turks: A Bridge or a Breach between Turkey and the EU* (Brussels: CEPS Publications, 2005, co-written with Ferhat Kentel). His forthcoming book is *Europeanization and Tolerance in Turkey* (London: Palgrave, 2013). He is currently involved in the FP7 Projects entitled "Identities and Modernities in Europe" and "Tolerance, Pluralism, and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe" in addition to another EU project, "Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe."

**E. Fuat Keyman** is Professor of International Relations at Sabancı University in Istanbul. He is also the director of Istanbul Policy Center (IPC) at Sabancı University. He regularly contributes to the newspaper *Radikal*, and has a TV program in which he offers political commentary on and analysis of Turkish and global politics. He works on democratization, globalization, international relations, civil society and Turkey-EU relations. He has published extensively on these topics in both Turkish and English. A selection of his books include: *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Contending Discourses of Nationalism in Turkey* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011, with Ayşe Kadioğlu); *Remaking Turkey* (Oxford: Lexington, 2008); *Turkish Politics in a Changing World: Global Dynamics, Domestic Transformations* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Publications, 2007, with Ziya Öniş); *Citizenship in a Global World: European Questions and Turkish Experiences* (London: Routledge, 2005, with Ahmet İçduygu); *Globalization, State, Identity/Difference: Towards a Critical Social Theory of International Relations* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997); *Cities: The Transformation of Anatolia* (Istanbul: Dogan Publications, 2010, in Turkish); *Globalization, Europeanization and Citizenship in Turkey*, (Istanbul: Bilgi University Publications, 2009, in Turkish); *The Good Governance of Turkey* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Publications, 2008, in Turkish); *Changing World, Transforming Turkey* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Publications, 2005, in Turkish); and *Turkey and Radical Democracy* (Istanbul: Alfa, 2001, in Turkish).

**Ghassan Khatib** is the current Director of the Palestinian Government Media Center. He has served as Palestinian Minister of Labor in 2002 and Minister of Planning in 2005–2006. Mr. Khatib was Vice President for community outreach at Birzeit University in 2006–2009, and was founder and Director of the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center, which specializes in research, opinion polling and media activities. He was a member of the Palestinian delegation for the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference in 1991 and the subsequent bilateral negotiations in Washington from 1991 to 1993. Mr. Khatib co-founded and co-directed bitterlemons.org, a Palestinian-Israeli internet-based political magazine. He holds a PhD in Middle East politics from the University of Durham, and is

the author of *Palestinian Politics and the Middle East Peace Process: Consensus and Competition in the Palestinian Negotiation Team*.

**Ziad Majed** has been a visiting scholar at the Kettering Foundation in the United States (2008) and the editor-in-chief of the *Al-Ofok* monthly review (2007–2010). He has also worked as a consultant for the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue (2003–2006). Mr. Majed was program officer at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in Stockholm (1999–2000) and projects coordinator at the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies in Beirut (1994–1998). Since 2007, he has been a researcher and coordinator at the Arab Network for the Study of Democracy, and Assistant Professor of Middle East Studies at the American University of Paris since 2010.

**Almut Möller** is a political analyst on European integration and European foreign and security policy. She heads the Alfred von Oppenheim Centre for European Policy Studies at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) in Berlin. Ms. Möller has published widely on the European Union's overall political and institutional developments, Germany's European policy, as well as foreign and security issues related to the EU's neighbourhood, in particular the Middle East region. She is a frequent commentator on European and foreign affairs in the German and international media. Apart from her native German she is fluent in English and French, and is working on her Arabic. Prior to joining DGAP in 2010, Almut lived as an independent analyst in London. From 2002 to 2008 she was a researcher at the Center for Applied Policy Research (CAP) at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, working on questions of the EU's institutional reform, enlargement and Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Ms. Möller is a Non-Resident Fellow at the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS) at Johns Hopkins University in Washington D.C., and an Associate Fellow at the Austria Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES) in Maria Enzersdorf near Vienna. She was a guest researcher at Renmin University of China in

Beijing (2006), the Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo (2007) and at the AICGS in Washington D.C. (2008). Ms. Möller holds an MA in Political Science from the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich (2002). She also studied at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität in Münster and at the Institut d'Études Politiques (Sciences-Po) in Aix-en-Provence. For a list of publications visit DGAP's website: <https://dgap.org/de/user/258>

**Dorothee Schmid** is the Director of the Turkey program at the Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI), a leading think tank dealing with international politics in Paris. As an expert on EU policies in Mediterranean countries and the Middle East, she has worked closely with European institutions on several Euro-Mediterranean research projects related to political reform and democratization in the region. Her current work focuses on French-Turkish relations, internal political developments in Turkey and Turkey's new diplomatic ambitions, especially in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Her recent publications include the report *Les Élités françaises et la Turquie : une relation dans l'attente (The French Elite and Turkey: A Pending Relationship)*, published with the Turkish think tank EDAM (2010). She recently edited a book on Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East: *La Turquie au Moyen-Orient : le retour d'une puissance régionale ? (Turkey and the Middle East: Return of a Regional Power?)*, CNRS éditions (2011). Dorothee Schmid graduated from Sciences-po Paris with a specialization in Economics. She holds a master in Economics from Sciences-po Paris and a PhD in Political science from Paris-II University (Panthéon-Sorbonne).

**Julia Seiler** currently works for the Bertelsmann Stiftung's "Europe's Future" program. She holds a Master's degree in Near and Middle Eastern Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. In addition to an internship with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Amman, Ms. Seiler has spent time improving her Arabic in Syria, Yemen and Egypt.

**Thomas Straubhaar** is Director of the Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI) (2005–present) and Professor of Economics, specializing in international economic relations, at the University of Hamburg since 1999. Upon completing his PhD in Economics from the University of Bern (1993), Mr. Straubhaar conducted postdoctoral research at the University of California in Berkeley (1985–1986). He received his Habilitation from the University of Bern in 1987 with the publication of “On the Economics of International Labor Migration.” In addition to having taught at the Universities of Bern, Konstanz, Basel and Freiburg, he was appointed in 1992 to the position of Professor of Economics at the Helmut Schmidt University in Hamburg. He has served since 1998 as Director of the Institute for Integration Research at the Europa Kolleg in Hamburg, and from 1999 to 2006 as President of the Hamburg Institute of International Economics. In 2010, he was the Helmut Schmidt Fellow at the Transatlantic Academy in Washington, D.C. Mr. Straubhaar’s research interests include economic relations, economic policy, regulatory policy, migration, population economics and the economics of education.

**Nathalie Tocci** is Deputy Director of the Istituto Affari Internazionali and Associate Editor of *The International Spectator*. She has held research posts at the Transatlantic Academy (Washington, D.C.) the European University Institute (Florence) and the Centre for European Policy Studies (Brussels). Her book publications include: *Turkey's European Future: Behind the Scenes of America's Influence on EU-Turkey Relations* (New York: NYU Press, 2011); *The EU Civil Society and Conflict* (London: Routledge 2011, ed.); *Civil Society, Conflict and the Politicisation of Human Rights* (Tokyo: UN University Press, 2011, ed. with R. Marchetti ); *Cyprus: A Conflict at the Crossroads* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009, ed. with T. Diez); *The EU and Conflict Resolution* (London: Routledge, 2007); *EU Accession Dynamics and Conflict Resolution* (London: Ashgate, 2004).

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