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MODEL COUNTRIES IN POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Is Turkey a Model for State- Building in the Arab World?

by

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Abstract

This study analyzes the Turkish case as a model country for the state-building processes in the Arab world in the aftermath of the Arab revolts that took place in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. To this end, it deals with the Turkish case in three phases: the founding of the Turkish Republic, political developments until 2002, and the post-2002 Justice and Development Party period. The study focuses on state-society relations manifested in the form of a secular-religious cleavage intertwined with problematic civil-military relations. Each phase of Turkey's history is compared to cleavages and civil-military relations in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. After analyzing the constitution-making processes in the latter three countries following the Arab revolts, the study concludes by discussing the viability of the Turkish model in the light of Turkey's search for a new constitution.



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MODEL COUNTRIES IN POLITICAL ANALYSIS:

Is Turkey a Model for State-Building in the Arab World?

by Aylin Güney¹ and Hasret Dikici Bilgin²

Introduction

Since 11 September, 2001, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has been in constant political turmoil and the most recent Arab revolts have added to this situation. The US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, have been accompanied by US rhetoric of democracy promotion in the Arab world.³ Since then, the removal of dictatorial regimes, especially in the Arab world, which is considered as the hotbed of terrorist

organizations, has constituted the core of US national strategy. The Arab revolts in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, which were marked by the removal of dictators Ben Ali, Gaddafi and Mubarak respectively, gave rise to state-building in the post-revolution period, which has become an issue of intense debate amongst academics since state institutions have been regarded as malfunctioning in these countries.

Turkey, as a regional actor, has been at the epicenter of these developments. Being a relatively stable country with a functioning democracy, a secular state and liberal market economy, it has been presented as a ‘model’ country for the state-building process in the post-revolution periods in the Arab countries in question. This debate about whether Turkey can be a model for Arab countries in transition to democratic regimes has intensified as the topic has been widely covered by the media and also referred to by various political figures in the Arab states, in Turkey and in the countries outside the region, including the US.⁴

In this respect, this paper, in assessing whether Turkey can be

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³ Carothers, T, (2007).

⁴ Kaya Erdem, B., (2012).. p. 435. See also M. Kirecci, M.A.(2012). p. 112. Derviş,.K.(2013), Al-Labbad M. (2012), Anderson L. (1986). Armağan, T. Z. (2012) Bâli A. Ü. (2012), Çağaptay, S. (2011), Çağaptay S. (2012). Kayadibi S and Birekul M. (2011). Kayaoğlu,T., (2012).

considered a model for Arab countries, will highlight the most controversial aspect of Turkish state-society relations, namely the relationship between Islam and democracy. Since civil-military relations are also related to this topic, they will also be dealt with as a complementary issue. They are also deemed important because the military has played a very important role in Turkish political life since the founding of the Republic. The paper presumes that the analysis of constitution-making may provide evidence as to whether the actors in one country take another country's constitution as a model in certain aspects. Thus, it will, at times, refer to the constitutions of the Arab countries to reveal differences and similarities with Turkey's. Finally, it will assess whether the Turkish case can provide an example or inspiration for Arab countries in transition.

Islam and Democracy in Turkey: the Ottoman Legacy?

One of the most important and controversial issues regarding Turkey is how, with its approximately 99 percent Muslim population, it could establish and sustain a democratic regime, which, despite some brief interruptions, has managed to survive until now. In other words, how have Islam and democracy managed to co-exist in Turkish political life?

To address this question, it is important to shed further light upon the main ideas and principles on which modern Turkey is based. In order to be able to assess whether Turkey can constitute a model country for the Arab world, this study will first outline the main characteristics of the Turkish Republic. Since its foundation on 23 October 1923, following the demise of the centuries-old Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic has been characterized by several important features. First, it aimed to create a secular state as opposed to the Ottoman Empire, with its first duty being to protect the freedom of conscience of its citizens. Second, it based the notion of citizenship on constitutional citizenship, which eventually recognized the non-Muslim Jewish, Christian and Greek minorities as the only minority groups. Third, from the memory of foreign occupation and subsequent War of Independence, it stood by the principle of the indivisible integrity of the Turkish Republic. Fourth, the military was regarded as the 'guardian' of the two main principles – secularism and the unitary state – upon which the Turkish Republic was founded.

It is important to note that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the modern Turkey, tried to pursue both nation-building and state-building processes inspired by French revolutionary ideas. As

Ahmad argues, “in the tradition of revolutionary France, the Kemalists saw the Allied occupation of Istanbul in March 1920 not as a de facto end of the Ottoman state but as the beginning of a new era by what Kemal described as the ‘first national year’.”⁵ The first step was to create a new society. Just as the French Revolutionaries had to create the Frenchman, the Kemalists had to create a new type of ‘Turk’ different from the ‘Ottoman’.⁶

However, one can argue that Atatürk, in a rather pragmatic fashion, followed a two-step process in establishing a secular state. First, when the first Turkish Grand National Assembly convened in Ankara on 23 April 1920 in the middle of the War of Independence, Atatürk made it clear that the priority was only to end the occupation of the country. Although he was well aware of the fact that the Second Group in the Parliament, i.e. the opposition, focused basically on religious issues, he did not “show his hand” until the end of the War of Independence. It was only after victory that it became easier for him to “assume a hold over politics” and initiate the reforms.⁷

The radical reforms aimed at establishing a new state-religion-society

relationship came into force after the declaration of the Republic on 29 October 1923, when the founders tried to distance the new Republic from the Ottoman past and the Islamic heritage that characterized it. In particular, they recognized that if the Caliphate and various other Islamic institutions continued to exist, then supporters of the Ottoman Empire would be able to “manipulate the symbols of Islam as powerful weapons against the reformers and their program.”⁸ Therefore, they took the radical steps of abolishing the Caliphate in 1924 and closing autonomous religious lodges (*tekke ve zaviyeler*) and Sufi orders (*tarikât*). In addition, the Directorate of Religious Affairs was established in the same year “to act as the ultimate authority on the knowledge and practice of Islam. The directorate would operate directly under the Office of the Prime Minister and its chair and board would be appointed by the president”,⁹ while Islamic law (sharia) was replaced by a new secular civil code modeled on Switzerland’s. This code was revolutionary in many ways: first, “it outlawed all forms of polygamy, annulled religious marriages, and granted equal rights to men and women in matters of inheritance, marriage and divorce. The religious court system and institutions of religious education were

⁵ Ahmad, F. (1993), p.77.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Mardin, S. (1973) pp. 169-190, see p.181.

⁸ Ahmad, p. 54.

⁹ Çınar, A. (2005), p. 16.

abolished. The use of religion for political purposes was banned, the article that defined the Turkish state as “Islamic” was removed from the constitution, and the alphabet was changed, replacing Arabic letters with Roman ones”.¹⁰ Chanting prayers in Turkish instead of Arabic was another revolutionary step. For Çınar, “these steps represent the institutionalization of secularism, which involved not exclusion, but a tightly controlled inclusion of Islam in the public sphere.”¹¹

Reconciling Islam with democracy constituted the main challenge for the founders of the Republic, who were struggling to establish a state *de novo*. Tachau argues that “the dawning of a new political era was heralded by the adoption of a new Constitution in January 1921, consolidated and reenacted in 1924. The most important aspect of this constitution was its proclamation that “sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the nation” and that the Grand National Assembly was the only true representative of the nation.”¹²

Despite all these revolutionary steps, continued allegiance to Islamic values and glorification of Ottoman times were major factors encouraging suspicion towards the

Kemalist Reforms. The dissolution of political parties in the First Parliament, such as the Progressive Republican Party established in 1925 and the Free Party in 1930,¹³ indicated that Islamic conservatism still constituted a challenge to modernization reforms. Consequently, Atatürk’s initial attempts to establish a multi-party democracy proved to be unsuccessful.

It is important to note that the basic problem during the early Republican and subsequent single-party years faced by the Republican Peoples’ Party (RPP) was how to establish a democratic regime by “accelerating the process of literacy and education in the new Turkey”.¹⁴ Although, for Atatürk, the creation of a “democratic citizen” was of utmost importance, low literacy levels in Anatolia were considered a major obstacle to this end. Therefore, Atatürk recognized that an important dimension of the state-building process was to create the necessary institutions to educate the people and elevate them to the level of contemporary civilization. Thus, since education of the masses was an indispensable element of the new Republic, the “script revolution” of moving from the Arabic to the Roman alphabet became necessary.¹⁵ In 1937, “secularism was

¹⁰ Ibid.p.17.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 17.

¹² Tachau F., (1984), p. 37.

¹³ Güney A. and Başkan, F. (2008), p.266.

¹⁴ Ahmad, 81.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 82.

included in the Constitution so that the amended Article 2 read: “The Turkish State is Republican, Nationalist, Populist, Statist, Secularist, and Revolutionary-Reformist.”¹⁶

Turning now to Arab countries, disassociating themselves from their Ottoman past was also central to the state-building strategies of these states that had emerged from the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. In their early years, these new states, and their largely Ottoman Turkish-speaking ruling elites, mainly continued the former Ottoman Imperial administrative system, while they based their laws on the Ottoman code of law known as *Mecelle*.¹⁷ However, centuries of Ottoman domination and more recently decades of Western colonial rule meant that the Ottoman past was constructed as an era of foreign invasion. Therefore, while the Arab nationalism that emerged in the 20th century primarily targeted Western colonial involvement, it also distanced itself from the Ottoman rule, partly to negate the old ruling elite. Prominent leaders of the movement, such as Egypt’s Gamal Abdel Nasser and Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi, deployed anti-imperialistic rhetoric as part of their Arab

nationalist ideology that now shaped state policies.

Arab nationalists, seeking to emphasize commonalities among Arabs across the Middle East and North Africa, also confronted Ottoman social organization based on confessional origins, known as the *millet system*. This resentment towards the founding elites of the major Arab states because of their Ottoman past carries both similarities and differences with that of Turkey’s republicans. On the one hand, both modern Arab and Turkish nationalisms defined their nations by distancing themselves from ‘the Ottoman’, with educational and language reforms, for example, being initiated accordingly. On the other hand, while Arab nationalism aimed to unify all Arabic people of the region within one single state, Turkish nationalism explicitly rejected expansionism and revisionism, limiting itself to the Anatolian Turks within the limits of the National Act (*Misak-ı Milli*).

Both post-independence Arab and Turkish state elites experienced a conflicting attitude towards the West: one of perceived cultural threat combined with admiration of Western modernity. Both Arabs and Turks had revolted against Western domination in the aftermath of World War One. The Turkish War of Independence led to the establishment of

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁷ Yilmaz, S. and Yosmaoğlu, I. K., (2008). p. 679.

the Republic in 1923 as mentioned above, while the Egyptian revolt against the British mandate which had been established on the eve of the Great War led to independence in 1922, although British influence continued until the Free Officers Movement's military takeover and the inauguration of Nasser as President in the 1954.¹⁸

Libya remained under Italian mandate, while French domination of Tunisia continued until the mid-1950s. The Italian defeat in World War Two allowed Libya to attain independence under King Idris in 1951, before he was toppled in a coup d'état by Gaddafi's Free Unionist Officers in 1969. The Tunisian struggle for independence from French colonialism, led by Habib Bourguiba, an activist journalist and politician, led to the declaration of the Republic in 1957. Thus, the *de facto* independence of Egypt, Libya and Tunisia were all owed to post-1945 anti-colonial independence movements. Their colonial experiences also transformed their perceptions of the Ottoman past to one that equated it with foreign rule and the exploitation of the region's natural resources. In Turkey, by contrast, criticism of the Ottoman past focused on its traditionalism and backwardness.

It is important to note that the military, especially junior officers, played an indispensable role in the anti-imperialist struggle and the establishment of republics in Turkey, Egypt and Libya. It was only in Tunisia that civilians and political parties – whose activities had been suppressed by colonial rule – led to the establishment of the modern state. The Egyptian and Libyan military takeovers shared several similarities, with the Libyan officers' movement replicating the Egyptian model of organization both before and after their intervention.¹⁹ As well as similarities in the institutional structures of the new one-party militarist states in the two countries, both Gaddafi and Nasser emphasized Arab nationalism, socialism and anti-imperialism as the main principles of nation-building.²⁰ This pioneering role of the military in state and nation-building in Egypt and Libya, and earlier in Turkey, resulted in the military becoming entrenched as part of the state elite. The extent that this military-dominated state elite permitted Islam to be visible in the public sphere defined the nature of state-society relations and intertwined the debate on political Islam with that concerning civil-military relations.

¹⁸ For a more detailed account of the Egyptian struggle for independence, see Gordon, J. (1992).

¹⁹ St John, R. B., (2008). p. 92.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Political Islam, Democracy and the Military

One can argue that throughout Turkey's republican history, trends in the politicization of Islam can be traced from the formation of either religiously-oriented political parties (National Order Party, National Salvation Party, Welfare Party, Virtue Party etc.) or center-right parties (Democrat Party, Justice Party etc.) that refer to religious values. It is also worth noting that the Islamic opposition in Turkey did not resort to violence, but allowed itself to become integrated into the political system, thereby trying to avoid clashes between the political elite and the state elite. Heper argues that "the consolidation of democracy in Turkey and the gradual reincorporation of Islam into politics were facilitated by the increasing secularization of the Turks, after the establishment of the Republic in 1923, which made general support for a radical religious revival less likely."²¹

The state elite, comprised of the Kemalist and secular military-bureaucratic establishment,²² regarded the political elite, perceived by the former as pursuing populist, short-term and sometimes religiously-oriented interests and policies,

with suspicion. This perception of political Islam by the Turkish state elite is rooted in the traditionalist-Western divide during the late Ottoman period. On March 31 1909, a group of Islamists staged a counterrevolution against the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. Alleged British support for reactionaries in 1909, and later collaboration during the Independence War, further centralized the anti-imperialist movement around the Republicans. The Republicans' victory in 1923 delayed the institutionalization of the Islamist movement as a political party for nearly half a century. Although Islamists, especially the *tariqats*, found representation within center-right parties, they were unable to establish their own party until the 1970s.

The Turkish state elite employed two main ways of intervening to prevent the rise of political Islam: first, the repeated dissolution of religiously-oriented political parties by the Constitutional Court; second, the Turkish military's direct and indirect political interventions. In this respect, the definition (as in the Internal Service Act, Article 35) of threats in Turkey's laws, especially internal ones, is noteworthy. These threats are defined as political Islam and Kurdish separatism. The Turkish military has long been depicted as a

²¹ Heper, M. (1997) p. 34.

²² Güney and Başkan, p. 263.

'political army'²³ in the military studies literature because it has intervened politically to overthrow an elected government three times (1960, 1971, and 1980) directly and once indirectly, which is also referred to as the post-modern coup (1997).

In Egypt, by contrast, continued British influence despite independence in 1922 created space for Islamists within the anti-imperialist movement. By the late 1920s, the Muslim Brotherhood had emerged as a prominent political actor under British colonialism with a discourse combining a desire for independence and the preservation of the Islamic values.²⁴ In the first couple of years after the 1952 coup, the Free Officers collaborated with the Brotherhood to crush the Communists.²⁵ However, after the military Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) had consolidated its authority, it declared the Brotherhood illegal, arrested and imprisoned its leading members, and purged suspected sympathizers from the military and ruling Free Officers' corp.²⁶ Before the Free Officers, during the rule of King Farouk I, the Islamist movement had also been suppressed and the movement's founding leader Hassan al-Banna was

murdered in 1949. But the Brotherhood's appeal to Egypt's poor masses kept the Islamist movement intact, making it the chief rival of Nasser's post-coup establishment in the 1950s.

Since Islamists had been deeply involved in Egypt's independence struggle and the Brotherhood had already consolidated a network in Egyptian society since the late 1920s, Nasserites had to develop a different strategy towards political Islam than the one adopted by the Turkish state elite. The Egyptian state elite tried to utilize Islam to legitimize their regime by bringing Islamic institutions, including Al-Azhar University, under state control and reorganizing them.²⁷ Meanwhile, the state turned a blind eye to the Brotherhood's existence as long as the movement refrained from being vocal and allowed the regime to capitalize on Islamic values. From the mid-1950s to the 1980s, candidates from the movement even won parliamentary seats by standing for various Egyptian political parties. In the 1970s, Anwar Sadat's domestic and international political opening (*al-infitah*) further expanded the permissive space for the Muslim Brotherhood. In time, the movement's discourse moderated and its leadership adopted a more collaborative

²³ Güney, A. (2002), p. 162.

²⁴ Cleveland, W.L., and Bunton, M. P. (2009). p. 302.

²⁵ Alexander, A., (2011). p. 538.

²⁶ Cleveland and Bunton. (2009). p. 306.

²⁷Ibid., p. 321.

stance towards the regime.²⁸ At the same time, however, Egypt's Islamist movement was also marred by internal strife, with radical groups gradually recruiting new members from the lowest strata of society. This increased the appeal of the moderate and accommodating Muslim Brotherhood to the state elite. Subsequently, Hosni Mubarak continued the previous policy of complacency towards the Brotherhood, by turning a blind eye to its activities without allowing them to become a legitimate actor. In the 2000 elections, for example, candidates from the movement standing as independents were allowed to run, winning as many seats as the legal opposition.²⁹ However, a rise in the Brotherhood's share of parliamentary seats to one fifth of the assembly in the 2005 elections revived the regime's threat perception and the movement suffered unprecedented suppression from 2005 to 2010.³⁰ Overall, unlike Turkey's Kemalist establishment, the Egyptian state elite have refrained from staunch secularism, prioritizing loyalty of the security forces to the state elite over attempts to secularize society. Nevertheless, when they considered it necessary, both state elites have crushed political Islam and prevented genuine electoral competition through various

methods to block Islamists from taking political power.

The revolution led by Gaddafi in 1969 which overthrew Libya's monarchy, followed an institutional and ideological path similar to that of the Egyptian officers. Like them, Gaddafi did not initiate secular reforms, trying instead to integrate Islamist discourse within his rule. For example, his manifesto, the *Green Book*, was an eclectic project incorporating Arab nationalism, Islam and economic egalitarianism. In its early phase, the new Libyan establishment tried to depoliticize Islamists and restrict the political power of the *ulema* by integrating a certain version of Islamism with Arab nationalism. One reason for this explicit integration of Islamism into state-building might be that, unlike Egypt and Turkey, Libya had lacked intensive exposure to the West until the 20th century and so Westernizers never formed a significant faction within the revolutionaries' group who later formed the state elite. Moreover, Ottoman support to the resistance movement against the Italian invasion in 1910 limited rejection of the Ottoman past compared to Egypt, while at the same time the appeal of pan-Islamism persisted.³¹ Indeed, Gaddafi's policies evolved into a form of pan-Islamism in the late 1970s, with Libya

²⁸ Farag, M., (2012). p. 216.

²⁹ Thabet, H. G. (2006). p.18.

³⁰ Farag, M. (2012). p. 216.

³¹ Anderson, L. (1986). p. 66.

financing Islamist militia in several African countries.³² However, this resulted in Libya's gradual international isolation by other African states and, more importantly, by the US in the 1980s.

What makes the Libyan case distinct from both the Turkish and Egyptian state-society relations is the extent to which Gaddafi went to redefine Islam. The Turkish state elite was more interested in the political institutionalization of the Islamists and limiting religion to the private sphere, while the Egyptian establishment was concerned primarily with limiting the political power of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups, as well as the religious scholars. In contrast, in Libya, under a more personalized form of rule than in Egypt, Gaddafi went as far as reinterpreting Koranic script. Initial collaboration between Libyan religious leaders and Qaddafi against the king soon turned into a struggle for power. In Libya where Colonel Gaddafi kept a tighter control over all forms of political movements and activities than in Egypt, the Islamist Movement encountered serious obstacles and as a result it did not develop into a moderate movement as it had done in Egypt and Turkey.³³ As a result, Libya's Islamist

movement did not become more moderate, unlike what happened in Egypt and Turkey. Instead, militant Islamists resorting to political violence found wider appeal in Libyan society from the mid-1980s onwards,³⁴ with clashes between state security forces and radical Islamists intensifying into a civil war in the mid-1990s.³⁵ In contrast to Egypt and other countries in the Middle East, the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya has been overshadowed by the strength of more radical groups.

Tunisia's state elite has been relatively more secular and civilian than both the Egyptian and Libyan elites. Habib Bourguiba, the leader of the independence movement, was influenced by French socialism and shaped his party accordingly.³⁶ The Neo Destour Party, later renamed as the Destourian Socialist Party, established by defectors from the conservative Destour Party, also emphasized secularism and nationalism.³⁷ However, Bourguiba established a one-

in general. In Libya, the state elite did not allow even a fraudulent electoral process as they did not need the consent of the masses to rule. The oil economy was enough to keep the regime alive. Hence, the Islamists remained quite radical compared to those in Egypt and Tunisia where there was some kind of electoral competition and openings for the Islamists to run as independent candidates or on the lists of the other parties.

³⁴ Takeyh, R., (1998). p. 168.

³⁵ Ronen, Y. (2002). p. 7.

³⁶ Halliday, F. (1990). p. 25.

³⁷ Angrist, M P., (1999). p. 749.

³² St John, R. B. (2008). p. 95.

³³ Inclusion in the electoral process is assumed to have a moderating effect on the radical movements

party state, which led to both the secular and Islamist opposition accusing the state elite of corruption and authoritarian policies, especially from the 1970s onwards. In response, the Tunisian state first tried to utilize rising Islamism against the left by tolerating the former to a certain extent. Later, however, the gradual growth of the *Islamic Tendency Movement* (referred as MTI from its original French name) unsettled Tunisia's rulers³⁸ and the Bourguiba administration arrested and imprisoned MTI's activists, and declared it illegal. Thus, the Tunisian case resembles more the Turkish one than the Egyptian and Libyan cases with regard to state-society relations. Both the Turkish and Tunisian state elites have pursued secularist policies so opposition to these policies has been anti-secular and anti-state in both countries.³⁹ However, a contrast to the Turkish case, the Tunisian military have not extensively intervened in politics although, as an authoritarian leader, Bourguiba did not refrain from resorting to use force to suppress labour strikes and uprisings in the early 1980s, despite his civilian background. In doing so, however, he carefully used a special division named the Brigade of Public Order, thereby keeping the rest of the military out of domestic politics. In Tunisia, therefore, the

military has not become part of the state elite, and remained uninvolved in the country's modernization project.⁴⁰

While the transfer of power from Bourguiba to Ben Ali, who was the Prime Minister, was not achieved democratically, it was not a clear coup d'état. His fall started when in its efforts to prosecute the MTI, the Bourguiba government had charged the movement and its leader, Rachid al-Ghannouchi, of terrorist activities. However, the court freed those charged and in response, Bourguiba ordered a retrial of 15 of the key leaders and demanded that 12 of them be hanged by the weekend, whereupon Ben Ali drew on Article 57 of the constitution to secure medical certification that the president was physically and mentally unable to rule.⁴¹ Initially, Ben Ali's rise to power allowed a rapprochement between the moderate Islamist MTI and the state elite, with Ben Ali capitalizing more on Islamic values to revitalize the legitimacy of the regime. In 1989, although the Islamist movement, then renamed *Ennahda*, remained illegal, it was allowed to run with independent candidates in the first elections under Ben Ali's rule. However, he still refused to legalize Islamist political groups in general and allow them to compete electorally as a

³⁸ Waltz, S. (1986). pp. 652-53.

³⁹ Ware, L. B. (1985). p. 28.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 37.

⁴¹ Ware, L.B., (1988). p. 592.

political party.⁴² From 1987 until he fled to Saudi Arabia in 2011, Ben Ali and the state elite prevented fair political competition; yet, they also followed Bourguiba's policy of keeping the military out of the decision-making process, probably to prevent any potential threat to their power.

Recent Transformations in Turkey and the "Arab Spring"

The 2000s were characterized by very important international transformations following the September 11 attacks in 2001, the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2003 and towards the end of the decade, the Arab revolts in the Middle East and North Africa. Domestically, the key development in Turkey was the election of the conservative democrat Justice and Development Party (JDP) in 2002. On assuming power, the party's leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan noted that his party would show that democracy can co-exist peacefully in a majority Muslim country and that Turkey can be considered as an example for all Muslim countries.⁴³

The rhetoric of 'moderate Islam' started to be used first by the then US Secretary of State Colin Powell, who labelled Turkey as an Islamic Republic which can act as a role model for the rest

of the Arab world.⁴⁴ This statement was echoed by the JDP-led government, which aimed at pursuing a more active foreign policy in the region. However, Powell's statement infuriated the secularist President of the time, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who argued that Turkey was not an Islamic Republic, but rather a secular democratic one, and thus could not constitute a model country where moderate Islam was adopted.⁴⁵ The fact that such a presidential statement was felt necessary revealed once again the ongoing tensions between Turkey's state and political elites.

A second important development during the 2000s was the increasing pace in Turkey's accession process to the European Union (EU) following the declaration of Turkey as an official candidate in 1999. A major impetus for change was the eight harmonization packages required by the EU to open the accession negotiations. These were approved by the Turkish Parliament between 2002 and 2004 and which mostly included changes to the 1982 Constitution – which had been imposed during military rule from 1980 to 1983. After 2005,

⁴² Halliday, F. (1990). p. 27.

⁴³ Kuru A., (2013), p.1.

⁴⁴ "Powell'a göre Türkiye İslam Cumhuriyeti" found at <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2004/04/03/dunya/adun.html> (accessed on 6 January 2013).

⁴⁵ "Sezerin İlimli İslam Tepkisi" found at <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Siyaset/HaberDetay.aspx?aType=HaberDetayArsiv&KategoriID=4&ArticleID=32351&PAGE=1> (accessed on 30 December 2013).

however, the initially pro-EU orientation of the AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) government changed to decreasing interest in the EU and a slowdown in the reform process.⁴⁶ During this period, the AKP mostly focused on reversing legal practices introduced into Turkish political life after the military's 1997 'post-modern' coup.⁴⁷ In this period, the government acted rather unilaterally and without establishing a broad consensus to introduce various legal changes through Parliament. These included constitutional changes regarding the dissolution of political parties, changes to the structure of the education system, lifting the headscarf ban on female students and public servants, and abolishing the daily national oath in primary schools.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Patton M. J., (2007) p. 339.

⁴⁷ The name 'postmodern coup' was given to the clash between the army and the political leadership on February 28, 1997, in which the military overthrew the coalition government led by Necmettin Erbakan of the now-defunct Welfare Party (RP). The military helped engineer the removal of the then Islamic-oriented government by demanding that Erbakan stop or reverse policies seen as promoting Islam in government affairs. It increasingly applied overt pressure on Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan of the conservative Islamic Welfare (Refah) Party. At a meeting of the NSC on 28 February 1997, senior military commanders issued an 18-point declaration, asking the government to take measures to curb the growing Islamist activities. Found at website: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/tu-military-coup-1997.htm> (accessed on 30 December 2013)

⁴⁸ According to the publication of the resolutions in the Official Gazette late Oct. 7, public officials will be permitted to don a headscarf, with the exception of officials wearing a uniform, while the student oath, which has been read out loud every morning for the past 80 years, has been removed. "New changes legalize headscarves for public officials,

All these policies were interpreted as AKP's moving away from its previously self-proclaimed conservative democrat character towards authoritarian tendencies.⁴⁹

It is noteworthy that in this period there was also a significant transformation⁵⁰ in civil-military relations as the constitutional powers of the military were eradicated to a great extent due to the changes carried out in line with the EU reforms.⁵¹ In addition to the EU's impact, this civilianization process was also helped by the Ergenekon and Balyoz trials over alleged coup attempts by military cadres during the mid-2000s, especially after the JDP came to power. Despite various civilianization reforms, such as the amendment of the role and duties of the National Security Council (NSC), and trials of former generals who carried out or plotted coup d'états, problems still prevail regarding civil-military relations in Turkey. Increasing civilian control of the military has not necessarily meant democratic control of it, since the AKP government has started to resort to authoritarian measures regarding

discontinue national oath" found at <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/new-changes-legalize-headscarves-for-public-officials-discontinue-national-oath.aspx?PageID=238&NID=55876&NewsCatID=338> (accessed on 6 January 2014).

⁴⁹ Çağaptay, S. (2010).

⁵⁰ Aydın, E. (2012). pp. 100-108.

⁵¹ Güney A. and Karatekelioğlu P. (2005), pp. 439-462.

both the political opposition and civil society organizations, as evidenced by the government's harsh response to recent protest movements known as the 'Gezi Park protests'.⁵²

In the meantime, Turkey is in search of a new Constitution, which would replace that of 1982 which was born after the military coup d'état. This new Constitution aims to enshrine democratic freedoms and further distance Turkey from the era of military coups. However, this reform suffered a setback in late 2013, after two and a half years of cross-party meetings.⁵³ The cross-party panel had tried to reconcile differences on some of the most deeply divisive issues in modern Turkey, ranging from the definition of Turkish citizenship to the protection of religious freedoms.

Larbi Sadiki argues that Turkey needs a robust democratic constitution and only then can one talk about a regional democratization model. He considers today's Turkey as a synthesis of Kemalist-thesis and Erdoğan-anti-thesis.⁵⁴ If this constitutional search were to succeed in

achieving a consensus between the Kemalist-secularist and religiously-oriented elites, it would represent Turkey's first truly civilian constitution since all previous constitutions have been drafted under military tutelage. However, it needs to be stressed that civilianization is a necessary but not a sufficient precondition for democratic consolidation to take place. In this respect, not only the constitution, but the democratic character of the constitution-making process is extremely important for democratic consolidation to take place in Turkey.

With respect to the Middle East, one can argue that the transformation of international politics in the 2000s, especially US foreign policy towards the region, came as a shock to MENA countries struggling with economic difficulties and political discontent expressed by various Islamist groups. Conventional American foreign policy in the Middle East has been built on balance of power struggles between Russia (earlier as the Soviet Union) and the US, and the rise of political Islam did not constitute a major foreign policy issue as long as it did not target US citizens and diplomatic representation in the region. However, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, altered US foreign policy dramatically, with the

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<http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/49-erdo%C4%9Fan-the-akp-and-the-repercussions-of-the-gezi-park-protests.html> (accessed on 6 January 2014).

⁵³ Solaker, G. (2013).

⁵⁴ Sadiki, L. (2013).

American administration accusing Al-Qaeda of the attacks and declaring a ‘war on terror’, which made radical Islamist organizations around the world targets of the American state. The US soon declared war on two countries: Afghanistan, as the country where Al-Qaeda emerged and had its headquarters; and Iraq, as the country allegedly harbouring and aiding the terrorists. Many countries were invited to contribute to and collaborate in this war on terror.⁵⁵ In this context, MENA countries had few options except to declare radical Islamists illegal. Egypt, a long-term ally of the United States since the 1990 Gulf War on Iraq and a recipient of American aid since the Camp David Accords negotiated by Manheim Begin and Anwar Sadat really had no choice. Tunisia had usually followed a non-aggression policy in the region with a number of attempts at mediation. However, the Ben Ali administration became a partner of the US in the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative, which aimed at preventing and eliminating terrorism in Africa.⁵⁶ As for Libya, Gaddafi was isolated after the 1988 Lockerbie bombing and support for radical Islamists in Africa had led to the intensification of international sanctions since the late 1990s. However, in the post-September 11 international environment,

⁵⁵ Walt, S. M. (2001). p. 57.

⁵⁶ Archer, T and Popovic, T. (2007).

Libya also had to declare war on terror to avoid American aggression.⁵⁷

In between 2000 to 2011, each of these three countries suffered from similar problems, including economic difficulties and high unemployment, especially among the youth, allegations of corruption, social discontent with authoritarian policies, denial of free electoral competition and challenges from political Islam. In Egypt and Tunisia, the Muslim Brotherhood branches had long become the major organization for Islamists and their candidates were allowed to run as independents, although the elections continued to be rigged in both countries. In Libya, not even a fraudulent electoral process existed, leading to more radical Islamist groups coming into violent conflict with the state’s security forces.

However, it was the self-immolation of a street vendor in protest against police brutality that ignited the events later to be called the Arab revolts, and popularly known as the *Arab Spring*, in late December 2010. Within a few months, Ben Ali fled from Tunisia, while events spread to other MENA countries. Hosni Mubarak was ousted from power in February 2011 and Gaddafi was captured and killed in October 2011.

⁵⁷ St John, R. B. (2008). p. 103.

The main reason behind the rapid dissolution of Ben Ali's power in Tunisia has been identified as the military's refusal to shoot at protesters.⁵⁸ In 2001, in the first elections of the post Ben Ali period, the Muslim Brotherhood's party, *Ennahda*, came first under the leadership of Mohamed Ghannouchi who had returned from exile.⁵⁹ The Islamists' victory and the rise of the more radical *Salafis* raised concerns about the future of the secular characteristics of the Tunisian state,⁶⁰ with relations between the Islamist government and the secular opposition remaining tense, although the conflict remained within civilian politics. Most recently, in October 2013 after two secular opposition leaders were killed, Tunisia's government stepped aside in favor of a caretaker government before holding elections in 2014.⁶¹

In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood formed a party called the Freedom and Justice Party, winning a landslide victory at the head of a coalition of conservative, moderate Islamist parties. The more radical Islamist organization in Egypt, the *Salafis*, who had for long considered politics as *haram*, abandoned their traditional policy

of avoiding electoral politics, and established a political party, *the Party of Light*. The Salafist party established an election alliance named as the Islamic Bloc and they came second in the elections. The policies of the governing party's leader, Mohammed Morsi, soon confirmed the worries of liberals that the Muslim Brotherhood would not tolerate secular opposition and would put Islamic law in effect. However, in July 2013, the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), which had been established following the overthrow of Mubarak, staged a putsch. As of December 2013, violent clashes between Morsi's supporters and the military-backed interim government continued while the Muslim Brotherhood has been declared a terrorist group and banned from political activity once more.⁶² Former Defense Minister and member of the SCAF Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was elected president in May 2014. El-Sisi got more votes than Morsi did in 2011 and his election marked the beginning of a new period under military influence and the sealing of the Muslim Brotherhood off from governance.

It is possible to argue that the revolts of the Arab Spring failed most badly in Libya. After Gaddafi was killed, a

⁵⁸ Anderson, L. (2011). p. 3.

⁵⁹ All information about the elections in this paper are retrieved from IFES Election Guide at <http://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/2217/>.

⁶⁰ Zeghal, M. (2013). p. 262.

⁶¹ "Tunisia | Reuters.com." <http://www.reuters.com/places/tunisia> (December 27, 2013)

⁶² "Egypt Declares Muslim Brotherhood a Terrorist Group | World News | Theguardian.com." <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/25/egypt-declares-muslim-brotherhood-terrorist-group> (December 27, 2013).

militarist National Transition Council was established. The Muslim Brotherhood established the Justice and Construction Party, but a bloc of moderate Islamists and liberals came first in the 2012 election and established an interim government to draft a new constitution. However, political violence has almost turned into civil war since then.⁶³

In general, transitions in the period following these Arab revolts have been painful, and each state still remains far from establishing a functioning democratic system. Political Islam went through a remarkable transformation in this process, with both radical and moderate movements forming political parties and competing in elections. The electoral process has been promising in this respect if we assume its moderating influence will continue. However, the secular-Islamist cleavage has nonetheless persisted. The Islamists' electoral successes, especially those of the Muslim Brotherhood, worry the secular and liberal opposition. This tension manifests itself most clearly in the constitution-making process regarding the role of Islamic law and the rights of women.

⁶³ "Egypt Declares Muslim Brotherhood a Terrorist Group | World News | Theguardian.com." <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/25/egypt-declares-muslim-brotherhood-terrorist-group> (December 27, 2013).

When the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly was drafting a new constitution in December 2012, the leading party, *Ennahda*, wanted to build the constitution on the basis of Sharia.⁶⁴ However, the final draft was not based on Sharia, although in the Preamble and Article 1, Islam is declared as the state's religion, while Article 73 states that the President must be a Muslim.⁶⁵ Sharia is only mentioned explicitly in Article 114 as the basis of financial law. Article 45 provides for gender equality and condemns violence against women. The military's exclusion from the political sphere is provided for by Article 17, which emphasizes that it has to be politically impartial and subordinate to the civilian authorities. Thus, in both state-society and civil-military relations, the draft Tunisian constitution sets a unique example for the MENA region.

In Egypt, by contrast, the constitutional process has been rather problematic. After ousting Mubarak, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) became an important political actor, even after the election of Mohammed Morsi of the Muslim

⁶⁴ Sadek, G. (2013).

⁶⁵ "Unofficial English Translation of the Fourth Draft of the Tunisian Constitution | ConstitutionNet - Supporting Constitution Builders Globally." <http://www.constitutionnet.org/vl/item/unofficial-english-translation-fourth-draft-tunisian-constitution> (December 27, 2013).

Brotherhood as President. The overthrow of the Morsi government in a coup d'état in July 2013 was therefore not surprising as is the influence of the military on drafting a new constitution. SCAF has been influential in the constitution-making process, especially with respect to elections and criminal law. Since Mubarak's arrest, the military establishment remained active and exercised its power during the writing of the constitution. It held power over and monitored the functioning of the constituent assembly, which led to the draft constitution in 2012. The President and SCAF struggled over the draft constitution on the issue of the distribution of powers. The post-Arab Spring constitution of Egypt was finally approved by the President on December 26, 2012, thus replacing the 2011 Provisional Constitution of SCAF.⁶⁶ Regarding, the constitution's religious content, Article 1 defines the Egyptian people as part of the *umma*. Article 2 states Islam as the religion of the state and subjects legislation to Sharia. Article 4 establishes Al-Azhar as the main source of Islamic knowledge. Article 219 further stipulates that Sunni Islamic principles form the basis of the law. The draft

constitution lacks any clear reference to gender equality; clauses regarding women were inserted within those on family and social policy instead, thus reinforcing traditional gender roles (Article 10). The strength of the military establishment is also integrated into the constitution. According to Article 236, 'All constitutional declarations that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and the President of the Republic issued between 11 February 2011 and the entry into effect of the Constitution are hereby repealed. But their effects on the past remain in existence.' This article may be interpreted as a guarantee that the initial enactments of the SCAF are not challenged. According to Article 147, the president also appoints military public servants, thereby subordinating the military to the president. However, Article 195 states that the Minister of Defense will be appointed from among the members of the military, and there is also an autonomous military judiciary (Article 198). Although the draft was completed during Morsi's time in office, the Muslim Brotherhood claims that the final draft has been altered by the post-coup government.⁶⁷

Of the three Arab countries discussed here, the constitution-making

⁶⁶ The analysis of the Egyptian Constitution in this article relies on its English translation by Nivien Saleh at <http://niviensaleh.info/constitution-egypt-2012-translation/> (accessed on May 6, 2013). The interim government established after the coup on July 3, declared that the constitution will be put to a referendum in 2014.

⁶⁷ "Brotherhood Rejects Egypt Charter." 2013. *BBC*. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25183139> (December 27, 2013).

process is slowest in Libya. Libya's lack of any electoral history and the absence of any basic political party organization certainly accounts for this situation. In Egypt and Tunisia, there is at least the minimal institutional structure required for the dialogue necessary for drafting a constitution. Libya's ongoing civil strife also prevents the functioning of the constitutional committee. So far, therefore, the only achievement has been the approval of the Constitutional Drafting Commission electoral law, by which the 60 members of the constitution-making committee are elected so that all tribes and regions are represented. In contrast to Tunisia, it is highly likely that Sharia will be the basis of the new constitution given the lack of a strong secular opposition. However, as of August 2014, there is not much progress in constitution-making due to the deep political divisions.

As this discussion of the draft constitutions reveals, the new states and their governments have not yet been able to settle issues regarding the secular-Islamist cleavage and civil-military relations. Of the three countries, Tunisia appears to have the most liberal draft constitution because Islamic law does not form the basis of legislation although it is declared the state religion. Notwithstanding, the military's decision

not to use force against anti-government demonstrations, which allowed Tunisia's former state elite to be overthrown, the military establishment has been kept out of the constitution-making process and carefully subordinated to civilian control in the constitution. However, the secular opposition is still suspicious of the incumbent government's intentions to put the Islamic law in effect if it expands its power base in the upcoming elections. In the Egyptian constitution, Sharia is used as the basis of legislation, with the institutional authority of Al-Azhar scholars being explicitly recognized. The constitution also empowers the military. Given that the democratically elected Islamist government was toppled by the military, prospects for a functioning civilian political system are not promising in the near future. However, Libya's situation is the grimmest, with even basic institutions not functioning, tribal social structures persisting, and the armed forces divided while the country has collapsed into civil war.

Concluding Remarks: Turkey as a Model?

As this paper's comparative analysis reveals, it is hard to conclude that Turkey can constitute a model for MENA countries. From the three periods analyzed, the founding of the modern states, and the

pre and post Arab Spring periods, it is clear that the Turkish experience with democracy is unique due to its specific historical background and the political culture of Turkish society. Its state-building process has followed a specific trajectory, marked by a high degree of Westernization and modernization. Although there had been military interventions in Turkish political history, the strong adherence to the Kemalist principles prevented the military from staying in power for long periods. Eventually, Turkey's accession process to the European Union has proved to be a major factor in bringing about the transformation of the military's traditional role in Turkish politics, which rendered future coup d'états almost impossible.

Turkey's democracy, however, still needs to be further consolidated. In this respect, the relationship between the state elites and political elites are of utmost importance. The state elite who perceived themselves as the guardians of the Republican principles saw the politicization of Islam as a major threat and want the state to control the practice and public visibility of religion. The political elites argue that secularism, imposed from above, was not embraced by the masses and attempt to take measures that will make public life more suitable for

practicing Muslims. The mutual suspicion and contempt have driven both sides to resort to non-democratic methods. Being part of the state elite, the military is mobilized against the political elites. The political elites did not take the worries of the secular opposition into consideration in decision and policy-making; and, as the recent developments reveal, they fabricated law cases without solid evidence to undermine the credibility of the prominent members of the bureaucratic and military establishment. In other words, democracy has not been the only game in the town.

However, it is possible to be optimistic for the future. The legal reforms have curbed the political powers of the military and awareness of the negative repercussions of military interventions seems to have developed in the last few years. The Gezi protests, on the other hand, reveal that Turkish society, despite being conservative on average, despises authoritarianism and intervention in the life-styles of the people. In future, the state elites are more likely to refrain from relying on the extra-parliamentary actors and the political elites have to recognize the civilian secular opposition.

However, at its current stage, the Turkish political system does not resolve its problems with respect to the state-society relations, and its flaws prevent the

country from being a model for any other country. Besides, the state elites and the political elites mean two different things when they talk about the Turkish model, and both are problematic: the former suffers from elitism and militarism, while the latter tends to be authoritarian on the inside and expansionist/revisionist on the outside.

No matter how it is formulated, the Turkish model appears unacceptable to Middle Eastern public opinion, which can be explained as resulting from lingering resentment of Turkey's Ottoman past. Research indicates that the level of positive support to Turkey playing a greater role in the region has consistently declined in the last three years.⁶⁸ As the Neo-Ottoman's discourse of the JDP period indicates, relations between Turkey and Arab countries are shaped by history on both sides. On the one hand, Turkey's ruling party the AKM apparently views Turkey as a regional leader with historical experience of ruling the MENA region. On the other hand, Arab leaders and public opinion resent the Turkish model for similar historical reasons, and from an entirely opposite perspective. Turkey's interventions in the internal conflicts of the

countries in the region are identified as one of the main reasons why Turkey cannot be a model for the region.⁶⁹ In other words, Turkey's activism in the region appears to be perceived as a patronizing act.

Constitution-making processes in the aftermath of the revolts also reveal that the history of state-society relations and civil-military relations conditioned Egypt, Tunisia and Libya in a different way than Turkey. Despite the tension between the secularists and Islamists in Turkey, the level of secularization at the social and constitutional level is incomparable to these countries. As far as the civil-military relations are concerned, the legal reforms in Turkey have so far strengthened the autonomy of the civilians from the military. The military remains a very strong political actor in both Egypt and Libya and is empowered by constitutional rights. Tunisian politics and the new constitution have been more civilian than the Turkish one, yet not more secular. Overall, it can be concluded that the Turkish model does not seem to appeal to the bureaucrats and politicians in these countries.

⁶⁸ Akgün, M. and Şenyücel Gündoğar, S. 2013. *Ortadoğu'da Türkiye Algısı 2013*. TESEV, p. 21. <http://www.tesev.org.tr/assets/publications/file/03122013120651.pdf> (December 12, 2013).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

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