

# Beyond the Democratic Wave in the Arab World: The Middle East's Turko-Persian Future\*

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## ABSTRACT

*It is unlikely that the Egyptian revolution will have a major impact on the political and strategic landscape in the Middle East in the short and medium terms. Egypt, the Arab state with the greatest capacity to act regionally, will be tied down for a considerable period of time in getting its house in order and sorting out the relationship between the civilian and military components of the new political order. This means that the shift in the center of political gravity in the region from the Arab heartland comprising Egypt and the Fertile Crescent to what was once considered the non-Arab periphery – Turkey and Iran – which was becoming clearly discernible before the recent upheavals in the Arab world will continue. The shift in the strategic and political balance in the Middle East in favor of Turkey and Iran is the result of a combination of factors, some domestic, some regional and some global.*

Recent events in Egypt that led to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak by a “people’s revolution” have given rise to the impression that Egypt is once again emerging as the focal point of politics in the Middle East. It is argued that this is likely to be the case both because of the “demonstration effect” of the Egyptian revolution on the rest of the Arab world and because of the revolution’s anticipated impact on Egypt’s relations both with Israel and with the United States. It is assumed, and in some quarters feared, that a civilian government responsive to popular opinion will dramatically alter Egypt’s relations with Israel (and by extension with the United States) thus undermining the current status quo between Israel and its Arab neighbors that favors the former.

I would contend that despite the euphoria surrounding the January 25 revolution both

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these conclusions are premature for a number of reasons. First, given the Egyptian military's vested interest in the existing economic and political power structure in the country, any political transition supervised by the military top brass is unlikely to bring about genuine socio-economic and political change, thus eventually limiting the demonstration effect of Egyptian events on neighboring Arab countries. Second, the armed forces have declared unequivocally that they will honor all international treaties

signed by the previous regimes, thus signaling their commitment to the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty of 1979. Therefore, while there may be some easing of the Egyptian blockade of Gaza, the fundamental nature of Egypt's relations with Israel is unlikely to change.

The Egyptian military is committed to the status quo for two major reasons. One, it knows that it cannot afford an openly hostile Israel on its borders especially since the latter has the massive backing of Washington and possesses state of the art weaponry supplied by the United States. Second, the military top brass has a vested interest in good relations with the United States, which has poured billions of dollars into the military's coffers during the past three decades. The corporate interests of the Egyptian military officer class preclude its countenancing any major change in the foreign policy trajectory of the country. Despite more political openness and a public face of civilian rule, it is unlikely that the fundamental power structure in Egypt or its foreign policy orientation will undergo radical transformation except in the very long, run if and when civilian forces are able successfully to chip away at the military's domination of the country's political and economic life. It is worth noting in this context that it took six decades for Turkey to assert a reasonable amount of civilian control over the military and that that process is still far from complete.

Therefore, it is unlikely that the Egyptian revolution will have a major impact on the political and strategic landscape in the Middle East in the short and medium terms. This also means that the shift in the center of political gravity in the region from the Arab heartland comprising Egypt and the Fertile Crescent to what was once considered the non-Arab periphery – Turkey and Iran – which was becoming clearly discernible before the recent upheavals in the Arab world will continue.

This shift in terms of power and influence from the Arab heartland to Turkey and Iran commenced with the Arab defeat in the Six Day War of 1967 and gained momentum with the Iranian revolution of 1979. One began to see, however hazily, the contours of the emerging Turko-Persian future of the Middle East in 1991 with the decimation of Iraqi power in the First Gulf War that provided both Iran and Turkey political space to increase their influence in the Persian Gulf and in the Fertile Crescent respectively. It became a full-blown reality following the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq by the United States and its allies between 2001 and 2003.

To many Western analysts, the self-confidence demonstrated by Turkey and Iran in the international arena in the past decade appears to be an attempt to recreate the Ottoman Empire (hence the popularity of the term “neo-Ottomanism” while referring to Turkish foreign policy) on the one hand, and the emergence of a Shia crescent, on the other.<sup>1</sup> To the more discerning observers of the Middle East however, the emergence of Turkey and Iran as major regional players does not reveal such disconcerting trends. The political elites in Ankara and Tehran are not naïve to fall prey to such inflated aspirations. They are merely asserting their long overdue roles as major regional actors in a system of sovereign states.

### **International and Domestic Contexts**

The shift in the strategic and political balance in the Middle East in favor of Turkey and Iran is the result of a combination of factors, some domestic, some regional and some global. The Afghanistan and Iraqi invasions in 2001 and 2003 irrevocably changed the balance of forces in the eastern part of the Middle East by removing Iran's two major regional adversaries – the Taliban and the Ba'ath Party – from power in Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively. They also coincided with a major shift in the balance between political forces within Turkey with the coming to power of the AK Party in 2002. The international implications of this event began to become clear with the refusal of the Turkish Parliament in 2003 to provide American troops passage to northern Iraq to open a northern front against the Saddam regime. The Parliament's decision mirrored deep-seated antagonism among the Turkish public – in an increasingly democratic Turkey – against the American invasion of Iraq.

The first three years of this century were crucial for the Middle East because events in those years radically changed Iran's security environment and Turkey's foreign policy orientation. While Tehran was greatly concerned about the presence of American troops on both its flanks in Iraq and Afghanistan, which conjured up fears of a pincer movement against Iran, the Iranian ruling circles quickly realized that the United States was now stuck not in one quagmire but two. They also

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realized that Iran was the indispensable player in both of these theaters and that it would be extremely difficult for the United States to disengage from either Iraq or Afghanistan without completely losing face in the absence of Iran's cooperation or at least consent.

The aftermath of the twin invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq made it very clear that Iran was indispensable to the construction of a stable and legitimate security structure in the Persian Gulf and beyond. The debilitation of the Iraqi state and the near-total decimation of Iraqi power following the American invasion reinforced and re-affirmed Iran's position as the pre-eminent, if not the predominant power in the eastern half of the Middle East.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, the election results of 2002 demonstrated the coming of age of a post-Kemalist democratic Turkey increasingly comfortable with its Muslim identity. The coming to power of the AK Party signaled a subtle shift in Turkish policy both toward Iraqi Kurdistan and toward Turkey's own Kurdish population that bode well for Turkish-Kurdish reconciliation. The latter has not yet realized its full potential in the Turkish domestic arena because of a shortsighted ultra-nationalist backlash that has put the AK Party government on the defensive.

However, and in spite of this backlash, there has been a remarkable change in Turkey's relations with the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan for two reasons. The first is Turkey's massive economic presence in that region, a logical result of the fact that Turkey provided the economic lifeline for land-locked Iraqi Kurdistan between 1991 and 2003. Second, there has been a dramatic shift in Ankara's political approach to autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan from one of mistrust to one of cooperation. Although the beginnings of this change antedate the coming to power of the AK Party, the process has accelerated since the Erdogan government came into office in 2002.

Improved relations with Iraqi Kurdistan are part of Turkey's regional strategy of "zero problems with its neighbors", best articulated by current Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu.<sup>3</sup> This policy is also in evidence in Turkey's steadily improving relations with Syria, with whom Turkey shares a large land border but with whom relations had been tense, if not hostile for the past several decades. While both Turkey and Syria benefit economically from their new relationship, its significance goes beyond economics with one analyst suggesting that "Syria's status in Turkish strategic calculations has been elevated from threat to strategic ally."<sup>4</sup> Given Syria's

close relationship with Iran, the improvement in Turkish-Syrian relations has also had a positive impact on Turkey's relations with Iran.

### **Increased Soft Power of Iran and Turkey**

The rise of Iran and Turkey is also the result of a combination of hard and soft power, and the increasing dexterity with which Ankara and Tehran have been able to combine the two sets of assets in particular situations and locales. Hard power can be quantified, among other things, in terms of demography, military capability, GNP (especially the capacity to trade and provide aid), and technological capacity. Turkey's rise to the 17<sup>th</sup> position among world economies in the past few years according to data provided both by the IMF and the World Bank is one indication of its increasing hard capabilities. Iran is currently the world's fourth largest producer and the third largest exporter of oil.<sup>5</sup> It also possesses the world's second largest natural gas reserves and is the leading producer in the Middle East where 40 percent of the world's gas reserves are located.<sup>6</sup> Iran's combination of oil and natural gas reserves make it a very important player in the energy market both currently and well into the future when natural gas is expected to play a more prominent role as a source of energy. Additionally, both Turkey and Iran possess respectable military capabilities, although Iran is hampered from acquiring sophisticated weapons and suffers from lack of spare parts for imported weaponry because of military and economic sanctions imposed upon it almost throughout the post-revolution years.

Soft power is much more difficult to measure but is nearly as important in international politics as hard power, because, in the words of Joseph Nye, it "rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others... Simply put, in behavioral terms soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft power resources are the assets that produce such attraction. Whether a particular asset is a soft-power resource that produces attraction can be measured by asking people through polls or focus groups."<sup>7</sup>

According to one of the most reliable polls undertaken in 2010 by the University of Maryland and Zogby International in six Arab countries with regimes friendly to the United States – Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco – three regional leaders compete for the top spot in terms of popularity in the Arab world: Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Hassan Nasrallah.<sup>8</sup> Only one of the three – Nasrallah – is an Arab and he is the only one who is not a head of state or government, although he has recently assumed the role of kingmaker in Lebanon with the fall of the pro-Western Saad Hariri government and its replacement by one supported by Hizbullah and its allies.



Photo: AA, İsmail Yeşilyurt

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It is also remarkable that two of the three leaders most popular in these countries, five of which are predominantly Sunni, are Shia. This fact exposes the hollowness of the much asserted proposition in the Western media and some academic circles that the Sunni-Shia divide will now form the primary variable shaping the political contours of the Middle East to the near total exclusion of all other domestic, regional, and global variables affecting the politics of the region.<sup>9</sup> It also gives the lie to the related myth that the Arab-Persian split will form the major fault line in the Middle East and that future regional conflicts will emanate from this source. It is worth noting that the major propagators of both these myths are authoritarian Arab regimes allied to the United States.<sup>10</sup>

In Arab perceptions, Erdogan, who leads the pack by a substantial margin, represents the Turkish model of Muslim democracy; Ahmadinejad represents the Muslim world's defiance of the West, especially of the United States; and Nasrallah represents Arab and Muslim resistance against Israeli designs. All three share to different degrees a dislike of or antagonism toward Israel, which can be attributed to the continuing Israeli occupation of Palestine and its aspirations for military hegemony in the Middle East heartland. Incidentally, both the Israeli occupation of Palestine and its military superiority over its Arab neighbors are guaranteed by the supply of state of the art American weapons and Israel's status as the sole nuclear weapons power in the region.

This poll, like several of its predecessors, is also a good indicator of the goals or values that most Arabs cherish: democracy at home, resistance to Israel's hegemonic policies in the region, and defiance of the global hegemon, namely the United States. It is also worth noting that all three figures admired by the

Arab publics are associated in one way or another with political manifestations of Islam. The eminent Arab journalist Rami Khouri captured this reality in the following words: "The common denominator among all the Islamist trends is their shared sense of grievances against the three primary forces that they feel degrade their lives: autocratic Arab regimes that run security states usually dominated by a handful of members of a single family; the effect of Israeli policies on Arab societies through military attacks, occupation, and influence on U.S. policy in the region; and the military and political interference of the United States and other Western powers that harms the people in the region."<sup>11</sup>

What this means is that both Turkey and Iran have the sort of "soft power" in the Middle East that no other country – certainly no Arab country or regime – can wield. Turkey's soft power is largely a function of the legitimacy of its political system and of its leadership at home. This is a model that people in other Middle Eastern countries would like to emulate. The attraction of this model has become amply clear from the recent outbreak of democratic revolutions in various Arab countries all the way from North Africa to the Persian Gulf.

Iran's soft power is based on the acceptance by large segments of the population in the Middle East of its foreign policy objectives, namely, resistance against global hegemony and assertion of its autonomy in international affairs as an independent player that is willing to bear the cost of defying the concert of powers dominating the international security and economic structures. Furthermore, the perception that these are the only two countries/regimes in the Middle East that are able to stand up to Israel and challenge what is widely seen in the region as Israel's predatory behavior adds to Turkey's and Iran's popularity among the Arab and Muslim publics.

### **The Current Scenario**

The continuing turmoil in the Arab world extending all the way from the Maghreb to the Persian Gulf has, among other things, shed light on the profound vulnerabilities of Arab regimes, particularly of the oil-rich kingdom of Saudi

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Arabia, which was being projected by the West as capable of balancing Iran in the Gulf.<sup>12</sup> Turmoil in Bahrain and Yemen has demonstrated that the Arabian Peninsula/Persian Gulf is not immune to the democratic wave sweeping the rest of the Arab world. A change of regime in Bahrain, the weakest link in the chain of Arab autocracies in the Gulf, is especially likely to work in Iran's favor given Bah-

rain's Shia majority and its historical connections with Iran.<sup>13</sup> This prospect has alarmed the Saudi regime and its GCC allies prompting them into sending troops into Bahrain to preserve the monarchy and help it quell popular protests.<sup>14</sup> The tiny country of Bahrain has thus become the frontline in the proxy conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the energy-rich Gulf.

Iran has also successfully consolidated its influence in the Arab heartland in Syria and Lebanon, especially after the recent installation of a government in Beirut supported by Tehran's ally Hizbullah. Furthermore, despite the challenge from the Green Movement, the Iranian regime appears reasonably secure and is likely to ride out the current storm. Although the increasing influence of the Revolutionary Guard within the Iranian power structure has raised the specter of "praetorian corporatism"<sup>15</sup> in the country, the Iranian regime continues to be multi-centric because its constitution operates on the principle of dispersal of power among various clerical and representative institutions as well as between the regular armed forces and the Revolutionary Guard. There also exist multiple crosscutting cleavages among members of the governing elite. Furthermore, the existence of representative institutions based upon adult franchise that can often produce surprising results, as they did in the presidential elections of 1997 and 2001 and, even I would argue, in 2005, despite attempts by the hard-liners to control electoral outcomes, provides vents for letting off political steam. This ensures a degree of regime security and regime legitimacy not available to authoritarian regimes in the Arab world.

The legitimacy of the freely elected Turkish government is even less in doubt. Despite charges of autocratic behavior leveled against Prime Minister Erdogan by some political opponents and alleged conspiracies by elements in the military and the secularist civilian elite to overthrow the AK Party government, the Turkish government is securely in office, its legitimacy and capacity hardly dented by such charges and conspiracies. In September 2010 constitutional amendments

proposed by the government and aimed at “rais[ing] democratic standards and further erod[ing] the powers of the country’s once omnipotent generals,”<sup>16</sup> were approved in a referendum by 58 percent of the voters. If this may be taken as an indicator, the AK Party is likely to increase further its share of the popular vote in the 2011 parliamentary elections as compared to its performance in 2007 when it garnered 47 percent of the vote.

### **Bilateral Relations between Turkey and Iran**

In sum, despite the current upheavals in the Arab world and in part because of them, the Middle East seems to be inexorably heading toward a Turko-Persian future. This conclusion is augmented by the evidence that both Turkey and Iran have demonstrated the capacity to keep their bilateral relationship on an even keel, despite the fact that their objectives do not fully coincide on a number of issues including relations with the United States and Iran’s nuclear program. Turkey has had to do an intricate balancing act to keep its relationship with the United States intact while improving relations with Iran, and has succeeded remarkably well so far. Iran has demonstrated its understanding of Turkey’s strategic link with NATO and, therefore, with the United States, and has never made it an obstacle in the improvement of its own relations with Turkey. It also recognizes Turkey’s aspirations to join the EU (although this prospect seems to be receding fast) and sees it as complementing its own desire to improve relations with the EU, thus dividing Europe from the United States on issues of vital concern to Tehran.

Turkey, on its part, recognizes Iran’s aspirations for nuclear autonomy, especially building indigenous capacity to enrich uranium, although it may be ambivalent about the strategy adopted by Tehran to achieve its goal in this arena. Moreover, the secular-Islamic divide that at one time was a major hindrance to the development of Turkish-Iranian relations is no longer relevant. This is so because Turkey has succeeded to a large extent in overcoming its Kemalist neurosis and because Iran has now reached a post-revolutionary phase where national interest trumps ideological antipathy.

Economic relations have also contributed in large measure to the rapprochement between the two countries. Iran is the second largest supplier of natural gas to Turkey after Russia, providing nearly one-third of Turkey’s natural gas. Bilateral trade between Turkey and Iran has increased from \$2 billion in 2000 to \$10 billion in 2008. Turkey has expanded its economic relations with Iran in defiance of American warnings, because, among other things, it considers the gas connection with Iran vital for turning Turkey into a major energy hub connecting Asian

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sources of supply to European markets and beyond. Although the balance of trade is skewed in Iran's favor because of its gas supply, Turkish exports of goods and services to Iran have been rising significantly over the past few years.<sup>17</sup>

Growing commonality of interests on the Kurdish issue with both Turkey and Iran home to restive Kurdish minorities has also facilitated cooperation. Turkey and Iran came to share the concern re-

garding the emergence of an independent Kurdistan in the wake of the American invasion of Iraq and the de facto statehood this conferred on Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurdish issue that at one time was a bone of contention between Ankara and Tehran with the former accusing the latter of supporting the PKK's secessionist designs against Turkey has now turned into an arena of convergence between the two capitals equally concerned about Kurdish secessionism and irredentism. According to one Iranian commentator, "the likelihood of an independent Kurdish state is at the heart of common interests between Iran and Turkey, and Washington's ambiguous policy on this issue has strengthened the sense of fear felt both by Iran and Turkey."<sup>18</sup> Both Iran and Turkey, despite their support to different factions within Iraq, have a vested interest in the unity of that country in large part to prevent the emergence of a Kurdish state. This has meant that Iran's support to the Shia in Iraq is constrained by the need to protect the unity of Iraq, and that Turkey's support to certain Sunni factions, especially the Turkmen, is also subject to the same constraint.

All this does not mean that no problems will arise in their bilateral relations in the future. What it does mean is that given the interests that bind them Turkey and Iran are unlikely to come into direct clash with one another. The only possible exception to this rule is Iraq, where both have overlapping interests that sometimes converge and sometimes diverge from one another. However, if Ankara and Tehran can handle their differences in relation to Iraq when they occur with political sagacity and adequate sensitivity to the other side's concerns, as they have done so far, Iraq can actually become the prime arena for cooperation rather than discord between them. There is sufficient indication that both the Turkish and Iranian leaderships are aware of this fact, with Iran conceding primacy to Turkey in northern Iraq and Turkey conceding primacy to Iran in the Shia dominated south of the country.

The Iranian nuclear issue and the two countries' relations with Israel are other issues that may cause occasional hiccups. However, it is clear that Turkey is adequately sensitive to the Iranian position on Tehran's right to enrich uranium for civilian purposes even if the West perceives this as the first step toward weaponization. Turkey's attempt in 2010

to mediate the enrichment dispute between Iran and the P5+1 was a clear indication of the importance Turkey attaches to this issue as well as to its relations with Iran. Although this attempt failed because of American opposition to the nuclear swap deal negotiated by Turkey and Brazil, it has had a positive impact in terms of Turkey's image in Iran. This image was further augmented by Turkey's vote in the UN Security Council on June 9, 2010, opposing the latest round of sanctions against Iran. This vote was partially a reaction to the P5+1's rejection of the uranium swap deal negotiated by Turkey and Brazil. However, in large part it reflected Ankara's desire not to alienate Iran, which it considers a very important neighbor and economic partner.

Moreover, Turkey is not unduly disturbed at the prospect of a nuclear weapons capable Iran for several reasons: one, it considers such an eventuality unlikely in the short run and believes that were it to happen it would take the form of nuclear ambiguity rather than overt weaponization; two, as a member of NATO it considers itself covered by the American nuclear umbrella and, therefore, immune to nuclear blackmail; three, it perceives Iran's nuclear (weapons) program as a defensive and deterrent strategy rather than an offensive one; and, finally, it does not see itself entering into a confrontation with Iran where the nuclear capability of either party would become relevant. This last point is very important because it indicates a sea change in Turkish perception of Iran. According to two Turkish analysts of the Iranian nuclear issue, "Less than a decade ago, had Iran displayed similar ambitions to develop elaborate nuclear capabilities, it would have been confronted with much more negative reactions from Turkey's public and government."<sup>19</sup>

Despite the vast difference in their rhetoric toward Israel (although this gap has been much reduced thanks to the devastation of Gaza by Israel in December 2008 and the Israeli killing of nine Turks in international waters in May 2010) and Turkey's defense relationship with Israel, Iranian and Turkish perceptions of Israel have begun to converge much more than they diverge. The deterioration in Turkish-Israeli relations can be traced to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003

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that facilitated enhanced covert Israeli presence and espionage operations in the Kurdish region of Iraq.<sup>20</sup> Ankara perceives Israel as stoking Kurdish aspirations for independence, an outcome clearly deleterious to Turkish interests. One can in fact argue that this factor has contributed more significantly to the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations than either the coming to power of the AK Party in Ankara in 2002 or the highly destructive Israeli raid in Gaza in December 2008.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

Overall, Turkish and Iranian interests converge more than they diverge and there is a greater realization of this fact both in Ankara and in Tehran now than there was ten years ago. This clears the way for greater cooperation between Turkey and Iran on regional issues and strengthens their respective positions vis-à-vis other actors in the region. Furthermore, it is more than likely that domestic upheavals and changes of regimes in the Arab world will make the major Arab countries much more focused on internal issues than has been the case during the past decade. Such upheavals may in some instances threaten civil war, as seems to be the case with Libya, thus focusing Arab energies even more on the domestic arena. In other cases, such as Yemen and Bahrain, regime repression will further de-legitimize the position not only of the local regimes themselves but of their major regional supporter Saudi Arabia as well. Egypt, the Arab state with the greatest capacity to act regionally, will be tied down for a considerable period of time in getting its house in order and sorting out the relationship between the civilian and military components of the new political order.<sup>22</sup>

All this is likely to redound to the benefit of Iran and Turkey, the only two countries in the region with adequate hard and soft power and with reasonably favorable regional security environments to influence events in the Middle East. The future of the Middle East over the next couple of decades is, therefore, likely to depend not so much on what happens in Cairo or Riyadh as on events taking place in Ankara and Tehran, the relationship between these two capitals, and the policies adopted by them toward the rest of the region.

## Endnotes

1. The term neo-Ottoman used in a pejorative sense, especially to refer to Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu's conception of his country's foreign policy, even found its way into multiple cables sent by the American embassy in Ankara to the State Department. See Robert Mackay, "Reaction to Leak of U.S. Diplomatic Cables, Day 2," in *The Lede* (November 29, 2010), retrieved from the New York Times website at <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/29/updates-on-the-global-reaction-to-leaked-u-s-cables/?scp=1&sq=neo-ottoman&st=cse>. The prestigious Council on Foreign Relations held a symposium in June 2006 in New York on "The Emergent Shia Crescent: Im-

plications for U.S. Policy in the Middle East”, retrieved from [http://www.cfr.org/publication/10866/emerging\\_shia\\_crescent\\_symposium.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/10866/emerging_shia_crescent_symposium.html).

2. Mohammed Ayoob, “American Policy toward the Persian Gulf: Strategies, Effectiveness, and Consequences”, in Mehran Kamrava (ed.), *The International Politics of the Persian Gulf* (University of Syracuse Press, forthcoming, 2011).

3. For a vision statement of Turkey’s current foreign policy, see the article by current Foreign Minister and author of the “zero problems with neighbors” policy, Ahmet Davutoglu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007”, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2008), pp. 77-96. For an intelligent and balanced critique of this policy, see Ziya Onis, “Multiple Faces of the ‘New’ Turkish Foreign Policy: Underlying Dynamics and Critique,” *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2011), pp. 47-65.

4. Hasan Kosebalaban, “The Crisis in Turkish-Israeli Relations: What is Its Strategic Significance?”, *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Fall 2010), p. 47.

5. Data provided by U.S. Energy Information Administration and retrieved from <http://www.eia.gov/countries/index.cfm?topL=exp>.

6. Data provided by U.S. Energy Information Administration and retrieved from [http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/ieo/nat\\_gas.html](http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/ieo/nat_gas.html).

7. Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), pp. 5-6.

8. *2010 Arab Public Opinion Poll*, Conducted by the University of Maryland in conjunction with Zogby International, retrieved from [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2010/08\\_arab\\_opinion\\_poll\\_telhami/08\\_arab\\_opinion\\_poll\\_telhami.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2010/08_arab_opinion_poll_telhami/08_arab_opinion_poll_telhami.pdf).

9. For example, Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

10. For example, see King Abdullah of Jordan’s interview in the Washington Post in Robin Wright and Peter Baker, “Iraq, Jordan See Threat To Election From Iran: Leaders Warn Against Forming Religious State,” *Washington Post*, December 8, 2004. Former President Mubarak of Egypt in an April 8, 2006 interview on al-Arabiya satellite television declared “The Shiites are always loyal to Iran. Most of them are loyal to Iran and not to the countries in which they live” thus linking the Sunni-Shia divide to the Arab-Persian divide. Quoted in Barry Rubin, “Iran: The Rise of a Regional Power,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (September, 2006), retrieved from <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2006/issue3/jv10no3a10.html>.

11. Rami Khouri, “Free at Last! Free at Last! Allahu Akbar, We are Free at Last! Parallels between Modern Arab and Islamic Activism and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement,” in Maria J. Stephan (ed.), *Civilian Jihad: Nonviolent Struggle, Democratization, and Governance in the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 81.

12. For a very insightful analysis of the vulnerabilities of the Saudi regime, see Madawi Al-Rasheed, “Yes, It Could Happen Here: Why Saudi Arabia is Ripe for Revolution,” *Foreign Policy-Middle East Channel* retrieved from [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/28/yes\\_it\\_could\\_happen\\_here](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/28/yes_it_could_happen_here).

13. Mohammed Ayoob, “Libya is Important, But Don’t Forget Bahrain,” *Foreign Policy-Middle East Channel*, retrieved from [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/25/libya\\_is\\_important\\_but\\_don\\_t\\_forget\\_bahrain](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/25/libya_is_important_but_don_t_forget_bahrain).

14. Mohammed Ayoob, “The GCC Shows Its True Colors,” *Foreign Policy-Middle East Channel*, retrieved from [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/03/16/the\\_gcc\\_shows\\_its\\_true\\_color](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/03/16/the_gcc_shows_its_true_color).

15. The concept of “praetorian corporatism” derives from my combination of two paradigms – praetorianism and corporatism – currently used to explain the rise of the Revolutionary Guards’

power in Iran. I believe both are at work simultaneously and one cannot understand the nature of power in Iran without combining both paradigms. For the praetorian argument, see Elliot Hen-Tov and Nathan Gonzalez, "The Militarization of Post-Khoemini Iran: Praetorianism 2.0" *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Winter, 2011), pp. 45-59. For the corporatist argument, see Ali Ansari, "The Revolution will be Mercantilized," *National Interest* (January-February, 2010), retrieved from <http://nationalinterest.org/article/the-revolution-will-be-mercantilized-3332>.

16. "Erdogan Pulls It Off," *Economist*, September 13, 2010, retrieved from [http://www.economist.com/blogs/newsbook/2010/09/turkeys\\_constitutional\\_referendum](http://www.economist.com/blogs/newsbook/2010/09/turkeys_constitutional_referendum).

17. For a good account of the multi-faceted nature of the Turkish-Iranian relationship, see Daphne McCurdy, "Turkish-Iranian Relations: When Opposites Attract," *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Summer, 2008), pp. 87-106.

18. Rahman G. Bonab, "Turkey's Emerging Role as a Mediator on Iran's Nuclear Activities," *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2009), p. 173.

19. Mustafa Kibaroglu and Baris Caglar, "Implications of a Nuclear Iran for Turkey," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Winter, 2008), p. 61.

20. For details of Israeli presence in Iraqi Kurdistan, see Seymour M. Hersh, "Plan B," *New Yorker*, June 28, 2004, retrieved from [http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/06/28/040628fa\\_fact](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/06/28/040628fa_fact).

21. See Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Clash of Interest Over Northern Iraq Drives Turkish-Israeli Alliance to a Crossroads," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), pp. 246-264.

22. See, Mohammed Ayob, "The Tyrant is Dead, Long Live the Military," *Foreign Policy-Middle East Channel* retrieved from [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/13/the\\_tyrant\\_is\\_dead\\_long\\_live\\_the\\_military](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/13/the_tyrant_is_dead_long_live_the_military).