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Stabilizing Disarray in the Muslim World: Turkey and the European Union

Muhammad Nadeem Mirza, Lubna Abid Ali & Irfan Hasnain Qaisrani

Abstract

This study focuses on the growth of transnational forces and increased global interdependence in the Post-Cold War period, posing serious challenges to conservative regimes in the Middle East – manifested by popular uprisings for economic and political change, beginning 2010 in Tunisia. Since then the Arab states of Middle East are in turmoil. The situation has become complex due to the presence of Al-Qaeda network and ISIS ('Islamic' State of Iraq and Syria) radicals in the Middle East and Mediterranean region. Such non state extremists groups are a collective threat to future Europe also. On the other hand various countries of the Middle East and gulf region, have been engaged in waging the proxy wars against each other in order to achieve their specific objectives. Geographically, historically and politically Turkey has been a bridge between Middle East and Europe. The underlying assumption of this study establishes Turkey's matured foreign policy not only as a model for struggling states of the Muslim World but holds keys to emerging threats to Europe. The study explores possibilities of Turkey to be central player not only for the resolution of regional issues but also as an active player at the global level.

Key words: Functional foreign policy. Deprivation among Arabs. Turkey as bridge between East and West. Networked cities. Managing IS radicals.

Introduction

From Pan-Turanism to Pan-Islamism and from orientalism to European centrism there has occurred a shift in the foreign policy orientations of Turkey towards a pan-geographical foreign policy that is "functional" and allows realization of its potentialities. It aims at combining East & West and embraces North & South in the future [(Adib-Moghaddam, 2014a) Also see (Adib-Moghaddam, 2014b)].¹For the purpose, a modern Turkey under the 'strong'

¹ In his book, Arshin Adib Moqaddam, the professor of Comparative Politics at SOAS, London has framed this concept for a "functional foreign policy" of Iran.

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leadership – which has shown the political and strategic ‘will’ to take bold steps – has stepped up efforts for the restoration of the past glory it enjoyed in the ancient times. It has been active in the international system for positive purposes in order to help solve the issues which plague the Muslim world.

Middle East and the Gulf region has been in turmoil because of a number of factors, most important being the internal dissatisfaction of the youth with the prevailing social, political, and economic conditions; the proxy wars being fought between different states; wars in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, etc.; intervention of the competing great powers and other great games going on in the region; and most importantly rise of the extremist organizations like Al-Qaeda and most recently ‘Islamic’ State of Iraq and Syria. These issues have been dominant in determining the future of the region. How Turkey as an actor or factor may influence the final outcome or the processes involved in the Middle East specifically and the Muslim world generally, remain the important question that this study intends to explore.

Theoretical framework

The study employs the theoretical tools available in the field of foreign policy analysis and complex interdependence. Under the impact of technological and financial interdependence foreign policy has been transformed in 3 contexts:

1. Making of foreign policy
2. The content of foreign policy
3. Implementation of foreign policy

In the first phase, it is the process of the foreign policy decision making which is constrained by the complex interdependence. Although the cognitive constraints of the decision makers play an important role in the decision making process, yet because of the process of the globalization and its attendant manifestations, the extraneous factors are now considered as important intervening variables to reach at the decision. The poliheuristic theory of foreign policy decision making being propounded by Alex Mintz and others, not only addresses the final outcome i.e. the decisions, but also take into account these intervening variables. It considers that the decision making process involves two stages: first the cognitive/psychological stage and second the rational choice stage (Mintz, 2004). Secondly, the interdependence processes impact the content of the foreign policy. Which issues are considered as urgent and which are considered as important. How the prioritization of the issues is to be done. And finally the interdependence processes affect the implementation of the foreign policy decisions made.

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Overall these interdependence processes result in formulation of the foreign policies by the states which are being pursued for the common good. There is now an international brand of experts(Morse, 1969, pp. 375–379) pursuing agenda based on “low policies” seeking international collective goods and to create regulative devices to finance trade.

Secondly the rise of non-state actors and the phenomena of radical groups require concerted efforts for control and are beyond the capacity of a single state. Thirdly, the essential connect between Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations theoretical literature is provided by the role theory. “Roles, like the civilian power role, make intuitive sense to policy makers and offer great potential to translate foreign policy and IR theory into meaningful, policy relevant advice” (Thies & Breuning, 2012, p. 3).

Similarly the underlying assumption of Complex Interdependence as elaborated by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr. synthesize the competitive and cooperative aspects of global struggle(Nye, 2007, p. 211). While analyzing Turkey’s role in stabilizing the disarray in the Muslim World this is the assumption of this study that it has the ‘capacity’ to influence the outcomes. As explained by Joseph Nye that theory of Complex Interdependence is applicable to “situations in which actors or events in different parts of a system affect each other. Thus it works towards a cooperative security, instead of only balance of power.”(Keohane & Nye-Jr., 1998, pp. 3–32).

With its pan-geographical foreign policy having 222 missions around the world and airways connected to 249 destinations, Turkey is making resonance not only in the Muslim World but also in Eurasia. It is the 6th biggest economy in Europe. A politically mature foreign policy capable of addressing not only regional concerns but holds keys to European States and engaged with US and NATO.²

The central questions addressed in this study are:

1. Does the Turkish model of socio-political advancement be an example for the Muslim World?
2. With its possible EU membership can Turkish state be a bridge between civilizations.

²During a Personal interaction with the ambassador of Turkey to Pakistan H.E. Babar Girgin, in 2014 in Islamabad.

3. How can Turkey combat the radical forces like ISIS and maintain regional peace?

Turkey and the Arab World

Geographically and historically Turkey extended to three continents:

The Ottoman Empire stretched from the Danube to Persian Gulf and from the Ukrainian steppes to the Tropic of Cancer in Upper Egypt. It included the mastery of the great trade routes of the Mediterranean of the Black and Red Seas, and of parts of the Indian Ocean. It had an estimated population of fifty million as against some four million in England and embraced some twenty races and nationalities (Lenczowski, 1962, p. 4).

Historically Turkey pursued a liberal political system and has allowed local autonomy through the exercise of indirect rule. Based on Turkey's past experience recent scholarship in IR has highlighted the post-Arab spring situation and the balancing role that Turkey can play in the region. For example, "with a forty million strong middle class, roughly sixty percent of its population, since 2012 Turkey emerged economically developed in equal terms to Europeans"(Rohde, 2013, p. 4).

There are indeed practical lessons for the Post-Arab spring Muslim World in the Turkish model of democratization. Turkey adopted a threefold approach by focusing on educational system, economic development and strengthening of legal system (Pupeenales, 2012, p. 14). Its education system is considered as one of the best in the Muslim world and is also establishing its worth in the international scholarship. The economic model that the Turkey has been pursuing since long results in astounding development and it is said that Turkey is one of the few countries in the world who have no obligations to the IMF.

In addition, the current changes in world politics owing to globalization situate Turkey as a global power house for international peace and reconciliation. Since, Istanbul has emerged as an economic hub, thus transformation of foreign policy has occurred. "One such change is the formation of net-world spaces"(Ghofrani, 2014). A new paradigm has emerged within the realm of "networked economy". It means in the futuristic analysis cities will be among major elements "affecting and shaping economic systems and cultures". According to this paradigm due to communications skills, transportation

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mechanisms there will emerge global cities – as ‘hubs’ for all kinds of activities in ‘geographical regions’.

The complex interdependence assumptions point to the existence of a main office of each economic corporation in one of their global cities in order to be able to keep up its international activities. Turkish port city of Istanbul is cited as an example of a regional global city. It is close to free waters and possess among other “capacities”... the presence of high managerial skills for the management of the available infrastructure as well as existence of suitable rules for management of peripheral areas. Another related aspect is clearly defined legal and financial requirements to facilitate presence, production and service of companies and corporation (Ghofrani, 2014).

Measured on the scale of democracy, freedom of expression and human rights, Turkey by far stands above Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Libya or even Saudi Arabia. Tunisia, for example, three years after protests ousted Ben Ali, still needs a consensus between Islamists and secularists. After the Parliament’s vote of October 26, 2014, the struggle between the two forces still is considered as the ongoing process and the Tunisian democracy is still based on shaky foundations. Before the election of the head of Islamist party Rached Ghannouchi, noted that Tunisia after the parliament’s vote of 26 October, will not be a stable democracy but a transitional democracy (Ghannouchi, 2014). While at the time the positive aspect of the Tunisian elections was that the same leader of the Islamist party quoted that Tunisia is no-more to return to the one-man dictatorship. The days of the president-for-life is over in Tunisia (Byrne, 2014). Tunisians now are more hopeful and are confident in democracy (Piser, 2016).

Financial variables, uncontrolled unemployment, nepotism/favoritism and corruption have been the primary forces behind the Arab uprising. The sense of deprivation among Arabs, and the dictatorial regimes where people lack the right to vote and bring about socio-political change, have been the main cause behind the revolt against the rulers. The domino effect of these revolutions have been unprecedented. Externally presence of radical groups and communications revolution also helped in increasing the awareness among the young populations of these countries. These factors ultimately increased their anxiety about the situation of their countries and they rose against the political system.

The role of extraneous factors like the great powers support of the dictatorial regimes, the sense of injustice due to their selective application of international law on the East and West of the Red Sea, coupled with the US invasion of Iraq has further added to the instability and crises in the region (Noueihed & Warren, 2013). The rigidity of the authority structures and the

tribal divisions further escalated the peoples drive towards change. However in some cases like in Iraq and Syria, the issue has been hijacked by sectarian violence and religious extremism (Bradley, 2012).

As against such causes of polarization and instability Turkey represents a state system working within a neo liberal ideal model and practicing effective privatization. The democratic process in Turkey brought AKP, the Justice and Development party to power. On the other hand even Muslim Brotherhood is fundamentally a religious public opinion and on occasion is in clash with financial and regulatory mechanisms. Turkey seemingly represents an alternative to the Middle East's three models of governments, which have been facing problems since long;

- i) Secular Arab dictatorship
- ii) Authoritarian government, and
- iii) American invasion.

The situation has become bleak and volatile also due to mismanagement by tribal rulers of these countries. The tribal societies and the tribal setups have further complicated the volatile situation of these countries. Muslims comprising 57 states having 70% of the world's vitality assets account for only 5% of the world's GDP.

The Turkish model evolved at the end of First World War under the leadership of Kemal Mustafa Ataturk. The establishment of republic based on the Western conception of nationhood and the rejection of religious opinion from the entire open circle. The strategy of 'peace at home and peace abroad', outline the broad spectrum of Turkey's relations in the region and at global level.

The foundation of Turkey's success has been the legislature's capacity to encourage financial development. Secondly, the adoption of remote policy to adjust Turkey's Islamism not to its position between US and the Middle East. What constitutes a bridge between East and West is Turkey's soft power and therefore ascribed as an inspiration for the Post-Arab Spring in the Muslim World.

Turkish foreign policy formulation is moreover, to a certain extent influenced by the Turkish International Relations Community. Its intellectuals are engaged systematically in dialogue with international relations academic community the world over. This has brought a huge focus to its endeavors to not only theoretically but practically enrich the sophistication of policy-making. The transformation of Turkey's foreign policy started under the foreign minister

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Davutoglu's vision after the Justice and Development party AKP come to power in 2002. This led to the academic discussion and discourse that engineered Turkey's "remote approach".

Turkey and the European Union

With a per capita income of US\$10,807; the 17th largest economy in the world, Turkey had offered largest development assistance in 2013. Historically it has been a critical player from the concert of Europe to the UN systems. It has been a member OECD, the Council of Europe, NATO member and an associate member of EEC. In 2010, the European Council Commission and Parliament gave their appraisal of Turkey's procedure to move ahead. Although Turkey intends to join the EU, yet because of certain differences, its membership has been held. Both EU and Turkey face similar global challenges and solutions require concerted efforts and joint approaches. The central issues involved in a balanced partnership require:

- i. Development and economic growth
- ii. Allowing diversity
- iii. Regional Stability
- iv. Financial and monetary responsibility

Turkey since 1999 has taken bold initiatives in the context of vote based system, peace, human rights, and legal frameworks for protection of foreign capital and corporations. There exist a perception that Turkey's accession to EU membership is linked to it being a Muslim country rather than a failure to satisfy the EU demands (Bogdani, 2010, p. 6).

Turkey's Vital Role in the Context of EU Energy Supply

Turkey provides the reliable choice against EU's reluctance to continue reliance on Russia. The Bosphorus – Kirkuk – Ceyhan and the Baku – Tbilisi – Ceyhan oil pipelines offer vital connection to the Turkish pro-geography foreign policy.

By end of Second World War, successive US governments have supported Turkey's promotion to the European Union. As a member of NATO since 1952, combined with EU partnership has embedded Turkey in the Western Camp. At the same time, Turkey is a key Middle East player in Syria, Iraq, and even Russia without any fiscal responsibility from Washington. It is not only the one-way that Turkey wishes to fulfill the criteria of the EU, on the contrary the EU also needs to address four genuine concerns of the Turkish state:

- i. Common agriculture policy
- ii. Fiscal responsibility
- iii. Monetary expenses, and
- iv. Easement of Visa conditions.

Turkey has also been the part of the energy corridors being developed by either different great powers or by the countries of the origin. For example Central Asia is considered as one of the biggest source of the energy supply for the future. Turkmenistan houses one of the biggest gas reserves. Although it is China which has taken the lead in developing the energy corridors across the region, yet the role of Turkey has also remained dominant in this regard. Chinese has envisioned the One Belt One Road (OBOR) project worth trillions of dollars with the purpose of connecting about 65 countries. For the purpose China has planned to invest trillions of dollars. Turkey which is already a considered as an important hub for the transportation of the energy resources to the world, would benefit from the project immensely (Sabah News, 2017). By joining the project the products which usually reached from China to Turkey in six-eight weeks, would be reduced to about ten days – a 3,000-kilometer (1,864 mile) reduction in the distance. Turkey has already developed “the Marmaray, Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, Baku-Tbilisi-Kars and the Edirne-Kars railway projects... so far”. These project constitute the part of the middle corridor of the Modern day Silk Route (Can, 2017). India also wanted to connect with Turkey and has offered its own projects to connect to Turkey. It has invested in Iran’s Chabahar port with the intention of connecting it to Central Asia and ultimate to Europe through Russia and Turkey (Agencies, 2016). The North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) was activated back in 2014, and it is expected that the route will further strengthen the connectivity among the member countries (INSTC, 2017). Simply because of its geo-strategic position, no state which wants to build any connectivity project can sideline Turkey.

Zero Problems with the Neighbours

Turkey as a key NATO partner has held critical positions in its understandings, around the world. Yet, Recep Tayyab Erdogan, and his Justice and Development Party has taken some tough stands on issues related to Israel-Palestinian conflict. This proves Turkey’s pro-geography position as actively participating in Middle Eastern issues while preserving its European identity intact.

Turkey pursued a proactive policy in the region in the aftermath of Arab Spring. Turkey has supported the opposition in Syria that demands change. The provision of a cradle zone at the Turkish–Syria border to host 1.5 million

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Syrian refugees has the possibility of embroiling Turkey in perhaps military encounter with Syrian troops. There are clear markers of Turkey's departure from the previous trajectory of zero issues with neighbors' and remote approach. It has been actively involved not only in Syria but also in Iraq issue. Specifically the issue of Kurds has created a dilemma that Turkey simply cannot remain neutral in the issues plaguing the neighboring countries.

A latest radical group that has emerged in the aftermath of crisis in Syria and Iraq: the ISIS has opened war fronts in both Iraq and Syria. According to a professor of International Law Mohsin Baharvand 'we may assert that illegal armed groups with huge physical and financial capacities in the Middle East amount to full fledged war of aggression'(Baharvand, 2014). Chapter VII of the Charter of the UN provides legal grounds for regional arrangement to deal with armed aggression which is considered as outright threat to peace and security. While Article 52 of the same Chapter even specifies that when dealing with such threats, priority be given to regional arrangements(UN, 1945).So it seems that the only solution to the Middle Eastern problems generally and of Syria and Iraq lies in the coordination between the three dominant powers of the region – Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Working under the auspices of the United Nations, these powers should jointly address the issues of terrorism and should try to eliminate the threats – most importantly against ISIS.

Similarly it is not only the three regional powers which need to join hands in order to defeat ISIS, great powers of the international system also need to join hands in order to defeat the threat of terrorism. The US-led coalition has started the airstrikes against the ISIS since 2014 in Iraq and Syria. Because of the efforts of different actors involved in the conflicts, ISIS is on the retreat while leaving a trail of destruction behind it. Although ISIS is retreating, yet its fight for the control of the Kobani at the Turkish-Syrian border has resulted in creating anger in the Kurd population in Turkey. They considered that the Turkish government did little to protect the Kurds across the border from the atrocities committed by ISIS.

Turkey and Pakistan

In the words of Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Sadiq Babur Girgin, Pakistan and Turkey enjoy the relationship of heart and mind (KARDESH) meaning beloved friend. There are political, historical, cultural, and economic ties. Turkey has been the host to the Trilateral Summit taking place between

the heads of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkey. There is a Joint Ministerial Commission for Economic and Technical Cooperation. Zorlu Energi has completed Pakistan's first private sector energy investment in 2013. With a capacity of 56.4 MW Pakistan Wind Farm has been constructed in Jhimpir. There are also a number of Turkish construction companies operating in Pakistan. However, bilateral trade needs to increase as Turkey produces everything from raw materials to high-tech finished products. This requires clearing the hurdles by respective governments. Another area that needs greater focus is Islamabad – Tehran – Istanbul freight train that after making test runs in 2010 has not taken off. It takes 14 days against 25/30 days of shipping between Karachi and Turkish ports.

Turkey has gone through immense economic revolution. It is connected with its centers of higher education, and seats of learning for centuries. Turkish Alma Matters in Pakistan was established in 2012. It supports a large network of international affiliates in higher education. Alma Maters has networks in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad.

Pakistan is also on the path to modernization and development and in future it is in need of huge skilled workforce. Skill development is one area where Turkey can help Pakistan. Pakistan can learn and benefit from Turkey to improve human capital for a participatory and vibrant role in world economy.

Conclusion

Numerous components fuel centrifugal tendencies ranging from Kurdish issue to the role in Syrian unrest and constrain Turkey's zero-problem with neighbours. On the other hand the countries of the West will keep on being Turkey's most vital political and financial concerns. However, with defanging of its religious affiliations domestically, and allying with radical anti-Bashar forces in Syria has created a paradox in its foreign policy. This has the possibility of sucking Turkey into the larger power dynamics that emerge through proxies in the power politics of Middle East.

Chance of Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran coming together – to address the problems of Middle East specifically and of the Muslim world generally – at the moment are minimal. Resultantly the Saudi Arabia and Iran have been engaged in supporting the opposing forces in different countries and parts of the world. Though some scholars have termed it a sectarian struggle, yet it seems that the competition between the two regional powers is based upon power politics. Similarly the great powers of the system i.e. Russia and the United States are supporting opposing forces in Syria. Russia is intent on protecting Bashar-al-Assad regime, while the United States has been

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supporting weapons to the anti-Assad forces. These both great powers share their interest in defeating ISIS which itself is allegedly getting un-official support by selling oil. The US is providing military hardware to Kurds, which are enjoying relative autonomy in Iraq and Syria, but some of them are challenging the Turkish authority in Turkey. The role of Al-Qaeda and Israel in all these crises remained dubious at best – specifically Al-Qaeda's role in Yemen, Iraq, and Syria; and Israel's in the whole Middle East.

Contemporary Middle East has presented one of the biggest challenges to the not only the scholars of international relations, but also to the policy-makers. It seems that the solution to its problems lies in front of everybody i.e. the coordination among Iran-Saudi Arabia-Turkey at the regional level, and between Russia and the United States at the system level, yet that coordination coming in the near future seems a distant possibility. In such situation Turkey and Pakistan can play very constructive role while trying to bring the competing countries on the negotiation table.

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