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Social and Political Transformations in the Middle East

Umit Kurt and Oguz Alyanak

Months ago, the spark that set the body of a young vendor set Tunisia in fire, which spread all over North Africa and the Middle East. "Mohammed Bouazizi was the man who set himself and Tunisia on fire", according to the TIME magazine.¹ (TIME, January 21, 2011). His self-immolation was the beginning of what we speak of today as the Arab Spring.

The Arab world has been experiencing an inevitable chain of social and political movements that started in early 2011. We believe that the long period of inertia and apathy that pervaded the Arab world has come to an end. And this belief is the main reason why we carry a series of articles on the Arab Spring to this edition of our newsletter. Today, thanks to Mohammed Bouazizi, we can speak of courageous of crowds of the Arab world, from Tunis to Tahrir Square, from Yemen to Bahrain to Benghazi and Tripoli.² What we continue to witness is truly revolutionary, in the sense that a new order of freedom is emerging in the Arab world.³

Notwithstanding the uprisings have been ignited in all countries having similar economic hardship and absence of civil and political rights, we should not expect the uprisings to lead to similar changes in all countries.⁴ We can already speak of three different patterns underlying the motives of resistance. In Tunisia and Egypt, the presidents have been ruled out by members of their own regime, including the military; they are now trying to limit the extent of change and to transform a potentially revolutionary process into one of reform from the top. In Yemen and Libya, the challenge to the leaders has transformed into a challenge for the survival of the state itself: the two countries have no institutions that can persist if the presidents are ousted. In other countries



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affected by protests, the regimes have been trying to quash the protesters through a mixture of populist concessions, cautious reforms introduced from the top, and the occasional use of force.⁵

Until very recently, it was often argued that the political options for the Arab world in the possible aftermath of the Arab Spring were limited to three: First, the persistence of corrupt autocracies as in Egypt and Libya, or royal dynasties as in Saudi Arabia and Jordan; second, the establishment of “Islamic fundamentalisms” and third, strengthening of al-Qaeda’s “terrorism”, which was sometimes thrown into the same basket as Islamic fundamentalism.⁶ What this kind of assessment could not foresee is the emergence of a movement of mass democratic resistance that is utterly modern in its understanding of politics.

The uprisings in the Arab world were explained through two determinants, economic, with mass unemployment, rising prices, scarcity of essential commodities and political, cronyism, corruption, repression, and torture. Egypt and Saudi Arabia played pivotal roles for the sustenance of U.S. hegemony in the region, as confirmed recently by U.S. vice-president Joe Biden, who stated that he was more concerned about Egypt than Libya.⁷ The mass movement remains intact in both Tunisia and Egypt but is also short of the political instruments that reflect the general will.⁸ As Tariq Ali keenly puts, “the first phase is over and the second, that of rolling back the movements, has begun”.

At this point, it is also crucial to touch upon the role and effect of Turkey in the region. Clearly, Turkey’s foreign policy of engaging with different governments and political groups in the Arab world has had a transforming impact on Middle Eastern politics and economy. The Turkish position on change, as a part of the Foreign Minister’s “zero problems with neighbors” policy

has been clear all along. Change in the Arab world is inevitable and must reflect people’s legitimate demands for justice, freedom and prosperity. And change must come without violence. While the Arab Spring moves at different speeds in different countries, Turkey continues to urge Arab governments for genuine reform.



A new and democratic era will give the Arab world a chance to be the masters of their own destiny. It will also enable the people to develop a new paradigm for their relationship with the West based on equality and partnership – a position Turkey has come to symbolize under its reformed foreign policy. As the foreign minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoglu, pointed out, “Turkey’s institutional and intellectual help in enabling the transition to democracy in Arab world are indispensable parameters for democratic future of the region.”⁹ Although there remains numerous ambiguities about what will happen in the region, what has emerged in the Arab world is a thoroughly modern mass democratic movement in political terms.

Arab revolutionaries are struggling for “democratic freedoms, a free public sphere, and joining the contemporary world after decades of lies, isolation and deception.”¹⁰ But in both cases, transformative hopes remain feeble: the political and economic order in these countries of resistance is fragile and susceptible to change.



The articles that are collected from graduate students and experts on the topics discussed provide different perspectives to evaluating the Arab Spring. We hope you enjoy reading them. And as always, we are looking forward to hearing your feedback on the discussion.

ALL THE BEST,

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The Political Economy of Turkey's Response to the Arab Spring

*Altay Atli**

The uprisings in the Arab world proved to be a tough trial for Turkey's new foreign policy paradigm based on the principle of "zero problems with neighbors" and complicated its vision of becoming a key player, if not outright leader, in the region. Before the demonstrations rocked the Arab world, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government had been winning "hearts and minds" throughout the Middle East thanks to its firm stand on the Palestinian issue as well as its efforts to solve problems in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was hailed as a hero who "taught a lesson to Israel," at the same time Turkey was lifting visa requirements and expanding economic relations with the countries in the region. The Arab world was praising the "Turkish model" of democratic progress in a predominantly Muslim society as a blueprint for its own road to development.

The pro-democracy movement in Egypt provided an opportunity for Turkey to promote its own "model". Erdoğan did not lose time in demanding the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak to "heed the desires of the people" and to "step down".¹ The role that Turkey had tailored for itself in the Middle East implied the promotion of democratic change in the region and the response to Tahrir Square was in perfect accordance with this vision.

The real challenge for Erdoğan and his government, however, came with Libya. In stark contrast to its response to the movement in Egypt — and despite the fact that compared with Egypt the uprising in Libya led to greater oppression and brutality — Turkey hesitated to take a clear stance against the Libyan

leader Muammar Qaddafi. Ankara's cautionary approach to the events unfolding in Libya was attributed to the existence of more than 25 thousand Turkish citizens living in Libya, mostly workers and engineers employed by Turkish construction companies, as the government's priority was said to be ensuring the safety of its citizens.

Turkey strongly opposed a NATO intervention against Libya on the grounds that it would be "counter productive" and demanded that change be brought to Libya not through external interference, but from within.² The interesting point is that for Ankara, Qaddafi remained in the picture until keeping him there was no longer possible. Erdoğan, who had asked Mubarak to listen to the people and to go, said in an interview about Qaddafi that he "expected the Libyan leader to take positive steps" one of which would be to appoint a new head of the state "of his choice."³ It was only more than two months after the outbreak of unrest in Libya that Ankara decided to dump Qaddafi. In early May, Erdoğan said that instead of heeding his government's calls, Qaddafi preferred to shed blood and there was nothing more to say in Libya: Qaddafi had to go.

The contrast between Turkey's responses to the events in Egypt and Libya raises questions about Turkey's self-fashioned role as the promoter of democratic change in the Middle East. With regard to Egypt, Ankara had an uncompromisingly pro-democratic stance. In the Libyan case, the response was rather delayed, which appeared as an effort to gain time in order to find a compromise between the establishment, i.e. Qaddafi and the democratic forces. The most common explanation for this unclear position referred to the economic involvement of Turkey in the region. It was argued that, while Turkey's trade and investment relations with Egypt were minimal, in Libya it had a significant economic existence that needed to be protected. Therefore



Ankara could not part easily with Qaddafi, under whose rule Turkish business in Libya had soared, as easily as it did with Mubarak.

This argument implies that Turkey's pursuit of democratic norms and ideals in the region is little more than rhetoric, which only lasts as long as material benefits are preserved. While from a purely realist and pragmatic perspective, this line could have made sense, it nevertheless creates a false dichotomy between the support for democracy and the capitalistic pursuit of profits, which hinders a fuller understanding of why Turkey's responses to Egypt and Libya differed so drastically. This essay proposes a political economy approach that escapes the limits of this simplistic dichotomy by focusing on the interrelation between ideational and material factors determining Turkey's response in both cases.

In order to discuss the material side of the picture, we need to locate both Libya and Egypt in the geo-economic map of Turkey's foreign economic relations. According to the data released by Turkish Statistics Institute, Turkey's trade with Libya totaled 2.4 billion dollars in 2010, while its trade volume with Egypt in the same period was 3.2 billion dollars.⁴ On the other hand, according to Turkish Treasury data, over the ten-year period between 2000 and the end of 2009, Libya received a capital flow of 51.8 million dollars from Turkey, while the figure for the Turkish capital received by Egypt over the same period was 68.6 million dollars.⁵ Both trade and investment figures point to a greater weight for Egypt, however the real story lies somewhere else.

Construction services are the backbone of the Turkish economy, employing 1.4 million people and accounting for 6 percent of Turkey's GDP. In 2010, when Turkey's economy expanded by 8.9 percent, construction was one of the main drivers of growth,

as the sector grew by 17.1 percent in one year.⁶ This growth was mainly derived from activities overseas. Over almost four decades up until the end of 2010, Turkish contractors have undertaken more than six thousand projects in 89 countries, with a total value of 188 billion dollars. Libya is the second largest market for Turkish contractors; they have been active there since the early 1970s and the total value of the 529 projects they have completed so far is 26.4 billion dollars, of which nearly the half has been realized over the last five years.⁷ The construction industry has also spillover effects on trade, as the bulk of Turkey's exports to Libya consist of construction materials. In comparison, Turkish contractors have completed 25 projects in Egypt with a total value of 593 million dollars, almost one-fiftieth of what they have accomplished in Libya.⁸ In other words, Turkey is doing big business in Libya.

It is also important to note that before the uprising broke out in Libya, Turkey had been on a major diplomatic and economic offensive toward this country. Erdoğan's visit to Libya in November 2009 had been a turning point in relations, where the two sides agreed, in Erdoğan's words, "to forget the past and build a new future", lifted visa restrictions, and signed an agreement for the reciprocal promotion and protection of investments. During 2010, Erdoğan went to Libya four more times, during one of which he received the Qaddafi International Prize for Human Rights; and his Trade Minister, Zafer Çağlayan, paid five visits, all of which were accompanied by sizeable groups of businessmen.

All was going well until the uprising muddled this picture. Turkish construction companies in Libya—around 200 of them—had to evacuate Libya, leaving unfinished projects and equipment pools behind. Minister Çağlayan announced that Turkish companies had incurred a loss of 1.4 billion dollars in the form



of uncollected revenues and that another 97 million dollars of deposits remained in Libyan banks.⁹ To these figures should be added the losses caused by physical damage. On the other hand, the projects that the Turkish companies were working when the uprisings began had a total value of 15.3 billion dollars, and the fate of these projects remain uncertain.

Losing Libya would certainly be a blow for the Turkish economy, and from an economic point of view one could argue that Turkey did not turn its back to Qaddafi right away, as it did with Mubarak, because without him the future of Turkish business in Libya could be jeopardized. This line of argument, however, implies that democracy in Libya or the Middle East in general is not a concern for Turkey, since it can be easily dismissed when capitalistic benefits are at stake. My argument is that counterposing support for democracy to the pursuit of material benefits in this way is ungrounded because the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, in a neo-liberal setting, the two are interrelated in the sense that pursuing one's material benefits can require the involved party to adhere to universally accepted norms such as democracy, whereas, in the opposite direction, promoting democracy as a value might require the actor in question to possess economic power so that it can have leverage in political and social issues.

Business in a foreign country requires a favorable environment to flourish. If the market in question is a democracy, the rule of law provides this environment. The dilemma here is that a non-democratic regime can also provide a good business environment, however in this case it would be based on relations of patronage. In other words, only selected business actors would be able to benefit from the environment and others would be excluded. Under the Qaddafi

regime, this was the case in Libya. However, if the current regime is deposed, but only to be replaced by another form of an authoritarian regime, there will be no guarantee for Turkish companies to have the same favorable business environment as they did under Qaddafi. Another possible scenario for post-Qaddafi Libya is democratic transformation. The important question is whether democracy will take root from within or will be imposed from without.

Under the Qaddafi regime, that is since 1969 when he overthrew the king and established the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Turkey never felt the need to pressure the Libyan leader to heed the desires of Libyan people. Democracy in Libya is now a concern for Turkey, not only (but mainly) because democracy will be decisive in determining the fate of Turkish business presence in Libya. Turkey's procrastinated response did not exactly refer to a preference of capitalistic benefits over democracy, rather what Turkey did was to wait for different options for the post-Qaddafi period to develop so that it could make its choice. The alternatives included two democratic options: democracy from within, i.e. through the pro-democracy opposition, or democracy from without, i.e. through Western intervention. Turkey clearly preferred the first option, since the second option was highly likely to create a post-Qaddafi Libya in which business opportunities, particularly in the construction sector, would be distributed to contractors from Western countries. Whereas the experience of Iraq and Afghanistan set precedence for this scenario, a recent statement by the head of the Turkish Contractors Association, Erdal Eren, clearly revealed the concerns. Eren explicitly stated that the NATO intervention in Libya had economic motives and the business environment that is likely to emerge after the intervention was not going to be a favorable one for Turkish companies.¹⁰ At the end of the day, Turkey opposed the NATO intervention and decided



instead to provide financial support for the opposition groups in Libya. It was also while the NATO intervention was on the way that the Turkish Parliament hurriedly ratified the investment agreement that was signed during Erdoğan's visit to Libya in November 2009. In other words, Turkey was preparing for the post-Qaddafi period.

Turkey supports democracy in Libya, and wants this to be achieved through local dynamics and this preference is directly linked to its calculations for the future of Turkish business in the country. In Egypt, with the absence of long-term business prospects, Turkey's promotion of democracy was only related to the purpose of strengthening its role as a key player in the region; therefore the response to the uprising was fast and firm. In Libya, the construction business complicated the picture, and Ankara needed time to determine its response.

The uprising in Syria constitutes an even greater challenge for Turkey. Not only is there an intense and complicated web of economic relations between Turkey and Syria, but the two countries are also neighbors, which causes additional problems such as refugees and cross-border humanitarian crises. At the time of writing this essay, thousands of Syrian refugees were crossing the Turkish border in order to escape persecution by the Assad government. Turkey's response so far has involved taking care of the Syrians crossing the border and asking Assad to make reforms. To what direction Turkey's Syria policy will eventually develop remains to be seen.

In conclusion, Turkey's response to the Arab spring is marked by different approaches to similarly motivated uprisings in different countries but this is by no means a sign of inconsistency in Turkey's foreign policy. It is not about supporting democracy in countries with fewer economic prospects for

Turkey and prioritizing the preservation of status quo in countries where Turkey is doing business. The two are not mutually exclusive and this is a false dichotomy. In fact, within the neo-liberal framework, democracy can be (and usually is) supported for the purpose of improving business prospects, while increasing business volumes can provide an actor with the leverage it needs for assuming a role as the promoter of democratic values in its region. Turkey is experiencing both, and the variation in its responses to the uprisings in Egypt and Libya clearly illustrate the dynamics of the crisis response process where both support for democracy and existence of large long-term business volumes are involved in an intertwined manner.

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Footsteps of Revolution in the Land of Queen Sheba

*Bezen Balamir Coskun**

Yemen, as a Persian Gulf country, has been at the crossroads of ancient spice roads connecting Africa, the Middle East and Asia for thousands of years. The Romans called this fertile and wealthy country *Arabia Felix*, in contrast to the Arabian Deserts to the North. However, compared to its wealthy and glorious past, Yemen is today one of the poorest, underdeveloped and conflict-ridden nations in the world. In five years Yemen has witnessed six wars and more than 40 percent of the population lives on less than two dollars a day. Corruption and the mismanagement of the country's oil resources brought Yemen to the brink of collapse.

In 1967 the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) was formed in Southern Yemen, comprising Aden and former Protectorate of South Arabia. Between 1967 and 1971 thousands fled north following a crackdown on dissidents and armed groups formed to overthrow government. [(NOTE: Insert the name before this abbreviation.)] (YAR) and PDRY clashes started in 1972. The modern Republic of Yemen was born in 1990 when traditionalist North Yemen and Marxist South Yemen merged after years of border wars, with Ali Abdallah Saleh as president. The peace broke down in 1994 with a short civil war. Armies of the former north and south, which had failed to integrate, gathered on their former frontiers as relations between southern and northern leaders deteriorated. President Saleh declared a state of emergency and dismissed the southern government members following political deadlock and sporadic fighting. The civil war ended in defeat for separatist southerners and the survival of a "unified" Yemen. Still, tensions persist between the North and the

South. Since the summer of 2009, hundreds have been killed and more than a quarter of a million people displaced by clashes between government troops and northern Houthi rebels belonging to the minority Shia Zaidi sect. The government declared a ceasefire with the northern rebels in February 2010.

Inspired by the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions, in January 2011 Yemen's opposition began to unite, and thousands of Yemenis have started protests against the 33-year rule of president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Even though Yemen has been the scene of social unrest for several decades, Saleh had been able to maintain the status quo thanks to tribal support and to U.S. financing. Until 2011, anti-government sentiments were concentrated in the southern region of Yemen, which, since the unification in 1990, has been struggling for independence, and in the northern mountains of Sa'da, which seek the return of the rule of Imams.

Politically, Yemen is a one party state: the general People's Congress. Although the government has allowed opposition, its influence in policy making is limited. The only real contender to Saleh has been Al-Ahmar's clan, where the Hashid family has constituted the main opposition to the government for many years. Apart from the Hashid, Bakhils are the second most powerful tribe in Yemen. Through the years Saleh ensured their support with financial incentives and preferential treatments. The social and economic gap between the upper class who have links with the government and the impoverished majority population that suffers from unemployment and social inequalities has brewed the anger against the regime.

Current protests have spread through invitations sent to all parties including the Houthi's in the north, the tribes, trade unions, civil society organizations and the army inviting them to join the protests. For the first time in this history people from Southern Yemen



stopped calling for separation, raised the national flag and demanded an end to Saleh's regime. Yemeni people seem to be actually united in their aim to change the regime through civil disobedience. If the whole uprising is not revolutionary, it is revolutionary to witness the sense of unity in a country with clear-cut tribal and ideological differences. The key moment to now was when Hussein al-Ahmar, the chief of Yemen's second largest but most powerful tribal confederation, joined the protesters and promised to offer protection. Even al-Houthi, who fight for independence and generally have nothing to do with protestors, offered their support and resources. Despite the differences, the established opposition encouraged the uprising and street revolt.



While the Yemen protests share similar motivations to those in Egypt and Tunisia, it is still not clear that they will become successful. Unfortunately, Saleh did not follow Mubarak of Egypt and Ben Ali of Tunisia and leave the throne peacefully, but has insisted on dealing with protests by force. As of this writing, at least 200 protestors have been killed and thousands wounded in four months of protests. In June, 2011, President Saleh was flown to Saudi Arabia, suffering from injuries as a result of an explosion at his official compound. Still, Saleh had not formally resigned his office, but only temporarily handed power to his long-term vice president, Abd al-Rab Mansur al-Hadi.

Yemen's socio-political terrain consists of tribes. The country's complex tribal dynamics are reflected in the

course of events following the absence of Saleh after the explosion. The crisis had escalated into a fight for power between Yemen's most powerful families: Saleh's family and the al-Ahmar family. The personal animosity between the sons of the late Sheikh Abdullah bin Hussein al-Ahmar and the sons and nephews of Saleh have been an obstacle to peaceful regime change in Yemen. Right now, the protests of urban youth and civil society activists have been sidelined in the power competition between armed factions of these tribal elites. Earlier feelings of unity within the society have begun to fade. There is a need for a genuine mobilization of the public. The escalation of conflict is dangerously paving way to the fragmentation of the state in Yemen.

As the political battle in Yemen escalates, the most immediate challenge is to avert a civil war. Even if Yemenis avoid these outcomes and a peaceful transition occurs, they will face an economic crisis, regional tensions and an unstable security environment. Among all, the country is in danger of the infiltration of al-Qaeda terrorists into the country. Given U.S. security forces have intensified their attention to hunt Anwar al-Awlaki, a Yemeni cleric and a member of al-Qaeda, the failed state of Yemen could become the next target for an U.S.-led intervention. It is important for the international community to understand the complexities of Yemeni politics and society, and to act accordingly. It is also important to integrate Yemen into the international community not to isolate it. Lack of successful nation-building and state-formation, the tribal dynamics of Yemeni politics and society, and the failed-state phenomenon blur the possibility of peaceful transition in Yemen. In short, Yemen needs strategies and political will for a successful revolution.

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Two Sides of the Same Coin; Conflicting Views of Islamism in Pakistan

*Jeanette Bailey**

The turbulent nature of the political systems and government structure in Pakistan has given rise to many different religious Islamic groups. Two of the most notorious groups are the Jama'at-e-Islami (JI) and the Jama'at-ud-Da'wa (JD), as referenced by Humeria Iqtidar in her book *Secularizing Islamists?* (2011:ix). This essay will examine both differences and similarities between the JI and the JD.

The JI Islamist group began in Pakistan in 1944, during the British colonial rule. Founded by scholar Mawdudi, the group was composed entirely of religious clergy. Their goal was to maintain a pure Islamic movement in a push toward making Pakistan into a true Islamic state. Shortly after its founding a shift in the movement entered the group into the political arena, where they fought to bring about an Islamic revolution by using the democratic process to enforce a change in the state that would then trickle down to the masses. This shift toward a government focus led to dissension in the group. While still democratically motivated today, the base of the movement is now composed of middle-class business men and women.

In contrast to the beginning of the JI, the JD was a movement created in response to Russia's war with Afghanistan. JD's original base pulled from the socially "undesirables," and their sole mission was established to be *jihad* against the 'godless secularist communists'. The JD was backed, and trained, by CIA, with money from the United States and Saudi Arabia, who then used the JD to their strategic advantage in the cold war with Russia. With the

completion of the Afghanistan-Russian war the JD turned its attention to fellow Muslims whom they believed to have been corrupted by Western influence. They waged a new struggle to reform all Muslims, establishing their view of traditional Islamic practice as the only true Islamic practice. Like the JI, the JD also sought to establish an Islamic state.



While both Islamic groups today seek to establish the traditional Islamic State, they are far from allies. It would seem that similar goals are not enough to form a homogenous unification. Many Islamic groups exist as oil that has been agitated in water. They form little droplets that race about trying to collect others like them, while simultaneously being pulled apart by similar droplets of oil attempting to achieve the same unification. The JI and JD may both seek the same end result, but much like the oil in water, they have very different opinions about what a traditional State looks like and how that State should be obtained.

The Jama'at-e-Islami believes that a democratic political approach should be used to gain control of

the State. That power should then be used to implement change in favor of Islam at the governmental level. The JI has struggled with this mission since their inception and has yet to achieve all that was hoped for in the beginning. Through this process their goals and interpretations of the Qur'an continually fluctuate to meet the needs of the times.



They are concerned with their namesake and dislike the more militant fashion of the JD, whose faces are synonymous with the global ideal of terrorism. The JI worry that the actions of the JD, who have claimed to be moving away from a militant focus, will cause the world to associate Islam and violence. Such associations would harm their political potential and undermine their end goals.

The Jama'at-ud-Da'wa prefers to be seen as a social pressure group that leans on the government to implement Islamic ideals. They see democracy as another form of secularization and see the JI's approach to seeking power in the government as a long series of failures. They also believe that the incorporation of Islam and democracy has led the JI to be corrupt. In the minds of the JD the JI are not true Islamists.

Tensions between the two groups also rise as they attempt to pull constituents from the same pool. Both groups spend time and money engaging in humanitarian acts to gain public support for their rhetoric. Supporters of each group look down at the members of the other and there is a constant strain of tug of war to build the largest support base.

Whether political groups, or social pressure groups, and recognized or not, both the JI and JD are influenced by globalization and modernity. The JI changed their goals early on to focus on democratic politics; a tool derived by the secular capitalist world that they are in *jihad* against. The JD, too, has changed, looking to take a step back from their militant history in order to gain popularity and favor in the eyes of the people. The

JD believes that power does not belong to the people but to Allah alone; yet in seeking the favor of their constituency they gain power in a democratic game.

As the unrest in the Middle East moves forward and governments, political parties and social movements begin to carve out a new identity, the Islamic world will have to either find a blending of Islam that is applicable to all, or learn to be content with mild variations in religious interpretations and practice. The Qur'an calls for unity and peace, but until the agitation of the water is able to cease, the oil cannot find common ground.

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Egypt and the "Arab spring": Notes on facts and challenges

*Moises Garduño García **

After Mubarak's fall, the issue in which scholars, moral leaders and many people are working nowadays is in the best way to carry out Egypt's transition to democracy. Many young people who participated in the creation of the unthinkable successful ⁽¹⁾ Egyptian revolution, had in the last days of March, attended training workshops on popular election mechanisms, transparency and other activities related to the surrender accountability and human rights monitoring. Popular organization in the protests, which manifested itself in efforts to care for the houses, streets and neighborhoods ⁽²⁾ as well as in the sale and distribution of medicaments (usually a business controlled by the Coptic population) to the mosques and hospitals, today steps up to the commitment to "safeguard the revolution" and to participate directly in building the political destiny of their country.

Institutions like University of Cairo, the Center for Political and Strategic Studies Al Ahram and the Center for Strategic and Future Studies of Medinat Nasr, to cite some institutions in the Egyptian capital, have promoted several efforts to build a clean parliamentary and presidential election at year end ⁽³⁾. The debate caused by monitoring the referendum on March 19, where the Egyptian people could exercise their opinion about accepting or not a series of reforms to the constitution (including those to limit mandates of the president and to reduce the requirements to be a candidate), helped to generate a new interest in Egyptian citizens to forget the pessimism and distrust about voting that prevailed under the old regime.

However, we still have "bumps in the road" in this process. For example, the army's role as guarantor of security and justice has had a lot of critics among the Egyptian population. One evidence of this is the report "*The army and the People Never Were One*" published by the activist Maikel Nabil Sanad^{Mark}, who states that the military had been responsible for supplying ammunition to the police trying to suppress the riots of revolution in the first stage (from 25 January to 29 January, 2011), and who had also participated in the arrest, imprisonment and even torture of many demonstrators in several attempts to invade the Tahrir Square during a second stage (from 29 January to 11 February, 2011) and whom they claim now works in the monopoly of the media, the ban on taking pictures in the center of the city and some incentives to obedience through mobile telecommunications companies via text message at the present stage (since the fall of Mubarak up to now)^{Mark}.

The report shall be added to numerous allegations of other protesters against the Egyptian army and unjustified detention, abuse of power, and even torture. Thus, people have put into question the activities of the Egyptian army in its "police working" thereby increasing concern about the administration of justice in the streets of the capital. This is complemented by the announcement of the army on March 22, 2011, when it banned any demonstration or strike, subjecting people to imprisonment or heavy fines. This, of course, would cause popular discontent and more protests in first days of April, 2011^{Mark}.

In regard to the international environment, the expansion of the "Arab Spring" to certain "strategic countries" has caused the "Great Powers" to interfere in these processes (whether political, intelligence or military) to maintain their interests in the area,



especially the U.S., Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran^{Mark}. Analyzing the most important events in Egyptian foreign policy since Mubarak's departure — this includes Mawafi's visit to Syria, the authorization to several *Hamas* leaders to attend a meeting in Damascus via the Cairo airport, the permission for the passage of an Iranian ship by way of Suez, the neutrality in the Hariri's case in Lebanon, along with a "friendly approach" with *Hezbollah* and the selection of Sudan as the first foreign destination of Prime Minister Essam Sharaf to define the priority of Egyptians on the subject of the Nile — we can perceive the intent of a policy based on the main interests of Egypt in what looks like the quest of a regional consolidation in its area of influence, a similar case to what Turkey does with its Iran-friendly relations and its cooperation with the U.S. and Israel at the same time^{Mark}.

Then, Egypt may be the target of pressure from a Washington-TelAviv axis to moderate the conduct of its foreign policy and turn in a direction similar Mubarak's. To keep an independent foreign policy that achieves the export of the internal values that domestic politics of Egypt intends to build is a future challenge for the next Egyptian rulers. Although the popular consensus remains the demands of social and political rights of the people, domestic protests in Egypt have sent clear messages concerning the international affairs, or at least its regional policy, announcing in demonstrations their commitment to the Palestinian people to fight for the respect of human rights in Gaza, Palestinian unity and the rejection of the Israeli settlement program, and supporting other causes, such as support for the Iraqi people in their rejection of the U.S. armed presence, the demands of the people in Bahrain and Syria and slogans for the departure of Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen. This summary allows notice of a consensus among the different Arab peoples, a dismissed phenomenon since the pan-Arab philosophy of Gamal

Abdel Nasser and the widespread opinion for the Palestinians in their conflict with Israel^{Mark}.

In this sense, a revolution that emerged without leaders now must build a strong government in order to create a strong regional leadership to remain independent of the threat of these factors. Many young people, especially young people in Egypt, still have hopes for this and are working day and night to point out anomalies in the process of this construction, issues that for some analysts becomes like a *renaissance*, not only political but also social, due to the plural participation of all social strata, without religious or ethnic divisions and with political hopes in common^{Mark}.

Egypt enjoys a moment of "high responsibility". New political parties may be born based on young people who until now did not participate in any existing organization. But of course there are also fears. Fears of radicalization and the chaos created in part from fear that the new State cannot meet the minimum aspirations of the people, as was the case in other transition experiences in the world (and whether by revolution, armed interference, elections or other processes) that have failed to meet those challenges and whose transition to democracy did not complete, such was the case of Iraq, Pakistan, Iran and Mexico and other countries which, with different stories and different ways, have experienced a "change in the name of democracy" but where problems such as corruption, violence, unemployment and political unrest have prevailed in spite of that experience. Thus the real challenge will be how Egypt responds to the aspirations of its people, how it improves basic services, how it accommodates a new Islamist government apparatus (once again, can we see Turkey?), how it rehabilitates the reputation of its national army in order to improve its relationship with the people after the elections. As we have seen, the army must act as guarantor of the democratic

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process and not as a repressive apparatus, an issue that is more reminiscent of devisive work of intelligence members than the army itself, and thus maintain what for many Arabs means the Egyptian model of resistance, if not a paradigm according the history of the Arab world, where it has been a cultural, social and linguistic model and a source of political inspiration to consider.

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¹ When Wail Ganem (who launched the call for protests on January 25 via facebook) appeared on 9 February in Tahrir Square, protesters greeted him as a hero and after being released by the Egyptian security forces stated:

"When I made the page (all of we are Khaled Said) on facebook I was a dreamer, but now I am convinced that all of us here are dreaming together" <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=1&issueno=11761&article=607534>

Accessed March 28, 2011.

² A chronicle of Sharq al-Awsat cites the use of "the stick" as a useful tool to deal with potential violence in the streets during protest times. People used to buy this popular and traditional tools in order to defend their own neighborhoods via guarding rounds. , <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=11754&article=606545>

³ See for example <http://www.icfsthinktank.org/English/Default.aspx?lang=en>, accessed March 30, 2011.

⁴ Maikel Nabil Sanad, lives in Cairo, and is a political activist and blogger. In April 2009 he founded the Movement of Not to Compulsory Military Service. "As a pacifist, he declared his conscientious objection to military service and demanded to be exempted from it. He was arrested on November 12, 2010 by the military police but was released two days later and he was finally exempted from military service for medical reasons. Following the publication of its report on the Internet, he was arrested on March 10, 2011. According to his lawyer, Nabil Sanad is in custody and awaiting an investigation on several charges. See more on their facebook pages.

<http://www.facebook.com/MaikelNabilSanad?sk=wall> y <http://www.facebook.com/FreeMaikelNabil>
<http://www.maikelnabil.com/2011/03/army-and-people-wasnt-ever-one-hand.html>

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⁵ Nabil, Maikel., *The army and the people never were one*, March 8, 2011, Available at <http://www.maikelnabil.com/2011/03/army-and-people-wasnt-ever-one-hand.html>, Accessed April 9, 2011.

⁶<http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/56DBD67D-3A98-4EF2-AC80-5FAE82093A6A.htm?GoogleStatID=1>.

(Army avoids a new strike in Midan Tahrir, Al Jazeera, April 9, 2011. Accessed April 9, 2011.

⁷For example, blackout information in Syria and Bahrain can be a signal of some consensus among the elites of these countries in order to prevent the falling of Bashar al Assad and al Khalifa regimes because nobody (except the Syrian and Bahraini peoples) agrees that this phenomenon occurs. Syria has been, along with Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iran's gateway to the Mashreq and a staunch ally against the U.S. and Israel rhetoric in the zone, while Bahrain has become a critical point for maintaining "stability" between the Arab Gulf countries to the "Arab spring in one hand, and Iran Islamic proyect on the other one. Thus, consensus may lie in preventing Iran support to Bahrain protesters in exchange for not support the "rebels" in the Syrian case

⁸ BBC News, "Iran warships sail via Suez canal amid Israeli concern", *BBC News*, February 22, 2011, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12533803> accessed April 10, 2011.

⁹ Al Sherbibi, "Egyptian protesters defy army", *Gulf News*, April 10, 2011 available at <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/egypt/egyptian-protesters-defy-army-1.789692>, Accessed April 23, 2011.

¹⁰ During the Mubarak regime protests were few in number due to torture mechanisms of the government. Generally, workers and young people were repressed every time they took the streets (for example in 2008 a protest organized by kifaya movement was well received by people but just hundreds appeared in the streets). However, one of the strongest protests was those against the killing of Khaled Saeed, a critic of the regime who was killed in June 2010 and whose death caused outrage among the Egyptian population, first in Alexandria and later in Cairo, population under the slogan "all of we are Khaled Saeed" took the streets bringing nearly 20000 people in the Egyptian capital. The revolution has started from this moment.





The Arab Spring and the Turkish Model

*Alper Y. Dede**

The notion of regime change through mass uprisings in the Middle East was inconceivable until the mass uprisings started in Tunisia after a young Tunisian street vendor set himself on fire to protest the local authorities. Until this “Arab Spring” started, experts of the region had been commenting on the need for gradual reform to make the transition from the inefficient and authoritarian status-quo regimes to more democratic ones. Accordingly, the routes to democratization in the region had to be through gradual social, economic and political reforms. In this vein, gradual change and transition to more democratic regimes in the region would be inevitable as secularization and modernization took root in the long run. Additionally, people in the region would become fed up with the authoritarian rulers and create internal pressures for more democracy. A developing civil society and international pressures from the world community would aid the whole process of democratization. In short, these were briefly the recipes for a possible route to democratization in the Middle East until the mass uprisings on the Arab streets. However, the way that the Arab Spring took place seems to be in contradiction with what the experts had been arguing regarding the prospects of democratization in the region.

Political Change through Revolutions?

On one hand, the idea of political change through revolutions is not something new for the region. The Iranian revolution of 1979 replaced the Shah regime with an Islamic autocracy. On the other hand, political change through revolutions is completely unexpected in the region. Besides the structural factors (such as the overall inefficiency of the governments in the region, high rates of

unemployment and underemployment, mass poverty, authoritarianism, and lack of democracy), two additional factors fueled the uprisings on the Arab streets: i) the availability of modern means of communication, and ii) the well-educated young masses’ high levels of frustration as a result of stagnancy and inefficiency of the regimes whose only purpose was to maintain the status quo. Without these two factors, the Arab Spring would not have been possible.

Social sciences teach us that mass movements or uprisings do not take place in a vacuum. Certain structural factors must exist for the mass movements to ferment, like high rates of unemployment, mass poverty, economic crises, inefficiency of governments, lack of democracy and authoritarianism. Additionally, the movement organizers must be able to effectively communicate with each other and with the members, to mobilize the available resources to attract new members to the movement, to promote political activism, to take available opportunities whenever and wherever they can, and to frame their grievances to urge members to take part in the collective action. In a way, availability of the means of social media for the frustrated young educated Arabs became an opportunity for them to disseminate their revolutionary messages through the Internet as well as providing them an avenue to frame their messages. In other words, the mass uprisings could become possible as a result of the availability of communication among the group members through the Internet.

Can the Turkish Process of Democratization Genuinely Become a Model for the Region?

The Turkish Republic was established in 1923 and shifted from authoritarian single-party rule to a democratic multiparty system in 1950. Since 1950 —



despite several interruptions in the form of military interventions in 1960, 1971, 1980, 1997, and the memorandum in 2007 — Turkey has exhibited significant strides toward democratization during the tenures of Adnan Menderes and Turgut Özal as prime ministers. A similar process is currently going on under AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*-Justice and Development Party) rule. While many countries of the Middle East have been experiencing mass uprisings, the following question has to be answered: Can Turkey's unique democratization experience since the AKP's rise to power be a model for the Middle Eastern countries as well as for the *Ikhwan* and other political actors in the region? For some, Turkey has now politically and economically become a model country for the rest of the region. Thus, what makes Turkey attractive for the emerging regimes?

Recently, one of the prominent *Ikhwan* figures, Abdel Moneim Abou Al Fotouh, indicated that the *Ikhwan* would form a new party like Turkey's ruling AKP (1). A similar statement was made earlier by Rachid Ghannouchi, the leader of Tunisia's Islamic Al Nahda movement. To understand the appeal of the Turkish model, we have to have a look at what the model is and how it became appealing.

During the Cold War years, Turkey had limited economic and diplomatic relations with the Muslim world since the Kemalist elites during those years naively assumed that increasing foreign relations with other Muslim countries would be detrimental to the secularist nature of the Turkish republic. This self-imposed isolationist policy remained in place until the AKP's rise to power in 2002. However, faint signs of departure from this strict isolationist policy existed during Turgut Özal's leadership in the 1980s and early 1990s, before the AKP's rise to power. By liberalizing the Turkish economy and enabling the emergence of conservative businessmen coming mostly from conservative towns in central Anatolia,

Özal actually allowed the conservative capitalists of Turkey—dubbed the *Anatolian tigers*—to expand economically. Those capitalists later formed the social and economic backbone of the AKP rule in Turkey. Currently, it is this new class of conservative businessmen that take the AKP's economic and political openings to the Middle East. This unique mutual relationship between the conservative capitalists and the AKP was beneficial to both: The AKP found much needed political and economic support against the secularist establishment while the conservative capitalists found venues to expand their political and economic operations under the AKP's protection in the new era. This unique relationship forms the *first pillar* of the Turkish model.

The Turkish Islamists' market-oriented economic approach constitutes the *second pillar* of the Turkish model. The Turkish economic model is especially marked by the Turkish economy's success with rapidly increasing GNP per capita and steady economic growth over the years, independent of state-led economic growth. The Turkish economy is also well connected to the global economy and is able to integrate the conservative entrepreneurs who mostly come from central Anatolian cities like Kayseri, Konya and Gaziantep. Turkish economic successes also include increasing exports, and the growing share of industrial goods in Turkish exports, which are mostly lacking elsewhere in the Arab world.

In this approach, economic successes and gains, not pure ideology, are the main driving forces. Earlier, in the late 1980s, the liberal spaces created by Turgut Özal's reforms paved the way for the emergence of this type of market-based Turkish Islamism from which the rest of the Arab world was deprived. As a result of their export-oriented economic growth strategies, the Turkish Islamists have gradually become market-seekers: as they economically grew,



they started to seek new markets for their goods. The new markets were found in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia, whose people were predominantly Muslims. This expansion overlaps with the AKP's long-term economic strategies to expand Turkey's exports that would inevitably make Turkey a country that has a larger role in the regional trade. This could also make Turkey a soft power in the region as well. In the last decade, Turkish goods have become very popular in the Middle East. Turkey's popularity in the region is not just limited to goods. Indeed, Turkish television soap operas have become very popular in the region. Additionally, as a result of lifting of visa restrictions with many of the countries of the region, the volume of Middle Eastern tourists visiting Turkey has sharply increased. A similar increase has taken place in the Middle Eastern investments in Turkey since the AKP's rise to power. Thus, Turkey's economic success and the newly emerging conservative business elite have increased its soft power in the region and that constitutes the *third pillar* of the Turkish model.

Conclusion

In addition to the three pillars mentioned above, Turkey's process of democratization, rising economic performance, Erdoğan's and the AKP's popularity in the Arab world (particularly regarding the Palestinian issue and Turkey's gradual distancing from Israel), and the AKP's cultural-religious affinity with the people of the region in contrast to the Kemalists and secularists in Turkey has also contributed to its attraction to people in the Middle East. Additionally, the AKP's ability to successfully move from relatively heavy Islamist tones into a centrist political movement with a conservative outlook has significantly contributed to Turkey's gradual rise as a soft power in the region. Indeed, on several different occasions, AKP officials have described themselves as a political party that is similar to the European Christian Democrats, which indicates the AKP's

willingness not be perceived as a hardliner Islamist party (2). Before coming to power, the AKP elites gained very valuable lessons from their experience serving at the local levels. For instance, Erdoğan used to be Istanbul's mayor. Indeed, the AKP descends from the political legacy of Erbakan's National Order Party, which has allowed the AKP members to build a significant amount of parliamentary and governmental experience over the years. Besides gaining political experience, this served as a moderating influence on the party itself. During the AKP's tenure, the motive to succeed economically has often times superseded harsh ideological positions and moderated ideological excesses in the long run, besides exposing people to different ideas and lifestyles as a result of increasing economic transactions with the global economy.

These moderating factors or dynamics that are peculiar to the Turkish model do not exist in the Arab world, which clearly shows the distinctiveness of the Turkish model. Considering the "democratic deficit" argument regarding the Middle East in Western academic and media circles, the Turkish model becomes more meaningful because it suggests that democracy can function in a Muslim country, and that conservative Muslims can be democrats actively advocating democracy, economic growth, and rights and freedoms.

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Will geopolitics split along sectarian lines in the Middle East? Witnessing the rise of a sectarian speech amidst war of perceptions

*Camille Germanos**

The upheaval in Bahrain revived geopolitical rivalries between Iran and the Arab Gulf States. These rivalries are potentially to be drawn over sectarian lines and could entrench the rift between the Sunni and Shi'ite Muslim sects^{Mark}. To prevent the possibility of this ethnic conflict, we need to better understand the intricacies of these competing sectarian speeches. We propose to describe briefly in this piece the formation of a sectarian speech in the Middle East amidst a war of perceptions between the leading Shi'ite and Sunni clerics.

When the battles of hearts and minds were first started in the Middle East last January, two leading clerics joined their voices with the Arab revolutionaries, the Sunnite Ulema Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwiy and the Shi'ite Sayed Hassan Nasrallah. Both of these were vocal about the Tunisian revolution, which became the vanguard of the Arab wave of upheavals. Both of them backed-up the demonstrations that followed against totalitarian Arab regimes in Egypt, Yemen and Libya. Yet, those upheavals were never defined as sectarian or as profoundly marked by geopolitics. The trend was to describe these indigenous popular movements as having no ambition to export themselves beyond the national borders.

This political perception changed, sadly, when the uprising expanded toward the frontiers of the Arab world, namely Bahrain and Syria. The clerics' diverging speeches delegitimized *seriatim* the Bahraini and the Syrian oppositions as sectarian and

exogenous, with foreign conspirator agendas. The adoption of diplomatic double majors by the "International Community" did not ease the dogmatic contradictions. We wonder if the Arab revolutions will henceforth be able to transcend the Shi'ia—Sunni divide.

Two opposing clerical voices: Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwiy and Sayed Hassan Nasrallah

This sectarian dispute was indeed started March 2011 over the appraisal in Bahrain. It was during the *khutbat al-jum'a* of 18 of March 2011, Ulema Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwiy, who is the president of the World Federation of Muslim Scholars, described from Doha, Qatar, that the Bahraini revolution was a sectarian one. Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, theologian and Secretary General of Hizballah, hinting to al-Qaraḍāwiy, responded in a speech he gave the very next day in Lebanon. While al-Qaraḍāwiy excluded the Bahrain revolution from the legitimate Arab appraisal, Nasrallah claimed that the rights of dignity and justice are not tributary of a sectarian identity.

These speeches, pronounced by two opposing politically influential clerics, defined the future perception of the Bahraini crisis. On one hand, Ulema Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwiy,^{Mark} who in the past had a prominent role within the intellectual leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood, has been directly involved through his *khutba* in both the Egyptian and contemporary Arab revolutions. Al-Qaraḍāwiy, who once called on *Maydan al-Tahrir* in Egypt for both Muslims and Christians to join their prayers thanking God, whom he said answered their prayers for protection during the Egyptian revolution that had put an end, on the 20th of February, to the corrupt regime of Hosni Mubarak, later condemned on March 18 the Bahraini opposition with his disgrace. On the other hand, Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, who, since 1993, has been the Secretary General of Hezbollah, an armed and religious organization considered to be the



resistance by the official and popular Lebanese discourse,^{Mark} called on his allies from all nationalities and sects for unity and coordination in their fight against oppression and unfairness particularly in Bahrain.

Various dimensions of the divergences between Sheikh Yūsuf and al-Qaraḍāwiy Sayed Hassan Nasrallah

The clerics' perceptions echo the divergences between the doctrinal and political differences between the Sunni militant formations, e.g., the Muslim Brotherhood, and Hezbollah, the Shi'ite organization, in their fights for Justice and Freedom^{Mark}. This historical disparity is to be distinguished from the irreconcilable cohabitation of Sunni and Shi'ite heritage of the war in Iraq; a cohabitation that seemed recently to be repairing over political, ideological, and dogmatic fields. One could have hoped that the changes in the Arab and Islamic world would permit a new departure toward an open Islam, which would have put an end to the extremist Salafist groups that have deepened the rupture between the Sunni and the Shi'a since the 1980s.

The tensions in politics persist, despite all signs of rapprochement between the Sunni and Shi'a in the field of dogma and in the struggles between the different armed Islamic factions in the Middle East. The question is, are we witnessing the first signs of the re-making of a sectarian speech? In the fields of the social sciences, we accept that social categories can also be conveyed through religious or political speeches and that social groups can be constructed or identified based on exogenous perceptions of their constituencies. These social categories can be appropriated and integrated by the group being described who might start agglomerating and describing themselves as such.

The same phenomena can also be described in

various ways: a social or a political reality can be constructed with reference to a selected chapter(s) in history.

If one were to draw a conclusion from the 20th century and the example of the Bahraini outburst, the opposition's demand appears to be a social query for justice, integration into civil services and equitable wealth distribution. The Bahraini opposition, perceived mainly as a Shi'ite movement, can equally be accused of Persian affinities. Looking back to the 16th century, the island of Bahrain was indeed subject to struggles for hegemony between the Arab and the Persian shores of the Persian Gulf. "Truth" is ambiguous in this case. It consists mainly of a recollection based on the imagination and mechanisms of perception and appropriation.^{Mark} It is exactly within this frame of thought that the speeches of al-Qaraḍāwiy and Nasrallah are to be analyzed in this piece.

Having been vocal on the Egyptian and the Tunisian appraisals, after he prayed for the death of Qadhafi and hoped for the Yemeni opposition to succeed in days, al-Qaraḍāwiy declared that the Bahraini revolution was a Shi'ite appraisal against the Sunni and therefore was incomparable with the Tunisian, Libyan, Egyptian or Yemani revolutions. Al-Qaraḍāwiy made reference to the early March events when demonstrations had crossed sectarian lines. The Ulema described the Shi'ite in Bahrain as attacking the Sunni, squatting their mosques and vandalizing their districts. Devoid of their legitimacy, the Bahraini opponents to the regime were actually described as vandal secessionists, and therefore the Shi'ite clerics were called to seek dialogue with the ruler who, according to al-Qaraḍāwiy, was willing to negotiate and make concessions.

In fact, the social claims and quest for a constitutional monarchy degenerated into violence and sectarian



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tensions when the Al-Khalifah monarch called for the intervention of the Gulf military force. From a social scientific perspective, such a move can only push the opposition to define its identity in opposition to the ruler by using exogenous associations. As it is considered, rather than holding them in a national Bahraini identity, the King has excluded the opposition from both national and territorial legitimacy.



No matter how one explains these mechanisms, the fact is that the Bahraini demonstrators held posters of Iranian and Hezbollah religious leaders to face the public forces' retaliation. This cost the Bahraini insurrectionists being described by al-Qaraḏāwī as a group of Shi'ite dissidents. They were also accused of foreign allegiance, as al-Qaraḏāwī claimed that the Bahraini Shi'ite were relating themselves to the Iranians instead of identifying themselves as people from the Arab Gulf.

Last, but not least, the eminent cleric al-Qaraḏāwī clearly contributed, in his long speech, to making a difference between the Sunni and the Shi'ite sects and that is exactly constitutive of a sectarian speech: *"I have always been accused of being against the Shi'ite, I am not against the Shi'ite. I am only against sectarianism and religious hatred."* A day later, Saturday, 19 of March, 2011, Nasrallah took the opportunity in his speech, delivered under the slogan of solidarity with the Arab revolutions, to answer

back al-Qaraḏāwī without naming him.

Looking at the structure of this speech, one can see that Nasrallah first addressed the Bahraini, bringing moral support to their opposition, by consolidating religious support with their cause and re-describing their appraisal as a peaceful movement. He then addressed all religious clerics from the Sunni and Shi'ite sects, as well as their political allies, namely Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Prime Minister of Turkey and the Iranian Ayatollah Seyed Ali Hoseyni Khāmene'i, to stand by the so-called human dignity and rights for justice, irrespective of religious sectarianism and urging them to remain attached to their common values and to stand by the deprived and fight for the most elementary human rights.

Thus, Nasrallah first called for the Bahraini to stand by their principles and not to fear sectarian speeches. He reassured the mostly Shi'ite opposition that there were leading Sunni clerics who stood by their legitimate demands. These words resonated even more as they were reinforced by a large Sunni clerical representation among the audience that day. He then described the Bahraini revolution as peaceful population appraisal that was faced with governmental violence and murder. The Bahraini went for dialogue, he claimed, and they stood by their unity and their human values and reclamations. Arabic armies were sent to stand by a regime that was never menaced to fall. They locked the hospitals and destroyed the peoples' home. Even *Loulou Square* was destroyed, a sign of the unbearable weight of the opposition symbols. For those who are familiar with the history and politics of the Gulf, it is understandable that exogenous symbols, namely Persian, are unbearable to these regimes, whose national identities were also consolidated based on external factors of especially Persian differentiation. It is also unfortunate, but quiet frequent, to witness amidst foreign military intervention the destruction of national symbols.



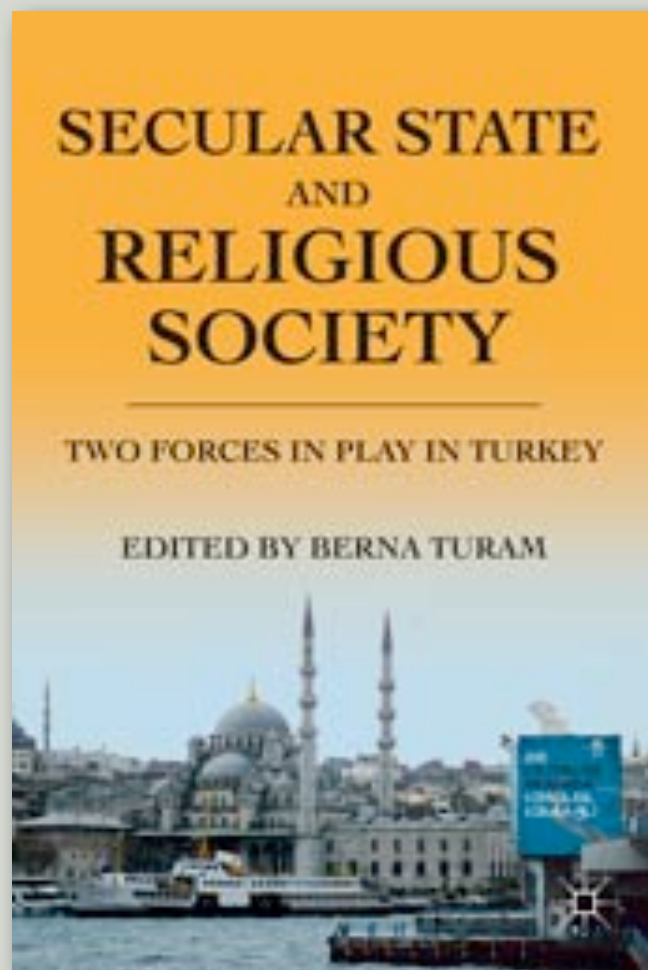
Having tightened the vise around al-Khalifa rule by contrasting them to a peaceful opposition, Nasrallah finally asked why one should keep silent on the Bahraini movement, or worse, why one should attack their claim just because of their sectarian religious identity of being Shi'ite. The opposition in Bahrain being mostly Shi'ite should not be deprived from the right to stand up for their dignity, he claimed. No one ever questioned the religions or sects of the Palestinians, the Libyans, the Tunisians, or the Egyptians to stand by their rights. How then could some *khutba* attack these movements because of their sectarian identity? The Bahraini movement is not sectarian, Nasrallah ascertained, but rather a civil peaceful movement as rightful as the Libyan or the Yemeni rebels' claims.

Nasrallah's art of rhetoric and fighting history made him sound more political than al-Qaradāwiy. But he personally attacked the al-Khalifah rulers, threatening at the same time the Arab monarchs of the Gulf. Such a statement could in the least cost him a war of words with his newly declared enemies, who "reminded" him soon after that he was the leading figure of a terrorist organization. The Bahraini's response to Nasrallah's direct attacks was to menace all Lebanese interests in the Gulf.

It is known in political science that if one can capture the starting point of the break between main political actors it becomes possible to justify a period in history. Such a period might be triggered by the two speeches that were delivered by Nasrallah and al-Qaradāwiy. There is no doubt that the dissonances in perceiving the Bahraini crisis paved the way for future struggles in the Middle East, especially if a cynical betrayal of the aspirations of the Arab youth will play in favor of the most rigid or quarrelsome factions.

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A New Book:
Secular State and Religious Society:
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Edited by Berna Turam
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Turkey as a Model Democracy? Revisiting the Turkish Referendum

Oguz Alyanak and Umit Kurt***

On the day before commemorating the martyrdom of Saint Valentine, *Guardian* columnist Robert Talt published an article that sketched the main points of contention in Turkish democracy. Far from being a model for the Middle Eastern states, let alone Egypt, Talt paid a visit to the dark side of the moon, laid out Turkey's new path as one of Egyptification and, following up on Gareth Jenkins' statement that Turkey exchanges militant authoritarianism with a civilian one, warned his readers of the possibility of an authoritarian comeback. At a time when the international press was flooded with articles praising the "Turkish model", Talt has rowed the boat against the flow, which was followed by the newly-appointed American Consul-General Ricciardone's critical statement: "I do not understand how Turkish journalists could be detained while at the same time addresses about freedom of speech are given."



In this article, we delve into Turkish political culture and outline some of the "darker" aspects of the "Turkish model". Following the debate that Talt, among many others, has started, we argue that Turkey

has yet to become a consolidated democracy that can serve as an exemplar for the Middle East. To back this argument, we point out to some of the lessons that can be drawn from Turkey's latest attempt at democratization, the referendum of 12 September 2010.

Referendum Revisited

On 12 September 2010, precisely thirty years after experiencing one of the four *coup d'états*, which have indubitably shaped the course of Turkish democracy, Turkish constituents attended a referendum to vote on an amendment that would change 26 articles of the current Constitution, established by the army generals, notably, Kenan Evren, some twenty-eight years ago. Ironical is that the constitution of 1982, amended in various occasions, including the referendum of 12 September 2010, was also the product of another referendum conducted on 7 November 1982. The results in 1982 were an overwhelming 91 percent to 9.

Perhaps, it was foolish optimism to expect results that would radically deviate from the above given the figures in 1982, when the shadow of Mr. Evren and his brothers-in-arms were still present. However, in 2010, the picture was much different, and arguably brighter. Both the supporters of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the opposition perceived the then-upcoming referendum as fair game. In other words, there was hope that something would change: be it the constitution, the "hapless fate" of the Turkish Republic or the AKP itself. Leaving the 2007 memorandum aside, Turkish politics, for one thing, had not been intervened by the military since 1997. Hence, the very visible hand of the army in this equation was almost nullified. Moreover, from a more academic perspective, it could very well be argued that Turkey was adamant on its process of democratization, although what the



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word democratization means can itself be questioned. Negotiations with the EU, though slow, were on track, and so was the adoption of the chapters of the *acquis communautaire*. Borrowing the vocabulary of the political scientist Stephen Linz, there were adequate variables to argue for, and more importantly believe in, Turkey's progression toward a consolidated democracy.

Hope for Change?

Hope, however, was ephemeral. The night of 12 September 2010 proved to be one of those black and white moments where, on the one side, those who voted for the constitutional change were cheering in euphoria, and the rest were saddened in remorse. Whereas the results of the referendum were predictable for some, they were frustrating and surprising for others. What stood as surprising for us is not necessarily the results, but rather the kinds of discussions these results ignited among intellectual circles and, more significantly, the repercussions of such discussions for evaluating ideological cleavages in Turkey. On the one hand, prominent academics and columnists argued that the results reflected the division of the Turkish society on the basis of secular (read, Kemalist), conservative (read Islamist) and ethnic (read Kurdish) identities. On the other hand, certain academics, along with members of the AKP, interpreted the results (and the overwhelming percentage of votes in favor of a constitutional change) as a potential for social incorporation and adhesion. Rejecting the tri-partite categorical division proposed by the former camp, the latter camp was driven by the hope for finally changing Turkey's three-decade-old Constitution.

But change itself needs to be problematized not only for what it brings, but how it is handled. If Turkey, under the reign of the AKP government, is undergoing a transformative stage in its modern

history, a stage that nourishes hope for change, be it for the good or the bad, how can factors contributing to this change be explained? What does such change signify for Turkey? And where can the *leitmotif* that is contributing to the ruling AKP's voracious appetite for change be found?



If one aims to portray the fundamental reason behind the rise and success of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his AKP, and decipher the rationale behind his (and his party's) success in the referendum, one should be more aware of the historical context through which such change has been taking place, and thus pay closer attention to the structural-functionalist residues of a social corporatist system bolstered by the lack of a class-free system, let alone free of any deliberation on class based struggle, and the prevalence of conservatism and traditionalism as elements substituting the moral void of *laicite*. These two elements, coupled with transitions in the international context (e.g., neoliberal revival and the impact of globalization) contribute immensely to what can now be called both a transformation of the Turkish political culture. A clever constellation of these two elements paved the way for Erdoğan to decode the behavior of the Turkish constituents and orient the AKP's rhetoric accordingly.



Change Without Class-Struggle?

As far as the Turkish context is concerned, since, it is highly improbable to speak of a continuation of a political culture constructed on class-based identities or a public space that promotes discussion on class relations, the use of the term “class formation” in Turkey is indeed more of an oxymoron than a reality. With the obvious exception being the 1970s where the Marxist winds of the Cold War carried ideological dusts leading to the formation of different factions among the left and the right, and eventually to the *coup d'état* of 1980 which put an end to not only the nascent signals of a potential class-based system, but also political activism in whole and monopolized power in the hands of army general for a period of two years, Turkey's experience with class has either been curbed under the rubric of an Islamic or national unity. Whereas the former divided the society more or less on the basis of religious preferences, the latter imagined a conflict-ridden and classless society where each and every citizen acted in harmony to make the social organism, that is, the society, live and prosper. Not only was this Durkheimian narrative on social beings — which was transmuted into the Turkish case by the pre-eminent ideologue of his time, and the founding father of Turkish nationalism, Ziya Gokalp — adopted as a *de facto* founding principle of the Turkish Republic, but, throughout the entire span of modern Turkish history, it continued to be a principle organizing (and disciplining) Turkish society. Thus, in a society where contradictory voices were often repressed, either through the administrative power of the government, juridical power of courts or the hard power of the army, the ruling governments enjoyed a great space of maneuver, with being checked and balanced only by the Constitutional Court or the army.

This also explains a great part of the tension attached to the referendum. In conjunction with a “Yes” voting in the constitutional referendum, the AKP's plans to

enlarge membership of two top judicial bodies — the Constitutional Court and the Higher Council that appoints judges and prosecutors — have aroused particular concern because the judiciary is still seen by secular Turks as an ardent bulwark against creeping “Islamization,” especially at a time when the military is gradually retreating from politics.

The role of the three institutions — the military, judiciary and state bureaucracy (including civil-military bureaucrats) — is worth a closer look for a very simple reason: their intervention and impact on Turkey's democratic experience, in the name of secularism, social order or the Kemalist legacy, has simply failed to circumvent a political party with Islamist roots claiming 47 percent of the votes in national elections and 39 percent of the votes in local elections, in 2007 and 2009, respectively. This tripartite structure, guarding the legacy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, played an active role in suppressing previous governments with Islamist tendencies (such as the Welfare Party's closure in 1997) and was almost successful in taking the AKP down in 2008. The referendum of 2010 came at a time when this structure was shattering, hence raising pro-secularist fears and concerns about the implementation of the AKP's “hidden agenda” which would arguably lead to “bad change,” that is change of the regime from an arguably democratic one to an Islamist one. Consequently, one of the biggest concerns rising from the opponents of constitutional changes was that a “Yes” vote would bring the removal or weakening of an essential mechanism that supervised the actions of the government.

Furthermore, it was argued that the victory of the AKP in the constitutional referendum would undermine the power of the military and make the Turkish political system accountable to its voters and elected officials rather than its soldiers. All these



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steps toward democratization transpire as a fully-fledged democratic transition, which enhances the role given to the Turkish “political society.” This “political society” encapsulates, as another prominent political scientist Alfred Stepan underlines, core institutions of a democratic political society such as political parties, elections, electoral rules, political leadership, intraparty alliances, and legislature. In a nutshell, what the ramifications of this referendum manifest are the consolidation of the aforementioned institutions of a political society rather than appointed elites of the *étate*. It is the instruments of the political society that are taking over the role corruptly practiced by the tripartite structure. Crystallization of “political society” transformed these institutions and agencies into subjects of political contestation and paved the way toward a democratic system as “the only game in [the Turkish] town”.



Possibility of Conservative Change

At this point, we wish to start analyzing the second dynamic in effect: conservatism. The current situation regarding conservatism in Turkey could best be described as an “opening of tradition” when indicators such as the following are taken into consideration: staunch support of conservative social classes to Turkey’s EU-bid, the new civil constitution

initiative, democratic control of the armed forces, and civilization of the political arena. These examples would suffice to argue that in Turkey, the modernity paradigm is shifting, and the terms “secular,” “conservative,” “progressive,” “backward.” “Kemalist” and “Islamist” are attaining new values. What secular-Kemalists, who regard themselves as modernist and progressive, do not comprehend, however, is the fact that a conservative individual can act in a progressive manner and an allegedly progressive individual can, in turn, act in a conservative manner. Hence, it would not be wrong to speak of Islamist progressivism or Kemalist conservatism. Both are hierarchical structurally and both employ tools repressing internal, dissident voices.

Moreover, this opening of tradition also brings increased visibility in economic and social spheres of public life. Conservative classes that have played a considerable role in the AKP’s rise to power are the “new-rising middle classes” of Turkey, which, in a report published in 2007 by an international organization, European Stability Initiative, was termed also as the rise of the “Anatolian Tigers.” These socio-economic classes literally encompass the new industrial, commercial, and financial bourgeoisie in Turkey. They willingly espouse democracy by promoting active participation in civil society and defend the neo-liberal mechanism of a free market economy. Moreover, they also embrace Islamic conservative values as their lifestyle and bring further visibility of Islam to Turkish secular spaces. In doing so, they do not necessarily relinquish their ties with modernity/modernization. However, they represent an alternative to modernity that can at its best be considered a neo-conservative perspective *vis-à-vis* mainstream secular modernity in Turkey. At this point, the AKP incarnates the modernity standpoint of these *new* conservative social classes.



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The two dynamics this article focused on are perhaps the two most underestimated ones in discussions on Turkish politics. The issue here is not that the dynamics analyzed in this paper often go undiscussed. In fact, there is plethora of discussion especially on conservatism and traditionalism in Turkey. However, for the most part, the discussion on these two elements is often conducted on a superfluous level, where symptoms of social and political transformation are only linked with the conduct of one political actor, and restricted to a limited time frame. Nevertheless, the upshot of the referendum cannot only be encapsulated in the almost eight year reign of the AKP. In order to get a better reading on the referendum, one must discuss it in relation to the two dynamics that color the patterns of Turkish political culture: the formation and sustenance of a class-free society and the prevalence of conservatism among all factions, including the secular-Kemalist. From this perspective, AKP's continuous victory in consecutive elections since 2002 can be explained in terms of Erdogan's exceptional reading of these dynamics, and his brilliant utilization of these dynamics in policy debates. This, from a rhetorical perspective, is what we can conclude as "perennial populism": the defining and distinguishing characteristic of the AKP and its leader.

A Populist Democracy?

The AKP benefits from Erdogan's perennial populism in terms of bolstered competence and enhanced will for policy-making. Presumably, this competence and will for policy making enables the AKP to come up with convincing answers (so convincing to the eyes of the voters that they lead to landslide victories in each election) to challenging questions (e.g., Turkey's membership in the EU, the Kurdish problem, secularization, the status of the Alewite community, etc.), thus leading to an expansion of the AKP's political domain. What lies beneath what many

academics and journalists utter as a democratic opening is in fact a pragmatic, and perennial, populist policy scheme. With this in mind, Talt's claim for Turkey's resemblances to Egypt find a stronger ground.

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Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and King Abdullah of Jordan



Academic tourists sight-seeing the Arab Spring*

*Mona Abaza***

I would like to share with this short piece a concern that several of us in academia in Cairo have been facing with the impact of the Arab Spring, to point to some frustrations regarding the continuing unequal academic relationship between so-called “local” and Western experts of the Middle East, between broadly speaking the North and the South (although this classification is clearly clichéd), and the reshuffling of the international division of labour in the academic field whereby inequality is and will still be prevailing.

Without sounding xenophobic, which is a growing concern that personally worries me more than ever, there is much to say about the ongoing international academic division of labour whereby the divide between the so called “theoreticians” of the North and the “informants” who are also “objects of study” in the South continues to grow.

I am indeed speaking of frustrations because “we” as “locals” have been experiencing a situation, time and again, of being reduced to becoming at best “service providers” for visiting scholars, a term I borrowed from my colleague, political scientist Emad Shahin, at worst like the French would put it, as the “indigène de service”, for ironically the right cause of the revolution. To rather cater for the service of our Western expert colleagues who typically make out of no more than a week's stay in Cairo, a few shots and a tour around Tahrir, the ticket to tag themselves with the legitimacy and expertise of first hand knowledge.

It is no secret that the Arab revolutions have revived academic interest in the region in a clearly positive

manner. This is to be certainly welcomed because it has marked a new phase that will possibly end the dreadful misdoings of the 9/11 effect. It is certainly a promising new phase that will hopefully be unmaking the evil damage of Bin Laden.



But for the local community of academics, in particular what concerns my colleagues at the American University in Cairo, many of us have come up recently with similar observations. Namely the bewilderment at the lavish grants and scholarships that many of our Western colleagues have recently benefited from to research our beloved revolution. Many of us have been bombarded by emails from Western colleagues for such service providing.

Now, I do not mean to express any sort of unjustified resentment towards our Western colleagues, who enjoy definitively far better conditions regarding teaching load, travel allowances and research grants. Never mind still, if in the academic international division of labour, we as “locals” are still struggling



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to scale up to buy time to undertake research and to write. Nevertheless, I think that there is a price to be paid for being on the spot of events and for not being at Princeton, Harvard or Oxford universities. Indeed, I think that AUC ought to be proud of its younger generation of politically and socially committed academics I personally know, and who made a conscious choice to return back and live in Cairo and work there.



This said, it is no coincidence that many belonging to our scientific community have recently felt somehow “misused” through being overwhelmed by Western tourist-revolutionary academics in search of “authentic” Tahrir revolutionaries, needing “service providers” for research assistants, for translating, and newspaper summaries, for first hand testimonies, and time and again as providers of experts and young representatives for forthcoming abounding conferences on the Arab Spring in the West. “Cherchez”, the authentic revolutionary in each corner of the city, is the fashionable mood of these times. In theory, there is nothing wrong with providing services, had the relationship been equal, which was unfortunately never the case.

Another point of concern was made clear to me through my ongoing dialogue with Emad Shatin who pointed to the following issues: the level of commitment of some Western academics to their

subject matter, and the return the region gets on the provision of service. Many overnight Middle East experts show a remarkable tendency to pursue sensational and market-driven topics and readily switch interest as the market forces fluctuate. One day they are self-proclaimed experts on “political Islam” or “Islam and gender” and another, they are authority on “the Arab Spring” and “pro-democracy revolutions”. This superficial and business-oriented handling of crucial developments and changes in the area affects how the peoples of the region are perceived and how policies are shaped in the West.

Malaysian sociologist S Farid Alatas argued as he promoted the idea of the necessity of establishing an indigenous sociology through a modern reading of the work of Ibn Khaldun and state formation that such a move has to be undertaken parallel with the rethinking of curricula and syllabi in non-Western academic contexts. Furthermore, he argued that until today, textbooks specialising in sociological theory reveal a flagrant subject-object contradiction, which has been previously highlighted in the debate on Orientalism.

Namely, that European thinkers remain pervasively as the “knowing subjects” whereas non-Europeans continue to be the “objects of observations and analyses of European theorists”. Unless these issues are not brought up on the table of research agendas I am afraid that much will be said in the name of the revolution while perpetrating the same inequalities and Orientalist attitudes that are mostly felt in the job market, and in evaluating “whose knowledge counts more” in academe.

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<http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/22373.aspx>

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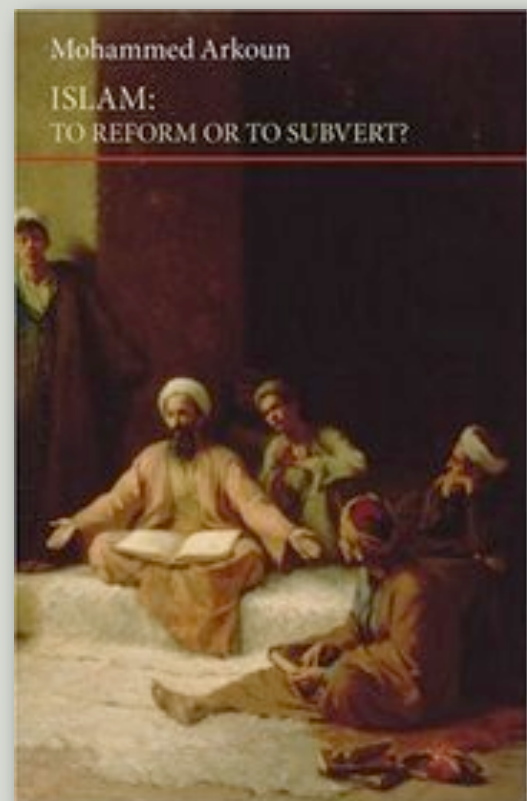
**Review of “Islam: To Reform or to Subvert” by Mohammed Arkoun
(Saqi Books, 2006)**

*Imranali Panjwani**

Mohammed Arkoun’s “Islam: To Reform or to Subvert” is arguably the last book of Arkoun to be published in English before his death on September 14th 2010. His death symbolises a loss in pioneering intellectual thought and boldness, particularly in the field of Islamic studies and source interpretation. It is therefore all the more significant to analyse this last work of his which not only represents a synthesis of his previous works (such as *Rethinking Islam: Common questions, Uncommon answers*) but also some of his lasting critical thoughts on how the revealed and transmitted sources in Islam, namely the Qur’an and Sunnah, should be viewed and interpreted by scholars and believers alike.

Any review of a book would of course cover the author’s main themes and thoughts but I cannot start without mentioning Arkoun’s intellectual breadth and depth of both Western and Islamic sciences. Arkoun’s work can be characterised as anthropological, historical and epistemological but what is intriguing is his attempt in traversing numerous themes, worldviews and subjects. Arkoun appears extremely comfortable in quoting pioneers (past and present) of Western philosophy and Orientalism such as Weber, Hegel, Kant, Burton, Wansbrough, Schacht and Rubin as well as scholars of Islamic sciences such as Shafi’i, Khaldun and Ghazali. For anyone interested in Shi’i scholarship, Arkoun also mentions scholars such as Baqir al-Sadr, Khui and Muzaffar, which from my own personal reading is rare amongst Islamic scholarship that generally leans toward Sunni and/or Sufi interpretations. This in itself shows the reader Arkoun’s intellectual and communal awareness.

Moreover, Arkoun daringly covers the revelation of the Qur’an and its epistemological value and the development of classical Islamic scholarship to the mindset of *ulama* (scholars) and political approaches to Islam in relation to the Islamic person. He is therefore both an insider and outsider to Islamic thought. Finally, Arkoun is neither an apologetic or modernist — perhaps an appropriate term is a ‘criticalist’; he equally criticises Western worldviews of Islam as well as Islamic worldviews of the West, for example, ‘the book by Bernard Lewis, entitled *What Went Wrong?*, whose phenomenal sales attests to its mass appeal, is an excellent case in point...it will suffice to point out that both its title and its contents betray the intellectual impasse born of a frame of mind intent on thinking in terms of the polarity of an imaginary ‘Islam’ and its equally imaginary counterpart of the ‘West.’





So long as this fictional dualism remains in place, the intellectual impasse which is thereby engendered is destined to remain irresolvable.’(P. 10) He further says, ‘the self-promoting West does not even integrate in its geopolitical strategies the imposition of its world vision and ‘universal’ values, to counter the negative or positive perceptions other peoples and cultures are developing towards its policy.’(P. 117)

The book is divided into seven chapters covering the following subjects: Qur’anic studies, belief and the construction of the subject in Islamic contexts, logocentrism and religious truth in Islamic thought, authority and power, the concept of the person in Islamic tradition, aspects of religious imaginary and the rule of law and civil society in Muslim contexts. The latter chapter deals with the Crusades and the Battle of Lepanto. Arkoun’s intellectual project in this book is to demystify and deconstruct the religious imaginary which the majority of Islamic scholars (and Western scholars of Islam), Shi’a or Sunni, have operated on for far too long and to challenge the reader into thinking about the fundamental questions of the purpose of revelation, its relationship to the person and its social effects. This is not merely a commentary on reform of Islamic thought but a bold attempt in changing the status quo of Islamic thought and practice – not just for a renewed interpretation but for the very existence of humankind, which Arkoun argues is trapped in an anthropological triangle of ‘violence, sacred and Truth.’(P. 382)

The first issue Arkoun deals with is the ‘tele-techno-scientific-reason’ of contemporary Western intellectual thought which he calls a ‘purely pragmatic, empiricist expertise.’(P. 37) His criticism centres on reason as an instrumental venture yielding only efficiency and productivity but without actually answering the ‘unreachable mysteries of the lived experiences of the individual.’(p. 41) The

instrumental nature of reason has been greatly criticised by philosophers such as Charles Taylor who in his seminal *Sources of the Self* states:

...much of contemporary philosophy has ignored this dimension of our moral consciousness and beliefs altogether and has even seemed to dismiss it as confused and irrelevant...we are dealing here with moral intuitions which are uncommonly deep, powerful and universal. They are so deep that we are tempted to think of them as rooted in instinct, in contrast to other moral reactions which seem very much the consequence of upbringing and education. There seems to be a natural, inborn compunction to inflict death or injury on another, an inclination to come to the help of the injured and endangered. Culture and upbringing may help to define the boundaries of the relevant 'others' but they don't seem to create the basic reaction itself. That is why eighteenth-century thinkers, notably Rousseau, could believe in a natural susceptibility to feel sympathy for others.(Taylor, Charles.

Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 4-5)

Instead, Arkoun argues for ‘Emerging Reason’ which analyzes cognitivity itself ‘so as not to repeat the ideological compromises and derivations of the precedent postures and performances of reason’ (Arkoun, Mohammed. *Islam: to Reform or to Subvert* (Saqi Books, 2006), p. 35) and to fully encompass the human condition, including minority voices. At the same time, Arkoun argues we must not be overly certain about our religious interpretations as this leads to irrational orthodoxy, to the detriment of the human condition.



In fact, Arkoun states that even when the sciences of *usul al-din* and *usul al-fiqh* were developed by Muslim theologians and jurists from the 8th century onwards, their 'frameworks were pluralistic and conflicting, much less monolithic than what the fundamentalist discourse has been imposing for several decades.' (p. 56) Moreover, he writes, 'European modernity, at least since the eighteenth century, has left us with the impression that reason could finally be liberated from the constraints of dogmatism in order to be placed in the service of objective knowledge alone, once a radical separation between every institutionalised religious law and the "neutral" state has been accomplished.' (P. 57) Arkoun's aim here is to revitalize Islamic thought from its own constraints and admit that its own epistemology was, at one time, dynamic in itself and that 'both trends, Shi'a and Sunni, never paid serious attention to the modern European development of philosophy until the nineteenth century.' (P. 203)

Failing to engage in this exercise leads to a problem in narrative, i.e., the creation of idealised circumstances, sciences and figures that were correct and certain and which forever more will be the continual reference point for Islamic interpretation and belief. Arkoun's method of problematising the issue of certainty in reason leads him to consider how the Qur'an was revealed and its epistemological value today. He argues, similar to Muhammad Shahrur, that the Qur'an started as a prophetic discourse (not a book) between God, the Prophet Muhammad, and the people. It was a lived faith experience that operated not only within the milieu of other religious traditions but, in particular, in the same monotheistic space as Christianity and Judaism. For Arkoun, it appears the Heavenly message, the Book, is the 'celestial text' that has been revealed in the form of books or 'societies of the Book-book.' (P. 81) His aim is to deconstruct the 'revealed given' that 'has been received, interpreted and translated into

ethical, legalistic, political, semantic, aesthetic and spiritual codes.' (P. 81) In this sense, Arkoun puts the Qur'an in a much wider epistemological framework emanating from the same Heavenly source as other revealed books, but which has been greatly shaped by historical forces and needs to be viewed as a progressive construct.

Here, Arkoun points to a gap in classical Muslim scholarship that has continued up until today. He states that 'Qur'anic scholars had little regard for questions of an epistemological nature, if they were even aware of them at all.' (P. 59) This is substantiated toward the end of the book in which Arkoun quotes from several notable scholars from the Shi'a and Sunni tradition (such as Khui, Khaldun and Ghazali) who do not deal with the fundamental questions of the Qur'anic discourse and instead treat the Qur'an as an enclosed book, full of certainties and capable of containing every single aspect of guidance for human beings. For Arkoun, the same applies to the Sunnah and the fact that this has been elevated to a degree that can supersede even the Qur'an itself. It is here we come to the biggest problem that Arkoun identifies: the 'Official Closed Corpus.' (P. 81) This is the corpus of books compiled in the 8th through the 10th centuries; the core books of narration and law produced by figures not to be questioned and that provide the base narrative of interpreting religion. Arkoun mentions the main books of hadith of the Shi'a and Sunni as examples of this, but what is intriguing is the gradual formation of imperatives and cultural norms by classical scholars which cement this idealised narrative, such as the trustworthiness of key religious figures in history or the notion that the whole *umma* would not agree on an error (therefore implying their agreement must be truth). This critique also includes the 'most learned exegesis to daily liturgical recitation and the spontaneous quoting of verses or hadiths in current conversation, in controversy or at joyful or sombre events.' (P. 86)



For Arkoun, the Official Closed Corpus has resulted in the stagnation of interpreting Islamic thought and sources for the contemporary age. This in turn has resulted in the narrowing of classical Islamic sciences, including theology and law. He says:

the composition, diffusion and consecration of the written corpora have allowed the setting up of a supreme Instance, from which, from every community, learned *ulama* draw intangible definitions of the ideal conduct and means of validation and reactivation of orthodox believing...This means that the believing experienced ignores the distinctions of the historian, sociologist and psychologist analyst between the Qur'an as a chronological series of oral statements, then as the Official Closed Corpus, the secondary corpora elaborated by the interpreting communities for the purpose of integrating into the relatively open Corpus of belief everything that appears as innovation, heterogeneous conduct (*bid'a*) imposed by historical evolution or socio-cultural diversity. (P. 122)

Arkoun analyzes the epistemology and methodology of the Official Closed Corpus by devoting a large section to *al-I'lam bi-manaqib al-islam* (Exposé of the Eminent Qualities of Islam) by Abu al-Hasan Amiri (d. 381/992). Here, he shows the logocentrism and use of reason in Amiri's work, which he argues was attempting to be dynamic in its own time and emphasised the role of reason rather than simply following in the footsteps of the ancients. This is a

valuable section of the book as it exposes Arkoun's use of case studies to cogently illustrate the kind of argumentation used in the classical Islamic period, which he supplements with useful diagrams. Arkoun's thrust here is to show how Amiri's work attempted to change the prevailing methodological assumptions of the time (but also acknowledges Amiri's limits) and to assert that Islamic scholars today must do the same. He states, 'what have we gained from our own reading of the *I'lam*? Essentially, an evaluation of the practical efficacy and theoretical inadequacy of philosophical writing in the fourth century H./tenth century...The value of al-Amiri's demonstration resides in the solid links he manages to establish between Revelation and history.' (P. 199)

Arkoun then goes on to analyze authority and power within the Islamic tradition. Fundamentally, he argues that not only have Islamic ruling authorities stagnated scholarship but that even *ulama* have failed to grasp the 'historical reasoning about the changing epistemological postures of reason in each given culture and at each stage of a long historical development.' (P. 205) The result is a collective memory or imaginary in which the political and/or scholarly ruling elite exercises power in the name of a claimed Truth. The worst aspect is when killing occurs with reference to holy cities that exemplify this collective imaginary by the ruling elites, scholars and believers alike. Examples also include the banning of intellectuals who disagree with the 'Iranian Republic, under the leadership of learned authorities who monopolize control of Qur'anic interpretation.' (P. 372) It is here that Arkoun deals with the concept of the person in Islamic tradition by examining the relationship between the 'Qur'anic fact' of God conveying Himself to us and how we must respond to Him. Both these chapters act as a bridge between the epistemological and methodological chapters early on in the book and



relate on a practical level to authority, power and personhood.

The final chapters examine the concept of a religious imaginary using two historical case studies – the Crusades and the Battle of Lepanto. Here, Arkoun aims to show historical conflicts and killings that have resulted from creating a problematic narrative of religion. Quoting Monsignor Sabbah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Arkoun states, ‘What gives birth to religious extremisms and religious wars is not dogma, but men who transform dogmas into specific cultures and national identities. For if all the faithful limited themselves to the effort to seek God and to adore Him, the search for God and his adoration could not be the causes of wars, hatred or discrimination.’ (P. 308) This leads to Arkoun’s final point in the book: Humanity has trapped itself in an anthropological triangle of violence, the sacred and the Truth.

Overall, I would argue that “Islam: to Reform or to Subvert” is an invaluable addition to Islamic scholarship, not least because it represents Arkoun’s final thoughts in English before his death. The book is a rarity and it strikes deep at the heart of the intellectual, social and political issues facing Islamic scholarship and Muslims. Scholars and readers alike who are looking for an anthropological, historical and epistemological contribution with an acute understanding of Muslim community issues would find this a welcome contribution, along with Shahrur’s *‘The Qur’an, Morality and Critical Reason: The Essential Muhammad Shahrur.’* Arkoun’s real value in this book is his level of analysis and scholarly breadth. He understands Western and Muslim modes of scholarship and is not afraid to ask the boldest of questions about the formation and influence of religion. Perhaps this following statement sums up his liberating and courageous intellectual approach: ‘when confronting each other, both sides are intellectually arrogant. That

is why I am defending a pluralistic, open epistemology that goes beyond the contradictory debates on the one-sided truth, or the right of each individual to hold on to his ‘difference’, without caring about the ideological dimensions implicit in each ‘difference’, or ‘identity’ currently based on emotional ties.’ (P. 97)

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Professor **Mohammed Arkoun**
(February 1, 1928 – September 14, 2010)



Two Important News

The Sociology of Islam Journal from Brill
Reception at MESA, Washington DC (Dec. 1-4, 2011)

Dear all,

As you all know, our Sociology of Islam mailing list has grown enormously over the last few years. As of today, we have more than 1400 scholars from 413 universities and 37 different countries with a wide range of scholarship interests and specializations, from Sociology to International Studies, History, Political Science, and Islamic Studies. We have published seven issues of the Sociology of Islam and Muslim Societies Newsletter (<http://pdx.edu/sociologyofislam/newsletter>). The newsletter is written/created from a distinctly non-Orientalist perspective. I must admit that we have faced some challenges from the increased trend of Islamophobia in the academic environment in the US; however, as C Wright Mills wrote, "every time intellectuals have the chance to speak yet do not speak, they join the forces that train men not to be able to think and imagine and feel in morally and politically adequate ways. When they do not demand that the secrecy that makes elite decisions absolute and unchallengeable be removed, they too are part of the passive conspiracy to kill off public scrutiny. When they do not speak, when they do not demand, when they do not think and feel and act as intellectuals--and so as public men--they too contribute to the moral paralysis, the intellectual rigidity, that now grip both leaders and led around the world" (The Causes of World War III, 1958, p. 134).

We are also very excited to announce that our newsletter, the Sociology of Islam and Muslim Societies will be published by Brill (<http://www.brill.nl/>) as a scholarly peer reviewed journal, and in preparation for this development, our editorial and advisory board has been updated. There are plans to publish the first issue at the end of 2012.

Additionally, we will hold a reception for the Sociology of Islam at the upcoming MESA meeting in Washington DC, on December 1-4, 2011. Reception details are as follows, and you will also find information about the upcoming reception at the MESA program website: <http://www.mesa.arizona.edu/>.

**The Sociology of Islam Social Gathering at MESA
Saturday, December 3, 2011
Social Gathering, 5-6pm, Jackson Room (Marriott)**

You are all invited and we hope to see some of you there.

Salaam to all,

Tugrul Keskin



The Sociology of Islam Journal - Brill Fall 2012

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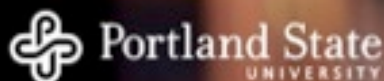
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