

Turkey: Looking Beyond the Current Challenges

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Turkey's efforts of recent years to enhance its influence in the Middle East have been stymied by the upheavals in the Arab world. The lack of regional stability has affected Turkey's relations with the neighboring countries in the region and complicated its regional situation, both with regard to maintenance of its current standing, and even more so with regard to the expansion of its influence. The events in the Middle East have even impacted on Turkey's domestic problems. While it is a mistake to make a direct connection between the "Arab Awakening" and the domestic tension in Turkey, it would nevertheless appear that the indirect influences of the protest that began in the Arab world in late 2010 have not bypassed Turkey.

In an article published in the *International Spectator* in June 2013, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu argued that, "If you adopt a position based on principles that are compatible with the flow of history, then your position will not disappoint you. We believe that the flow of history is on the side of the masses that have demanded their rights in the Middle East; the flow of history is oriented in that direction."¹ The Foreign Minister also remarked that if at a certain point there is what appears to be a negative development, in the long term perspective, this will prove to be only a temporary obstacle. He added that what has taken place in the Arab world should have happened in the 1990s, and even though at that time the major powers preferred to preserve the status quo, history is now assuming its natural course. He emphasized that while leaders are temporary, nations are eternal, and that therefore Turkey supports the will of the people and

the leaders chosen by them. Furthermore, he, like Turkey's president, underscores the moral ("virtuous") aspect of Turkish foreign policy.² These comments reflect Turkey's at least rhetorical position on the awakening in the Arab world. And indeed, aside from the case of Bahrain (and Libya, in the early stages), Turkey has in fact stood with the forces of change. Conversely, when counter-trends emerged, Turkey hastened to criticize them, and was one of their most prominent critics.

Turkish public opinion remains in support of this principle of siding with the masses – even though it is criticized from time to time at home and abroad, not only by those who argue that Turkey must be guided by *realpolitik*, but also because critics claim that the attitude of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan toward the will of the people is simplistic, with an over-emphasis on formal elections and under-emphasis on conduct according to liberal principles.³ Moreover, if the prism is in fact long term, criticism of deterioration in Turkey's relations with one of the countries in the region is perceived as marginal and even petty, because what matters is the overall course of history. At the same time, among shapers of foreign policy, an increasingly positive attitude can be seen toward the principle of "precious loneliness."⁴ This approach was evident, *inter alia*, when at a press conference on August 21, 2013, Foreign Minister Davutoglu stated that Turkey would rather stand alone than be wrong.

Turkey and the Turmoil in the Middle East

The developments in the Middle East have sparked tension in Turkey's relations with a number of players in the region, including Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and the central government in Iraq, as well as Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The conservative Sunni states are likewise uncomfortable with Turkey's unequivocal opposition to the military coup in Egypt. In contrast, the actors in the region with which Turkey has retained good relations are Hamas, Qatar, and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq – in other words, none of the regional powers.

Turkish hopes for the imminent demise of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria have been dashed. Yet along with its unambiguous opposition to Assad's continued rule, Turkey has a serious dilemma concerning which opposition elements in Syria to support. It appears, for example,

that Turkey is playing a double game in its relations with the Kurds in northern Syria. On the one hand, it supports what presents as an additional dimension to weaken the Assad regime. On the other hand, it displays an ambivalent position regarding the possibility that an autonomous region will be established in northern Syria similar to what exists in northern Iraq. The talks that were held between official Turkish representatives and the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which is considered the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), were quite noteworthy: it is doubtful that such contacts would have taken place in the past, and they certainly would not have been publicized.⁵ Nevertheless, the Kurds are accusing Turkey of de facto support for Jabhat al-Nusra, which is identified with al-Qaeda and is fighting against them.

Turkey, however, is clearly unenthusiastic about supporting Jabhat al-Nusra, as it fears that terrorism by extremist Islamic elements will later be turned against its territory and its citizens.⁶ Events such as the May 2013 terrorist attack in the Turkish city of Reyhanli, in which more than fifty Turks were killed and which the Turks attributed to supporters of the Assad regime, have aggravated these fears. But it is not only events within Turkey, but also those outside the country that have given rise to concern. For example, a car bombing near the Turkish embassy in Somalia in July 2013, for which al-Shabab (which is linked to al-Qaeda) took credit, caused the deaths of six Turkish citizens. In addition, in 2012 and 2013 a number of Turkish citizens were kidnapped in Lebanon (by Shiite elements),⁷ after which Turkey warned its citizens not to travel to Lebanon. These kidnappings were apparently part of the reason that most of the Turkish contingent from the UNIFIL peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon was withdrawn in August 2013.

Decision makers in Turkey had mixed feelings about the September 2013 Russian-brokered agreement on the issue of Syria's chemical arsenal. While Turkey welcomed the idea of disarming Syria of its chemical weapons, leaders expressed their concern that the agreement would not lead to a cessation of violence in Syria and that on the contrary, it could even prompt Assad to feel that he is immune from outside intervention.⁸ In August, Turkey made it clear that it would be prepared to be part of an action against Syria by an international coalition, even without UN

Security Council approval.⁹ Turkey has recently emphasized its criticism of the structure of the Security Council and the veto power of the permanent members, preventing the Council from being a leading actor on the issue. Spokesmen expressed disappointment with the fact that there would be no action in Syria by a US-led coalition, similar to NATO action in Kosovo. Yet in spite of Turkey's disappointment that military action in Syria no longer appears to be a viable option (at least as long as the Syrian chemical weapons agreement is deemed effective), coalition action against Syria, had it occurred, would have implied a few latent risks for Ankara. Public opinion polls in Turkey show consistently that the public is opposed to Turkish military action in Syria.¹⁰ Thus, if intervention of this type did take place and encountered difficulties, it would arouse public resentment.

In addition, the Turkish military seems to have weakened in recent years, with its former top leaders and commanders currently under arrest or indictment, and might not have performed well in a military operation in Syria. The threat emanating from the situation in Syria has again highlighted the problematic reality that Turkey lacks the ability to defend itself from a missile attack. NATO members responded relatively rapidly to the Turkish need for anti-missile defense and placed Patriot batteries on the border with Syria. However, the Turks are apparently giving increasing thought to the importance of acquiring independent missile defense capacity. Indeed, on September 26, 2013 China's CPMIEC won a Turkish tender for purchase of long range defense systems. Senior NATO officials were highly critical of Turkey's willingness to advance such a contract with a Chinese company.¹¹

Another dilemma facing Turkey is the large wave of refugees streaming into the country as a result of the ongoing civil war in Syria. An estimated 600,000 Syrian refugees are in Turkey, 200,000 of whom are in refugee camps.¹² It is doubtful that the refugees taken in since the events in Syria began will ever return to their homes, and thus the challenge of absorbing them has become far more of a long term problem than the Turkish authorities envisioned when the wave of refugees started. In this context, the increasing tension within Turkey between the Sunni majority and the Alevis¹³ is also noteworthy, and in the eyes of this minority, the Turkish position toward Syria clearly reflects a Sunni foreign policy.

Along with the negative developments in Syria, there is also bitter disappointment with the events in Egypt. Erdogan was one of the first to oppose the Egyptian army's ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood in July 2013. He referred to it as a military coup and strongly criticized Western hypocrisy in standing aside as the military ousted an elected government from power. On the practical level, the ambassadors of the two countries were recalled for consultations and joint naval maneuvers were canceled. Egypt sharply criticized the Turkish demand to convene the Security Council following the violent events in the country. Comments by Erdogan comparing the chairman of Egypt's Supreme Military Council, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, to Assad¹⁴ also contributed to a sharper tone between the two countries. Erdogan's harsh approach to the events in Egypt appears in part to have resulted from the painful memories of the military coups in Turkey over the years and the suffering they inflicted on Islamic elements, among others, in Turkey.¹⁵ Nevertheless, and although the Egyptians have not yet returned their ambassador to Turkey, in September 2013 the Turks chose to return their ambassador to Egypt – only for him to be expelled in late November 2013. Still, presumably in light of the growing trade between Turkey and Egypt,¹⁶ Egyptian security forces are reportedly guarding some of the Turkish convoys traversing Egypt to transport goods to elsewhere on the African continent.¹⁷ Turkey also paid a price for its strong opposition to the el-Sisi government in its relations with some of the Gulf states, and in particular, Saudi Arabia.¹⁸ Thus, for example, many have drawn a connection between the freeze on investment in a \$12 billion Turkish power station by TAQA, the Abu Dhabi National Energy Company, and resentment of Turkish policy.¹⁹

In Iraq, the tension between the Turkish government and the central government in Baghdad is still an issue both governments have to reckon with. Indeed, this tension has become more pronounced since the US withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, partly because of Turkish accusations that Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki is promoting a pro-Shiite sectarian policy and because of Iraqi charges that Turkey is supporting the Kurds in northern Iraq in a manner that encourages their separatist intentions. For his part, al-Maliki stated in June 2013 that the Gezi Park protests that broke out in Turkey were a result of Ankara's intervention in other

countries – i.e., implicit criticism of Turkish policy toward Syria and Iraq.²⁰ The fact that energy deals related to oil and gas are in advanced stages of negotiations between Turkey and the KRG without the approval of the central government in Baghdad²¹ contributes to al-Maliki's increased fears of a Kurdish declaration of independence. The serious deterioration in the health of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, who is of Kurdish origin and is considered a unifying force in Iraq, has also enhanced al-Maliki's concerns. The United States has for some time pressured Turkey to improve its relations with the Iraqi central government, and indeed in October-November 2013, there were mutual visits of the Iraqi and Turkish Foreign Ministers in an effort to turn a new page in the relations.

Since August 2013 there has also been an attempt to ease the tensions with Iran. The timing of the most recent attempt to reduce the tension is connected not only to the election of Hassan Rouhani as president of Iran,²² but also to the rapid deterioration in Turkish-Egyptian relations and to the tension in Turkey's relations with other countries in the region. Turkey welcomed the signing of the interim agreement between Iran and P5+1 on the nuclear issue. In addition to reduced fears from the negative repercussions that a Israeli/US military strike may have had, Turkey also hopes that the easing of the sanctions on Iran will bring about an increase in the volume of bilateral trade.²³ Speaking about the possibility of direct negotiations between the United States and Iran, Turkish President Abdullah Gul stated that "if the nuclear dispute were to be resolved we should be the one who is happiest" because the two other options – a military strike against Iran or a nuclear Iran – are bad options from Turkey's point of view.²⁴ Nevertheless, the two countries are hard pressed to overcome the significant dispute over the fate of the Assad regime. Thus after his trip to Iran for Rouhani's inauguration ceremony, Davutoglu stated he hopes for a change in Iran's position on Syria.²⁵

The Gezi Park Events

The demonstrations that began in Istanbul's Gezi Park over the intention to uproot the park's trees to reconstruct an Ottoman building and turn it into a shopping center, developed in May 2013 into a widespread protest against the government. Because of what was widely perceived as brutal

suppression of non-violent protest, the demonstrations in Istanbul expanded and spread to many other areas of the country. Large numbers of young people were caught up in the demonstrations, and for some of them, this was their first political experience.²⁶

Some have asked whether the events in Gezi Park can be attributed to the disturbances that swept through the Middle East in recent years. Some claim that a comparison between the events in Turkey and Tahrir Square in Egypt is misplaced; while the Arab uprisings were against dictatorial regimes, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) was elected in 2011 by some 50 percent of those who voted in what were indisputably free elections. Some have attempted to compare the events in Turkey with the Occupy Wall Street movement, but here too the comparison is problematic, since the protests in Turkey did not stem from resentment over economic issues.²⁷ Others have compared the events to the anti-Putin demonstrations and emphasized that the Turkish uprising was a protest against Erdogan's authoritarian tendencies. However, in contrast to the situation in Russia, there is no disputing that Erdogan received broad support in the various elections in Turkey. Another comparison has been made between what occurred in Turkey and the widespread demonstrations in Brazil, but in that case too, resentment about economic issues was much more significant than in the case of the Turkish protests.

While it cannot be argued that the events in Gezi Park did not affect Erdogan's standing, it is still difficult to see whether, and from where, a political force will emerge that is strong enough to challenge his position. From time to time, the argument is made that only the Gulen movement, a civil society movement – also known as the Hizmet (service) movement – established by Fethullah Gulen, a religious preacher, can challenge Erdogan at this time.²⁸ It is evident, however, that this movement's main efforts are directed at pushing a slow process of reform and in working within the apparatus of the AKP, and not in founding a new party. There is also a latent rivalry between Erdogan and President Gul, who presents a more moderate line than Erdogan and seems to be more compatible with the direction of the Gulen movement.²⁹ It appears that Erdogan's intention to change the governmental system in Turkey to a presidential democracy³⁰ has been interrupted, but even before the Gezi Park riots, doubts arose as

to his ability to institute this reform. Erdogan can still run for president of Turkey in 2014 even without these reforms, but the question is whether he will be satisfied with the position, which is mainly ceremonial. If he chooses not to run for the presidency, the main obstacle that will stop him from participating in the parliamentary elections with the goal of serving a fourth term as prime minister is the AKP constitution. While there will be a certain amount of damage to his image if the party constitution is changed in order to allow him to run for prime minister, the damage will be limited and containable.

The protests in Gezi Park, and even more their suppression, cast a shadow over what has been called the “Turkish model.” This vague term, which is also used in different fashions, generally refers to the convergence between modernity, democracy, and Islam in Turkey. However, even prior to the protests there were doubts as to the relevance of this model beyond the borders of Turkey, for two reasons. One reason is that Erdogan’s authoritarian behavior began before the riots (and in fact was one of their causes). Two, Turkey’s unique situation – a result of the revolution carried out by Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the republic, as well as its institutional ties with the West over the years (a member of NATO and a country interested in joining the European Union) – has in any case limited other countries’ potential to emulate the Turkish model. Nevertheless, the Gezi Park events can be seen as an illustration of the growing strength of civil society in Turkey and the positive impact that some of the reforms passed by the AKP in its more than ten years of rule have had on achieving greater openness in Turkish society.³¹ The weakening of political Islam in the Arab world – reflected, *inter alia*, in the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt and the weakening of Hamas – whether it turns out to be temporary or ongoing, also affects the AKP. However, over the years the AKP has actually emphasized the fact that it is not an Islamist party, and is closer to conservative democratic parties. Therefore, the erosion in the standing of political Islam will have more of an effect on Turkey’s foreign relations than on the domestic arena.

Istanbul’s loss of the competition to host the 2020 Olympics to Tokyo in September 2013 was presented by supporters and opponents of the AKP, justifiably or not, as related to the party’s performance (even though

Turkey competed five times previously for the right to host the Olympics, and it was never as close to being awarded the games as it was this time). Opponents of the AKP breathed a sigh of relief when it became clear that Turkey would not be hosting the Olympics. For Erdogan, this was a failure, as he wished to develop a number of grandiose projects prior to the centennial celebrations of the Turkish Republic in 2023 and to connect at least some of these projects to preparations for the Olympics. Supporters of the AKP have even blamed the Gezi Park demonstrators for Turkey's loss of the Olympics.³²

In August 2013, during the Gezi Park protests, a verdict was handed down in the Ergenekon trial, in which various figures were charged with attempting to organize to overthrow the government headed by the Justice and Development Party. The verdicts symbolized the end of the process of the weakening of the military as an important political player in Turkey. Particularly notable in this regard was the fact that Ilker Basbug, who served as chief of staff of the Turkish army from 2008 to 2010, was sentenced to life in prison. The harsh sentences, along with doubts about whether the defendants received a fair trial, were seen by critics as evidence of a witch hunt in Turkey. However, many people agreed with Erdogan's criticism of the army's intervention in the Turkish political system over the years. Thus, for example, EU officials welcomed the fact that in July 2013, Article 35 of the armed forces law in Turkey was changed to emphasize that the role of the military is only to defend Turkey from external threats.

Another important development was the decision in late 2012 to renew the peace talks with PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. One of the motivations behind the peace process with the Kurds was the hope of mobilizing representatives of the Kurdish parliament to vote in favor of constitutional reforms that would authorize the change in the system of government in Turkey to a presidential democracy. Since the hope for far reaching change in the system of government has in fact been shelved, there was concern whether the disappearance of this motive will be destructive to the process. Of course, there are deeper motivations for dealing with the Kurdish issue, and the argument that Erdogan's governments have been bolder than previous Turkish governments in their efforts to contend with this challenge is still valid. The very fact that direct contacts were

held with the PKK leader, as well as the open admission that the talks were underway, departed significantly from what had taken place in the past, and therefore broke a taboo. However, there has not been significant progress in the process. The withdrawal of PKK fighters from Turkey and their move to Iraq without their being disarmed and the organization's declaration in September 2013 that it was suspending the withdrawal of its fighters from Turkey gave rise to serious doubts about the chances for its success.³³ On September 30, Erdogan announced a series of reforms and, in an effort to breathe a bit of life into the peace process with the Kurds, also presented several reforms connected to the Kurdish minority. These included allowing private schools to teach Kurdish, restoring original Kurdish names to Kurdish villages, and proposing a number of possibilities regarding the high electoral threshold required in the Turkish parliamentary elections, which prevents the Kurdish parties from entering parliament. Another notable development in this respect occurred when Erdogan gave a speech in November 2013 in Diyarbakir alongside the president of the KRG, Masoud Barzani, and got his public support for the peace process within Turkey. In his speech, Erdogan for the first time publicly used the word "Kurdistan" while referring to Northern Iraq. To those who later criticized him for using this word, he replied, "A big state cannot be built with fear. Those who are afraid of words, of concepts, of taboos...cannot build a big state."³⁴

Turkey-Israel Relations

A dramatic development in relations took place on March 22, 2013, during the visit by US President Barack Obama to Israel, when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu apologized in a phone call to Erdogan for the loss of life during the *Mavi Marmara* incident. The conversation took place after almost three years of direct and indirect contacts between the two countries about the event.³⁵ The Turks presented the apology as success for Turkish diplomacy and an achievement for Erdogan.³⁶ Israeli (and American) expectations that after the apology the other agreements on compensation and a return to normalization would be reached quickly have not materialized. Despite several rounds of talks that were deemed positive meetings by both parties,³⁷ and although it appeared that at least

outwardly the primary unresolved issue was the amount of compensation, in fact, the necessary agreements were not reached.³⁸ In July 2013, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc claimed that the main dispute between the two countries stemmed from Turkey's demand that Israel take responsibility for the events and under this rubric make payments to the families of the casualties, while Israel wishes to pay ex gratia.³⁹ It can be argued that on this issue it was apparently Turkey that retreated, at least partially, from previous understandings: in talks over the past few years, there was discussion of setting up a humanitarian fund to which Israel would transfer money and which would allocate the funds as it saw fit for the families of the casualties; the idea of such a fund is arguably closer to ex gratia payment.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it has become clear that the families of the casualties are not prepared to drop their lawsuits against IDF soldiers, and that a treaty between Turkey and Israel, to be approved by the Turkish parliament, will apparently be necessary in order to overcome the problem of these lawsuits.

While Israeli opponents of an apology have from the outset claimed that there was no chance of improved relations between Israel and Turkey, the Gezi Park riots perhaps also aggravated the situation, as a thaw in relations with Israel is low on the list of priorities of the Erdogan government. Nevertheless, there has been a positive development in that for the first time since the *Mavi Marmara* incident, the most senior diplomat in Israel's embassy in Ankara was invited to a reception held by the Turkish President.⁴¹ On the other hand, a number of remarks by Turkish officials have caused concern in Israel: Erdogan's comment about the involvement of the "interest rate lobby" in the Gezi Park riots (which it was difficult not to interpret as an anti-Semitic remark); an explicit statement by Deputy Prime Minister Besir Atalay about the Jewish diaspora being behind the riots (which was later denied);⁴² and a comment by Erdogan to the effect that Israel was behind the ouster of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt.⁴³ In addition, David Ignatius's claim in the *Washington Post* that Turkey blew the cover of Iranians spying on behalf of Israel and gave their names to the Iranian authorities,⁴⁴ allegedly in 2012, caused uproar both in Israel and in Turkey. While many in Turkey accused Israel of leaking the story, after a

denial by the Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesperson Erdogan stated that his government should trust Israel's statements on the matter.⁴⁵

Some officials in Turkey believe there is a significant chance that in order to be able to export some of its natural gas, Israel will agree to cooperate with Turkish energy companies and build an underwater pipeline to Turkey. An official of the Turkish energy company Turcas has stated that if tension between Israel and Turkey resurfaces, his company would even bear all the costs of construction of the pipeline from the Leviathan gas field.⁴⁶ It is also evident that Turkey was prepared to move closer to Israel in the hope that this would encourage US military action in Syria. However, Israel's hesitation on the question of whether and where to export the gas, as well as the lack of American desire to intervene militarily in Syria, has not helped improve relations.

While in the past the restarting of diplomatic negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians might have mitigated the tension somewhat between Israel and Turkey, which at least on the declarative level has revolved mainly around this issue in recent years, there was no rapprochement evident when the talks were restarted under the auspices of the US administration in July 2013. Not only is Turkey far from influencing the political process (which in any case has little chance of success); its attempt to take advantage of its good relations with Hamas in order to advance reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas also failed, and in general Turkey today shows more interest in what occurs in Gaza than what occurs in the West Bank. Moreover, in spite of the importance of steps toward normalization between Israel and Turkey, Turkey will likely hesitate in the foreseeable future to cooperate openly with Israel. On the other hand, regarding tactical cooperation, such as exchange of information on jihadist terrorists in Syria, the apology has given the two countries room for flexibility.

Looking Ahead

Although Russia and the United States have reached agreement on the issue of chemical weapons in Syria, Turkey will likely continue to call for Assad's ouster. While it will adhere to rhetoric that emphasizes morality, it will also at times show pragmatism, in light of the fact that the Turks do not want to act independently in Syria, nor are they able to do so.

While anti-Western feelings are nothing new in Turkey – Turkish officials frequently emphasize Western hypocrisy, in connection with events in Syria and Egypt, for example – there is concern that these feelings will spiral out of control and have a negative impact on Turkish decision making, even when it is relatively clear that Turkish interests match those of the West,⁴⁷ e.g., the weakening of the relationship between Syria and Iran. As for Egypt, it would appear that the clearer the picture regarding the stability of the el-Sisi government, the more willing the Turks will be to attempt to cooperate with it, even in a limited fashion. This is due to the traditional importance of Egypt in the Arab world and the fact that Turkey also has significant economic interests in the African continent in general and Egypt in particular.

Turkey's entry into an election year, both for local elections (March 2014) and for the first time, direct elections for the president (scheduled to be held in August 2014), does not bode well for its relations with Israel. Moreover, from Turkey's perspective, relations with Israel are not the highest priority. The US administration, which is working to promote a diplomatic process between Israel and the Palestinians, is also exerting less pressure on Turkey to make progress in its negotiations with Israel. If there are dramatic developments in the political process between Israel and the Palestinians, Turkey will probably somewhat soften its stance toward Israel. However, Turkey overall feels disconnected from the process, and taken with the mutual suspicions between the Turkish government and the government of Israel, a significant improvement in relations does not appear imminent. However, because of energy issues, Turkey has an interest in attempting to foster limited cooperation with Israel, even more so because its ability to be in direct conflict with Israel has been reduced due to the tension in its relations with many of its neighbors.

The assessment that the future holds many advantages for Turkey in the Middle East, in spite of the pitfalls along the way, reflects the influence of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu in setting the path of Turkish foreign policy. This basic optimism is part of the general vision of pushing Turkey to center stage, both in the region and internationally. Much has been written on Turkey's failure to recognize the limitations of its power and on the losses it has already suffered and the consequent failures that can yet

be expected.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, since this is a long term perspective, there is difficulty in challenging this optimism – all the more so because it connects well with nostalgia for the imperial past, which speaks to the heart of some of the Turkish population.

Notes

- 1 Ahmet Davutoglu, “The Three Major Earthquakes in the International System and Turkey,” *International Spectator* 48, no. 2 (2013): 5.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
- 3 Burak Kadercan, “Turkey’s Gezi Park Episode is Far from Over,” *OpenDemocracy*, August 11, 2013, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/burak-kadercan/turkey%E2%80%99s-gezi-park-episode-is-far-from-over>. See also Sayed Abdel-Maguid, “Erdogan and Democracy,” *al-Ahram Weekly*, August 28, 2013.
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- 13 Estimates are that the Alevi minority numbers between 10-20 million Turkish citizens. They are different from the Alawites in Syria, but nevertheless support them in the civil war there. For more information see Dror Zeevi, "The Awakening of the Turkish Alevis," *CanThink*, September 16, 2013.
- 14 "Egypt Committing State Terrorism, al-Sisi and al-Assad are Same: Turkish PM," *Hurriyet Daily News*, August 17, 2013.
- 15 In this context, see also Gallia Lindenstrauss and Timur Saitov, "When Identification Becomes an Obstacle: The Turkish Response to the Military Coup in Egypt," *CanThink*, July 18, 2013.
- 16 In 2012, trade between Turkey and Egypt totaled more than \$5 billion, and Turkish exports to Egypt grew by some 33 percent over the previous year. For the sake of comparison, trade between Israel and Turkey in 2012 was some \$3.5 billion. "Turkey's Anger at Egypt May Cost Economy," *Xinhua*, August 19, 2013.
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- 20 Ahmed Hussein, "Maliki: Turkey's Events Result of Its Interference in Other Countries' Affairs," *IraqiNews.com*, June 17, 2013. See also "Who in Middle East Used Gezi Park Protests as Opportunity," *Today's Zaman*, July 7, 2013.
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- 26 "78 Percent of Gezi Park Protest Detainees were Alevis: Report," *Hurriyet Daily News*, November 25, 2013.
- 27 While in indicators of inequality Turkey stands out (for example, in the OECD inequality index from 2011, Turkey appears in third place), there are no indications

that the protests were motivated by economic issues. Seltem Iyigun, "As Turkey's Economy Booms, Deep Inequality Persists," *Reuters*, November 28, 2012.

- 28 The movement promotes what appears on the face of it to be a moderate version of Islam. Gulen believes in the importance of education for turning the individual into a person who can contribute to society. One of his famous sayings is, "We need to build more schools and fewer mosques." Since the early 1980s, schools that receive inspiration from Gulen and place an emphasis on science education have come into existence. He criticizes religious schools that do not prepare their students for the modern world. The movement has between 3-6 million believers around the world who apparently donate an average of 10 percent of their earnings to it. In Turkey, there are newspapers (*Zaman* and the English version, *Today's Zaman*), a bank, a business association, a university, and hospitals associated with the movement, and many employees of the police and the courts support it. However, there is considerable criticism of the movement in Turkey and abroad. It has an aura of secrecy surrounding it, and there is blind devotion to Gulen himself, in a manner reminiscent of a sect. See, for example, Rasim Ozan Kutahyali, "Is a Power Struggle Brewing between Erdogan and Gulen?" *al-Monitor*, August 19, 2013.
- 29 Maximilian Popp, "Turkish Power Struggle: Brotherly Love Begins to Fray Ankara," *Spiegel Online*, June 25, 2013.
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