‘‘The best of enemies’: The changing relationship between Syria and Turkey with particular reference to the Arab Spring.”

by

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ABSTRACT

Syria and Turkey have a long history of cross-border tension, emanating from the different ethnicities, different approaches to geopolitics, and a history of war across the border. With the addition of modern issues, such as the increasing strength of the Kurdish independence movement, and the transferrance of the Arab Spring to Syria, there is even more cause for tension. This work will analyse what it is that has shaped relations between the two, and the way that the two have responded in particular to the instability within Syria. Both hold different views of themselves, and this naturally underpins the way that they interact with one another.

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Map of the Kurdish people. Source: The Economist

1. Introduction

The relationship between Turkey and Syria is under-examined in the Middle East, in favour of relations between Israel and Palestine, or tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran. However, the relationship between Turkey and Syria encompasses more of the different pulls of the Middle East. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the Middle East has been split more between those who are pro-United States, and those who are anti-West. Turkey and Syria are at the extremes of this debate. Although the root of their tensions is based on far more than policy towards the West, this has been one area of division.

The Arab Spring uprisings that began in Tunisia, but have since spread to Libya, Egypt and more recently Syria and Bahrain have been characterised by rejecting the authoritarian governments of the Middle East. Although each country has had a slightly different experience of the Arab Spring, there have been major patterns. In Syria, although the fighting has been more equally matched than in Egypt, it seems to fit within the pattern of the Arab Spring uprisings. The purpose of this work is to use this as the prism by which relations between Syria and Turkey are analysed.

1.1 Introduction to key issues

There is a clear rationale behind the description of Turkey and Syria as the 'best of enemies'. The phrase refers to the fact that Turkey and Syria have many areas of social, political, and economic overlap. In each of these cases, the relationship between the two has the capacity to be ameliorated. However, diffidence between the two nations has been almost continuous since the ending of the First World War, and the development of the modern states in both Syria and Turkey. Tensions between the two distinct models of governance in both countries - namely a secular, European-looking democracy in Turkey and an Islamic Arab Public in Syria - has underpinned a lack of co-operation between the two nations. The core thesis of this work is that tensions between the two nations are driven by the internal processes of both states, and how these impact upon domestic processes. In the case of the Arab Spring, Turkey is anxious as to the outcome of the uprising, and it is unclear which forces in Syria would benefit from the fall of Bashar Assad. This work will take a firmly constructivist line of International Relations, in showing how foreign policy drives internal policy, and how this in turn impacts upon the way that foreign policy is conducted. This is a cyclical model, whereby interactions between Turkey and the West, and Syria and Iran in particular impact upon domestic policy, and therefore how the two nations interact with one another. This therefore drives Turkey to look to the West and Syria to look to Tehran. This will be the hypothesis tested by this work.

The key issues that determine relations between Turkey and Syria can be grouped into historical, ongoing and short-term. The historical tensions between the two stem from the period of Ottoman rule, and both Ankara (and previously Istanbul) is as diffident towards Damascus as *vice versa*. This is perhaps the origin of the conflict and tensions between the two. Secondly, there is the historical model of governance used by both states. Ankara has traditionally (at least until the victory of the AK Party in 2002) looked to the West for guidance, regarding itself as a European power. Its secular model has alienated many nations of the Middle East. This is true of Syria under the Assad family, which has pursued a more ostensibly pro-Islamic viewpoint.

The ongoing tensions between the two concerns issues that do not look to change, although could be solved with diplomacy. These primarily consist of tensions between the two over water and the Kurds. The issue of water is a pressing one for Syria, particularly given that the origin of the vast majority of Syria's water comes from rivers that begin in Turkey. As Muftuler-Bac (1997) writes, "Turkey's advantage over Syria and Iraq is that about 90 per cent of the water in the Euphrates and Tigris rivers is drained from Turkish soil." (Muftuler - Bac, 1997, p. 43). In addition to this, the presence of a large cross-border population of Kurds is something that has heightened tensions between the two nations, particularly given the Turkish policy of non-negotiation. Although Damascus has been less anti-Kurd in its domestic policy, they have sought to undermine the Turkish government through the funding of the Kurdish armed group, the PKK. This is another factor that has drawn the two nations into conflict.

Finally, the short-term factors between the two have centred on the uprisings in Syria. This has not only caused a wave of refugees to move across the Turkish border, and therefore draw the Turks into the conflict, but have led Turkey to consider what will replace the Assad regime, were it to fall. This, coupled with the Western willingness to intervene in Libya, has led for Turkey to demand an international intervention in Syria. Tension has also increased over Turkish willingness to openly support the opposition armies, both with public pronouncements and with the creation of refugee camps for defecting members of the Syrian army. These short-term tensions have changed the nature of Syrian-Turkish tensions into one of existential survival rather than diplomatic sniping. This work will examine the short-term crisis in the context of the longer-term crises.

1.2 Ottoman period

The legacy of the Ottoman period has created tension between the two nations. In particular, the manner in which the Syrians fermented revolt against the Turks, which is seen in Turkey as representing a 'stab in the back' during the war against the West. This is particularly leveled at Syria, as Damascus and Aleppo were both home to Arab nationalists who helped to unite the Arab peoples against the Ottomans. Similarly, in Syria, there exists still resentment towards the Turks for much of the oppression that occurred during the Imperial period, particularly in response to the Arab nationalism of he early twentieth century. As Ma'oz and Yaniv (1986) write,

> ‘‘-Turks remembered the ‘treason’ of Arab - Syrian nationalist circles during World War I and the ‘stab in the back’ they suffered from the Arab revolt; Syrians remembered the misrule of their Ottoman masters and the heavy-handed methods the latter adopted in attempting to suppress the nascent Syrian - Arab nationalist movement.”−(Ma’oz and Yaniv, 1986, p. 85)

The tensions between the two nations have served to begin both countries on a path of suspicion and resentment, even at the inception of Turkey in 1922-3. In addition, the period of French mandate (1924-1943) is regarded with controversy in Syria, as it was at this point that the province of Alexandretta was transferred from Damascene control, to that of Ankara. As a U.S. Federal Division Report of 2004 found, this is still an area of controversy: “Relations between Syria and Turkey, which share a long border, have ranged from normal diplomatic ties to political and military tension. Conflicts have arisen over border problems, the apportionment of river water flow, smuggling, and charges of international subversion. (Federal Research Division, 2004, p. 265) Tensions between the two nations over these issues remain to this day. Although the Ottoman period ended around a century ago, the two nations were binarily opposed almost at the moment of their creation. This is an extremely important area of tension between the two nations, and no work on the two can ignore the importance of the Ottoman period to Turco-Syrian relations.

1.3 The Kurdish issue

The Kurdish issue is the one that has the most capacity for causing poor relations between Turkey and Syria. The Kurds are a people who are ethnically distinct from the Turks and the Arabs, and have agitated for autonomy, and in some cases, independence. This has been vehemently opposed by both Damascus, Ankara, as well as in Iraq and Iran, where Kurds are also found (see map above). However, as a general rule over the past century, the use of the Kurdish issue has been a symptom of wider relations, and not in itself a cause. Generally, during periods of diplomatic tension, when relations are in a relative trough, the Syrians will give overt support to the Kurds. This is a major policy used by the Syrians, and one that particularly angers the Turks. Each time the Syrians give support to the Turks, either through open shows of support, or through more covert funding, it creates a stronger sense of Kurdish identity, and the issue is further confounded. As Olson (2000) writes, "The Kurds are a people estimated to number some 20 - 25 million living largely in four Middle East countries: Turkey which is estimated to have a population of 10 - 12 million; Iran, 5 - 6 million; Iraq, 3.5 million, and Syria, 1 million...Since the bulk of Kurds live in contiguous areas of east and south-East Turkey, north and north-east Iraq; north and north-west Iran and in east and north-east Syria, they have possessed a sense of self, community and of shared space since medieval times at least." (Olson, 2000, p. 120)

Indeed, in many respects the Syrian support for the Kurds represents a means by which Damascus can offset the Turkish control of Syrian water supply. The Syrians have shown

themselves to be both willing and able to use Turco-Kurdish tensions to counteract Turkish monopoly of water supplies. As Tejel (2009) writes,

> ‘‘-Syria’s open support of the PKK [the Kurdish Workers party, who are the leaders of the call for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey in particular] may be best understood in light of the Turkish government’s announcement in 1977 of the launching of the Southeast Anatolia project, a vast program aimed at exploiting the water resources of the Euphrates and Tigris basins. Covering nine provinces with a total area of 74,000 square kilometres, the US $32 billion project became the largest development project ever undertaken in Turkey and one of the largest of its kind in the world.’’−(Tejel, 2009, p. 75)

However, unlike in the case of Jordan and Israel, where mutual desire for access to water supplies has caused the two states to work together, Syria and Turkey have shown little ambition to co-operate over the issue.

However, what is truly confusing when it comes to Syrian policy towards the Kurds is that they share many of the same objectives as the Turks. Both countries strongly oppose the establishment of a Kurdish state, and both believe that the Kurdish people must work within the existing states. In this respect, the two nations truly are the ‘best of enemies’, based on a combination of shared goals, and deliberately differing policies. As Gunter (2011) writes,

> ‘‘-Along with Turkey, Iran, and Iraq, Syria strongly opposes the establishment of any Kurdish state because it would be a threat to its existing territorial integrity. At times, all four states have worked together to prevent such an eventuality. Nevertheless, as have the other three states, Syria has also not hesitated to use the Kurds against the other three, Turkey especially.’’−(Gunter, 2011, p. 283)

For Syria to deliberately undermine their own domestic policy to promote tension with Turkey, it shows the extent to which the two nations are truly opposed to one another. The Kurds are one of the biggest domestic issues for both Syria and Turkey, and one of the major reasons why Turkey are so unwilling to countenance the idea of a long-term instability in Syria. In Iraq, the removal of Saddam Hussein led to the election of a Kurdish President, and this is something that the Turks do not wish to occur in Syria, where a powerful Kurdish minority could forge links with Turkish Kurds, which would undermine Turkey. For the Turks, the strength of the Assad government was in its relative quieting of the Kurdish issue. Instability will result in this issue being re-raised.

1.4 Alawite/Alevis

The Alawi people are a religious group within Syria who follow a branch of Shi’ism known as the ‘Twelver School’. The Alevi are a subgroup of the Islamic world who combine an element of Shi’ism with that of Sufism (mysticism), and are found predominantly in Turkey. An area of confusion in the study of bilateral Turco-Syrian relations comes from the fact that the two peoples are often said to be linked by religion. However, although the term Alawite and Alevi are related - both stem from the support

for Ali - they are in fact not synonyms, and the Alevi people are a Turkic grouping who do not share beliefs with the Shi'ite Alawite group that rule Syria. As Cagapty (2012) writes,

> ''-Around eighty percent of the world's Muslims are Sunnis and another fifteen to twenty percent are Shiites. Other groups, such the Alevis, make up such a relatively small portion of the Muslim faith that many are simply unaware of them. This leads to a fallacy: Many assume that because the Alevis are not Sunnis, they must be Shiites, confusing them with the similarly named Alawites. This myth is common even among some Muslims who assume that the Alawites and Alevis are identical.'' −(Cagapty, 2012)

Thus, what bears mentioning at this juncture is that there is a clear and important distinction to be made between the Alevi peoples of Turkey and the ruling elite of Syria. Alevis are not Sunnis and neither are they Shi'ites. The Alawites are Shi'ite, and rule Syria, a predominantly Sunni nation. This is an important distinction to make at this juncture of the work. Although there are many areas of overlap between the two nations from a cultural level, the link between the Alevis and the Alawites is not a cultural link. The reason for raising this at this point is that there is a major fallacy in some of the literature. This work will not follow this confusion, and instead will not conflated the two related, but non-synonymous terms.

1.5 Other areas of foreign policy (i.e. Iran/Israel)

Prior to 2002, and the victory of the AKP in Turkey, Turkish foreign policy followed a predominantly pro-Western axis. This meant that Turkey had cordial relations with Israel, which naturally increased tensions with Syria, who were a major supporter of Hezbollah in Lebanon. However, in recent years, the Islamic (but not Islamist) AK Party have become less cordial with Israel, and have looked to spread their alliances in the Middle East. This has involved some opening of relations with Iran, who have often been the key supporters of Syria. Although this does not, in itself, suggest a rapprochement with Syria is more or less likely, it does show the extent to which Turkey has sought to diversify its allies within the region. Indeed, Turkey has looked in recent months to increase its value in the world through increasing diplomatic links. Turkey has, recently, begun calls for a deprofileration of the Middle East - calling on both Israel and Iran to discontinue the production of nuclear weapons, and therefore to improve their own relative security, as well as that of the Middle East in general. Thus, there have been recent changes in the relationship between Turkey and the other nations of the Middle East, and this shows the extent to which Turkey is interested in fostering a stability in the region, something that will naturally be upset by the fall of Assad, particularly if the Syrian government that replaces the Assad rule is a more pro-Islamist or anti-Turkish government. Turkey therefore wishes to ensure that what replaces Assad is a moderate government that does not undermine the diplomatic work of the AK Party in the last decade.

1.6 Methodology

This work will focus primarily on secondary sources, both from academic literature, as well as from news reports, in order to determine how the changing levels of stability within Syria has impacted on the relations between Syria and Turkey. Through this, it will be possible to show what has caused the tensions between the two nations, and how both perceive one another, and therefore themselves.

As stated above, the core hypothesis of this work is that there is a clear feedback loop whereby wider diplomacy has impacted upon internal processes, which in turn has impacted upon relations between the two states. In addition, this work has hypothesised that both Syria and Turkey share key goals and aims, although the tensions between the two have prevented any level of co-operation, and indeed have actually caused further scheming and suspicion. The two nations bear some structural similarities, although nearly a century of contrasting governance has served to alienate the two nations from one another. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Damascus and Aleppo were proto-Western cities in much the same way as Istanbul. However, in the intervening century, the government of Syria has turned its back on the West, and therefore Turkey. Global geopolitics has impacted upon this. Turkey has been threatened by the Russian Empire and the USSR in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and this has caused it to become a major ally of the West, particularly in its membership of NATO. By contrast, Syria has seen the West as its primary enemy, through its period as a French mandate, as

well as more recent developments. Although it is oversimplistic to refer to the two as being pro and anti-West, this is partially the root of many of the conflicts between the two nations that have emerged since the fall of Communism and the ending of the Cold War.

The two nations have been fundamentally opposed in issues of foreign policy, and this has caused them to diverge on domestic policy. Both could benefit from co-operation on economic matters, as well as on water policy, and the approach to Kurdish issues. Tensions on an international level have driven Turkey and Syria apart, and this has shaped the way that the two nations have interacted over key domestic issues. The job of this work is to examine how the upheavals as a result of the Arab Spring have impacted upon the way that Turkey and Syria regard one another, and the actions taken as a result of this.

2. The Uprising in Syria

The uprisings in Syria mark the first major expansion of the 'Arab Spring' to the Arabian Peninsula. It is correct to regard the fighting in Syria as contiguous with that in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia owing to the fact that there are clear operational similarities, and the roots of the uprising are in fact similar. Although there are naturally some areas of divergence, these can be more attributed to differences between the countries themselves, and not of the conflict. This chapter will analyse the Arab Spring itself, in terms of how it has impacted upon Syria, as well as the nations surrounding it.

2.1 The uprisings elsewhere

Before considering the uprisings in Syria, it is necessary to consider the Arab Spring itself, in order to place the Syrian uprising fully within context. The first thing to be said is that the Syrian uprising was one of the last (to date) uprisings to emerge, and the only one, other than that in Bahrain, yet to be resolved. Certainly, of the remaining crises (as of May 2012), the Syrian one is the one that looks more likely to lead eventually to some sort of reform or overthrow. In Bahrain the protests seem too sporadic, and the government looks to control more loyalty from the population than in Syria. Therefore, given that the Syrian uprising has occurred after the uprisings in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Bahrain, and occurred even after the fall of Ben Ali and Mubarak, it can clearly be seen that the Arab Spring uprisings that preceded it have impacted upon it. Indeed, there is a clear consistency of aims between the Arab Spring uprisings in the Maghreb as in Syria, as all have been a protest against corruption and autocracy, and not necessarily concerned with the establishment of a democracy in any Western (or even Turkish) sense. In Egypt and Tunisia - the first nations to experience what became the Arab Spring, in both cases the movements were led by the middle classes, and were underpinned by working class support, particularly against petty corruption. In Tunisia there is a marked class, based difference within the uprisings, with many of the blog posts relating to the uprisings being written in French (the language of the educated Tunisian middle class)

and many of the slogans pertaining to the war being chanted in Arabic (the language of the Tunisian working class).

What was certain about the uprisings throughout the Arab world was that they were based on a discontent with the status quo. In the three successful cases (Libya, Tunisia and Egypt) there was a widespread discontent with the particular leader, particularly amongst the non-urban, and non-governmental staff. That said, the reluctance of Ben Ali, Mubarak and Gaddafi to countenance reform or to give any concessions to the rebels ultimately led to the leaders' loss of support, and the swing in popular opinion away from the current leader. In essence, the reactionism of the leaders was what led to them losing any support. This was a clear lesson for Bashar Assad, and one that he singularly failed to heed. As Jartys and Jomma (2012) writes, "It is worth pointing out that if the current Syrian regime had drawn any conclusions from the events which took place in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen and taken some preventive measures aimed at the liberalization of its political system, president Bashar al-Assad could now count on regaining some of his authority in the society and retaining his power." (Jartys and Jomma, 2012).

However, to many contemporaries it looked as if Syria had avoided the Arab Spring, given the lag between the 'Spring' in North Africa, and its emergence in the Arabian Peninsula. As Noueihed and Warren (2012) write, "At first it seemed as if there might be no Arab Spring in Syria, let alone a battle for its aftermath. Within days and even hours of Mubarak's departure on 11 February, the ongoing protests in Libya, Yemen and Bahrain shifted up a gear. Syria, by comparison, seemed quiet." (Noueihed and Warren,

2012, p. 154) Therefore, whilst there are clear lessons that the Assad regime could have learned from the events in North Africa, these were not learned, and as such the instability in the region spread to the Arabian Peninsula.

2.2 The factions in Syria

In all three North African Arab Spring nations, the main body of the fighting, and indeed, the uprising itself, began in a provincial city, and was centred amongst a group who had traditionally opposed the leader. In Libya this was the Benghazi peoples, who has a well-known antipathy towards the Gaddafi family. In Egypt, although less clear cut, the protests only moved to Cairo later on in the uprising, rather than beginning there.

In the case of Syria, there is a clear inbuilt tension within society, given the fact that Syria represents a Sunni majority country ruled by a Shi'ite sect. In addition, there are further divisions within society, as the Druze and the Christians, who are ancient groups of Syrians, as well as the aforementioned Kurds, are all sizeable minorities, who are worried about the instability of a civil war, as well as the dominance of a Sunni majority. This has served to create several fault lines within Syrian society, which although has caused tension before, has opened fully into civil war until the Arab Spring. Increasingly, the division between the Alawi and the Sunni looks as if it will constitute the majority of the tension between the two sides in the civil war. As Jartys and Jomma (2012) write, "The growing friction between the Alawi, who support Assad, and the Sunni, standing on the other side of the barricade, lead to the intensification of the civil war. It is possible that the hostility towards the Kurds, Druze and Christians will also grow, even though they

hardly take part in the ongoing military conflict." (Jartys and Jomma, 2012)

The northern city of Homs has been one of the primary areas of fighting, and the Alawis have clearly identified this city as being a hotbed of anti-Assad support. In addition, there has been fighting throughout the northern regions, including up to (and even beyond) the border with Turkey. Although the Syrian army has remained mostly intact, and therefore has maintained a superiority in the civil war, the anti-Assad forces have become increasingly well organised as the war has continued, perhaps receiving support from pro-Sunni forces in Saudi Arabia. In addition to the weapons that are being used to support the anti-Assad forces, there has been a clear framework that has emerged throughout the crisis, and the anti-Assad forces, although a coalition, is beginning to take on some form of organisation. This is crucial in shaping the way that foreign powers can engage with the opposition forces, and makes the international community able to identify a government-in-waiting. This was a crucial stage in the uprising in Libya in particular, and certainly Turkey have been looking to identify an organisation within the anti-Assad forces as a means of bolstering its own case for intervention.

2.3 The Opposition

The Opposition that has emerged to Assad has been somewhat weaker than that in Libya. One of the major problems stems from the fact that although there is a nascent organisation, it has yet to assume total control of the fighting, and it is difficult to tell if

the official opposition organisation is a viable government-in-waiting. The primary opposition group are the Syrian National Council, which has emerged as one of the leading anti-Assad groups. Partially, this stems from the fact that minority groups, such as the Druze and the Christians are fearful of a Sunni majority taking over, fearing that this would lead to a suppression of their religion and other organisations. This has prevented the Syrian National Council from taking control. Similarly, the Muslim Brotherhood, who emerged from the uprising in Egypt with great credit, have yet to gain any major control in the anti-Assad movement, although the model in Egypt involved the Muslim Brotherhood only acting as a united group after the fall of Mubarak. In Egypt, the Brotherhood was content to work within the anti-Mubarak protests, and contesting elections as a united force after the uprising was complete. It is likely that the same would be true in Syria. As Erturk (2012) writes, "Among the opposition the Syrian National Council (SNC) has not emerged as a credible alternative to the regime. Within its ranks the Muslim Brotherhood stands out as a strong contender. The SNC is highly fragmented, their mood is not conciliatory and they have not been able to offer a vision of Syria that is convincing and reassuring to the silent majority. The army has also remained relatively intact; most of those who defected are young conscripts with some high ranking members of the officer corps." (Erturk, 8 May, 2012) It is this lack of organisation and coherence within the Syrian National Council that makes the organisation somewhat weaker. A strong organisation could increase its popular support and undermine the Assad government. At present it is not possible to do this given the relatively loose organisation within the Syrian opposition.

In addition, unlike in the other nations of the uprising, many of the structures of the state have remained intact. There have been no mass defections from any of the branches of government. In Egypt, it was the neutrality of the army, as well as the resignation of key figures close to Mubarak that helped to catalyse the uprising from a protest to a revolution. In Libya, key government ministers defected, having much the same effect. In Syria, there has been little of this, with the army remaining mostly intact, and no prominent Syrian government minister resigning. Partially this comes from the familial loyalty within the Syrian regime, but also from the fact that the ruling cabal has learned some of the lessons from elsewhere in the Arab world. The maintenance of the structures of the state is a major part of the uprising, making it easier for the Assad regime to quarantine areas of rebellion, such as in Homs, and ensure that other parts of the country do not feel emboldened to act. In addition, the lack of defections of key figures has maintained a continuity within the regime, and has given the rebels no clear leaders. This has ensured that suspicion of the SNC has helped to prevent widespread recruitment to the cause, which has in turn ensured that the Assad regime have been able to hold onto many of the centres of power. This is a marked difference from the other areas of the Arab Spring.

2.4 The refugee crisis

Although the fighting has been bloody in the areas that are involved in the uprising, there has also been another corollary of the war - the refugee crisis. This is perhaps a more important aspect of the uprising, as it drags other countries into the conflict. This is

particularly important in the context of the work that is being studied here. Many of the refugees have fled northwards, into Turkey, although there has been a number who have fled to Lebanon. To complicate matters, prior to the uprising, Syria had been home to a number of refugees from the war and resulting instability in Iraq. Many of these refugees have fled as well, meaning that tension in Syria has the capacity to affect a number of bordering countries.

Such has been the size and the scope of the refugee crisis, that international organisations have been quick to give aid to Turkey and to Lebanon, in order to help them deal with a sudden influx of displaced peoples. This has the capacity to drag Turkey (and Lebanon) into the conflict, particularly given that the fighting in Syria is in fact close to the border. It is conceivable that many refugees from Syria are in fact regrouping, ready for an attack, and are using Turkey as a safe haven. There has been open suspicion of this in Syria, particularly given that Turkey has allocated a refugee camp for those who have defected from the Syrian army. This has led to minor skirmishes between Syria and Turkey, and this has been enough for Turkey to justify calling for foreign intervention. As Euronews (2012) writes, "Turkey and Lebanon have begun to receive aid for the increasing number of Syrian refugees. It is estimated around 25,000 are in neighbouring Turkey, living in camps like Yayladagi after fleeing the violence." (Euronews, 13 April 2012) If this figure of 25,000 were to be correct, it would certainly put a large strain on the infrastructure of the Turkish state, particularly given that many of these refugees have arrived in a short time, and that the numbers of refugees looks likely to be constantly increasing.

Certainly, there has been an encroachment upon the Turkish border, as both the retreating armies, as well as the Syrian army have followed the path of many of the refugees. This is extremely dangerous from a geopolitical perspective, as the Turkish have shown themselves to be willing and able to intervene militarily in the conflict. In addition, Turkey's membership of NATO may mandate action from NATO members if Turkey itself is attacked. A Global Politics Report of 2012 shows that the refugee crisis in itself is bringing Syria and Turkey closer to war, in both a literal and metaphorical sense. The Syrian army is getting ever closer to the Turkish border, and this is leading to a decline in relations between the two: "Over 1,400 people have been killed and the Syrian refugees that Turkey hosts now number more than 10,000. Furthermore, Bashar al-Assad's army has been battling protesters and attacking Syrian villages very close to the Turkish border." (Global Politics Report, 2012) As stated above, if it is shown that the Turkish army is training Syrian rebels, or even providing them with a safe haven, the Syrians may feel legitimated in targeting refugee camps. This is almost certainly something that would lead to a direct war. A violation of Turkish sovereignty would greatly increase the chances of war. In effect, Turkey is already tacitly involved in the war, in taking the refugees. Whereas Lebanon is also taking refugees, relations between Beirut and Damascus are far closer. The mutual suspicion between Turkey and Syria is more likely to cause the Syrian regime to attack Turkey in order to prevent refugees or defectors from being trained by the Turks. The refugee crisis therefore has a major capacity to cause tension between the two nations.

2.5 Overspill

As well as the refugee crisis, there are also other areas of overspill within the region as a result of Syrian internal issues. Naturally, the uprising is being closely watched by Israel, who have long been enemies of the Assad regime. In addition, however, both Saudi Arabia and Iran have a major stake in the fight. Iran has long supported the Assad regime, particularly given that both are Shi'ite Muslims. For this reason, Saudi Arabia is also interested, particularly given the fact that Syria is a majority-Sunni country. If Syria were to fall to Sunnism, it would go a long way to offsetting the fall of Iraq to Shi'ism after the US-led invasion in 2003. Although these nations are interested in the geopolitical aspects of the crisis, this has been predominantly a one-way interest, with neither Israel nor Saudi Arabia offering overt support to the rebels. Tehran has perhaps upped its support for the Assad regime, although since these channels were already in place, there can be little case to argue that the overspill has impacted too greatly on Syrian-Iranian relations.

What the overspill does have the capacity to do is to ferment rebellion in other nations of the Arabian Peninsula. Although Iraq and Saudi Arabia are unlikely to experience anything like that of Syria (although for different reasons), countries such as Lebanon and Jordan both are potentially vulnerable to some level of instability. Jordan, as a pro-Western monarchy could be undermined by an anti-Western Islamist uprising, and Lebanon, a finely balanced consociational democracy is permanently liable to instability

by one faction. In Lebanon's case, the strong link between Syria and Beirut means that there is direct potential for overspill. As Kahn (2012) writes, "Syria's ongoing unrest

spilled over into Beirut on Monday as UN officials wring their hands over the most entrenched and bloody Arab Spring revolution today." (Kahn, 21 May 2012). This report is taken from an Israeli newspaper, showing the extent to which the Israelis believe there to be a direct threat coming from the link between Syria and Lebanon.

Whilst this has the capacity to impact upon Turkey, what is more likely is that the Turks are more willing to become involved in the conflict as it grows. Although Turkey and Lebanon have little history of interaction since the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the fact that the Syrian uprising appears to be spreading is likely to encourage Turkey to become involved. An allied Syria and Lebanon in direct hostility to Turkey would greatly threaten Turkish interests, and could pose a major threat to Israel, traditionally a strong ally of Turkey. Given this therefore, the large capacity for overspill is something that would drag the Turks into the conflict.

3. The direct impact of the Arab Spring on Turkey

The Arab Spring has impacted on Turkey in a number of ways. Although Turkey is not an Arab nation, it maintains many strong links with Arab nations, and the capacity of a

destabilisation of the region is something that Turkey is extremely concerned about. This chapter will examine the Arab Spring from the Turkish perspective, in order to determine how and why there has been a shift in foreign policy, and whether this has the capacity to cause a seismic shift in Turco-Syrian relations.

3.1 The AKP in Turkey

The election of the AK (Justice and Development) Party in Turkey in 2002 marked the end of an eighty years period of dominance for secular parties in the nation. The AK Party, led by Prime Minister Erdogan, are an Islamic Party, and their victory marked a turning point in Turkish domestic policy. Although there were worries from both inside and outside of Turkey that this would lead to a change in the structure of the Turkish constitution, there has been no evidence of this in the decade since their emergence. Indeed, despite the AK Party's success suggesting that there is a strong Islamic (although not Islamist) majority in Turkish politics, there has been little change in Turkish foreign policy, particularly in terms of relations with the Muslim world. Although in the last decade Turkey has dealt with constant rebuffs from the European Union regarding accession, this has not led to Turkey becoming a solely East and Southward looking nation. Although Turkey has fostered relationships throughout the Arabian Peninsula, this has not been on the basis of religion, but instead on the basis of improving Turkey's standing in the world. Turkey's overarching foreign policy goal has been to increase its value to the global community by forming diplomatic links with disparate nations. For example, as well as being friendly with Israel, Turkey has also forged some level of

diplomacy with Iran, making it unique in the international community. In addition, Turkey has been extremely successful at promoting its interests throughout the Arabian Peninsula, and has been a major force for diplomacy.

As stated in the introduction, it is the hypothesis of this work that internal factors impact upon foreign policy, and *vice versa*. In the case of Turkey, this is very clear. The AK Party has promoted the idea of democracy with a Muslim face, balancing carefully the demands of the secularists and the Islamists, giving in to neither. There foreign policy goals has been one of diplomacy with a Muslim face, forging strong links with some of the disaffected nations of the European Union (most notably the UK), without undermining their links in the Islamic world. As a result, Turkey is in a unique position of being able to communicate between the Western sphere and that of the East. As a member of NATO and a potential EU member, Turkey is strategically involved in the Western world, although its Muslim character allows it to interact effectively with the Arab and Persian nations around it. This is very much the character of the AK Party itself. Unlike the secular parties that preceded it, the AK Party is willing to concede an Islamic character (Erdogan had previously served a ban from Turkish politics for reading a pro-Muslim poem in a political context), and this naturally has ameliorated relations with the Islamic world.

3.2 Turkish Foreign Policy Goals

The biggest change in Turkish foreign policy that has taken place in the last decade has been the growing disillusionment with Turkish-European relations. At the beginning of the new millennium it appeared as if Turkey were to be on the verge of membership of the European Union, if not at the same stage, at least on the same path as many of the former Soviet bloc nations, such as Poland, Bulgaria and Romania. However, there has been a backlash from some nations, particularly those in Western Europe against Turkish membership. Increasingly, the European Union has begun to define itself as a Christian-only organisation. When this is coupled with the fact that the accession of Cyprus effectively undermined the Turkish claims to peace on the northern half of the island, it is clear that Turkey remains some way away from joining the EU. This has been increasingly recognised with Turkey's society and politics, and Ankara has favoured a shift away from EU-accession, in order to focus on more productive (and fruitful) alliance building. Turkey instead looked to the other nations of the Islamic world, and have sought to increase their regional utility through the development of a strong diplomatic network.

Turkey sought to create an effective bloc of multi-bilateral relations in order to increase its own standing in the world. In many respects it was natural that they would look to their former Imperial possessions in the south in order to create this network. Although relations between the Turks and some of the former Ottoman nations had not always been at its strongest, for those in the Arabian Peninsula who were broadly West-looking,

Turkey was a clear friend. This allowed them to create an effective network of allies in the Arabian Peninsula, including Jordan, Israel and to a certain extent, Saudi Arabia. As Cagapty (2011) writes, “Prior to the "Arab Spring," Turkey's recent activist foreign policy shifted away from Europe, building Turkey more influence in the Middle East. After coming to power in 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) cultivated ties with former Ottoman lands in the Middle East and beyond that had been were ignored for much of the 20th century. The hope was that this would jump-start integration between Turkey and its neighbors, creating something like the 1950s "Benelux" bloc of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. For instance, of the 33 new Turkish diplomatic missions opened in the past decade, 18 are in Muslim and African countries.” (Cagapty, 2011) Turkey has therefore explicitly and deliberately looked to the other nations of the Islamic world, rather than focusing on the European nations to the West. This has given a clear character to Turkish foreign policy, and has meant that the events of the Arab Spring have had a major impact on the Turkish diplomatic network. After Turkey has cultivated good relations with many of the nations in the Arabian Peninsula, it is a clear strategic danger for the regimes with whom they have enjoyed good relations to be overthrown. Instability in the Middle East undermines the Turkish foreign policy project - and whilst there is the chance that the dust may settle on an Arabian Peninsula more pro-Turkey, this instability has the capacity to undermine much of Turkey’s work of the past decade. This explains their close involvement in the Syrian uprising.

3.3 Relations with Syria prior to the Arab Spring

As shown in already in the work, the Syrian approach to diplomacy with Turkey has been one of suspicion and of tensions. Syria has played a major role in funding the PKK Kurdish party, and this has drawn them into direct tension with the Turks. However, Turkey has been no less guilty of undermining the Assad regime than *vice versa*. Turkey has been keen to see some level of political reform in Syria, particularly in terms of bringing the Sunni majority into some sort of power-sharing agreement. Although this has not yet been forthcoming, in the years leading up to the Arab Spring, Turkey has placed a great deal of emphasis on ensuring that the Assad Shi'ite minority was able to at least reflect some of the Sunni majority in the state. As Aras (2012) writes, "The shift in the AKP government's approach toward Damascus stems from a number of reasons, one being Turkey's desire to see the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB) come to power, or at least share power with Assad's Alawite regime. According to an Agence France-Presse report, during foreign minister Davutoğlu's lengthy talk with Assad in November, the former suggested Ankara would support Assad if the SMB, an outgrowth of the country's majority Sunni community, was given four major ministries." (Aras, 2012, p. 45) This is extremely interesting in showing how Turkey and Syria interacted in the period before the outbreak of the uprising in Syria. This shows a clear foreign policy, in that Turkey is willing to support stability in Syria, even if it means the Assad regime remains in power. The rationale behind the Turkish approach is that by creating a power-sharing agreement, Syria will become more stable, and will be less likely to challenge Turkey, and undermine its attempts at a diplomatic network. In addition, Turkey is perhaps playing a

more long-term game, in that by effectively promoting the sharing of power between Sunnis and Shi'ites, Turkey may be sowing the seeds of a secular state. In effect, secularism comes through a government being unwilling or unable to govern in a purely religious way. In Lebanon, for example, the finely balanced consociational democracy is something that promotes the effective removal of religion as a means of determining foreign policy. Turkey is perhaps hoping that by promoting a Sunni group to share power, that Syria will be unable to pursue a purely Shi'ite foreign policy. This in particular would draw Syria closer to alliance with Turkey, rather than with Iran, which is something that would greatly help Turkey's interests in the region.

However, a major stumbling block at present, and for the foreseeable future is the fact that whilst Turkey and Syria both oppose a Kurdish state, Syria has been willing to use the issue of Kurdish nationalism to undermine the Turkish regime. In recent years this has been a major tool by which the Syrians heighten tensions with the Turks. This is particularly effective in causing tension because the Kurdish area of Syria is in the north, and is contiguous with the Kurdish region of Turkey. Therefore, not only do the Syrians undermine Turkey through the promotion of Kurdish interests, but also they do so on the border with Turkey. In the past five years, this has been heightened by the policy of the Assad regime towards the Kurds. Although there is some extent to which the Syrian regime is looking to pacify the Kurds and ensure that they do not rise up (particularly since the beginning of the uprising), it is clear that Syria wishes to exert influence in Turkey. One of the key cases of this was in the return of Muhammad Salih Muslim, who had his exile from Syria removed, and became free to return to the Kurdish area of Syria.

As Al-Tamimi (2011) writes, "Assad has reportedly encouraged the opening of Kurdish schools in the north, and has allowed for a Kurdish politician by the name of Muhammad Salih Muslim- a member of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) that is suspected of being affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and is apparently organizing local elections in the Kurdish areas- to return to Syria from exile in Iraq." (Al-Tamimi, 2011) Therefore, as both parties are attempting to undermine the other, both are using different internal processes to influence the foreign policy of the other. This is something that has been greatly catalysed with the outbreak of the Syrian uprising.

3.4 Turkish regional concerns

The impact of the Arab Spring has greatly impacted upon Turkish foreign policy in a way that is not true of other states. Turkey's extensive network of diplomacy meant that it was able to enjoy some of the most fruitful relations with the other countries of the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa. Furthermore, their realignment in the last decade towards the Islamic world has meant that Turkey has a vested interest in stability in the region. The Arab Spring has undermined this. In effect, Turkey was willing to tolerate authoritarian regimes, on the basis that a stable ally was better than an unstable one. As a result of the Arab Spring, stability is no longer a guarantee, and this makes planning for diplomacy extremely difficult.

Although Turkey itself is unlikely to see an uprising, particularly given the popularity of the AK Party, who have effectively given a voice to rural pro-Islamic voters, the refugee crisis has threatened even to destabilise the Turkish state. The shock of being unable to

predict the Arab Spring is compounded by the fact that it is making a clear and direct impact upon the Turkish state. It is this that has led to Turkey seeking an international solution. In effective, the network of bilateral relations that Turkey enjoyed has collapsed. Key allies in the pro-Western Middle East such as Egypt have fallen away, and states such as Saudi Arabia have been unwilling or unable to offer any guarantee of stability. The Middle East is currently in a state of flux, and Turkey is seeking a multilateral solution to offset the instability in the region. Once again, Turkey has looked to the West in order to bring some level of guarantee of security to the Middle East. As the *New York Times* reported in April 2012, the attacks on Syrian towns near the border with Turkey prompted the Ankara government to engage immediately and directly with the United Nations: "Turkey's foreign minister on Friday reported increased Syrian military attacks near the border and a relentless influx of refugees from Syria, saying he had telephoned the United Nations secretary general to express his alarm about the situation in the prelude to a proposed cease-fire in the Syrian conflict that is scheduled to start in less than a week." (New York Times, 6 April 2012)

The Arab Spring throughout the Islamic world has the capacity to cause further conflict, and Turkey is extremely anxious about the corollary effects of the uprising in Syria. One of these is the impact on Iraq, which is not fully stabilised. Indeed, the presence of a Shi'ite majority in Iraq may draw the Iraqis into some level of support for the Alawite regime, and this threatens another major Turkish border. As well as the direct threat from refugees from Syria, there has also been an increased number of refugees from North Africa as a result of the Arab Spring, most notably from Libya. The movement of people

not only has the capacity to affect Turkey directly, but could also be problematic for other areas of the Middle East. In the case of Jordan, the events of Black September were prompted by the influx of Palestinian refugees from the war with Israel. This led to a destabilisation of Jordan, which in turn drew the Syrians into a war with Jordan. Turkey understands, therefore, not only the danger of an influx of refugees, but also of instability caused by refugees moving elsewhere in the Arabian Peninsula. As Ulack (2011) writes, "Syria was home to a number of refugees from Iraq, meaning that these secondary refugees have the further potential to destabilise the region:

> ''-Furthermore, the revolutions of the Arab Spring have serious ramifications for already existing refugee populations, notably the more than one million Iraqi refugees that have settled in Syria since 2006. The possibility of increased large-scale refugee movement from Libya and Syria will not only spur a devastating humanitarian crisis, but could also further destabilize the region.''−(Ulack, 2011)

This shows the capacity of the Arab Spring uprisings to create large-scale regional difficulties for Turkey.

3.5 Support for the Rebels

Given the circumstances in which Turkey finds itself, it has attempted to clearly and directly respond to the events in Syria. This will be discussed in more detail below, although at this juncture, what remains to be seen is that the Turkish policy is twofold.

Firstly, Turkey has attempted to gain some level of international consensus in favour of intervention in Syria. In the meantime, and whilst this is not forthcoming, Turkey has been openly supporting the anti-Assad forces. Although it is not clear whether the Turks have been arming the rebels, they certainly have been making public pronouncements supporting them, and they have given clear signs of their willingness to help, such as the creation of safe havens inside Turkish territory for those who are involved in the fighting. As Aras (2012) writes:

> ‘‘-Ankara's support for Syrian opposition groups is one of the clearest signs of its break with Damascus. To this end, the Turkish government built several tent camps in Antakya, a city in southeastern Anatolia bordering Syria, to host eight thousand Syrian refugees fleeing their government's violent crackdown. One of the camps hosts defecting military officials.’’−(Aras, 2012, p. 44)

The important aspect of this comes from the fact that this policy is a potentially dangerous one. If the Assad regime were to defeat the rebels, and the uprising were to be quashed, Turkey would be faced with a Syria extremely hostile to Ankara. Turkey is effectively gambling on the rebels eventually triumphing, or at least gaining some level of power-sharing, if not overthrowing Assad completely. Although the previous events of the Arab Spring have shown that eventual victory is possible, for the Turks to gamble on their relations with the Syrians is a major leap. This is about more than retribution for Syrian involvement in the Kurdish problem, and instead stems from the fact that the Turks are willing to sacrifice stability in Syria in favour of a more pro-Turkish regime

taking power. This is a major shift in foreign policy. Previously Turkey preferred stability to strong alliances. Now the reverse is the case.

4. The international network - the role of diplomacy, the economy and multilateralism in Turco-Syrian relations

This chapter will investigate the way that Turkey has looked to react to the uprising in Syria. The core hypothesis of this section is that the Turks are looking to both minimise the instability in Syria, as well as viewing the uprising as an opportunity to redress the balance of the Middle East, and create a lasting settlement, that will ensure that Turkey has both economic and political allies in the region. In the Arabian Peninsula itself, Syria is one of the few nations that remains anti-Western, and the removal of the Assad regime would allow for a broadly pro-Western axis in the Middle East. This would not only foster trade and stability in the region, but would isolate and marginalise Iran. This is an optimal situation for Turkey, who would be a major player in the new Middle East.

As part of this, Turkey has focused on multilateralism. This is not altruistic or conscientious. It is based on necessity. If Turkey were to intervene unilaterally, they would alienate many in the Middle East, and would polarise Syrians into pro- and anti-Turkish groups, making it far easier for the Assad regime to win the propaganda war. Although a multilateral consensus has not yet been forthcoming, it is something that the AK Party has worked hard for, both within the West and the rest of the world.

4.1 UN diplomacy

Perhaps because of the tensions between Syria and Turkey, there has been a clear attempt by Turkey to build an international consensus behind intervention in Syria. Although Turkey has the military capacity for an effective intervention - particularly if the intentions of the intervention are relatively small, such as the creation of a no-fly zone, or to establish a safe corridor for the rebel armies to operate within - Turkey has been unwilling to act unilaterally in Syria. Turkey has, instead, been attempting to lead an international coalition in intervening in Syria, and Turkey has attempt to engage particularly in the United Nations in order to create the consensus for an intervention. Gul, the President of Turkey, has attempted to set the agenda of the UN and encourage it to regard Syria as a key area of potential intervention. In this he has been relatively successful. As the *Al Arabiya News* reported on 22 May 2012: "The six-point Annan Plan might still be the last chance for an orderly transition in Syria if it is urgently implemented in all its aspects, including an effective ceasefire, free political activity and exercise of democratic rights," Gul told the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. "Once this is achieved, I believe a relatively peaceful political transition can be reached in Syria." Turkey is "highly concerned" about nuclear proliferation and continues to call for the establishment of a "weapons of mass destruction free zone" which would include both Iran and Israel, Gul said." (Al Arabiya News, 22 May 2012). This shows the extent to which Turkey is using the current crisis in Syria as an opportunity to try to reshape the region. In much the same way as Turkey is looking towards multilateralism rather than

unilateralism, it is also focused clearly on the long-term rather than simply short-term gain. In many respects, Turkey is less worried about Syrian instability in the long-term, and regards the uprising more as a chance to secure a pro-Turkish, pro-Israeli state in the Middle East. Combined with a newly pacified and less belligerent Iraq, this would mean that the Middle East would be increasingly pro-Western, particularly with the Saudis currently one of the US's most valuable allies. Turkey is therefore looking to increase pressure on Iran to enter the international community rather than remaining a pariah state. The fall of the Assad regime would leave Iran increasingly isolated. Although Turkey and Iran have enjoyed somewhat cordial relations in the last few years, Turkey is wary of Iran, and certainly leans more towards Israel than Iran. For Iran to lose its influence in the Arabian Peninsula would be a major benefit to Turkey, who favour stability and pro-Western alliances rather than instability and anti-Westernism.

The fact that the Turks are looking to the UN shows that the primary means of intervention is perhaps based on economic sanctions against the Assad regime. Although there is little chance of using the United Nations for military intervention, particularly given the close links between Russia and the Assad regime, gaining some sort of economic sanctions would allow the Turks to focus on the long-term undermining of the Assads. Although this is not the only solution that has been mooted by the Turks, there is a clear sense that engaging with the United Nations will keep the pressure up on the Syrians, and ensure that they are at the forefront of the international community. Diplomacy has been a major strength of Turkey's foreign policy, and by showing themselves willing to use multilateralism, they can present their goals as long-term. This

is far more likely to win Turkey the support of the international community, and positions them well to be at the head of a new Middle East which would be sure to emerge if the Assad regime were to fall.

4.2 The role of NATO

As well as looking to the United Nations for some multilateral action over Syria, there is the potential for NATO to become involved, and this is also something that Turkey has actively pursued. In the 1980s, it would have been unthinkable for NATO to consider becoming involved in Syria. However, in recent years the remit of the Organisation has expanded, meaning that NATO is now involved in conflicts throughout the world, such as in Afghanistan, Libya, and peacekeeping missions in Sub-Saharan Africa. NATO, although still a collective defence organisation, is now more concerned with dealing with threats to the West that are non-traditional. One of these threats comes from failed states that are used to harbour potential means of attacking the West. Therefore, NATO are currently operational in Afghanistan (although this is set to be reduced in the immediate future). In the Former Yugoslavia, NATO was involved based on the region's capacity to cause instability for the rest of Europe. Turkey are in effect arguing much the same for Syria. Instability in Syria has the capacity to destabilise its neighbours, and this could spillover into the nations of the West. A destabilised Middle East would not benefit any of the countries of NATO , and if the Turks are able to convince their allies that this is a likelihood, then they are likely to gain multilateral support.

NATO has become a means by which the nations of the West are able to quickly and efficiently deploy. Furthermore, under Article 5 of the NATO treaty, if one of the NATO members are attacked, then the other members are compelled to attack. This was the means by which NATO was deployed to Afghanistan following the attacks of September 11, 2001. If Turkey can prove that it has been attacked, then the NATO members will be compelled to act, although if Turkey can show that there is a real threat to its own borders, as well as the stability around it, then it will be able to convince the other members of NATO to intervene. The reason why NATO would be optimal for Turkey is that China are Russia are not members, and these two states have been the biggest obstacle to UN action over Syria. As Popp (2012) writes, there is a clear sense that Turkey would prefer the support of the Russians and Chinese, although it would be willing to build a NATO consensus if a UN Resolution was not forthcoming: “It was telling that Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan would choose his trip to China this week as the venue for an astounding public statement. "NATO has responsibilities to protect the Turkish border," he told reporters, threatening to invoke Article 5 of the alliance's treaty, which stipulates that an attack against one NATO member shall be considered an attack against all members. The push is an audacious one. It is true that Syria fired on a refugee camp in Turkey, killing two Syrians. But Erdogan knows that would hardly be sufficient grounds for invoking NATO's mutual defense clause, a move last taken following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.” (Popp,2012).

There are many within the international relations community who feel that the Arab

Spring represents a greater opportunity for NATO intervention in the region. Although there have been major calls from Turkey for this, there are a number of people within the European states of NATO that feel much the same way, and it is certain that there are many in the United States who agree. However, there is something of a paradox in operation in this respect, in that the ongoing instability in the nations of the Arab Spring makes it extremely difficult for NATO to act. As Jones and Bates (2012) write, "NATO can no longer afford to ignore the popular opinion of North Africa and the Middle East and thus must seize this as an opportunity to solidify their commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of the law. While NATO member states have long championed these values domestically, they now witness the Arab World collectively struggling to champion them as well. However, the uncertain future of the governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria makes it difficult for NATO to act." (Jones and Bates, 2012) Turkey therefore is operating on relatively fertile ground in attempting to convince nations such as the UK and the US for intervention in Syria. However, because of the instability, neither is willing to commit troops, particularly given involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. With 2012 being an election year in the United States, the Obama administration is unwilling to commit to a fourth war in an Islamic country, particularly Syria, which has an unclear future, and from which it may be difficult for the US to extricate itself.

4.3 Economic and Political Factors

Turkey has a vested interest in changing the regime in Syria. There are many reasons for this, although some of the most important come from the fact that Turkey recognises the economici benefit of a more stable, pro-Ankara Syrian regime. Trade with Syria would boost the economy of both Turkey and Syria, which would greatly strengthen the ability of Turkey to act as the gateway between West and East. Turkey has a natural position between the Middle East and Europe, and if the economies of the Middle East were to improve, this would greatly improve Turkey's economic prospects. A more pro-Western Syria would not only provide more political stability for Turkey, but would also have a significant economic impact on the performance of the Turkish economy. As stated above, Turkey has effectively looked to create a network of allied states along the model of Benelux, and the addition of a pro-Western Syria would greatly improve this. Turkey would benefit greatly from an economic alliance with Syria, and feels that Syrian society would improve with regular contact with the West.

Ancillary to this is the impact that instability in Syria will have for the Turkish economy. The present refugee crisis, as well as the ongoing issue of instability in Syria, has the capacity to undermine the Turkish economy, in terms of hindering foreign direct investment (FDI) in Turkey, as well as stopping trade with Syria. In addition, instability in Syria has the potential to expand across the Middle East, further limiting Turkish trade

with its Islamic neighbours. This, then, represents the negative side of what has been mentioned above. In essence, the instability harms the economy of Turkey just as stability in Syria would improve it. Turkey therefore is incentivised in two mains ways towards guaranteeing a settlement in Syria. As Yilmaz (2012) writes,

> ‘‘-It is quite possible that policy-makers of all three countries will divert their populations’ attention from domestic difficulties to outside events, by creating a potential enemy. In the event of unrest in the surrounding Muslim countries (as has taken place in Iraq during the Gulf War and in Syria presently), uncontrollable masses of refugees, as well as terrorism, could cross the border and create chaotic situations in Turkey. This would consequently have a negative effect on Turkey’s political and economic stability.’’ −(Yilmaz, 2012, pp. 362 - 363).

However, a critical point to mention at this juncture is that Turkey is not willing to rush this process, and is thinking about the long-term condition of Syria. Although it would be possible for Turkey to intervene, and create a pro-Turkish or pro-Western government, it is clear that this would not be a long-term solution to the problem. Turkey values stability, and wishes to ensure that whilst Syria is in an unstable state, that the conditions are created for a long-term solution. What this means is that Turkey are looking to build an international consensus, and are also looking to consider the long-term future of Syria. For Turkey, the priority is not merely the removal of the Assad regime, but also the replacement of the regime with one that will be allied with the Turks, and will be able to create a prosperous economic situation between the two nations.

The political situation in the Middle East has been central to Turkey's diplomatic efforts of the past decade. Turkey recognises that the nations of the Arabian Peninsula are finely and delicately balanced. Turkey has looked to create a long-term solution in Syria. Although Turkey sees the uprising in Syria as a crisis, it also recognises it as an opportunity. This is not something that it wants to waste, and the Turks have been clear in looking at this period as the beginning of a new, stable Middle East.

4.4 Bilateralism and Multilateralism

Although the hypothesis of this work has been that Turkey has favoured a multilateral solution to the uprising in Syria, there is also an issue of bilateralism to be examined. This is clearest in looking at the language used between the two nations. The fact that Turkey has been making a number of public speeches calling for international intervention in Syria has not been met with silence from the Assad regime, and the two nations' relations have declined significantly in the past months. Assad spokesmen are regularly briefing against Turkey in response to a Turkish call for intervention. This is very much the gamble that Turkey are making - in that if the uprising is put down by the Assad government, there will be a clear deterioration in the relations between the two nations. Turkey is gambling on the fall of the Assad regime, or at least the ending of a Shi'ite hegemony in the state. However, Syria have been consistent in not only rejecting the claims of the Turks, but also in directly and publicly attacking the Turkish

government itself. A clear war of words has emerged between the two nations. As Ozpek (2012) writes,

> ‘‘-When the effects of the Arab Spring reached Syria, Turkey’s bridge-like position between Syria and Western countries collapsed. Upon Turkey’s call for constitutional democracy, Syrian Presidential Advisor Bouthaina Shaaban said “If Davutoğlu is to deliver a decisive message to Syria, he will hear more decisive reply regarding the Turkish stance which failed to condemn the brutal killing and crimes committed by the armed terrorist groups against the civilians, military and police members until now.” This tension undermined Turkey’s Syria policy, which aimed to achieve political and economic integration.’’− (Ozpek, 2012)

This illustrates a clear decline in relations between the two states as a direct result of the uprising in Syria, and the Turkish response to the instability in Syria. This has been one of the defining narratives of the last year, and shows one of the major impacts of the instability in Syria. Instability in Syria has the capacity for alliances and relationships within the Middle East to decline.

However, although from a bilateral perspective there has been a significant deterioration in relations between the two powers, as we have seen Turkey are keen to emphasise that the solution to the crisis is multilateral, and not the responsibility of Turkey alone. In May 2012 President Gul met with US President Obama and emphasised this exact point.

As *The Turkish Weekly* reported, "In a meeting he held with the US President Barack Obama in Chicago on Monday on the sidelines of the NATO summit, Turkish President Abdullah Gul said that the Syrian issue was one of the international community and it should not be viewed as a bilateral one." (Turkish Weekly, 22 May 2012) Turkey therefore has recognised that the issue cannot be solved by Turkey alone. Although this is a far harder path, it is one that has fewer ramifications for Turkey, particularly in the eyes of the other nations of the Middle East. If Turkey were to intervene bilaterally, they would be met with suspicion and hostility from some of the Arab nations. From a Syrian perspective, it would be simple to frame the conflict as one of liberation from the neo-Ottomans. For this very reason Turkey is prevented from acting alone. The multilateral element of the conflict is far harder for Turkey although will see far greater results. The work of Gul and Erdogan has been to persuade reluctant parties - either anti-Syrian such as the US and the UK, or pro-Syrian or neutral, such as Russia and China, that international involvement is necessary. The AK Party has gambled heavily on this, and bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria are at a major low. However, this is the price that Turkey is willing to pay for the future stability of Syria, something that would greatly benefit Turkey for the long-term.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The Arab Spring

Although there is some confusion over the nature of the term ‘the Arab Spring’, this is true of all historical labelling, and linking of processes. Clearly, when it comes to the uprisings in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Syria, there is some extent to which there are major national differences, and each example is slightly different from the other. As Baroud (2012) writes,

> ‘‘-The Arab Spring is only confusing and strange when we insist on calling it an "Arab Spring". It is much more cogent when understood within its local contexts. Egypt is in turmoil simply because it is undergoing a process that is restructuring a society that was made to cater to the whims of a small, corrupt class of rulers. Syria is positioned in a much more difficult geopolitical intersection, where countries throughout the region are all "investing" in the violence to ensure that the outcome suits their interests.’’−(Baroud, 23 May 2012)

However, there are two reasons why it is possible to refer to all four cases as being part of the same movement. Firstly, there is important areas of consistency between them, including over the motivation behind the uprisings, and the types of protests that exemplified them. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, it is possible to show that

one event leads naturally to another, in that the uprising in Tunisia caused that in Egypt, and that in Egypt prompted that in Libya. All three of these North African uprisings caused the Syrian people to feel encouraged to voice their opposition to the Assad regime, and this was something that led to the current uprising. The most important aspect therefore is that there is a continuity of ideas in the events of the Arab Spring, to the extent that it can be comprehensively shown that the events known as the 'Arab Spring' are in fact part of the same wider process. Although there admittedly national differences, these are not enough to fully undermine the extent to which the Arab Spring is one coherent process.

The importance of this for the purpose of this work is the extent to which this has impacted upon the actions of both Turkey and Syria in their response to the uprising. As will be discussed below, Syria have been exceptionally brutal in their actions, borne from a fear of the consequences of losing control . Similarly, the rebels in Syria have been more confident, seeing the success achieved by those in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia. In addition, Turkey has been more confident in their assumption that this uprising will lead to a change of government in Syria, and has gambled much on this. This shows the extent to which all three parties involved (the Assad regime, the rebel forces, and the Turkish government) have viewed the Syrian uprising as being the latest episode in the Arab Spring. In effect, all three parties are thinking of the Syrian uprising in terms of the uprisings elsewhere in the Arab world. This has greatly impacted on the strategy taken by the AK Party, as well as by those within Syria.

The result of this is that the Assad regime are facing an existential crisis, and are perhaps more willing to take extreme measures. Threatening the Turkish border with their troops is but one corollary of this. The willingness with which Turkey has begun planning for a post-Assad settlement has caused a nadir in relations between the two states in terms of both diplomacy and discourse.

5.2 The Turkish struggle for multilateralism

The biggest diplomatic narrative of the Syrian uprising has been the Turkish struggle for multilateralism. For the reasons identified throughout this work, Turkey has been unwilling and unable to act unilaterally in Syria, and has therefore been attempting to build a consensus in the international community in favour of interventionism. In this they have been unsuccessful so far, although this has not prevented the AK government from attempting to keep Syria high on the agenda of both the United Nations as well as NATO. However, there has been an unwillingness amongst the nations of the West to offer anything other than moral support for the Turks, and still less of a consensus behind military intervention. As Schumacher (2011) writes,

> ‘‘-These were also the reasons why the EU failed to respond in a more determined, outspoken and speedy fashion to the bloody crackdown on demonstrators that is occurring across Syria since March 2011. For weeks, the governments of Estonia and Cyprus, and to some extent Germany,

> expressed strong reservations about sanctions that would target Syrian President Bashar Al Assad directly.''-(Schumacher, 2011, p. 116)

This has prevented Turkey from being able to build an alliance, and therefore from intervening in Syria.

The rationale behind this lies in the historical differences between Turkey and Syria. During the late nineteenth and twentieth century, Turkey was threatened by the Russian Empire, and later the USSR to the north. This led Turkey to move into the Western sphere of influence, as a means of offsetting the growing power of the Russians. From the Crimean War in the 1850s, to the Turkish entry to NATO in DATE?, the West has consistently been an ally of Turkey against the Russians. By contrast, Syria has been consistently more anti-Western. Its experience under the French mandate between the wars led to a disillusionment with the European nations, and this led to it forming an alliance with the Russians to offset that of the West. Russia currently leases a naval base from the Syrians, and the two nations are extremely close diplomatically, with Russia selling weaponry to the Syrians. The two have taken divergent worldviews, and this has naturally shaped the way that they conceive of multilateralism. Syria is far more willing to ally with pariah states in order to combat the rise of the West. For example, close relations between Iran and Syria has been a major boost for the Assad regime, particularly since the fall of Saddam Hussein. There is now a contiguous Shi'ite path between Assad Syria and Iran, through Shi'ite-majority Iraq. Turkey has, in recent years attempted to foster an alliance of the pro-Western states in the Middle East, including

Israel, and this has met with some success. However, the Russian alliance with the Syrians is what is preventing not only UN action, but also has made the West wary of military intervention. To intervene in Syria is to draw the West into potential conflict with both Iran and Russia, and this something that few Western powers wish to risk. Although it is not inconceivable that intervention in Syria might be the ultimate outcome of the uprising, it will take a major effort of diplomacy on behalf of Turkey in order to raise the required international consensus. A pro-Western Syria is something that both Russia and Iran want to avoid, and therefore will invest money and weaponry in preventing. This is the ultimate danger for the West, although is something that Turkey is attempting to play down in their efforts to win over the Russian and Chinese governments to either support, or at least remove their objection to international intervention.

5.3 The Turkish Middle East

The events of the Arab Spring have in effect given Turkey a greater impetus to continue with their attempt to slowly change the Middle East, which has taken place since the AKP Party came to power in 2002. Since then, the Turkish diplomatic corps have been attempting to form alliances and create the conditions of stability required to ensure a prosperous Middle East. Although Turkey has been able to form links with Iran and Syria, neither of these has been successful at preventing in the region. With the Arab Spring, however, Turkey sees the opportunity for more dramatic change. Although the goal of Ankara remains to gain some level of security and stability in the nations to the south, they are willing to forfeit some short-term stability to guarantee a more friendly

regime in Damascus. This explains the fact that Turkey are undermining the Assad regime, even when doing so guarantees that the conflict will be prolongued. This is central to the response of Turkey to the Arab Spring. Previously Turkey was willing to overlook a state's internal human rights record in favour of an alliance with Turkey. Now however, there looks to be a shift in this away from alliances at all costs, and in favour of more altruistic goals. As Onis (2012) writes,

> ''-Turkey has redefined its geographical security environment over the last decade by deepening its engagement with neighboring regions, especially with the Middle East. The Arab spring, however, challenged not only the authoritarian regimes in the region but also Turkish foreign policy strategy, which was based on cooperation with the existing regimes without prioritizing the democracy promotion dimension of the issue. The upheavals in the Arab world therefore created a dilemma between ethics and self-interest in Turkish foreign policy.''-(Onis, 2012)

Although this may appear to be an ethical dilemma, it is perhaps simpler than this. Turkey favours a solution that will effectively bring peace to Syria, and this is viewed as being intrinsically linked with the idea of democracy. If Syria were to become a democracy, then the Israel-Palestine conflict would be greatly altered, given Syria's current support of Hezbollah. A democratic Syria would have improved relations with Israel, and there would now be a Middle East that was predominantly pro-West (and therefore pro-Turkey) and increasingly democratic. With Israel, Turkey, Jordan, Saudi

Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, the Gulf States and Syria all pro-West there would not only be greater internal co-operation within the region, but Iran would be marginalised.

However, where Turkey have struggled in their attempts to reform the Middle East comes from the cultural differences between the Turks and the Arabs. Although the West is becoming increasingly viewed positively in the Arab world, there is less of a movement towards democracy. The Arab Spring uprisings in North Africa were not democratic uprisings, however, they were narrated in the Western media. Democracy, which Turkey (rightly) regards as the vanguard of stability, is further off in the Arab world than it may appear. There is a suspicion of the process throughout the region. As Cagapty and Pollock (2012) write, "the Arab states are very different [to Turkey]. The first point, almost always overlooked, is that most are either still authoritarian or newly almost-anarchic. For instance, in all six Gulf Cooperation Council countries, plus Jordan and Morocco, monarchs remain more or less firmly in power -- some with weak elected parliaments, some without even that." (Cagapty and Pollock, 2012) Turkey therefore has a long way to go in creating a democratic Middle East. Despite their grand visions, the cultural barrier between the Turkish and Arab peoples remains high. Turkey has gambled stability in favour of democracy, and may ultimately get neither. This is the nature of the gamble.

5.4 The future of Turkish-Syrian relations

In conclusion therefore, there is a major extent to which the Arab Spring, and particularly its manifestation in Syria has seen a dramatic catalysing of the Turkish policy to Syria. Turkey has favoured regime change in Syria for some time. However, whereas previously this was based upon a desire to see a Sunni element to the government, Turkey now favoured full scale removal of the Assad regime. As Bellin (2012) writes,

> ‘‘-The events of the Arab Spring have suggested the necessity of rethinking the logic of authoritarian persistence in the Arab world. However, the internal variation in regime collapse and survival observed in the region confirms earlier analyses that the comportment of the coercive apparatus, especially its varying will to repress, is pivotal to determining the durability of the authoritarian regimes. At the same time, the trajectory of the Arab Spring highlights an empirical novelty for the Arab world, namely, the manifestation of huge, cross-class, popular protest in the name of political change, as well as a new factor that abetted the materialization of this phenomenon—the spread of social media.’’-(Bellin, 2012, p. 127)

What this effectively shows is that it is far more difficult for authoritarian regimes to survive in the modern world, especially given that regimes can no longer have a monopoly over the media. Turkey therefore is perhaps making a more calculated gamble

than it may appear. Given that the Arab Spring was begun by a relatively minor protest in a provincial city in Tunisia, there is a clear shift in the means by which ideas now spread. Turkey has effectively made their anti-Assad gamble on the basis of a societal shift in the Arab world. Arab societies, traditionally based on a top-down model of the state, are now being turned on its head. Uprisings, by definition, require a conceptualisation of the state as being bottom-up. This is the shift that has pervaded throughout the Middle East. It is one that has major ramifications for the region. Turkey is effectively working on the assumption that the position of the Assad government is effectively untenable.

This is even more important in the context of Turkish-Syrian relations. Previously Turkey was willing to form alliances with undemocratic states on the basis of regime change being unlikely. This in fact gave legitimacy to many of the autocracies with whom they allied. However, with a removal of Turkish support, as in the case of Syria, there is a clear sense that Turkey is no longer will to legitimise these regimes. As Cagapty (2011) writes, this marks a major shift in Turkish policy: “Syria is a case in point: Whereas Ankara hoped to reach out to the Syrian people, the Bashar al-Asad regime took advantage of its close ties with Turkey, a member of NATO, to gain legitimacy while oppressing its people. The "Arab Spring" has ended the mirage. Even though Ankara repeatedly asked Asad to stop killing civilians, he chose to ignore these calls—demonstrating that there was never true rapprochement between Turkey and Syria, and that Ankara had been unsuccessful in establishing effective soft power over Damascus.” (Cagapty, 2011)

The Arab Spring has caused Turkey to reassess its foreign policy priorities. Instead of supporting stable dictatorships, it is now looking to remove them. However, this is far more difficult in action than it is in thought. Although Turkey is now looking to a democratic Middle East, there is a clear suspicion of democracy in the Arab world, particularly that which is imposed by military force. Although Turkey has clearly changed its foreign policy, the historical tension and diffidence between the two nations means that Turkey is unable to act alone in any meaningful way in Syria. The structural similarities between Turkey and Syria, combined with their historical antipathy to different international powers has meant that the two nations are mutually opposed and suspicious. This means that the two are very much 'the best of enemies'. However, if the Assad regime were to fall, it is likely that this would result in a major shift in Syrian policy, and it is likely that this would lead to a rapprochement with Ankara. The structural similarities in this case would become loci of alliance, not division. This is what Turkey are hoping for.

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