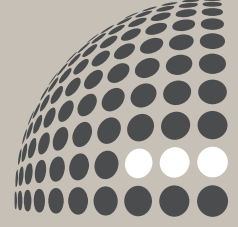


SETA Policy Debate



SETA | Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research | January, 2012 | www.setav.org | No: 7

Arab Spring, Tunisia and Turkey



| taha özhan | ahmet davutoğlu | rafik abdessalem |



ABSTRACT

Tunisia triggered a wave of protests that has been sweeping all over the North Africa and the Middle East since the early 2011. It set the motion in the so-called Arab Spring and successfully demonstrated that social and political transformation is possible without resorting to violence. Through fair and transparent elections that was held on October 23, 2011, Tunisians elected a Constituent Assembly that is mandated to draft the new Constitution of Tunisia. The new political actors in Tunisia has shown great interest in increasing the level of cooperation with Turkey, a country whose experience in political transformation and economic development has become a source of inspiration for the people in the region. SETA Panel brought two distinguished speakers together to discuss Turkish-Tunisian relations, as well as the recent developments in the Middle East and the North Africa: His Excellency Foreign Minister of Tunisia Dr. Rafik Abdesslem and His Excellency Foreign Minister of Turkey Prof. Ahmet Davutoglu shared their insights on the blooming relations between the two countries, transformations in the Middle East and the North Africa, and their implications for the regional and international power balances.



January, 2012 | Policy Debate Series No: 7

ARAB SPRING, TUNISIA AND TURKEY

| taha özhan | ahmet davutoğlu | rafik abdesslem |

Event Date: Wednesday, January 11, 2012

Policy Debate Series

The Policy Debate Series serves to provide a forum for fresh perspectives on controversial issues in world politics and Turkish foreign policy by bringing together experts representing diverse viewpoints and backgrounds. The series aims to bring these informed and innovative discussions to a broad audience. The presentations are transcribed from speakers' voice records and edited in a way that maintains the original content of their speech.

2012©All Rights Reserved

ARAB SPRING, TUNISIA AND TURKEY

Taha Özhan:

His Excellency Rafik Abdessalem and His Excellency Ahmet Davutoğlu, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to SETA Panel, regarding Arab Spring, Tunisia, and Turkey. We are honored to welcome His Excellency Abdessalem, foreign minister of Tunisia and His Excellency Ahmet Davutoğlu. I also welcome you to this special event. I would like to thank both ministers for accepting our invitation and I would like to also thank you for coming in a very short notice because we sent e-mails and faxes as late as yesterday. As all of you know, Tunisia set the motion in North Africa and in the Middle East and successfully showed that social and political transformation is possible without using violence. It was the Tunisian revolution that inspired other countries in the region and Turkey on the other hand, supported these mass movements of democratization and representation. Today we are here to listen to the foreign minister of Tunisia Dr. Abdessalem who is a longtime colleague from research centers, but now he is the minister. This is the first time I will be hearing him in his official post. So first I would like to invite His Excellency Rafik Abdessalem to deliver his speech.

Rafik Abdessalem:

Thank you very much Dr. Taha for this warm welcome here. Thank you my friend and colleague Dr. Ahmet; and thank you for attending this conference. It's a great pleasure for me to be here with you in Ankara. This is my first official visit to the region as I promised on the first day I became the Minister of Foreign Affairs that my first visit would be to Turkey. And I implemented this promise, because we have an excellent relationship with Turkey. We share a long history—long and deep tradition together, as well as we share a long and deep memory together. You all know, since the 16th century Tunisia is deeply connected to Turkey as well as Turkey is interconnected and intertwined with Tunisia and North Africa as a whole. As Dr. Taha said before, Tunisia has set the initial process of political transformation and political democratization in the whole region. What started as a local event in Tunisia, by the time it became a re-

Rafik Abdessalem:
Since there was no way for political change peacefully, the only way they found is to revolt against political despotism and political and economic corruption.

gional event. The revolution in Tunisia that started on the 17th of December and succeeded on 14th of January 2011 with the collapse of the regime of Ben Ali when he left the country. So, the general atmosphere of the region is becoming ready for political transformation and the process of democratization. Personally, I consider the process of change has been long delayed in the region. Since the end of the 80s the general climate of the region—either Tunisia or Syria or Yemen, or Egypt—were ready for political change because the political regimes in the region, either in Tunisia or other countries, are not essentially different from the regimes of the ex-communist block; but what precluded or delayed the process of political change was the international order or the international agenda. So people are very keen to implement or to have their dignity respected and to be free. But what precluded the process of democratization and political change is the international agenda. Maybe the political change in Tunisia as well as in Egypt and other Arabic countries is the byproduct of anger, disillusionment, political failure as well as economic and social failure. During the last decades, mainly the general condition in the region is based on mis-functioning of all political and social and economic structure. And the people of the region are very yearning for preserving their dignity and their freedom. And the only way they find is the revolution. Since there was no way for political change—peaceful political change—and the only way they found is to revolt against political despotism and political and economic corruption. What makes the Tunisian event a regional one, more than a local event, is that, as I said before, sociopolitical conditions, which are roughly the same in the region—which is based on corruption the fall of dignity of the people, social and political marginalization, and the only way to reply to these conditions were the political revolution. And the message sent from Tunisia to the other Arabic capitals is that political change is possible. And it is possible by the will of the people and by the voices of the people is in street. We used to hear that there was no way for political change and the only way is to coexist with the political conditions as it is, as it existed. But the reply of the people on the streets, the cry, is that political change is possible. And the main slogan that we heard and used to hear until nowadays in different Arabic countries is the proverb in Arabic, “The People Want,” and this, by the way, derives from the Tunisia poet who said [quotes in Arabic], “if the people want to live, they have their destiny in their hands.” And this has transformed from poetic proverbs into political slogans on the streets of Tunisia, as well as in Cairo, and in different cities in Libya and Syria and everywhere. So the main message that has been sent from Tunisia is that change is possible and it is possible only by the will of the people and the willingness of the people. And what the Tunisian revolution demonstrates is “The Power of the Powerless.” People are seen as having no willingness or having no will, have no voice, have no rights. At the end of the day, they crowd into the streets and they raise their voices and they make the political change, and social and economic change, possible. And I think the Tunisian revolution as well as the Egyptian revolution—and after that the Libyan revolution also—shatters the long past delayed, that we used to read and hear from the media and think tanks called the Arab exceptionalism; that democracy is valid in all over the World, except the Arabic region. It is common to say this—and even sometimes Islamic exceptionalism—that Muslims cannot be democrats and there is no ground of reconciliation between Islam and democracy. And I think Turkey affirms, before Tunisia, that Islam and democracy could survive together and there is a ground of reconciliation and interconnection between Islam and democracy. And the Tunisian revolution will confirm that Islam,

Arabism, and democracy is possible. It is possible to be Arab, Muslim, and democrat at the same time. And it is possible to be Turkish, Muslim, and democrat at the same time.

Of course, now, after the revolutions there are a lot of challenges, a lot of problems but I consider it very normal. This is the transitory period; like any democracy, there were some difficulties, some shortcomings, but at the end of the day, we are in the right way. Tunisian revolution was exceptional in the sense that it was very peaceful compared to other revolutions in the region. There are some but very limited. We have injuries roughly 800 or 850 people who are injured but at the end of the day, the achievement is wider than any other, you know, than the victims within this revolution. And we succeeded to make the political change peaceful in, let's say, without a heavy burden like what happens in other Arabic countries. And then, thank to God and to the will of our people, that we make also democracy possible in our country. After 23rd of October, we had an election—it was free election—and it is the first time in Tunisia that the power of the ballot box was there and people choose their members in the parliament. And then we formed a democratically chosen government in the first history of Tunisia. And then we have, this is the first democratic election, within the first elected government in the modern history of Tunisia and maybe the first time in the Arab World. Of course as I said, there are many challenges and many difficulties, but, personally, I am very optimistic since we overcome the difficult time after the revolution. Thank God that we have not had a political vacuum. Maybe after the revolution, the everyday of the people and the state was still functioning; the everyday of the people was not damaged. The functioning of the state was continuing—not in normal way as it was—but at the end of the day we preserved the political stability. And this is thanks to the bureaucratic tradition—the administrative tradition—of Tunisia compared to what happened, for example, in the neighboring country Libya where, after the collapse of the regime of Gadhafi, roughly, the functions of the state was, you know, ending—and that what makes the challenge for our Libyan neighbors very high. So as I said before, we have a peaceful revolution, and then we succeeded to build our democratic institutions. Since this is the first time in the history of modern Tunisia that we have an elected parliament and an elected government, and we have a coalition government, too. Of course I know that the coalition government does not have an excellent interpretation. And it is full, sometimes, by political polarization, but I think this experience, this model, is better for Tunisia, as well as for the whole region. It is better to have a coalition government where different parties participate in it and take the burden of governance then to move from one monopoly to another. We were, in Tunisia, since the independence of the country in 1956, the political life was monopolized by a ruling party, the era of Bourguiba and then the era of Ben Ali, but now we have a coalition government and I think this is the tangibility and the logic of democracy to have the art of reconciliation. And we are learning now to make conciliation. And there are many things to learn from the Turkish experience. I think the Turkish experience is the first experience in the region in the democratic process. And our colleagues here in Turkey are well equipped, well informed about the process of democratization and well experienced and we are really need to benefit from this experience. You know the exceptional case of Tunisia—that we were living either in exile or in prisons. Most of my colleagues who formed the government either they are living for long time in exile—in Europe or other countries in the region—or they were in prisons. The Prime Minister

Rafik Abdesslem:
This is the first time
in the history of
modern Tunisia
that we have an
elected parliament
and an elected
government,
and that we
have a coalition
government too.

Rafik Abdessalem:
What the Tunisian experience also illustrates is that the geopolitical condition of the region is deeply intertwined and interconnected.

spent roughly six years in prison; the minister of interior also spent roughly six years in prison and the majority of the members of the government spent majority of their lives either in prison or in exile. Personally, I spent 21 years of my life in exile. And thanks to God and the will of our people, we are coming back to our county and to beginning the process of democratization which is, as I said, the first experience and the first step in the process of democratization as a whole.

What the Tunisian experience also illustrates is that the geopolitical condition of the region is deeply intertwined and interconnected. What happens in Tunisia, as I said before, finds equals in different Arabic capitals. For the simple reason, the expectations and the demands of the people are roughly the same. There is no difference between the demands of the Tunisian people as well as the demands of the Egyptians, or Libyans, or Syrians, or any people of the region. People want to be free; they want to be represented; they want to have power in the political process and to have political institutions that represent them, not to represent the will of the ruler or of the family as it is the case for a long time in Tunisia, as well as for the region as a whole.

As I said before, whatever happens in Tunisia differently affects the whole region. Of course, Tunisia is a small country, but, as I said before, due to the interconnection and the deeply, you know, relationship between or affects between different countries of the region, definitely, the success of the Tunisian experience will positively affect the whole region. If the experience—the political experience—or the democratic process in Tunisia failed, and we hope all, that including our friends here in Turkey, hopes that this experience will succeed that definitely will affect the whole region. That is why it is a real challenge to make this experience benefit, and to provide the all requirements and the all conditions for success in the first democratic process in the region.

Many people are now looking to Tunis as model for peaceful political change and peaceful democratization and I think the Tunisian Model is deeply affected—a byproduct also—by the Turkish Model. We learned a lot from Turkey and we are still learning a lot from our colleagues here in Turkey.

And I think the future perspective of Tunisia as well of the region is bright. Personally, I am very optimistic since the people and the will of the people is there and present, we have young generations—we have young people—who are raising their voices and are well educated and well-politicized, mainly after the revolution. Politics is becoming every day, you know, part of the life of the people, so they know very well what happens in the country as well as in the region and in the world. That's why I am very optimistic that our democracy will succeed and, with the benefit from experience of our colleagues here in Turkey, that definitely will be in the right direction. And thank you very much for your attention.

Taha Özhan:

Thank you very much Mr. Minister. I forgot to mention we are having a Q and A session and we are planning to have it by writing. On right hand side you can see SETA stuff, if you can just write your questions, we will collect from you, then we will be asking them after Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu's speech.

Ahmet Davutoğlu:

My dear colleague, friend, brother, Rafik Abdessalem, and Dr. Taha, and dear guests.

First of all, let me say welcome to my dear friend Rafik Abdessalem, as we have spoken yesterday to each other. I think this is symbolically the most important foreign visit to Turkey this year and will be remembered as symbolically one of the most important visits for coming years. Why? Because Dr. Rafik Abdessalem does not represent only Tunisian government here in Turkey. He came to Turkey in his first visit ever outside Tunisia. But he is representing the dignity of the Tunisian people; he is representing the demands of the Tunisian people; he is representing all the main values for which Arab youth, Arab people have been struggling in the last one year. Jasmine Revolution was a starting point of a long process; we are at the beginning of this long process and the first success story and the first step came from Tunisia. And it is not surprising for me: when I went to Tunisia in February after Jasmine Revolution, less than three weeks after the revolution, in a meeting with the intellectuals and the leaders of the political groups of Tunisian people, I told them "I am not here to give you a guideline, because the grandsons of Ibn Khaldun doesn't need any guidelines." Tunisia is the land of Ibn Khaldun, a master of political theory and my master as well in my intellectual life. Tunisia is the land of Hayrettin Tunisi Pasha, a sadrazam—Grand Vizier—of Ottoman State, and one of the most bright minds of the 19th century which tried to combine modernity with the Islamic values. If a nation has such brains in the history, no doubt they deserve to start new process, new era, in our region—through Jasmine Revolution.

Therefore I am welcoming Dr. Rafik as a new representative of that long tradition of Ibn Khaldun and Hayrettin Tunisi Pasha. Here, yesterday we have spoken long in our bilateral relations. And in one of these meetings I raised a question and I want to raise it here as well: What is the uniqueness of Tunisia? Why Tunisia is so important, so unique for us? The uniqueness of Tunisia is, today, not only political one, cultural one, economic one, and its multidimensional geographic historical background. Tunisia is the place where modernity and traditional Islamic values live together and had a very productive synthesis. Tunisia is a Mediterranean country, is an Arab country, is an African country; like Turkey, a country of multidimensional character—a European, an Asian, a Middle Eastern, a Balkan, and Central Asian country. So, I think, there are few nations who can understand each other like Turks and Tunisians. Therefore, we have similar processes, and today, Turkey is the main supporter of Tunisia. In first days of the Tunisian revolution—Jasmine Revolution—we declared our support. We didn't even think for some time to make an assessment. Why did we support immediately? Because we were strongly believing that the Tunisian people—the demands and expressions of Tunisian people—are right, the quality of the educational background of the Tunisian people is promising, and Tunisia can make a change and a success. I think now we can make a comparison: in one year, Tunisia made a miracle.

We are grateful to Tunisian people and to Tunisian youth because of this miracle, because of their struggle for dignity. On several occasions, when I was asked what is the main motive behind the so-called Arab Spring, I always said dignity, dignity, dignity. Not poverty—poverty could be resolved, but dignity can resolve poverty or other issues. But dignity is the main value for all human beings. And as Dr. Rafik, my dear colleague, has mentioned—and I know him for last maybe twenty years, when he was

Ahmet Davutoğlu:
I told them "I am not here to give you a guideline, because the grandsons of Ibn Khaldun do not need any guidelines."

Ahmet Davutoğlu:
Based on
these values
and strategic
perspective, I
am sure in the
coming years we
will be talking on a
Tunisian model, on
a Tunisian miracle
and success.

working at Oxford in the Islamic Centre and many other institutions as an intellectual, I always followed closely—many of the Tunisian leaders spent their lives—today in the government—spent their lives in prisons or exiles. But they didn't lose their hope that one day the history of Tunisia, the history of the region, will be changed. And they made this miracle possible. We are grateful for this. And today, the significance of the Tunisian success is very important. It will not be a national success, it will not be the success of the existing government; the significance of Tunisia today is important for the success in the region. Tunisia started a process and showed to the region how a change is possible. Now, the new Tunisian government will show to the region how a constructive approach, a constructive policy, is possible and a new representative government, a new understanding—philosophy of governance—could be established in our region.

My dear friend, again I want to say here, the Turkish government, Turkish people, Turkish NGOs will be with you in this long way. We will support every attempt, initiative led by Tunisian government, every project initiated by the Tunisian government, because today, the success of Tunisia is the success of Turkey. We cannot afford any failure in Tunisia. Yesterday, we had several meetings on different issues with different state institutions, and we have decided and signed an action plan for 2012 between Turkey and Tunisia. But the main logic behind all these agreements is that Turkey will be siding with Tunisia in its struggle, in its great effort to establish a functioning democracy, and efficient economy, and an impressive, influential foreign policy. I told to my dear colleague yesterday that all of our embassies are at the disposal of the Tunisian government. All of our assets, in the sense of experience and institutions, will be at your disposal. Because your success for us is so important, that it will be identical to the success of the region. Everybody in our region now looking for what is going on in Tunisia. People in Egypt, in Libya, in Syria, in Yemen—they are all following what is going on in Tunisia. And we also follow very closely.

And therefore Dr. Rafik came to Turkey in his first visit. I can tell you that there are two dimensions of our bilateral relations and how Turkey approaches to Tunisia. One dimension is value dimension. We are defending the same values in international relations. These values are representative government; rule of law; transparency; respect for human rights in our domestic politics; dignity; very active approach in international relations—in foreign policy; being proud of our traditional identity and at the same time being proud of having a close relation with the modern world; looking for a synthesis of traditional and modern values; having a vision for the future of our nations and our region, but also for the humanity. These are the values we are sharing and we will be continuing to work with our colleagues and friends in Tunisia for the realization of these values in today's world. The second dimension is strategic dimension. Strategic dimension, because we think that Tunisia is one of the most important strategic actors from many perspectives—in Mediterranean, in Africa, in the Arab world—and Turkish-Tunisian strategic relations will help to resolve many issues. Based on these values and strategic perspective, I am sure in coming years we will be talking on a Tunisian model—on a Tunisian miracle and success—And that will enlighten the way for other nations which are today in the streets for the same values. Thank you very much, my dear brother, to be with us today, and we will be always walking together, hand in hand, in all issues. Thank you very much.

Taha Özhan:

Thank you very much. I think we can start the Q & A session, since we started a bit late. I hope we can ask as many questions as we can. [pause, silence]

I think we can start. The first question is to Dr. Abdessalem; in what way is Turkey an example, since you do not take secularism as an example?

Rafik Abdessalem:

Of course we consider Turkey as an example, since it is the first model of democratization in the Middle East region. Of course, there are different interpretations of the similarity. Of course, Turkey is a secular democratic country, we understand very well that. In Tunisia we have the first laws of a constitution, we have said Tunisia is an Arab Muslim country. We want to preserve our national identity, but to be democrats at the same time. I think the main message that sent from Turkey is a combination between identity and democracy. Democracy within the identity of the Turkish people. This is what we want to implement also in Tunisia. And I think Turkey is an attractive model, since we understand also secularity in Turkey is a neutral one; the state does not intervene in the political affairs and choices of people. So we are very keen to combine Islam and democracy in Tunisia, and we understand very well the Turkish experience and its historical context.

Q: Another question, for Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Foreign Minister. How do you think Turkey can help Tunisia practically in its democratization process and political transformation—fields of cooperation?

A- Ahmet Davutoğlu:

I think there are three levels of cooperation between Turkey and Tunisia. One is government-to-government or state-to-state relations. Yesterday, we decided and agreed on an action plan. And all of our ministers, and ministries of Tunisia, will be working together. In coming months, there will be several visits to each other. Highest level, presidential prime minister level, as well as almost all ministers—important functional ministers—will be visiting each other. Also in Turkey, our state planning organization will be working very closely with the state institutions of Tunisia to respond to the challenges like fighting against poverty, regional development, all these. This is only one important area of cooperation where Turkey can contribute to Tunisia. And in the coming months, you will be seeing that our ministries and institutions will be working like one institution, like one ministry, and we will be offering whatever we have in our power as an asset to the Tunisian government. This is a strategic decision of ours. Second level is more civil society to civil society level relations—think tanks, universities, humanitarian organizations, the relation between civil societies will be enlarged, and there we will be sharing all these intellectual questions about secularization, about modernity, about how to protect traditional values in a modern society—these are the issues everywhere being discussed. We will—it is not only from the government to the government—but from the civil society to the civil society. When I meet with brother Rafik, I don't see him as a counterpart, only as a Minister of Foreign Affairs, I see him

Ahmet Davutoğlu:
The success of Tunisia will be the success of Turkey.

Rafik Abdessalem:
This is the first time
in modern history
after the creation
of post-colonial
state that we have
deep and long
process of political
change and
democratization.

as an intellectual dealing with the same problems like me. We are sharing the same destiny. The success of Tunisia will be the success of Turkey. I am grateful for this, as he mentioned, the success of Turkey became a good example for Tunisian people that a democratic society, representative government, transparent economy, active foreign policy is possible in our region—with dignity. This is the second level which is really very, very important. Third level is, of course, more between two Ministries, but we will be working together in international issues. Not only domestic transformation as civil society or as government, but also we will be asking the same questions for international scene. How will we be representing a new good model for our region? How will we be defending the same values at international level? If there is an issue of injustice, there should be a Turkish-Tunisian common position. Tomorrow maybe Egyptian, Libyan common position. So there will be one voice from our region in international arena. Even when you look at the flags you can see how much we are similar. I told my friend yesterday, brother Rafik, once I went to a far eastern country, and protocol made a mistake and they put Tunisian flag during the reception of the President. And when they realized that it was a mistake, they were in panic. I said, don't make panic. That flag is my flag. And I can represent that flag—there is no problem. Because we have the same symbols—the same spirit. And Turkish tradition, cooperation, in this sense, both state to state and civil society to civil society, we will do everything we can for Tunisian people. Thank you.

Q: I do have what, around seven questions, almost asking the same thing. First, the regional developments, and challenges, and opportunities after the Arab Spring. And, the issue of Syria.

A- Rafik Abdessalem:

Of course the regional environment, I'll speak about it, is after the Tunisian revolution is becoming shaky environment. This is the first time in modern history, after the creation of a modern state—post-colonial state—that we have a deep and long process of political change and democratization. And as you know, any democratic process is a risky one, it is not, you know, guaranteed one hundred percent. But I think we are in the beginning of the process—what happens in Tunisia could happen also in Egypt and Libya. Within a local and internal context, maybe in Tunisia it is roughly similar to the Turkish experience, and the main peculiarity of Tunisian experience which is similar to Turkey is that we have a combination between Islamic tradition and modernization. We started the process of modernization since early time, at the end of the 18th century, beginning of 19th century, within the Turkish—what is called, you know, Ottoman home sphere. We were part of that questions and challenges as well as was raised in that part of the world. Now, after the Tunisian revolution, of course, there are a lot of challenges, of problems. If we can speak about the Tunisian local environment, we have succeeded—at least we have a peaceful revolution. And then we are at the beginning of the process of setting up new political institutions with checks and balance power, with the independence of civil society, with the free judiciary system, free civil society. But we are at the beginning of the process. Libya—a little bit different. Our neighbors in Libya are also in the beginning of a process to reconstruct the whole

country. They suffered a lot for a long history from political, social, and institutional vacuum. They are in the beginning of the process to build up—to set up—a modern state, a representative state. And, of course, the security problem still there with few incidents here and there. But I'm sure there is no, you know, deep polarization, deep division within the Libyan society. When you have roughly one hundred percent of the people are Muslims—Sunni, moderates—and this will be the main requirement for a democratic process in Libya too.

In Egypt, our colleagues and brothers in Egypt are also in the good direction. Of course, Egypt is a heavy country—it is a big country—a regional power also. They have a lot of challenges internal as well as regional ones. But I think there is no escape from the process of democratization. This is also could be said about Syria: there is no escape from political reform and political democratization.

A- Ahmet Davutoğlu:

Now we have many difficulties, many challenges in the Arab countries—Middle East political transformation. But still, if we compare last year January and this year January, you can see a revolutionary change and the process is continuing. Last year there was these days, Jasmine Revolution was on the way but not finalize; there were demonstrations in Tahrir Square; Libyan people started to move but there were several questions; in Morocco, a process—the level of discussions but there was not yet a constitutional declaration by the king. So, many people didn't have any idea what could be happening in the next one year. At the end of one year, we can make an assessment. I think transformation in North Africa in one year is a great success. Despite of all difficulties, today, the elections in Tunisia and Morocco were held and new governments were formed. And especially in Tunisia, the change was so peacefully achieved, that today in the government we have a coalition—a consensus of three political groups and opinions.

Democracy at the end of the day is derived of freedom of political ideas and to negotiate. A culture of negotiation, a culture of compromise. You will have political freedom, and you will need to develop a culture of compromise to reach a positive result for the people. And the Tunisian people succeeded in this. In Egypt, three rounds of elections were held despite all of the difficulties. People participated in these elections, a very high rate, and we are very optimistic for Egypt despite of all the challenges. Libya was the most difficult process, much more bloody. We lost thousands of brothers and sisters suffering, but after the changing of the regime, the negative scenarios that there could be chaos—domestic chaos in the country—did not come true. The process is continuing—Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt—I think these people succeeded a lot.

The second group of our countries, more Gulf countries. Of course there, stability continues, but in Bahrain there was an investigation commission and there was a process and discussions continuing. I'm sure there will be several more positive steps being taken. In Yemen there is a change.

The most critical zone is from Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. They are facing several difficulties now. Iraq had great advantages, because Iraq was the first country, which succeeded free and fair election in the Arab world. But, unfortunately, the domestic discussions several tensions continuing of the continuation of the terrorist attacks and

Taha Özhan:
How do you think the Turkish state, bureaucracy, civil society, universities, media is affected by Arab transformation?

Rafik Abdessalem:
Turkey affected the political process and political transformation of the region by producing a new and successful model of political as well as economic.

the weakness of the culture of compromise created certain problems in Iraq. But we will need to show solidarity and we hope they will be succeeding.

In Syria, the challenging question for all of us. The advantage of Syria last year was, after all these experiences, they have observed several positive and negative consequences of change. And in Syria, because of their foreign policy against Israel, the legitimacy of the government was much higher than the Mubarak era of Egypt. There was a much younger leader. But, unfortunately, Syrian regime did not use all these assets in a positive way. It did not learn the correct lessons from experiences in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt. And I call this always the “Illusion of Autocrats.” They thought that in one week, in one month, in two months, they can control, they can oppress all these events, then they can make some controlled reforms in a superficial way. If there was a rational approach from Syrian government, Syrian leadership, and if they declared last year in march, in April—even in July—that they respect the demands of the people and they are ready to go to election—today we would have another Syria.

As Turkey we did our best—in fact we did everything—to share our views, our experiences and in order to have such a roadmap for Syria. But they opted for another way and today all of us are really very, very disappointed and sorry because of all these losses of civilians, brothers and sisters, in Syria. The Arab League initiative was another chance but until now this chance has not been used properly by the Syrian regime. We will be following very closely. But history is flowing and nobody can resist against the flow of history. Nobody can stop a process which has already started. And I’m sure one day Syria will be electing their own parliament based on their free choice.

Taha Özhan:

I think as SETA, we do, as well, have a right to ask at least one question, and I will use that. There is always a debate that Turkey is somehow affecting the region, but there is also an issue that Arab Spring transformation in North Africa and the Middle East is also affecting Turkey. So if we go with the first part we talked about—how do you think Turkey is affecting this region in the sense of many issues? Constitutional change, constitutional amendment is one of the top issues in the region from Tunisia to Turkey, Turkey to Iraq, Iraq to Egypt—it’s at the top of the agenda. How do you think Turkey is affecting—or is it possible to affect? And I would like to ask Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, there is also a transformation within Turkey after this intensive interaction with the region. How do you think the Turkish state, bureaucracy, civil society, universities, media is affected by Arab transformation?

A- Rafik Abdessalem:

I think Turkey is part of this process. Since after maybe more than ten years, most of the people in the region are looking to Istanbul and Ankara as a model. And as I said before, the geopolitical conditions of the region are deeply intertwined and interconnected, so people are mostly saying, you know, if the history of success is there in Turkey, why it doesn’t happen in Tunisia, in Egypt, and all parts of the Middle East region? So I think since early time, Turkey affected the political process and political transformation of the region by producing a new and successful model of political as well as

economic. We know that Turkey is now in the 16th international rank and it is moving very quickly to have more economic and political achievements. So this really attracts the minds and hearts of the people. So if this success is possible in Turkey, why is it not possible in other parts of the region? This is the first thing. The other identities after the revolution, Turkey is now presenting a model for success as well as for institutional building. The democracy of Turkey, to build a new civil society, to check and balance power, to have independent judiciary system, to have a civil government which is, you know, representing the will of the people—this is representing a real model and attractive model for the region. The other element, I think, is Turkey is becoming an active player within the advancement of the region. Not only in the neighboring countries but including the Middle East as a whole and North Africa or what is called the Muslim world. Of course Turkey is an emerging power—economic and political power—and I think it is for the interest of Turkey as well as the people of the region to see Turkey playing a crucial role in the institutional building process as well as in the economic development. Now we are, in Tunisia, very keen to learn from our colleagues here in Ankara in different fields and different domains. In social and economic development, in institutional buildings, in industry. And I think this is for the interest of the region as well as for Turkey. And we are very keen to have a partnership. Not only in Tunisia, but a regional partnership. Turkey is very crucial for us: to have an excellent presence and active presence in the region, as well as Tunisia, is very important for North Africa and for the whole of Africa. So we are very keen to have a successful partnership with our colleagues in Turkey.

A- Ahmet Davutoğlu:

An excellent question. First of all, this is not just how Arab society is being influenced by Turkey, or Turkish society being influenced by Arab societies, or by the region. I think it is difficult to separate the destiny of us—we have the same destiny. We have the same historical background and the same future challenges. 20th century is from my—maybe not a political but more an intellectual—20th century was a parenthesis in history. It was not a real force of history. For many centuries these people lived together. I am now, I will give now—since I gave the example of Ibn Khaldun—Let me give you another example, Muhittin al-Arabi. Who was born in Spain, 13th century, traveled the way to North Africa, stayed in Damascus, came to Kayseri in Anatolia, and had students in all these lands. And there was no internet, there was no plane, there was no car—forget train or these. How there was such a close interaction—interconnection—between someone who was born in Andalusia and someone who was born in Anatolia. And I always told to my students when I was an academician, I feel very guilty because I didn't have enough number of students in these modern times like Muhittin al-Arabi and Ibn Khaldun, who had students everywhere. This is the question. Why was there such a distance—or I give the example of Hayrettin Tunusi Pasha, who was born in Tunisia—a Tunisian—and became Grand Vizier—Sadrazam—during Abdul Hamit's time, and he wrote books who influenced Tunisian Arab intellectuals as well as us. When I read and studied the life of Hayrettin Tunusi Pasha, it was one of the interesting examples of how you connect theory and practice. Theory of reformation, practice of adaptation to the international environment. So the 20th century was a parenthesis which was not natural. This parenthesis was created by colonialism and by

Ahmet Davutoğlu:
In this natural flow of history, we will not be asking how Turkey influencing Middle East, or how Middle East is influencing Turkey. We will be saying we have the same destiny—we will be influencing each other.



Cold War. Now colonialism and Cold War have ended. The natural flow of history starts again. In this natural flow of history, we will not be asking how Turkey influencing Middle East, or how Middle East is influencing Turkey. We will be saying we have the same destiny—we will be influencing each other. The same is true for the Balkans after the collapse of Soviet Union, or Central Asia. Now, whenever these Cold War structures are fading, the natural forces of history will be coming up. Those who are resisting against the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, or in Egypt, or now in Syria, in fact they are trying to protect these Cold War structures which are putting distance between societies. In an era of intellectual freedom, we will be influencing each other. In an era of political dialogue, economic interdependency, we will be affecting each other. This is something very natural. And Arab Spring has affected the mind of Turkish people as well and we realized—at least some sectors of our society realized—how this intellectual and political mutual interdependence—interconnection—is natural today and has been visible in a very short period of time. I was really admiring and shocked—in a positive sense—when our Prime Minister was received in Benghazi, Misrata, Tajura, Trablus [Tripoli] with thousands of Turkish flag after 100 year of Trablusgarp War when we had to leave because of colonial attack. Now, the old psychological affinity—the old cultural memory—are all coming back in a positive way of cooperation. We don't have any agenda of domination or agenda of one-sided influence. But we will be influencing each other and we will be shaping our history together. And that history will be a history of dignity and respect.

A- Rafik Abdessalem:

Let me add something here, you know, to continue the idea of my dear friend Dr. Ahmet—to affirm the intellectual unity of the region. When the process of modernization started here in Turkey—in Istanbul—it has it's opened since the end of the 18th century into the beginning of the 19th century in different capitals of the region, you find the same questions and the same answers—the same approaches—either in Damascus, in Cairo, in Tunis, and Beirut, and everywhere. So we are living in a united intellectual and moral home sphere. And even nowadays, what is produced in turkey is learned in different Arab countries—there is some translation. And what is produced in other Arab countries, most is translated here in Turkey. I will only give you one example: the *Strategic Depth* of Dr. Ahmet—it is produced here and learned here in Turkey. But it has well influenced the revolution—it is widely read in Cairo in Tunis in Rabat, and everywhere. This represents the intellectual unity of the region.

Taha Özhan:

I would like to thank you very much, especially this rich and lively debate at the end of the session. And thank you very much for participating—[applause]

Rafik Abdessalem:

I want to thank SETA for this invitation, and we are very keen to benefit from this experience and to have such a great time with success also.

Ahmet Davutođlu

Ahmet Davutođlu graduated from the departments of Economics and Political Science at Bođaziđi University, where he then went on to complete his M.A. in Public Administration and Ph.D. in Political Science and International Relations. He became an Assistant Professor in 1990 at the International Islamic University of Malaysia where he established and chaired the Political Science Department until 1993. He also lectured at the Institute for Middle Eastern Studies, the Institute for Insurance and Banking and the Political Science and International Relations Department's PhD programme of Marmara University as well as at the Military Academy and the War Academy. He was Professor of International Relations and Head of the International Relations Department at Beykent University from 1995 to 2004. He served as Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister and Ambassador at large during the 58th, 59th and 60th Governments. He was appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the 60th Government of the Republic of Turkey on 1 May 2009. He was elected as Deputy of AK Party from Konya to the Turkish Grand National Assembly at the 2011 General Elections and appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the 61st Government. Author of many books and articles on foreign policy and international relations in Turkish and English. His books and articles have also been translated into several other languages including Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, Persian, Greek and Albanian.

Rafik Abdessalem

Rafik Abdessalem is a member of Ennahda. He is currently the Minister of Foreign Affairs within Hamadi Jebali's coalition government. He has been working as Senior Researcher and Head of the Research and Studies Office at the Al Jazeera Center for Studies. Abdessalem holds a BA in Philosophy from the Faculty of Arts of Mohammed V in Rabat, Morocco, as well as a PhD in Politics and International Relations from the University of Westminster in Great Britain.

Taha Özhan

Taha Özhan is the president of SETA Foundation. He completed his BA in the New York Institute of Technology, and received his MA from the New School for Social Research in New York where he continued his PhD studies on political economy. Mr. Ozhan taught at Columbia University (2003) and State University of New York (2004-2005). He has publications in the fields of political economy and international relations, and co-authored *Iraq Under Occupation (İşgalin 6. Yılında Irak)*. He is the author of several research reports, academic papers, book chapters and frequent speaker in international conferences. He regularly contributes to SETA Analysis, SETA Policy Brief and Insight Turkey. Mr. Ozhan hosts a political discussion program on a national TV and frequent commentator in national and international media outlets. His columns appear in several Turkish national daily newspapers.

Ahmet Davutođlu graduated from the departments of Economics and Political Science at Bođaziđi University, where he then went on to complete his M.A. in Public Administration and Ph.D. in Political Science and International Relations. He became an Assistant Professor in 1990 at the International Islamic University of Malaysia where he established and chaired the Political Science Department until 1993. He also lectured at the Institute for Middle Eastern Studies, the Institute for Insurance and Banking and the Political Science and International Relations Department's PhD programme of Marmara University as well as at the Military Academy and the War Academy. He was Professor of International Relations and Head of the International Relations Department at Beykent University from 1995 to 2004. He served as Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister and Ambassador at large during the 58th, 59th and 60th Governments. He was appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the 60th Government of the Republic of Turkey on 1 May 2009. He was elected as Deputy of AK Party from Konya to the Turkish Grand National Assembly at the 2011 General Elections and appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the 61st Government. Author of many books and articles on foreign policy and international relations in Turkish and English. His books and articles have also been translated into several other languages including Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, Persian, Greek and Albanian.

Rafik Abdessalem is a member of Ennahda. He is currently the Minister of Foreign Affairs within Hamadi Jebali's coalition government. He has been working as Senior Researcher and Head of the Research and Studies Office at the Al Jazeera Center for Studies. Abdessalem holds a BA in Philosophy from the Faculty of Arts of Mohammed V in Rabat, Morocco, as well as a PhD in Politics and International Relations from the University of Westminster in Great Britain.

Taha Özhan is the president of SETA Foundation. He completed his BA in the New York Institute of Technology, and received his MA from the New School for Social Research in New York where he continued his PhD studies on political economy. Mr. Ozhan taught at Columbia University (2003) and State University of New York (2004-2005). He has publications in the fields of political economy and international relations, and co-authored Iraq Under Occupation (İşgalin 6. Yılında Irak). He is the author of several research reports, academic papers, book chapters and frequent speaker in international conferences. He regularly contributes to SETA Analysis, SETA Policy Brief and Insight Turkey. Mr. Ozhan hosts a political discussion program on a national TV and frequent commentator in national and international media outlets. His columns appear in several Turkish national daily newspapers.

SETA | FOUNDATION FOR POLITICAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

Nenehatun Cd. No: 66
GOP Çankaya 06700 Ankara TÜRKİYE
Ph: +90 312.405 61 51 | Fax : +90 312.551 21 90
www.setav.org | info@setav.org

SETA | Washington D.C. Office

1025 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 1106
Washington, D.C., 20036
Ph: 202-223-9885 | Fax: 202-223-6099
www.setadc.org | info@setadc.org