Current Events Project

Use the resources to gather support for and against one the following questions:

Based on the sources available to you, research one of these two questions:

1. Is Turkey’s model of democracy likely to have a strong influence on countries where “Arab Spring” reform is happening?

2. Is Turkey’s influence in the Middle East likely to support US foreign policy interests in the region?

Source 1: Arab Spring Fact Sheet. Outreach Center, CMES Harvard University. 2011.
Source 3: “Arab Spring Was Sprung Thanks to Technology”...Investors Business Daily_10/28/11
Source 6: ” High Turnout As Tunisia’s Historical Poll Ends” AlJazeera.com 10/23/11
Source 7: “Erodogan offers Arab Spring Neo-Laicism” Hurriyet Daily News 9/15/11
Source 8: “Turkey’s Potential As Middle East Leader Marred by Israel Dispute” Christian Science Monitor. 10/5/11
Source 9: Map of Turkey
Source 10: For Kurds In Turkey, A Country’s Conflict Rends Families” New York Times 10/29/11
Source 11: Global Issues: Democracy in Turkey (handout U Penn)
Source 12: Global Issues: Human Rights In Turkey (handout U Penn)
Source 14: Map of the Middle East
Source 15: Arab Spring Interactive Timeline
Source 16 “Libya’s NTC Declares Country’s Liberation days after Qaddafi’s Death” Al-Arabiya.com 10/23/11
Source 19 "Ataturk-Republic of Turkey" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6rrBSTlHHk (Parts 1 & 7)
Source 21: The Turkish Model Is Unlikely To Work In Egypt” Philadelphia Inquirer 11/6/2011.
Source 22: Middle East Protests; Country by Country http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12482311
Use the sources to help you form an opinion about Turkey's influence in some countries where "Arab Spring" reform is happening. Cite evidence from your sources to support your points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Rationale For</th>
<th>Rational Against</th>
<th>Quote /Paraphrase Evidence</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Yes, the Turkish model of a secular state will likely have a strong influence on countries like Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. | EX  
• Turkey is riding a wave of economic prosperity and greater diplomatic influence in the Middle East. | | Turkey was voted into Security Council. Gives 1.5 billion in humanitarian aid to foreign countries. | #7 |
| No, the Turkish model is not likely to have a strong influence on countries like Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. | The Turkish military has traditionally been a powerful force to maintain the secular principles v. political Islam. | | The Muslim Brotherhood is opposed to the military retaining supra-constitutional power. | #20 |
|   |   | Some countries, like Egypt would not want the military to have so much power |   |   |
Erdoğan offers ‘Arab Spring’ neo-laicism

TUNIS
Thursday, September 15, 2011

Following criticism in Egypt, the Turkish PM repeats his support for secular governments where he says all religious groups are treated equally

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Thursday repeated his controversial call for uprising-hit Arab countries to adopt “secular states,” following Turkey’s model.

“Turkey is a democratic, secular and social state of law. As for secularism, a secular state has an equal distance to all religious groups, including Muslim, Christian, Jewish and atheist people,” Erdoğan said during a visit to Tunis, the place where the wave of pro-democracy revolts sweeping the Middle East and North Africa began late last year.

“Tunisia will prove to the whole world that Islam and democracy can co-exist. Turkey with its predominantly Muslim population has achieved it,” Erdoğan said. His administration is seen by many as a model for post-revolution Arab countries, though Islamic groups in Egypt were split over his pro-secularism remarks there.

“On the subject of secularism, this is not secularism in the Anglo-Saxon or Western sense; a person is not secular, the state is secular,” Erdoğan said, describing Turkey as democratic and secular. “A Muslim can govern a secular state in a successful way. In Turkey, 99 percent of the population is Muslim, and it did not pose any problem. You can do the same here.” Erdoğan traveled to Tunisia following a rapturous welcome in Cairo and issued the kind of trademark warning to Israel that has earned him hero status on his “Arab Spring tour.”

“Israel will no longer be able to do what it wants in the Mediterranean and you’ll be seeing Turkish warships in this sea,” the Turkish prime minister said after meeting with his Tunisian counterpart, Beji Caid Essebsi, on the third day of his visit to North Africa.

Erdoğan reiterated his insistence on an Israeli apology for last year’s raid on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla that left nine Turkish pro-Palestinian activists dead.

“Relations with Israel cannot normalize if Israel does not apologize for the flotilla raid, compensate the martyrs’ families and lift the blockade on Gaza,” Erdoğan said, adding that Turkey would assure protection for Turkish vessels bound for Gaza or elsewhere in international waters. “Israel cannot do whatever it wants in the eastern Mediterranean. It will see our determination. Our frigates, our assault boats will be there.”

Erdoğan’s visit marks “the willingness to strengthen brotherly relations and cooperation between Tunisia and Turkey,” the Tunisian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu was one of the first top foreign officials to visit Tunisia in February and is also among the Turkish ministers accompanying Erdoğan on his visit. Davutoğlu signed a friendship and cooperation agreement with his Tunisian counterpart, Moulid Kefi, in Tunisia on Thursday.

Accompanied by a delegation of ministers and businessmen, Erdoğan arrived late Wednesday at the Tunis international airport, where he was welcomed by Prime Minister Essebsi.

Around 4,000 people waving Turkish and Palestinian flags had also gathered at the airport under heavy security to show their support for the man who has become one of the region’s most popular leaders. Erdoğan is due in Libya on Friday for the final leg of his tour. The transitional administration there has also said that Islam would be the main source of legislation in the new Libya.

* Compiled from AFP, AP, Reuters and AA stories by the Daily News staff.
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Tunisian Islamist in favor of mild Shariah

Friday, October 7, 2011

IPEK YEZDANI

ISTANBUL – Hürriyet Daily News

Tunisia’s most important Islamist party would prefer to see a mild form of Shariah law implemented in the North African country rather than the “neo-laicism” promoted by Turkey’s prime minister during a recent visit to Tunis, the party’s leader has said.

“What is meant by secularism is different between the Arab world and Turkey. In the Arab world, secularism has been linked in recent decades with dictatorship and with oppression, whereas secularism in Turkey is linked to democracy and freedom of choice,” Rachid Ghannouchi, the leader of the front-running Ennahda Party, told the Hürriyet Daily News in an interview on Oct. 7.

“Shariah is not something that is alien or strange to our societies,” Ghannouchi said, adding that Tunisian society was familiar with Shariah law and that some aspects of Islamic law were already enshrined in both Tunisian and Egyptian legal codes. “We don’t see Shariah as intervening in people’s private lives and to their freedom to wear what they want. Personal freedom is very important for us.”

Ghannouchi said there were different types of secularism even in Turkey. “The secularism promoted by Prime Minister [Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan, which is close to Anglo-Saxon secularism, respects people’s freedom of choice and is neutral in regards to religion. The other secularism, which is Marxist secularism or French ‘laïcité,’ is forced upon people and is anti-religion,” he added.

“There is the Turkish model of bringing together modernity and Islam, and we can have a Tunisian model that may be different in bringing together modernity and Islam. All share the same principles but there might be some differences between them,” Ghannouchi said, adding that they nonetheless believed the Turkish democratic model was very close to the model that they would like to have in Tunisia.

Erdoğan had issued calls for the North African Arab Spring countries of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya to adopt “neo-laicism” during his trip to the countries last month. But while Ghannouchi differentiated between Anglo-Saxon and French secularisms, the Turkish prime minister slammed Western secularism.

“[Ours] is not secularism in the Anglo-Saxon or Western sense; a person is not secular, the state is secular,” Erdoğan said, describing Turkey as democratic and secular. “A Muslim can govern a secular state in a successful way. In Turkey, 99 percent of the population is Muslim, and it did not pose any problem. You can do the same here.”

Gender equality in elections

Ultimately, Ghannouchi said his dream was to see Tunisia “free, democratic, developed and at peace with its own identity and at peace with modernity.”

Ennahda is “a moderate party,” he said. “Our party seeks to combine democracy, which is a Western product, with Islam, which is our own heritage.”

The Ennahda leader also said his party supported the principle of establishing a quota for
women for parliamentary elections to take place in two weeks’ time.

“According to the new law, 50 percent of the election lists have to have women candidates. Many of our lists are headed by women, [some of whom] don’t wear a hijab. We have challenged many of the parties who claim to be liberal and who claim to respect women,” Ghannouchi said, adding that his party challenged these liberal competitors to name head-scarved women on their lists.

The most important issue is to emphasize the importance of equality between all people and the principle of equal citizenship between men and women, he said. “All people should be treated equally regardless of their faith and regardless of their gender, whether they are male or female.”

Ghannouchi said that although he was the leader of the party, he would not be a candidate in the next elections. “I want to give an opportunity to young people, because this revolution was made by young people.”

Friday, October 7, 2011
Opinion
Worldview: The Turkish model is unlikely to work in Egypt
November 06, 2011 By Trudy Rubin, Inquirer Columnist

CAIRO - In mid-September, on a high-profile visit here, Turkey Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan received a hero's welcome at the airport from a Muslim Brotherhood delegation.
No wonder. Erdogan is a pious Muslim whose AKP political party has Islamic roots; his party has scored great success in a country with secular traditions and a secular constitution. The Turkish experience is often cited as a model for Egypt, where Islamist parties are expected to win a big plurality in coming elections. Yet when Erdogan told an Egyptian TV channel that religion could coexist with a secular state, the Muslim Brotherhood's reception turned hostile. When he said, "I hope there will be a secular state in Egypt," a Brotherhood spokesman accused Erdogan of interfering in Egypt's internal business.

That raises the question that is causing acute tensions in Cairo: If the Muslim Brothers - and their offshoot, the Freedom and Justice Party - don't want the Turkish model, what do they want? An Islamic state (even though they deny this)? Why did Erdogan's advocacy of the Turkish model make them so mad? These questions are being debated all over Cairo, as Egyptians prepare for the Eid al-Adha feast, after which they will begin to vote in their first free elections that begin Nov. 28. Many liberal and leftist Egyptians are deeply frightened. If the Brotherhood aces the elections, they believe, it will move slowly but surely toward the Islamicization of the Egyptian state. "They will pretend to be open-minded until they take power," I was told by Naguib Sawiris, a business tycoon and Coptic Christian who leads and finances the most prominent liberal party, the Free Egyptians. Sitting in his office atop his family's high-rise business tower overlooking the Nile, he said tensely: "What happened in Iran will happen here."
Such fears have made many (though not all) Egyptian liberals enamored of the Turkish model, in which a strong military provided a bulwark against Islamists until they eventually modified their program.

The Egyptian military, too, is no doubt enamored of the Turkish model. The generals, who were initially comfortable with the Islamists, are getting nervous that they might do too well in the elections. So the Supreme Military Council, which is temporarily ruling Egypt, has been promoting a set of extra-constitutional "principles" that would guarantee the military's power and perks. These principles would also limit parliament's role in choosing a committee to write the new constitution, thus curbing the Brotherhood's strength. This military aspect of the Turkish model is one major reason the Brotherhood rejects it, as Essam el-Arian, vice president of the Freedom and Justice Party, told me.

A law and medical school graduate, Arian spent years in prison during mass arrests of Islamists and is considered among the more pragmatic Brotherhood members. I met him in the Brotherhood's cramped headquarters on Roda island facing the Nile, a far cry from the fancy new building that houses the Freedom and Justice Party. Turkey's secular constitution, he said, gives a special role to the military, which endears the Turkish model to Egyptians "who are our [political] competition. We [the Brotherhood] don't welcome a secular constitution or a role of the military." Arian complained about the military's attempt to guarantee its power: "The rule of the military is refused except by a few intellectuals. The public is opposed." But as he continued talking, it became clear that the Brotherhood had additional reasons for rebuffing Erdogan and was far more conservative than Islamist movements in Turkey or Tunisia.
"In the Muslim world, we have a different role for religion in accordance with our different history and cultures," he explained. "Egypt is different from Tunisia," he said, an interesting
distinction since Tunisia's elections just returned more than 40 percent of the vote for the moderate Islamist party Ennadha, whose leaders back extensive rights for women and an openness to other cultures.

"What is acceptable in Tunisia is not acceptable here," he said. Arian went on to complain that the terms secular and secularism make a bad impression in Egypt, while "in Turkey this term is welcomed."

To the Egyptian Muslim brothers, secular means "anti-Islamic." The idea that religion can be separate from politics simply cannot be digested by them.

(Page 3 of 3)

But he rejected some of the claims I've heard most often from secular opponents. He insisted that his party "would hand over power if we lose. That is the key point of democracy: respect for other opinions and rotation of power." He also insisted that his party had no intention of adding terminology to the constitution to make explicit demands that all legislation comply with Islamic sharia law. Article 2 of the constitution already states, loosely, that the "principal source of legislation is Islamic jurisprudence." This was a formulation liberals once had hoped to remove; now they seek only to prevent more specific sharia demands. "We believe we can be religious and democratic," Arian insisted.

He is asking other Egyptians to take this pledge on faith. Many are not inclined to do so. They agree with Erdogan, who said that secularism "means respect to all religions" and should not be confused with hostility to religion. It's hard to see how this gap in perceptions will be bridged. Nor is Egypt's army able to emulate the actions of the much stronger Turkish army, which crushed radical Islamists in the 1990s. Such a crackdown in today's post-Tahrir Egypt would be out of the question.

The Turkish model may be Egypt's best hope, but it is unlikely to be replicated here.

E-mail Trudy Rubin at trubin@phillynews.com.
DEFINING AMERICAN INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Interests in the Arab World

The United States has significant economic interests in the Persian Gulf and long-standing political and strategic commitments to friendly Arab states. The Persian--Arabian Gulf region holds two-thirds of the world's known oil reserves and over half of its natural gas reserves. The United States has viewed the uninterrupted flow of that oil as a vital interest since the days of the Nixon administration. Direct U.S. petroleum imports from the Gulf have certainly diminished since the oil shocks of the 1970s. Nevertheless, they still constitute about one-fifth of all such imports worldwide. Because the world price of oil is determined by the market, sudden changes in the pattern of oil flows from the region would have serious economic consequences for the United States, particularly in the short term before markets and worldwide demand can adjust to those changes.

Oil-producing states need to sell oil as much as oil consumers need to buy, but there remain two sources of threat to this common interest. First, hegemonic control of most of the region's oil resources by an aggressor state would give that state the capacity to affect markets for political reasons. (It was this threat that most affected U.S. calculations following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, when the United States feared that Iraq could also control the Saudi oil fields.) Second, political instability in the region can alter short-term prices or flows and complicate American strategies.

Since the Gulf War, the United States has moved to address the first threat by consolidating its military presence in the region, bolstering its capacity and pre-positioning equipment on the ground. U.S. global military planning and weapons procurement strategies are predicated on the belief that the United States must have the capacity to fight a regional war in the Persian Gulf. This strategy identifies Iraq and Iran as the two states that pose a potential hegemonic threat in the region and seeks to contain both.

Although many in the Arab world were suspicious of U.S. intentions even before the breakdown of the peace process, their opposition to U.S. policy was muted in part by their belief that the peace process was working and that the United States remained indispensable to its success. Disagreements about American policies toward Iraq and Iran and about the extent of the U.S. presence in the region have become sharper since the American response to Iraq's renewed threat to Kuwait in October 1994. Pressure to do business with both Iraq and Iran has been coupled with a growing Arab uneasiness about the peace process and America's role in the conduct of that process since the May 1996 Israeli elections. These concerns fed the difficulties that the United States confronted in gathering regional support for its attack on Iraqi targets following Baghdad's penetration of Iraqi Kurdistan in August 1996. Concern in many Arab countries about the nature of the American response, most notably the targeting of southern Iraq while hostilities were taking place in the north, and fears that the United States was planning the
dismemberment of Iraq, something many Arabs strongly oppose, were reinforced by a perceived lack of American resolution in getting the peace process back on track. The U.S. military presence in the region has significantly reduced the hegemonic threats of Iraq and Iran. However, U.S. strategy in the Gulf continues to be challenged by political threats, including domestic instability in some Arab states and a weakening regional and international consensus in support of U.S. policy in the region. Effective deterrence requires regional support for the U.S. military presence and operations and international support for limiting the threats from Iraq and Iran, especially in the area of weapons of mass destruction, so as to reduce the need for the American use of force. Such support is not at a level adequate to sustain the viability of U.S. strategy in the Gulf.

Support for a Secure Israel

*Just as America's interest in the flow of Gulf oil will endure for the foreseeable future, so too will America's interest in a secure and peaceful Israel. That interest derives from many factors: historical ties dating back to America's early support for the creation of the state in 1948, shared Judeo-Christian religious sensibilities, and common democratic values. Israel enjoys the strong and emotional support of a large segment of the American population. This support is more broadly based than the Jewish community, although this community's ties with the Jewish state are especially close. Israel's long-term security requires a stable peace with its neighbors. Given continued American military and technological support, conventional Israeli security is more easily assured today. The greater current threat to Israel comes from regional instability that breeds terrorism and low-level conflict, and from unconventional capabilities that can best be controlled through negotiated incentives in an environment of peace. Clearly, the broader the peace coalition, the easier it will be to confront those who remain outside of it.*

The Threat of Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction

America's interests in the Middle East and in other parts of the world are threatened by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and by the spread of terrorism. As indicated, the Middle East is a major area of nonstate and state-assisted terrorism that specifically targets American interests and American citizens, both within the region and far beyond. A deterioration and collapse of the peace process would enormously complicate America's efforts to counter these threats. In short, the effective protection of primary American interests in the Middle East requires the broadest possible settlement that would leave Israel secure and at peace with its neighbors and provide a foundation for long-term stability and prosperity in the region. This means that the American role cannot simply be one of mediation; the United States has an interest in the actual nature of the agreement... To be sure, the United States should not and cannot impose a settlement on the parties, as the longest-lasting agreements are negotiated consensually. But given the deleterious consequences of a collapse of the peace process for important U.S. interests in the region, the United States has good reason to be actively engaged in efforts to bring such agreement about.

*Source: US Middle East Policy and the Peace Process Council on Foreign Relations*
By Al Arabiya And Agencies
TRIPOLI
Libya's interim National Transitional Council (NTC) declared in a ceremony held in the eastern city of Benghazi on Sunday that the country has been 'liberated,' three days after the death of former strongman Muammar Qaddafi.

NTC vice chairman Abdel Hafiz Ghoga announced Libya "liberated," at a huge rally in the eastern city of Benghazi, where the uprising against Qaddafi was launched eight months ago. NTC leader Mustafa Abdel Jalil attends the liberation ceremony in Benghazi (Photo by AFP)
"Declaration of Liberation. Raise your head high. You are a free Libyan," he said.

Tens of thousands of voices echoed him chanting, "You are a free Libyan."

Earlier, an official who began the ceremony in Benghazi said, "We declare to the whole world that we have liberated our beloved cities, villages, hill-tops, mountains, deserts and skies."

The ceremony, held by the NTC before thousands of people in Benghazi’s Kish Square, began with the singing of the national anthem and the waving of flags, both of which date back to the monarchy which Qaddafi overthrew in a bloodless coup in 1969.

Libya's interim leader Mustafa Abdul Jalil paid tribute to the fighters, women, businessmen and tribal chief who stood by the revolution.

An Islamic state?

Thousands of Libyans celebrate during the liberation ceremony in Benghazi. (Photo by AFP)
He also said that Islamic legal system, the Sharia, would be the fundamental form of legislation in the new country.

He said the banking system too would conform to Islamic regulations which prohibit interest.

Abduljalil added that a law banning polygamy has been annulled because it violated the Islamic Shariah.

Salah el-Ghazal, an official who addressed the tens of thousands of people gathered for the celebrations prior to Abdel Jalil speaking, said that Libya was blessed with Mustafa Abdel Jalil as the head of the NTC.

"God has blessed us with the Mustafa Abdul Jalil, who deserves to be the man of the hour," said Ghazal, who is a local official of the NTC.

Crowds listening to Libyan music and waving the tri-color flag cheered as Ghazal paid tributes to all those who had died, and referred to the "humiliating" death of Qaddafi.

"This is the humiliating end that God wanted to set as example for anyone who practices the worst forms of injustice ... against their people," Ghazal said.

Qaddafi, who vowed to fight to the end, was found hiding in a drain after fleeing Sirte, the last bastion of his loyalists. He died in chaotic circumstances after video footage showed him bloodied and struggling at the hands of his captors.

Abdel Rahman al-Kabisi, minister of martyrs and the wounded, told the gathering that the event marked "a great historic moment in beloved Libya's history."

"Oh pharaoh of the century, you are now in the bin of history ... in a stroke of fate ... you have been thrown into the bin of history. Go to hell," he thundered.
"I inform you on this historic day that the NTC ... has issued decree 157 and set up a new ministry, the ministry of martyrs, wounded and the missing," Kabisi said, adding that the ministry would be a top priority for the new regime.
Turkey’s potential as Middle East leader marred by Israel dispute

In its relatively new role in the Middle East, Turkey holds great potential as an influence for democratic, economic, and diplomatic good. But its dispute with Israel over the Gaza flotilla incident is holding it back.

By John Hughes
posted October 5, 2011 at 10:27 am EDT

If asked which Muslim country in the Middle East is most significant to them, many Americans might cite Saudi Arabia because of its oil.

Some might suggest Egypt because it is the heart of the Arab world. But the fact is that Turkey, perhaps with memories of past Ottoman glory, seems intent on becoming the most influential leader in the greater Middle East, and might overtake Saudi Arabia and Egypt in significance regionally, and for the United States.

Some have surmised that Turkey, a Muslim but non-Arab country with an image as “Islam lite,” could become a constructive counter to extremist Islamists in the area. In particular, it could be a counterforce to Iran, which already aspires to regional dominance. Thus Turkey would join Indonesia, another large Muslim but non-Arab country, as an example of impressive moderate Islamic statehood.

RELATED: Recep Tayyip Erdogan: 5 ways he has shaped Turkey

Though Turkey in the past has looked toward the West, it has in recent years been expanding its contacts and influence eastward into the Middle East. Amid the upheaval of the Arab Spring, its prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been mostly well received as a champion of democracy in countries now free, while strongly decrieing the brutality under way in Syria.

But with Iran he has maintained a balancing relationship, on the one hand trying to protect it from tougher Western sanctions, but simultaneously approving installation in Turkey of a NATO missile shield clearly directed at Iran.

What also seemed to position Turkey as a potential problem solver in one of the region’s most intractable disputes, namely Palestinian statehood, was a friendly association with Israel, including diplomatic relations rare between a Jewish and an Islamic state.

But in recent months, that relationship has become badly frayed. Turkey has expelled Israel’s ambassador. Hopes that Turkey might be a useful interlocutor between the Israeli and Palestinian camps now seem remote.

Turkey is in a nasty diplomatic fight with the Jewish state, citing an agenda of complaints that conceivably could lead to a naval confrontation. Turks have sought to breach an Israeli maritime blockade of Palestinian Gaza, and Ankara threatens to use warships to assure free passage of aid to the coastal strip.

All this could not have come at a less opportune time for the US president.

He is in the midst of a reelection campaign in which the support and financing by American Jewry is important. His refusal to support the Palestinians’ bid for a vote on statehood at the United Nations, and his sturdy support of Israel throughout the UN bid, further erode his standing in the Islamic world.

It was in Turkey — and Cairo — early in his presidency that he delivered hallmark outreach speeches to the Islamic world. The criticism since from Arab capitals is that there has been no real follow-up. Now, having opposed the Palestinians’ UN request to recognize statehood, and being committed to the championship of Israel for an electioneering year, his popularity in Arab capitals is unlikely to improve.

RELATED: Six ways to improve US relations in the new Middle East

President Obama clearly understands the potential importance of Turkey and its 77 million people. Of the few world leaders Mr. Obama scheduled for meetings alongside this year’s UN General Assembly session in New York, Mr. Erdogan was one. He got a long and
earnest Obama appeal to cool the confrontation with Israel.

But Turkey can be independent. It resisted then-President George W. Bush’s entreaties to let American troops transit Turkish territory in 2003 to open a second front in the Iraq war. It may not be easily persuaded by Obama to abandon a tough line with Israel that plays well throughout the Arab world.

That is unfortunate. Erdogan is to be mostly commended for promoting his country’s blend of Islam with democracy as an example to be followed by Arab states emerging from dictatorship.

But it would be sad – and potentially harmful – if Turkey’s anti-Israel posture eliminated it from a constructive role in forging a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians.

John Hughes, a former editor of the Monitor, writes a biweekly column.

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Socio-Political Art:

During our current events unit about what has been coined the "Arab Spring", we learned about the political and social changes taking place in the Middle East and North Africa. We have many questions, opinions, and feelings about the new political landscape, and we wonder about what will happen next. Historic events are unfolding each day, and people are trying to understand what it could mean for the future.

Artists are often inspired by the social, cultural and political events that happen during their lifetime. For example, Pablo Picasso painted “Guernica” (below) in 1937 as response to the bombing of a Basque town by German and Italian forces at the request of the Spanish government.

In 2006, French artist Thierry Erhmann and a group of international artists created the art complex called “Abode of Chaos” (below) out of a stone house in the bucolic French countryside. It features over 2,500 art projects, which comment on the current violent and chaotic state of the world.
Banksy’s “No Future”, (above) was painted on a building wall in London in 2010 as a commentary on the global economic crisis.

“Camouflage”, by Ellen Weinstein, 2007, questions the hidden or disguised intentions of the Iraq War. Might Andy Warhol’s camouflage series have influenced her?

This iconic image of a man with groceries standing in front of a tank in China during the 1989 protests circulated around the world as a symbol of the courageous individual standing against the brutal it of the authoritarian Communist regime. The 2011 poster for Occupy Wall Street protests drawn upon the “Tank Man” image for inspiration.
Seasons of Change: Student Art Inspired by "Arab Spring/Autumn"

We have read and discussed several news articles and background readings to gain a foundational understanding of the changes that happened this year. We have considered questions related to the influence of the Turkish model of democracy and secularism on countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. We have explored a common understanding of U.S interests in the Middle East region and how the democratic movements in the region could impact those interests. How can the act of creating and sharing our art with one another help us to understand these issues in a deeper and more personal way?

Project: Create a piece of visual art (acrylic paint on canvas, watercolor, collage, video, sculpture...) or a series of three poems inspired by what you learned in our current events unit about democratic movements in the Middle East and North Africa. Use the internet and available art books to get more information and inspiration. Your subject matter can focus on:

an idea/theme that inspires, worries, or concerns you:

- social media and democracy
- freedom of expression/censorship
- competing political interests
- unity/power of the masses
- challenging authority
- rebuilding a political system
- abuse of power
- religious harmony/intolerance
- oppression/brutality
- emerging leadership
- sacrifice/struggle
- victory/defeat

• an event that happened...
  (think about the Arab Spring timeline, Arab spring influence at Occupy Wall Street, Erdogan's trips to tout the Turkish model of secularism, NATO's intervention in Libya)

a central figure or a group that interests you: (protestors, police, political leader, Egyptian military, entrepreneurs, media personality, Ataturk)

a feeling, mood or atmosphere that you want to convey about what we have studied:

- Jubilation
- Uncertainty
- Fear
- Confusion
- Indignation
- Courage
- Outrage
- Grief
- Joy
- Peace
- Suspicion
- Depression

Your artwork should be accompanied by a 1.5 page paper, which includes a photo of your piece, its size dimensions and medium. It should discuss your sources of inspiration from the unit, provide some background on your subject, and analyze/explain your creative choices in relation to your artwork.

Exhibit Opening (Projects due) November 30