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*The Arabs and Turkey:
Present Challenges and Future Stakes*

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The ACRPS in Doha held an academic conference under the title of “The Arabs and Turkey: Challenges of the Present and the Outlook for the Future,” on the May 18 and 19, which was attended by a number of illustrious academics and researchers, from within the Arab Middle East and North Africa.

The conference addressed questions of the strategic relationships between the Arabs and Turkey, the historical foundations of these relationships and the prospects of their future development; these issues were discussed objectively and methodically. The conference sessions were divided along the themes: History, Politics and Strategy, and Energy, Economics and Water, in addition to a session devoted to discussing the societal aspect of Turkish-Arab relations. The conference included seven sessions over two days and closed with a round-table discussion led by ACRPS General Director Dr. Azmi Bishara.

Azmi Bishara : “There is a Convergence of Strategic and Vital Interests between the Arabs and Turkey”

At the opening session, chaired by Dr. Azmi Bishara and introduced by Dr. Abdulwahhab Al-Qassab, the participants attempted to answer the following questions: where does the future of Arab-Turkish relations lie? The following discussion is an attempt to shed light, in a very concise and intense way, on the conclusions reached at the conference proceedings.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Bishara described the meeting as being part and parcel of the ACRPS's vision of reaching a better understanding of the relations between the Arabs and Turkey. This was, in his opinion, not only important in terms of understanding a major regional power such as Turkey, with whom they share civilization, historic, economic, and strategic ties, but also because, in the absence of a unified Arab political entity, understanding these relations would help the Arabs better understand themselves. Bishara also pointed out that when a similar conference, titled “The Arabs and Iran,” was held on December 19 and 20, 2010, there was a similar interest at stake: that of determining whether or not there was such a thing as “the Arabs” who shared a set of common interests with regards to Iran, and who could look at Iran through the same set of eyes. The same was true, he said, of the debates surrounding the Arabs and Turkey; there is a need to understand who the Arab “we” really is. For this reason, there was a need to hold a symposium that assumes the existence of a virtual “we” that attempts to identify its interests and vision based on the vision of Arab scholars and researchers.

Bishara went on to make clear that when Turkey began to turn its attention to the Muslim world, and the East in general, a surge of journalistic writing began reflecting on the issue, which necessitated the holding of such a conference as this, to better elucidate, in a sensible and objective way, the issues at hand, particularly given the crucial nature of this topic. Bishara posed the questions: how do we deal with these developments when they arise? Do we project our own hopes and fears onto this new phenomenon, and hope that this (Islamic anew) country will play the role which we would like the Arabs to play? How exactly did the wishes of the Arabs begin to project themselves onto this nation-state of Turkey, during the second reign of the Justice and Development Party (the AKP)?

Bishara also emphasized that the latest warming of relations between Turkey and the Arabs was at least partially a result of Israeli incompetence in understanding the reality of the Turkish situation, and their failure to realize what it means for a truly independent Turkish political party, with its source of legitimacy being the Turkish public, and the Israeli response to the rise of the AKP being one of high-handedness towards the Turks, being one (without precaution, but with some surprise and preaching discourse). The same happened with the European Union, despite the fact that the AKP implemented in full the recommendations the EU had set for Turkish membership.

Bishara pointed to a number of cases in which a clear Turkish impact on Arab public opinion, born of the rise of a truly independent Turkish attitude could be seen, such as the Turkish position vis-à-vis the Freedom Flotilla, Erdogan's confrontation with Shimon Peres at the Davos Summit, and the refusal of the Turkish parliament to allow Western warplanes to fly over their territory during the war on Iraq.

A Balance in the Future

According to Bishara, the next 10 years will witness the realization of the concept of the “people” into a tangible truth, through the growing impact of Arab public opinion as an agent of political discourse in the post-revolutionary world. This change would lead to a small re-balancing of the present situation, with the diverse strands of Arab public opinion coming together to form a joint bloc which might take in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Sudan, including the possibility to soon include Yemen. In his closing statements, Bishara made clear that there remained a dream that, in the long run, a political, Arab entity would take shape, potentially becoming, in the long run, a pole of regional and global politics. The role of ACRPS, in such a change, would be to help prepare for this new role, as well as with the identification of Arab visions of a cultural, political entity that will assume its role in history. For the first time, these issues will be thought through in an environment of intellectual openness, which will help to produce the thinking towards a new relationship between the Arabs on one side and the Turks and Iranians on the other.

First Session: The Historical Perspective

Wajih Kawtharani: A New Approach for Arab and Turk Historians towards joint relations

Dr. Wajih Kawtharani went on to speak of the historical aspect of the Turkish and Arab relations. Kawtharani, who presented his paper “Problems of the Arab History of the Ottoman State and its Societies,” focused on two competing Arab views of Ottoman history. The first, which was widely represented in history textbooks of the 1930s-1960s, saw the Ottomans as a colonialist power; this trend, which he refers to as “Arab nationalist,” remained the dominant opinion. The second trend, which he named “Islamist,” saw the Ottoman State as being a legitimate Islamic Caliphate.

Kawtharani pointed out that the 1970s saw the birth of a new outlook, one which took in both Turkish and Arab historians, and looked to Ottoman history in a new way. As both Arab and Turkish historians distorted Ottoman history, especially at the beginning of the Kemalist era, and as of 1980s, new writings dealing objectively with history came into being, launched originally by Turks, Dr. Kawtharani claimed

that they were looking to history in a new light, with the Arabs soon to follow in reconsidering the Ottoman history. These new approaches were fed by the increasing reliance on a variety of sources:

- 1) Documents, particularly those related to family (and personal) law rulings and tax records;
- 2) The utilization of anthropological approaches, especially those related to a structuralist worldview (known in Europe), which had a lot of currency, and equipped the researchers with a new way of interpreting the documents.

He went on to point out that his own research focused on three topics:

- 1) The concept of a Sultanate in the state;
- 2) The dialectic of power between fanaticism and religious proselytization;
- 3) The mediators of power: (mediator authorities between society and ruling party) religious institutions, educational institutions, Sufi *Tariqas* [*sufi order and its way of life*], and *zawiyas* [*schools that teach spiritual studies*], as well as urban guilds and leagues.

Sayyar Al-Jamil: The Arabs Lack a True Understanding of Reality

With his paper titled, “The Turkish Constitutional Movement, Kemalist Ideology and its Impact on the Arabs,” Dr. Al-Jamil described Arab understanding of that crucial period of Ottoman history as “unbalanced, weak and splintered”. In his view, the Arabs did not possess a true vision of the reality; not only were they “splintered” politically, but they were “fragmented” intellectually as well. He pointed out that previous experiences had shown the Arabs to have engaged in a number of dialogues with Turkey that failed due to Arab ignorance of who the Turks were. On the other hand, the Turks seemed to have a good understanding of the Arabs. However, al-Jamil does not associate the failure of the dialogue with the fact that Turks knowing about Arabs more than the latter do about them; rather, he pointed out another two factors which made this issue important:

- 1) The Arabs lacked unity in approaching all things Turkish.
- 2) Arab attitudes were not founded on realities, but on politics and ideologies, which he saw as a greater threat.

Sayyar went on to say that, while both the Arabs and the Turks had spent a lot of time worrying about constitutional issues, only the Turks had managed to be successful on this front, intellectually and politically. In closing, he pointed out that Arabs had demanded a constitution before the Turks: the constitutional bug had moved from Tunisia, to Egypt and then the Ottoman Empire before moving on to Iran and, finally, the constitutional movement of 1908 in Mosul. Arabs deserve the right to claim that they had advocated for constitution before others.

Mohammed Nouredine: Arab-Turkish Relations at an Important Crossroads

In his paper titled “The Arabs and a Future Role for Turkey,” Mohammed Nouredine spoke of the critical, sensitive, and nebulous period through which Arab-Turkish relations are passing, pointing out how unclear the future is. In light of a new reality in the Arab world, there is a need to take a sober look at all possible outcomes of growing Turkish-Arab relationships.

Noureddine added that Turkey had a strategic interest in the Arab world, a position made clear in the writings of Ahmet Davut Ogulu. In Ogulu's writings, what emerges is the growth of an Islamic commonwealth, where the Arab world would form a major component of the final arrangement of the new Turkish strategy. The Arabs were an important part of this, given that they were the last national group to break away from the Ottoman State, and had in fact remained dedicated and tied to the state for a long time. Noureddine went on to say that the Turkish model would provide the newly ascendant Islamist movements in Arab countries while attempting to elaborate conciliation between their reality and their identity, after the eruption of Arab revolutions and the detection of the weight of Islamic groups, stretching from Tunisia to Egypt, to Syria. Turkey would be a new source of inspiration, rather than a duplication source with all questions that may arise.

Second Session: strategic and Political Aspects (Part I)

Mohammed Sayed Salim: Turkey as the Regional Strategic Alternative

Sayed Salim addressed the attendants with his paper titled, "Turkey as a Regional Strategic Alternative for the Arab Countries," in which he discussed the importance of the Arabs having alternative strategic political partners in a post-Cold War world for the Arabs, posing the following questions: what are the conditions of the Arab strategic alternative? What is the role of Turkey amongst the Arabs, and what role can the Arabs play for Turkey? Also, what influence have the Arab revolutions had on Turkey?

He went on to state that a true strategic ally would provide long-term capabilities for the Arabs, and share values and political directions with them. Yet such a strategic alliance would require an internal consensus within the two bodies considered.

Sayed Salim also suggested that the value of such an ally would be to help build a bulwark against the forces of globalization, and that the presence of a number of strategic options would allow a margin of freedom for the Arab countries to act independently of others. In his opinion, the discourse in the Arab world was now concentrating on what the factors needed in a new strategic ally would be. It was important, he believed, that all parties concerned should try to find a partnership based on pluralism, and not on subordination. Provided that the Arabs could agree on exactly what they were looking for in an alternative partner, they would find in Turkey an ideal and indispensable partner. Salim reiterated that Turkey is, in view of the limited strategic allies for the Arabs, an important strategic alternative that Arabs should benefit from after identifying their goals, and build accordingly a strategic peer relationship.

Dr. Farah Saber: Turkey Seeks a New Context for its National Security

Dr. Saber's paper, entitled "The Strategic Choices of Turkey and the Role of the Arabs Within Them," states that Turkey was itself seeking to create a new context for its national security concerns, in the hope of enhancing its own capabilities and supporting them. In terms of Turkish foreign policy, Saber believes that Turkey is seeking ways to incorporate its internal politics with its foreign agenda, a move which

began during the presidency of Turgut Ozal (1989-1993) and his Foreign Minister Ismael Cem. This era rang in a shift in Turkey's relations with the Arab countries, based on the need for Turkey to have a diversity of strategic options to further its strategic dimension, without endangering Turkey's political and strategic relationship with the United States; this shift became productive during the time of Erdogan as the Turkish direction started being inclined to adopt autonomous positions relatively. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, followed by the 2003 war on Iraq, alerted Turkey to the pressing need to have alternative strategic options outside of the US-NATO sphere, which otherwise had been very popular due to the zealously secular, nationalist ideology that was leading Turkey. The Turks began to see themselves as having the power to create their own spheres of influence at a regional level, whether in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia or the Arab world, without having to make exclusions of any other partners. Turkish diplomacy could also, it was believed, play a central role in either the Arab region or in Europe.

Mohammed Abdelkader: Turkey has an Active Role to Play in the Middle East

Mohammed Abdelkader shared his paper on the subject of “The Change of Turkey's Foreign Policy Towards the Arabs During the Rule of the AKP,” in which he presented his opinion that “the shifts in Turkish foreign policy embody the civilizational changes, the strategic dimension, and the move towards Neo-Ottomanism,” although these are “denied by Turkish Foreign Minister Davout Oglu”.

According to Abdelkader, Oglu sees that the balance of forces is shifting, and he prefers to look at the world through the prism of what will be, as opposed to what was, also believing that the future of a Turkish role will be found through a new Islamic coalition, which will take in Egypt, Iran and Pakistan, in addition to another Asia-centered alliance which finds its weight in Japan, Russia and China. This constitutes a strategic depth for Turkey in addition to its regional role which will allow it to become a central player at equal distances from all. Turkey, with its vast reserves of soft power in terms of the economy and culture, was a good candidate for a position of regional leadership. In the event of closer ties between Turkey and Egypt, Turkey's role in the region could be enhanced without jeopardizing Turkey's relations with the West.

In Abdelkader's estimation, Turkey was now in “putting out fires mode” in its active reconciliatory diplomacy with its Arab partners, as a number of Arab countries were now participating in strategic-level discussions with Turkey's leadership. This was in addition to the many high-level contacts which Turkey enjoys with a number of world players making Turkey an important international player itself, being the first NATO member to hold joint military exercises with Russia.

Dr. Hisham Qarawi: Turkey's Islamists' Constitutional Reforms in Accordance with European Standards

Dr. Qarawi focused, in his discussion on Post-Kemalist thinking on the following question: what do the Arabs stand to lose or gain from it? He pointed out that there were two separate meanings to Post-Kemalism: that which shaped the thinking of conservatives and Salafist Islamist thinkers, and a second meaning that has begun to influence the thinking of those shaping the state, competing for institutions, while attempting to integrate the Islamists. Kemalism itself was a Westernizing mission, which imposed

an exclusionary form of democracy for decades. While the move towards a multi-party system came peacefully, after the demise of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, secularism was imposed in an elitist way constraining the Islamic culture, even if people confronted and fought it.

In Qarawi's view, this type of paternalistic democratization led to the succession of military coups which turned the military establishment into the custodians of secularism. In his view, secularism is not enough to measure the level of democracy, as there are more important factors, such as pluralism, civil liberties, fairness of elections and a change in power; as such, Turkey could only be described as partly free.

He pointed to the post-Kemalist phase in Turkish politics, which took shape in the second half of the Twentieth Century, witnessed three military coups d'état, while the democratic process was administered by the judiciary since the 1960s. Qarawi views the Islamists as having succeeded in achieving the constitutional reforms which the European Union insisted on while at the same time, scoring some gains for themselves by restricting the role of the military in public life. He also emphasized that the Islamists of Turkey were not interested in imposing an Islamist fundamentalist regime on the people; rather, they preferred to rule through democracy, claiming that their continued presence in power was the result of their not being removed by the military. Qarawi concluded that Turkey's democracy was not-yet-perfect, but that it still presented a number of lessons for the Arabs to learn from.

Third Session: strategic and Political Aspects (Part II)

Dr. Mustafa Al-Labbad: Turkey Gained Popular Credibility in the Arab World After the Freedom Flotilla

Continuing the theme of the strategic and political ties between Turkey and the Arabs, Dr. Mustafa Al-Labbad went on to speak of “the reality of the relationship, their prospects for growth, and their impact on the Palestinian cause and the future of the Arab nation,” speaking particularly about the role of think tanks on this issue. Al-Labbad also pointed to the similarity between the Turkish-Arab and Arab-Iranian problem, namely that the Arabs were internally divided over how to approach the other side, and tended to view it in black-and-white terms, a duality from which the Arabs need to escape; states should, instead, concentrate on building policies to coincide with their own interests. The Arabs needed to adopt a materialist approach, and have a concordant which clearly spelled out the interests of all sides.

Al-Labbad also addressed the crescendo which the public approval of Turkey reached in the Arab countries after the Freedom Flotilla of May 2010, while the decline in Turkish-Israeli relations occurred for a number of factors, which could be classified in a number of ways: internal, regional and global. In al-Labbad's understanding, there were three distinct phases of Turkish-Israeli relations: the first following Turkish recognition of Israel in 1949, the second beginning in 1996, which was the first shift in the regional context, and the third phase, which began in 2008, continuing to the present, and is closely tied to the Palestinian question; this phase has seen a serious deterioration in the relations between the two countries. Al-Labbad also commented on Israel's long-running policy of building a ring of alliances around Arab countries, including, dating back to the 1950s, at different times, Ethiopia, Iran, Turkey and Sudan.

Mahmoud Muhareb: Israel was Shocked by the Arab Spring

Dr. Muhareb concentrated on understanding two periods of Turkish-Israeli relations in his paper “Israel, Turkey, and the Arab States: the role, status and imposing authority through relations and alliances – a view from within”. The late 1950s saw the rapid upgrading of relations between Israel and Turkey, while the final decade of the twentieth century saw a decline in these relations. Muhareb went on to quote the founding father of Israel, former premier David Ben-Gurion, who asked himself how Israel could survive in the Arab sea? It became clear that Israel would have to see itself as an exceptional state, and that it would have to bring about its interests through confrontation. As part of this desire to impose itself on the Arab countries, Israel would have to excel over its neighbors militarily, which it did through its possession of weapons, both traditional and nuclear, and through the militarization of its own society. Israel’s economic development and social advancement were used by Israeli military establishment as they were both put on hold and mobilized through proselytization based on Israel national interest. In Muhareb's view, throughout its history, Israel also sought to be an asset, not a liability, to US interests in the region, and always looked for ways to be of service to the US as opposed to the Arabs.

However, this did not stop the downfall of Turkish-Israeli relations even though Turkey was an important US ally. This was partly due to the strain caused by the occupation of Iraq, after which Israel and the US worked to support secessionist Kurds in Iraq, who in turn were supporting Kurdish rebel groups on Turkish soil. In addition to this, Israel failed to stand by Turkey on certain issues, such as that of Cyprus, and to hand over certain military hardware, such as unmanned drones. Muhareb suggests the following overall causes for the deterioration:

- The rise of a new Turkish political elite since 2002
- Israeli occupation and repression in the Palestinian territories
- Strengthening relations between Turkey and Syria
- Its growing relations with Iran
- Israeli procrastination on the issues of supplying Turkey with military technology and unmanned aerial vehicles
- The case of the freedom flotilla and the humiliation of the Turkish Ambassador to Israel

With regards to the issue of the Arab revolts, Muhareb argues that Israel was taken by surprise, and that it is, as a state, inherently opposed to the rise of democracy in Arab countries which would shift their policy of subjugation to confrontation, thus representing a threat to Israel.

Wisal Azzawi: Turkey is a Multi-faceted Entity

Dr. Azzawi made clear in her paper “Turkey and the EU: the controversy of rejection and the prospects of acceptance,” that Turkey's contemporary relationship with Europe as a whole is born of Turkey's separate relations with individual European countries, and are steeped in history. Azzawi posed the following question at the beginning of her talk: what does Turkey want from Turkey? The answer, according to her,

which has been the same since the 1990s, lies in the multi-faceted nature of Turkey as a country. Turkey's policy of global integration has always been complex, a situation which she described as “musical chairs,” with the ports of call of Turkey's foreign relations leaders ever-shifting. The numerous governments that have ruled Turkey have also presided over a variety of interests and aims. Nevertheless, the body politic of Turkey has long held to the sentiment that the country's problems can only be solved through alignment with the West.

The speaker also discussed how Turkey's self-identification with Europe and the West began with Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who stated that the future generations of Turkey should grow in the shadow of European civilization, or “the civilization of power”. Azzawi spoke of how the secular and Islamist trends within Turkey were defined through their attachment to the West, a position which was made clear in “Strategic Depth,” written by the one-time Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davut Oglu. Oglu's thesis was that Turkey and Europe were two dynamic bodies, whose relationship with each other needed to be more nuanced and multi-leveled [than was previously the case].

Fourth Session: Economic Aspects

Samir Aita: The Power of the Institutionalized State Allowed Turkey to Weather the Storm of Tsunami revolutions

The fourth session of the conference was devoted to the discussion of economic issues affecting the Turkish-Arab relationship. Dr. Aita presented his research paper titled “The Arabs and Turkey: from the freight trucks of commercial exchange to the train of economic growth and societal development,” and used it to focus attention on the Arab revolutions of 2011. In his analysis, Aita pointed out that Arab countries have undergone a profound demographic change, with the rise of a new generation of people who were forced to go out and look for a better way of life, and thus ended up in a series of revolutions demanding freedom, in an arc stretching “from the Ocean to the Gulf”. Aita pointed out that most of these revolts had arisen in regions of noticeable economic marginalization within the Arab countries (e.g., Daraa and Sidi Bouzeid), reflecting inherent disparities in the development of Arab countries.

Aita compared these conditions in the Arab countries to those in Turkey, which had seen a demographic shift similar to that found in the Arab countries. Nonetheless, Turkey had managed to avoid a crisis similar to that which had taken place in Arab countries through utilizing its place in the international community. It had contained this demographic and gone on to overcome an economic collapse and surmount an important social and political crisis to become not only a rising regional power, but a dynamic global player. The dynamism allowed Turkey to challenge both time factors, as well as development disparities in its Western and Eastern regions where a bloody civil war erupted—still low-intensity- over questions of “identity”: Kurdish against Arab identity. This is particularly important when considering the seeds of serious popular unrest which are present due to the imbalance in economic development between the Eastern regions of the Turkey, where a low-intensity conflict is being fought out over questions of ethnic identity, and the rest of the country.

Besides the presence of state institutions, another factor which allowed Turkey to peacefully absorb the demographic growth was the smooth transition of power from the secular elite, who emulated the West and whose authority stemmed from the military and adopting drastic nationalist orientations, to the new, Islamist-oriented elite of political leaders who relied in their power base on the “Anatolian Tigers,” being businessmen from the Turkish hinterland with Islamic orientations. This new class had a more mature, astute approach to both internal and foreign political affairs, and their rise allowed Turkey to “change from within”. According to Aita, this also represented a chance for Turkey to sustain its capital-intensive, manufacturing industries, inspired by the relocation of the American and European industries in cheap labor countries, with its pool of relatively cheaper labor, on the expense of real estate driven economy. Aita considered the differences that juxtapose Turkey to Arab countries is interesting, comparing real estate speculations in Dubai model on one hand, with Turkey’s urban planning policies on the other.

Dr. Huda Hawa: The Growing Presence of Turks in Arab Countries

Dr. Hawa delivered a paper titled “The Arab-Turkish Free Trade Area: drivers and obstacles as an example of Arab-Turkish economic partnership,” which she used to demonstrate the growing presence of Turkey within the Arab homeland, in particular as it relates to economic issues since the new century. This could be seen in the rise of mutual trade and investment across the two sides; at the outset of the 1980s, the size of these transactions was negligible, rising to around \$30 billion in 2000, and then \$130 billion at the end of 2007. This growth was possible through the establishment of a joint Turkish-Arab free trade zone, which became possible through a series of six individual agreements that Turkey had signed separately with countries in the Arab Levant and Maghreb.

Hawa believes that the reasons driving Turkey towards its Arab neighbors in the Levant are largely internally Turkish since Turkey's economic expansionist policies serve domestic interests. Being a commercially active country, Turkey is in need of economic investments, which in turn drives the acceleration of Turkish external trade, not only with the Arabs, but with countries in Africa and in other places as well, possibly turning the republic into a Middle Eastern tiger.

Dr. Munir Al-Hamash: Liwa'aliskenderun Remains Present in Syrian Consciousness

Dr. Hamash started off by noting that both sides in the Turkish-Arab pair stood to gain a lot from a close relationship founded on mutual interests. He pointed out that while Syria had benefited enormously from its economic contacts with Turkey, it had yet to completely forego the issue of Liwa' aliskenderun (in the Hatay province of Turkey), the writer also pointed out that the liberalization of these economic ties had not been in Syria's favor, with a number of Syrian factories, particularly those operating in the textiles and furniture realm, being forced to shut down due to the presence of Turkish imports. Al-Hamash went on to draw a link between the entry of Turkish-produced furniture into the Syrian market, and the present protests taking place in the city of Saqba, where the population had been reliant on a large number of small furniture-producing workshops for employment. The unemployment which resulted was the direct cause for the unrest.

Al-Hamash closed his speech by suggesting that will alone was not enough to justify closer economic integration, which should be based on based on justice, equity, but that local factors and realities would have to be taken into account; after all, all of the Arab economies, as well as Turkey's, would have to survive under the regime of globalization.

Fifth Session: Energy

Issam Chalabi: Oil is a Cornerstone of Turkish-Arab Economic and Political Ties

The fifth session of the conference was devoted to the energy aspects of Turkish-Arab relations, and was opened by Issam Chalabi's discussion of how questions around oil shaped the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the West, ultimately helping to bring about the decline of the Ottoman State and how it played a role in deciding the boundaries between the Arab states of the region. Relying on an analysis of the geostrategic interests which governed the way oil pipelines were drawn. He spoke of building the pipelines carrying oil from Iraq through Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine, and how the Iraqi government later saw the need to build a pipeline through Turkey, which could bypass possible political and military complications which the other pipelines might face. Finally, Chalabi spoke of how Iraq was to build a "moving pipeline" fleet of truck-tankers that transported Iraq's surplus petrochemical products through to Turkey, as one of the results of this overall project.

Abdulmajeed Attar: Israel Seeks to Become a Player in the Gas Market

Professor Attar began his address by stating that the Arab states, including those on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, were in possession of considerable energy reserves which were in demand in the West, giving them a very significant geostrategic advantage. However, Arab states, says Attar, have not capitalized on these assets and continue to be weak, fragmented states in terms of their political structures, of economic development and their societal advancement.

Attar also pointed to the declining importance of the Arabs in terms of world energy production and reserves, making it clear that the aim for the Arabs should be to halt this decline, which was seeing the growing importance of Israel, Turkey, and Iran:

- For Iran, which together with its Caspian Sea neighbors is also in possession of significant energy reserves (competing with Arab countries' resources), this new power could be seen in its ability to ignore the diktats of the West.
- Turkey is an autonomous political and dynamic economic model. Like the Arabs, it also enjoyed a very enviable geostrategic location, which placed it in between the Arab Middle East, the Far East, and Europe. In addition, Turkey enjoyed a robust, domestically-driven economy, with the possibility that its demands for energy would double by 2020, while at the same time the country is a transit point for energy supplies into Europe, and is willing to exploit this strategic location.
- Israel has also jumped into the fray, seeking to utilize its discovery of gas reserves in the south Mediterranean in order to become a gas exporter to the rest of the world.

Amr Kamal Hamoudeh: The Arab Countries are in Possession of Vast Gas Reserves

Professor Hamoudeh's presence was made impossible for health reasons, so his paper, "The Arab Gas Project as a Cornerstone of Turkish-Arab Relations," was presented by Dr. Mustafa Al-Labbad. The paper points to the rich reserves of natural gas owned by Qatar, Egypt, and Algeria. Hamoudeh's work spoke of the growth of the natural gas industry over the past three decades, which has seen the rise of pipelines or container tankers to carry large amounts of liquefied gas across boundaries. Nonetheless, Arab countries were unable to make the most of their reserves; this was typified by the policies of deposed Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak, who agreed to a settlement dating back to 1989 that would supply Israel with its gas needs, of 240 million cubic feet daily, for 25 years. A gas pipeline was built for this purpose.

Sixth Session: Water

Naji Haraj: The Syrian and Iraqi Water Crises are in a Continuing Downward Spiral

While presenting his paper during the seventh session, which was devoted to water management issues between the Arabs and Turkey, Haraj spoke of how Syria and Iraq are facing a worsening problem of a decline in both the quantity and quality of water which they received from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, to the extent that they can no longer meet their basic needs with the water they have. According to Haraj, one of the major non-natural causes behind this decline was Turkey's projects along the sources of these two rivers, especially the "GAP Project," [Southeastern Anatolia Project, though in Turkish it is: *Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi*], with the results being immediately visible in Iraq in particular since the 1970s as there has been a serious threat to the country's food security.

The researcher also reported on the centrality of this issue at a number of meetings held by the three countries over the last three decades, including a special joint commission for economic and technical cooperation. These deliberations also led to the formation, in 1980, of a joint technical committee comprising the three countries, the mandate of which was to decide a mutually agreeable accord on the shares of water destined for each of them. From a legal point of view, the writer spoke of the importance of internal agreements and protocols that governed the distribution of resources between these three countries, explaining that there was a guaranteed water access for each without violating the other partner countries just right to water access. Haraj pointed out that Turkey has adamantly refused to implement international law in general and any of the specific tripartite agreements governing the sharing of the Tigris and Euphrates. This transformed their joint cooperation in shared water resources into a source of conflict

Tarek Al-Majzoub: The Process of Turkish-Arab Integration Will Not be Easy

Al-Majzoub spoke on his paper "The Future Prospects of Water Cooperation between Turkey and the Arabs," in which he discusses the construction of the hydroelectric power plant along the Ataturk Dam in 1992, and the groundbreaking on the Beerjek Dam (on the Turkish part of the Euphrates), as both were

events that alerted both Syria and Iraq to the vitality of water resources. The Ataturk Dam, a crucially important part of the overall GAP Project in South Eastern Anatolia; the project aims to revolutionize the economy in a region covering 73,863 square kilometers (or about 9.5% of Turkey's landmass) located in **upper Tigris-Euphrates** basin in a mostly Kurdish-populated part of the country. While the project may have began as an attempt to assuage the political demands of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), it turned into, in the eyes of Syria and Iraq, a source for political pressure. In Turkey's view, water was a natural resource it had every right to exploit for its benefit, the way the Arab states exploited their oil for their own benefit, while Syria and Iraq saw the project as a violation of international treaties related to international rivers.

The researcher went on to state the importance of Turkish-Syrian cooperation for the Arab homeland as a whole, with Turkish-Syrian cooperation paving the way for broader links between Turkey and all other Arab countries instead of perpetual dispute and conflict. In Majzoub's opinion, resolving disputes related to water were the right place to start before moving on to other topics. Water has political implications; thus success in water sector could lead to success in other sectors.

Economic and other ties provided the groundwork for an agreement to be solidified through political means, and could give all of the concerned countries incentives to avoid conflict. The interests of the Arab homeland, as well as Turkey, demand the development of greater integration in their economies, in a manner that would help them overcome many of their hardships, weaknesses and reluctances, and make the most of their natural resources. While Turkey has relatively abundant water supplies, it is short on energy reserves, with the reverse being true for the Arab states. If they were to arm themselves with good intentions and determination, both sides could begin to resolve their differences.

While the process of Turkish-Arab integration would not be easy, it would be worth the efforts made if they were in earnest. Further Turkish-Arab integration could make it possible for the two sides to see a better future together, overcoming obstacles and using institutions to surmount relapses, perhaps ushering in something like "The Turkish-Arab Group for Water, Agriculture, and Energy".

Seventh Session: Social Aspects

Jamal Barout: French Policies of Ethnic Division to Create Sectarianism in Syria

ACRPS researcher Jamal Barout focused on how the drawing of national boundaries around Syria, through the Lausanne Protocol of 1923, helped to create ethnic strife amongst the Armenian, Kurdish, and Armenian-Chaldean-Assyrian communities. Barout claims that the Lausanne agreement, which was forced onto Syria during the French Mandate period, resembles the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), the premier international agreement which defined the concept of the nation-state at the close of the 100 Years War in imperial Europe. In particular, both agreements contributed to the concepts of the modern state, citizenship, sovereignty, people's rights and the role of minorities within the state. The presented research also directed the audience's attention to the phase which saw the birth of the Turkish republic, which was based along strong, classical lines of the nation-state, and the eruption of the minority issue. Barout

discussed the projections and implications of French ethnic ideas to the Al-Hasaka region of the Syrian hinterland, where the colonial powers had sought to form an entity for the benefit of Kurds and Arameans (Chaldean-Assyrians) in a bid to prevent the Arab-populated urban centers from getting too much power. The French had also sought to impose draconian limits on migration flows between the two areas. This threat led to a mass exodus of many of these ethnic communities to the Hasaka region, and caused mass urban sprawl in what had been a deserted area. This new population center was exploited by the French, and separatist movements within it, given that both the French right-wing and the moderate republican-wing both expressed reservations regarding the Franco-Syrian treaty which would have given Syria its independence earlier.

Akil Mahfoud: The Arabs in Turkey are Both a Bridge to Understanding and a Source of Friction

Dr. Mahfoud was unable to attend, so his paper was delivered by ACRPS researcher Hamza Mustafa.

“The Arabs in Turkey” provided a glimpse at some of the difficulties in describing the nature of Turkish-Arab relations; the understanding of the connections between Turkey and the Arabs was difficult because it was difficult to understand all of the concepts surrounding it, such as security, borders, historic memory, status, and so on. These terms possess an ambiguous dimension related to the noun, the (national) meaning, the identity dynamics and the nature of relations between Turkey on the one hand, and Syria and the Arab region on the other.

The role of the Arab community in Turkey in Turkish-Arab relations was also looked at, starting from the simple question: does the presence of an ethnically Arab community in Turkey make it easier for good relations between the two sides, or is the reverse true? The author had concluded that the Arab community of Turkey, with their current conditions and interactions, had so far proven to be a bridge for mutual understanding between Turkey and her Arab neighbors. However, in view of their reality, the historic dynamic, and the embedded strength, they are also a source of friction. The truth is that their role is a median one, between understanding and friction.

Mahfoud’s paper discusses the difficulty related to this study, which was born out of the need to investigate general facts about a unitary body known as the “Arabs of Turkey,” to analyze it as an ethnic complex phenomenon and its impact on its own conditions; it was also difficult to determine the relative priority of this question within Turkey’s body politic, which would be necessary before anybody could state what impact the presence of this community had on the Turkish-Arab relationship, and whether or not it is becoming a source of friction, rapprochement or antagonism.

The author also emphasized the ethnic and ideological posture of political orientations in both Syria and Turkey, where the state of play of regional politics and other matters relates to whether or not the issue of ethnic minorities would be made much of. Such regional factors may be more important to the status of the situation than what is actually happening on the ground.

In closing, Mahfoud reiterated that “The Arabs in Turkey” did not represent a single group who had a specific agenda that could be viewed as a political program that impacts the interactions between the Arabs and Turkey. Instead, they were a group who would remain in the background, while continuing to be a factor in the totality of Turkish-Arab connections. At the time being, observers are told to “stay tuned” before a final verdict can be reached, as it might require a lot of additional work and thinking.

Nazem Youness Othman

After the formation of the autonomous Kurdish region in Iraq in 1992, Turkey found itself in a double-bind. Dr. Othman's written submission addressed the impasse in which Turkey currently finds itself, and the double standards it would have to follow. Although it had official contacts with the regional administration of Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkey had to deal with the problem of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), an armed group involved in an insurrection in Turkey that has found a safe haven in Iraqi Kurdistan, leading to some vacillation in official Turkish policies.

Similarly, such a duality presented a serious challenge to the authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan, which sought to balance its need to please the Turkish government, and thereby succeed in their experiment of federalism, and their development concerns. Othman pointed out that the US constantly weighed in heavily to persuade the regional administration in Iraqi Kurdistan to please Turkey. In the end, it seems that Turkey has prevailed and this is evident in how Turkey is the best-represented foreign economic power in the autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq.

The Seventh Session was followed by a round-table discussion.