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**The Arab spring's time is running out:  
Why Italy and Turkey should increase their efforts towards  
the Arab countries.**

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**Abstract**

The “Arab Spring”, as a wide spread movement of uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa, shook and changed the old dictatorial system of checks and balances. The entire world looked, and is looking, doubtfully to the region where the uncertainties are turning the welcomed “spring” to a problematic “winter”. Moving from a general overview and recognition of the low awareness of the EU, the lack of a real strategy of the European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy and the doubtless fiasco of the Union for Mediterranean; this working paper aims to show why Turkey and Italy should forthwith take action. Their geographic location laying in the Mediterranean, economic interests, lack of natural resources, high dependence on gas and oil import and, finally, cultural ties make necessary a strict cooperation between the two countries that can play a leading role in the future outcomes of the region. This working paper, through a quick overview of both Italian and Turkish foreign policies and their economic interests on the Middle East and North Africa, is calling for a further and closer cooperation between Italy and Turkey.

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**1. Introduction**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2010 no one would have imagined that a protest in Tunis would represent the beginning of a spread and wide movement of uprising. Through mass protests, the Arab world, from Northern Africa to Middle East and the Gulf, shook and changed the old dictatorial system. If a movement of uprising and awakening has been generally welcomed, Western countries and the European Union, are now facing the challenges of creating a new balance . The old regimes, even if not granting civil, political and human rights were assuring countries’ stability and security for investments and energy supplies. After the early euphoric support for the spring, it is now time for the crash of dreams related to the outcome of elections that could create new Islamic states and to take real actions to build a new future in these countries. The general low awareness of the EU, the lack of a real strategy of the European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy and the doubtless fiasco of the Union for Mediterranean show the need for national actions. In this scenario of uncertainties, related also to the Euro crisis, countries such as Italy and Turkey cannot avoid to be involved in the shaping of the Mediterranean future. Their geographic location, economic-political relations and energy needs require a close cooperation between Italy and Turkey to secure the democratic path of the whole region. Of this cooperation, not only single countries will benefit, but the whole European Union, which is losing its international credibility, will have also a chance to evaluate the geopolitical relevance of Turkey and take a final decision on its accession to the European Union.

This working paper aims to analyze the future of the Arab spring from the Italian and Turkish perspectives in order to evaluate the future of the Mediterranean area. How should the policies towards the Arab spring countries, including a new migration policy and real economic aids be rethought? Can Turkey be a real model for those countries? Which are the common interests of Italy and Turkey and what can be done to secure them in the new democratic

challenge? A stronger and wider cooperation can play a major role in the shaping of a new Middle East and this paper aims to show why this train should not be missed.

## **2. The importance of concepts enshrined in words: Arab uprisings, awakenings or revolutions?**

Paul de Man wrote in 1983 “Modernity exists in the form of a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching at least a point that could be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure.”<sup>1</sup> The therefore called Arab spring is, doubtless, part of a wide desire to demolish the old regimes searching citizen’s involvement in political life. Well established dictatorships, from the El Abidine Ben Ali’s Tunisian regime to the Hosni Mubarak’s Egyptian one, saw mass protests leading to the fall of old systems in the Middle East and North Africa. Even if a global vision of the movement is needed, as these countries share several values, from language to religion and colonial past; a national perspective should not fade as there are contradictions, constraints and diverging opportunities. If in the short-term, a general understanding of “Arab spring” focusing on democracy and freedom can be allowed and supported, only in the long-term the events following will enable to better evaluate its implication for the region. The future shape of these countries, which are spread in a strategic geopolitical area, from Morocco to the Gulf countries, needs detailed national programs and the awareness of their genuine means and expectations.

This is why we must choose, among the terms proposed upon, uprisings. The protests, even if they are highly different from Algeria to Bahrain, have a common element: the lack of a real program and a leader. The Arab spring shares the weakness of being a widespread movement of uprisings calling for a change without an agreement on the meaning of the latter. The use of awakenings and revolutions must be rejected, as in this short-term perspective we have only faced unorganized uprisings. The real revolutions are now starting and constitute the big challenge of these countries: reforms, rule of law, democracy, minorities, human rights and justice will be some of the criteria to evaluate whether these revolutions could be considered awakenings or not.

In this process of change and reform, where new balances will be established in the whole region, the EU and Mediterranean countries should cooperate not only in a normative dimension, but also in a *realpolitik* one.

## **3. The players needed in shaping the new Middle East: the failure of European tools and the need to re-build a European Foreign Policy.**

The upheaval in the Arab countries involves several questions. Among them, who are going to be the players of the change or, as mentioned, of the revolutions starting seems to be crucial. Firstly, Europeans need to solve the age-old prejudices and contradictions that are blocking the process of the European integration, on one side, and a solid leadership and common policy on the other side. Only with a strong and credible European Union, the Arab spring can become a chance for Europe, and not a threat to its interests. Despite the Barcelona Process, the European Neighborhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean, in *realpolitik* the democratic path of MENA<sup>2</sup> countries has always been on the background.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul de Man, *Blindness and Inside*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1983, p.142.

<sup>2</sup> Middle East and North African countries.

Reflecting the original sin of thinking Mediterranean as divided in North and South, the aid and investments were mostly directed to economic prosperity, migration and fight against terrorism.

It could be argued that influences and pressures towards democratization were expected to be made through economic penetration. However, this is most likely a summary of European superiority complex. As also Yasmine Farouk point out,<sup>3</sup> there are several elements that close the door on European economic weight to spill in the region's political arena. The colonial past of some EU countries; the dependent relation (and awe) of EU with the U.S. (highly involved in Middle Eastern politics) that contribute to the widespread Arab perception of EU-US alignment on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, finally, the constraints (and whimsies) of individual EU countries on EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. These are the barriers to a genuine implementation of a foreign policy in the MENA countries and the functioning of partnerships as the Union for Mediterranean. The EU should not try to overcome the failure of the Union for Mediterranean (UfM), Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) or Barcelona Process with a new "Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity within the South Mediterranean", as it is being discussed nowadays. The EU does not need new tools, but should solve its inner contradictions and implement the principles enshrined in Barcelona Process, as the Mediterranean (without a North-South division) is an EU matter and should be neither US nor Iranian. Not "exporting" democracy and good governance with the umpteenth international tool but help empower Arab countries' citizens "to fine-tune their own."<sup>4</sup>

In this credibility gap that is affecting the EU, the transition period can be a test-bed for EU's real democratic values and leaderships. Not only financial and technical assistance, but a genuine and equal partnership that will involve wider ambitions in a co-planned project will be welcomed to end this stalemate of ambition, will and generosity. These new approach should move from the proposed 3 M (Market, Money and Mobility).

As far as the EU is now challenged by the backdrop of recession and austerity, the action should start from Market and Mobility. Beginning with Market, the post-uprisings leave weaker economies, particularly in non-oil countries due to the collapse of tourist revenues, capital flight and rising inflation. If, despite the events, the oil-exporters are likely to see average growth of 6.5% this year, large uncertainties associated with the transition process decreased GDP from an average growth of 4.4% in 2010 to -0.5% in 2011.<sup>5</sup> The underlined economic fallout combined with booming demography, rising inequality, unemployment and corruption cannot be ignored by the EU that must take action to avoid less friendly riots (if not proper revolutions) in the near future. EU destiny is bound to the MENA countries, from cultural ties to the well-know migration, energy and security and therefore it will be crucial that the EU supports citizens' will, basic freedoms and market recovery. A positive step, even if far from being reached, will be the creation of a customs union. The MENA economies, particularly the non-oil producing countries, are too small to attract significant investments in nowadays globalized economy, where mass production is vital to reduce unit costs. Different

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<sup>3</sup> Yasmine Farouk, "But Europe also has to dispel some long-held Arab prejudices" in *Europe's World* Summer 2011 No.18, p. 107-113.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Nafez Zouk, Garbis Irdian, George Abed, "The Arab World: Navigating through the Turbulence", *Institute of International Finance Reports*, October 19, 2011 available at <http://www.iif.com/emr/resources+1475.php>, last visited December 16, 2011.

external tariffs, customs regulations, procedures and documentation represent further barriers that should be avoided. A uniform competition policy and law will create a more predictable economic environment; particularly if efforts on tourist safeness, simple access to agricultural products and investments on SME sector will be made. In this light, not a simple aggregation of neighboring countries, but a free trade area with a common external tariff market in the Mediterranean will assure the recovery of economy.

The creation of a custom union cannot avoid a new approach towards mobility. As Europe is an ageing society, a demographic solution must be found before an unsustainable pressure on pension, health and welfare systems will exacerbate EU's political and economic failure. The Gonzales Report<sup>6</sup> underlined the need, by 2050, for constant labour force participation, of a 100 million people migration to fill the gap of 68 million workers that will be missing. Starting from this consideration, it will be essential to adopt, without delay, a new migration policy that will allow both the recovery of the economy in these countries and supply the labour force need of EU members. In doing so, also wide-ranging integration initiatives need to be taken, particularly at the local level, which is often the most problematic. Legal immigration and adequate social rights, as EU nationals, are such a critical challenge to the EU, despite its current nationalistic trend that faces daily the paradox of irregular immigrants employment, in particular in the building and agriculture sectors. Bilateral development agreements between the EU and Arab spring countries should include the promotion of immigration through mobility partnerships and two-way mobility between sending and receiving countries, as the report underlines "the aim should be training, not draining."<sup>7</sup>

In this challenging scenario, the EU should finally solve years-old issue concerning Turkish citizens' visa. Turkey is not only a candidate state which is suffering an unfair policy towards its citizens, but will be the biggest partner of EU in shaping new mobility as it is the geographical and cultural connection between the EU and the Arab countries. It is therefore necessary to end years-old dispute on visa requirements for Turkish citizens in the light of the economic and mobility needs, as the Soysal judgment reminded.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, to promote the implementation of democracy and the protection of human rights, the Arab countries should be allowed to join the Council of Europe. As most of the intra-European discussions focused on how the EU can support political reform not only through election-monitoring, support for political parties and promotion of the rule of law; a system of supra-national justice would strengthen the transitional process. The Council of Europe's membership for the countries will be the most effective way to promote democracy and protect human rights, as the membership would give Arab citizens' access to the European Court on Human Rights.

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<sup>6</sup> Reflection Group on the Future of the EU 2030, *Project Europe 2030 Challenges and Opportunities, Report to the European Council*, May 2010, available at [http://www.reflectiongroup.eu/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/reflection\\_en\\_web.pdf](http://www.reflectiongroup.eu/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/reflection_en_web.pdf), last visited December 21, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p.25.

<sup>8</sup> Further and detailed information are available at Keen Groenedijk, Elspeth Guild, *Visa Policy of Member States and the EU towards Turkish Nationals after Soysal*, İKV Economic Development Foundation Publication No. 246, Second Edition September 2011.

As the membership of the Council of Europe requires a democratization of MENA countries and their related acceptance of a superior control of the European Court of Human Rights, a preliminary step could be their participation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The comprehensive approach of the OSCE to political, economic, military and human aspects of the region could enhance political negotiations, decision-making and post-uprisings rehabilitation. The resulting framework will be the ground for the membership of the Council of Europe. However, these proposals must face reality and, particularly, the failure of UfM, the Euro crisis, the spreading idea of a forthcoming fall of the EU and the lack of will of member states to partially drop their sovereignty on behalf of a stronger European Union. In this dramatic panorama, strong relation and immediate joint action of Italy and Turkey is needed and will benefit both domestic interests and the EU.

#### **4. The importance of an Italian-Turkish leadership: an insight in Italian and Turkish Foreign Policies between political-economic interests and democratic need.**

Turkish-Italian relations have always been implemented at a high level, as shown by several bilateral agreements and numerous international organizations and alliances they belong. Historical ties and geopolitical interests towards the Mediterranean and the Middle East have always affected the foreign policies of Italy and Turkey, despite their belonging to NATO and the EU. Following the September 11 attacks and the related US initiatives, Italy and Turkey began to look even more to the MENA countries, while the EU was focused on the Eastern enlargement. The shifting Turkish-Italian foreign policies towards the MENA countries, which appear not so seldom to clash with other EU members' ones, could be the first steps towards a new understanding of the Mediterranean area. The pro active attitude of Italian and Turkish governments towards the Mediterranean is clear, and it is now time to carry the excellent ideas from the theoretical to the practical level. From the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan enjoying cheering crowds and mass adulation in his "Arab spring's tour", to Franco Frattini, the former Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, both countries recognized the need of a joint effort, calling for a "Marshall Plan for the Arab world".<sup>9</sup>

There are several political and economic interests that are shared by the two countries. However, as a preliminary concept, referring to Roberto Aliboni, the fundamental difference of Turkish and Italian shift to the MENA countries can be explained as such: If Italy's approach to the Mediterranean is mostly an opportunistic move based on energy supply and immigration issue, Turkey's shift can be a first sign of change in its strategic posture, due to the several problems affecting the EU and the cooling of its accession process.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Franco Frattini, "A Marshall Plan for the Arab world" in *Europe's world*, Summer 2011 No.18, p. 100-105. The Italian policy towards the Arab Spring has not changed with the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Giulio Maria Terzi di Sant'Agata, as underlined by the Minister at the VIII Turkish - Italian Forum, Istanbul 24-25 November 2011 and in an interview for "Il Mattino" December 21, 2011 available at [http://www.esteri.it/MAE/IT/Sala Stampa/ArchivioNotizie/Interviste/2011/12/20111221\\_mediterraneovogliad\\_I talia.htm](http://www.esteri.it/MAE/IT/Sala Stampa/ArchivioNotizie/Interviste/2011/12/20111221_mediterraneovogliad_I talia.htm).

<sup>10</sup> Roberto Aliboni, "Interests and Cooperation in the Mediterranean and the Middle East" in *Perceptions*, Vol. XVI No. 1 Spring 2011, pp. 4-5.

Moving to the strict Italian-Turkish ties, the trade relations play a fundamental role. Italy is Ankara's 4th trade partner, with 16.7 billions of dollars in trade and this year the goal of 20 billion dollars in trade will be reached. If we move to the general import-export, it can be seen how the Mediterranean area is relevant to both Turkey and Italy. In fact, in the Mediterranean Area Italy exports 29.9% of its total exports and Turkey 27.6% while the imports, in the same region amount to 24.3% for Italy and 18.1% for Turkey, including Southern Europe, Western Balkans, the Maghreb and the Near East.<sup>11</sup> However, if we focus only on the MENA region, we can see how the percentage of exports is more relevant for Turkey and its growing perspectives are higher, at least in short and medium term.

These strong trade relations are reflected on the policy framework of both countries. From NATO to the Turkish application to the EEC/EU, the Mediterranean and the Middle East have always been important for the two countries. However, in the last ten years, a growing focus can be seen on the Middle East after the US pressures following the 9/11. If this focus for Italy is mostly due to its uncritically following the US; Turkey's new foreign policy is based on questions of an emphasis on the eastern and southern dimension of its foreign policy and national security. Italy's military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, together with its unconditional support of Israel, is clearly more linked to the deep friendship with the US than a real interest in the area. On the opposite side, Turkey's shift reflects its interests and fears as the threats on the region are linked to its trade relations and domestic security. In this scenery, Sarkozy's proposal of an EU-Turkey "privileged partnership" completely misunderstands Turkish policies and years-old expectations. Turkey is ready and will be leading with Italy a renewed Union for Mediterranean, but based on the granting of a full EU membership. To reshape the UfM as a framework to develop new political ambitions, organize economic cooperation and implement the 3M strategy (money, market, mobility) in a big joint project, Turkey cannot be left out. Nowadays, the EU political and economic crisis, the need to reform NATO and the related failure of programs as the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Union for Mediterranean are pushing the Turkish government to seek new Eastern partners. The role of Italy will be therefore to prevent a complete shift towards the Middle East and revitalize Mediterranean projects.

## **5. Energy, a shared vulnerability**

The increasing energy dependence in Europe, particularly in the Southern countries, makes necessary to cooperate in the Mediterranean, Caucasus and Middle East. Among Southern European countries, Italy and Turkey share common points, i.e. both are import-dependent and they are situated at junction points. As industries and citizens' lives in the whole Europe are more and more dependent on energy-producer countries, Italy and Turkey are essential to secure and diversify the security of energy supply. Worldly-famous projects as the Interconnector Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI) and Nabucco aim to import natural gas (less expensive than nuclear or renewable energy) to Europe and involve sustainable agreements between energy-producers, energy-consumers and transit countries. In the light of the future domestic and European needs, Italy and Turkey's energy policies, agreements and cooperation will be fundamental with MENA oil and natural gas producing countries. From

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<sup>11</sup> Data from the FMI Direction of trade statistic yearbook 2008 & Quarterly March 2010, as quoted by Roberto Aliboni, *ibid*. In evaluating these percentages it is due to remember that the absolute amounts are quite different, as the Italian economy in GDP is about three times the Turkish one.

the Blue Stream and Samsun-Ceyhan pipelines to the ITGI project, the Libyan oil and Algerian gas import; energy supply will not only be an economic challenge for companies and industries but a vital matter for the whole EU and Turkey.

Italy is highly dependant on energy supplies since oil, gas and electricity are a strong need of Italian industries. Italy, being one of the main energy-importing countries, has an extremely relevant role in the European energy market. It is the seventh oil importing-country and the fourth gas importing-country.<sup>12</sup> While the oil demand is slowly decreasing, the gas demand is constantly growing thus challenging the gas storage and import capacity, as the 2003 gas crisis has shown.<sup>13</sup> The diversification of energy resources and infrastructures improvement is a priority, since 67% of gas is imported at present from Russia (31%) and Algeria (36%). However, the diversification of resources is not only a national matter: EU countries are 95% dependent on imports for gas supply and the EU is pushing member states to diversify resources and transit routes, to sign long-term contracts, to encourage investments and to establish a regular dialogue with energy producing countries.<sup>14</sup> Since Italy is close to energy-producing countries in the Mediterranean, it is responsible for resource diversification to secure European energy supply. When looking at the Italian infrastructures framework, Italy has only two regasification plants in Panigaglia (Liguria) and Porto Levante (Veneto), while most of the gas is imported through pipelines, namely Transmed (including TTPC and TMPC), TAG, Green Stream, TENP and Transitgas, as the Table 1 shows. However, the data shows the high potential for the import of natural gas to increase towards its 2025 goals. The Italian Energy Authority (*Autorità per l'Energia Elettrica e il Gas* AEEG) found necessary to change its energy market policy, as we can see in the privatization of ENI and the promotion of a liberal market.

Turkey is highly dependant on gas import as well. Its domestic resources do not meet the demand and, to supply the gap, oil and particularly gas imports are needed. Similarly to Italy, the demand for natural gas is increasing constantly every year due to the industrialization process. Furthermore, similarly to Italy, Turkey is located in a strategic region, making it an important transit country. The importance of Turkey to diversify European gas and oil supply from Russia, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Iraq grew particularly after the 2005 Russia-Ukraine crisis. In this light, existing routes and new projects through Turkey as the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzum (BTE), Nabucco and Interconnector Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI) natural gas pipelines and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Samsun-Ceyhan crude oil pipelines become crucial both for domestic and European demands, as the significant European funds show. Turkey, as a key transit country, is turning its energy policy into a political tool to become a political actor, through its historical, cultural and economic ties to link energy-consuming and energy-producing countries.<sup>15</sup> As a big investor in the region and a future re-seller country, Turkey can play a key role in the future energy supply and strongly decrease Russian influence on the Caspian region.

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<sup>12</sup> Çiğdem Üstün, "Energy Cooperation between Import Dependent Countries: Cases of Italy and Turkey" in *Perceptions*, Vol. XVI No. 1 Spring 2011, pp. 71-89.

<sup>13</sup> Annalisa D'Orazio, Clara Poletti, "The Italian Energy Policy: Changing Priorities" in *European Review of Energy Markets*, Vol. III No.1 April 2009, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Domenico Dispenza, "International Pipelines Across the Mediterranean" in *International Energy Agency, Cross Border Gas Trade Issues Workshop*, Paris March 26, 2006

□ Çiğdem Üstün, "Energy Cooperation", cit. p.79.

This setting shows the importance of a strong relation between Italy and Turkey, as European players, and the need to secure strong partnerships with MENA countries. Their similar energy needs, demands and policies are the ground for the increasing cooperation that sees joint projects between BOTAŞ, ENI and Gazprom, to import Russian gas through Blue Stream pipeline; BOTAŞ, Edison SpA and Depa SA, on the ITGI project that will create the South European Natural Gas Corridor. However, the lack of EU's coherent energy policies, the disputes with Greece and Bulgaria on the Samsun-Ceyhan crude oil pipeline, the early stage of Nabucco and the current Arab uprisings are seriously threatening the future energy supply. Again, while the EU is tackled by its domestic problems, Italy and Turkey should strengthen their bilateral relations and secure their relations with the energy-producing countries, which are challenged by the recent uprising, particularly with Algeria, Libya, Syria and Egypt.

## **6. The cultural element: Turkey as a model?**

Italy and Turkey, both members of NATO and several other organizations, are natural partners in the Mediterranean security and development. The strong cultural and economic ties that have always linked the two countries with South Mediterranean are undeniable. However, in nowadays scenery, Turkey can play also an indirect role in those countries now approaching their institutional revolutions. Being a well routed secular democracy with a booming economy, which is composed mostly of Muslim citizens; Turkey is an example of success. If the Arab spring is a mix of hopes and expectations for what has been called the "neo-Ottoman ambitions", where Turkey is a model for democratizing Arab states; a question on how relevant the Turkish model could be in those countries must find an answer. The new foreign policy of Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, which is revising Atatürk's "zero problems with neighbors" and will lead to the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime; is temporarily filling the vacuum of a strategic leadership in the Arab world.

Turkey is a *sui generis* country, its historical, political and economic frameworks are unique. The Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi's moderate political Islam, which is often proposed as a model of reformist Islam, is strictly connected with the role of Turkish military in the political system and the Anatolian bourgeoisie. The strong secular character safeguarded by the military was interestingly a trend of moderation of political Islam, which is not anymore dreaming about Caliphate and Sharia law, but secures its interests in the capitalistic Anatolian bourgeoisie that is more likely to maximize profits in the marketplace than calling for an Islamic revolution. Finally, a big role has been played by the European Union and the prospecting membership, which gave a great incentive to implement democracy, plan structural reform and untie tensions in civil-military relations.<sup>16</sup> This is why the Turkish model is not easy-fitting to the Arab countries, and should be considered more as an example of success to promote a further European and Turkish involvement in the region than a model. The EU and Turkey should be more pro-active in the region, granting funds to implement the economic transition even, as suggested by Ömer Taşpınar,<sup>17</sup> through the subordination of economic aids to conditions and criteria. Turkey can be the mediator of this transition as an example of a secure booming economy that formed a close relationship with the EU and adapted to its standards.

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<sup>16</sup> Further analysis see Ömer Taşpınar, "The Turkish Model and its applicability" in *IAI Mediterranean Paper Series 2011*, pp. 9-13.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p.13.

## 7. Conclusions.

The Arab uprisings brought uncertainty and unstable international and economic relations in the Middle East and North Africa. The two biggest countries overlooking the Mediterranean cannot quiescently wait for a new balance in the region and need to fill the EU's credibility gap. Both in the US and EU, the widespread idea of Turkey as an emerging regional power must deal with old established foreign countries in the region, namely Italy and France. Old established trade and cultural relations with the European countries are slowly giving space for a greater impact of Turkish culture and investments on the region. This is why not only a clash of domestic interests should be avoided, but coordination among them is needed.

In the shaping of a new policy for the Arab spring's countries, the long standing unsettled issues should finally be solved. Italy, which has always been outspoken about the need of closer relations with Turkey and its EU memberships, needs nowadays to enhance its efforts. The noteworthy role of Turkey in the MENA countries' societies, where it is turning in a pop-culture phenomenon, is an unmissable opportunity for the EU to not be left out of the new balances in the region. The neglect of Turkey based on years-old disputes with Cyprus or France will be an unforgivable mistake.

In this light, Italy could and should play a major role in securing the EU-Turkey relations and avoid the prospective protracted domestic unrests and conflicts in the Arab countries. To promote a further cooperation will advance not only Italian and Turkish domestic interests but also EU's. This cooperation, however, will involve a new Italian policy of independence from French support and pressures on the future Cyprus EU rotating presidency. Naturally, a clear and effective "Marshall Plan" on the region should find a solution to the Cyprus problem and set on course Turkey's negotiations with the EU, as the Arab spring is a chance that cannot be missed.

At present, the uprisings are giving contradictory results and the risk of creating a new block composed of MENA countries and Turkey should not be taken. The EU must follow a clear policy with Turkey and the Arab countries and Italy can be the major player, thanks to its good relation with Turkey and its geographic location. Procrastination is not anymore reasonable. What if, in creating a new partnership, all the Arab countries or the Muslim majority countries will recognize the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus; could the European Union ignore such recognition? The Arab spring's time is running out, and it is strictly tied with a clear policy towards Turkey's EU membership. The European Union should choose its future path and should not turn its back to the vital energy of its most dynamic partner. As the Italian Minister of foreign affairs reminded: "Europe without Turkey would not be the Europe that it wants to, and can, be."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "ItaTurk Forum: We stand at Ankara's side for its European integration, says Terzi", *Italian Ministry of foreign affairs press release*, November 25, 2011 available at <http://www.esteri.it/MAE/EN/Sala Stampa/ArchivioNotizie/Approfondimenti/2011/11/20111125 ItaliaTurchia Terzi.htm>, last visited December 23, 2011.

**Table 1: Gas Import Capacity of Italy, bcm/year.**

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2025</b>
<b>Pipelines:</b>		
TransMed (Algeria-Italy)	33.5	33.5
Green Stream (Libya-Italy)	11.0	11.0
TAG (Trans Austria Gasleitung)	37.4	37.4
Transitgas (Switzerland-Italy)	19.9	19.9
<b>Subtotal existing pipelines:</b>	<b>101.8</b>	<b>101.8</b>
TAP (Trans Adriatic Pipeline)	-	20.0
ITGI (Turkey-Greece-Italy)	-	11.5
Galsi (Algeria-Italy)	-	8.0
South Stream from Slovenia	-	24.0
South Stream from Greece (a)	-	10.0
<b>Subtotal new pipelines:</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>73.5</b>
<b>Total import pipelines:</b>	<b>101.8</b>	<b>175.3</b>
<b>LNG terminals:</b>		
Panigaglia (La Spezia)	3.5	8.0
Adriatic LNG Terminal (Porto Levante)	8.0	8.0
<b>Subtotal existing terminals:</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>16.0</b>
Livorno / Toscana (under construction)	-	3.7
Brindisi (under construction)	-	8.0
Taranto	-	8.0
Porto Empedocle	-	8.0
Priolo Augusta	-	8.0
Senigaglia / Ancona	-	5.0
Gioia Tauro	-	12.0
Ravenna - Atlas LNG	-	8.0
Ravenna - Rosignano	-	8.0
Zaule (Trieste)	-	8.0
Alpi Adriatico (Montefalcone/Trieste Offshore)	-	8.0
<b>Subtotal new terminals:</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>84.7</b>
<b>Total LNG terminals:</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>100.7</b>
<b>TOTAL IMPORT CAPACITY:</b>	<b>113.3</b>	<b>276.0</b>
Minimum capacity with South Stream (b)		163.5
<b>Import projections (c)</b>		<b>70-94</b>

(a) Estimation;

(b) No new projects except South Stream and Livorno and Brindisi terminals;

(c) EU Energy Trends to 2030 - Updates of 2009 and 2007.

Sources: ENI, Edison, OLT, GIE, RBK.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The chart is available at <http://eegas.com/TAG-Italy-2011-04e.htm>, last visited December 22, 2011.