

Putin's Russia as a Model for Erdogan's Turkey.
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Introduction

The BRICS as a category seem not to have much in common with each other, except the fact that all are growing economies with large populations with the potential to have significant impact on world economy and politics. One of the obvious differences of these countries is their regime type. Brazil, India and South Africa are all democracies, with established traditions and regime security. Russia and China, on the other hand, are authoritarian states. Both regimes are characterized by single-party domination and powerful bureaucracies. However, the existence of authoritarian regimes in China and Russia does not mean that both regimes are similarly authoritarian or to the same extent. Russia's authoritarianism, taking a different character under Putin, is a very distinct case, not only among the BRICS but also globally. The country, while formally having an electoral democracy, has not been able to break away with its autocratic past. In this vein, Russia faces many criticisms from the West but also arguably constitutes a model to those seeking to establish authoritarian regimes under a rubric of democracy.

While Russia is not the benchmark of democratic and economic accomplishment either within or outside the BRICS category, it is often referred to as a comparison to contemporary Turkey, under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Aside from their many differences both leaders have been very hostile to the media industries in their countries, possibly viewing control over media as a pillar to the consolidation of their personal powers, and both have played an important part in the transformation of ownership and composition of the media industries in their countries. However, despite the similarities in the process of controlling the media, Putin and Erdogan have vastly different images in the international community. While Putin is seen as

the ex-KGB president with an iron fist over the country, Erdogan is viewed as the champion of democracy in Turkey and the Middle East, the miracle leader that led the country to economic growth and development. Erdogan's domestic anti-democratic practices, his tightening grip on the media, have not led to a similar loss of legitimacy as they did in Putin's case.

In this paper, I will explore the reasons behind the divergent outcomes of gaining and losing legitimacy in the case of Erdogan and Putin, respectively arguing that though the experience of the Turkish media has been one modeled after the Russian case, there are three main reasons behind Erdogan's ability to maintain his legitimacy. They are: the long-standing legitimacy of the Turkish electoral system and trust in the elections; the allying of the traditionally liberal camp in Turkey with Erdogan; and lastly the preference of the international community, the U.S. in particular, of having Turkey as a poster child of democracy in the region. In order to prove this argument, I will first present an outline of the wars on media in Turkey and Russia, and point to the similarities of the two cases. Following the historical development of the issue, I will illustrate why and how the Turkish electoral system is deemed more legitimate, the process through which the liberal camp in Turkey sided with Erdogan and how they came to change their position in the last year. Finally, as an indicator of the international community's preferences I will present as data statements made by the U.S. political apparatus and European representatives, most notably those of Hillary Clinton and President Obama. I do not identify any rank and order between the 'reasons' I find behind Erdogan's continued legitimacy as a democrat; while it is perfectly possible for one or a combination to be the 'main' reason, such a relation cannot be demonstrated conclusively as of yet.

The Long Battle Between the Media and Islamists in Turkey

Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (JDP; Turkish: Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi, AKP) has been the ruling government party since November 2002, but it is the successor of a long line of political parties originating out of the Islamist movement in Turkey. The movement's history can be traced back to the founding years of the Republic, but the relevant period for the purposes of this paper is the beginning of 1990s. JDP's precursor Welfare Party (WP; Turkish: Refah Partisi, RP) was the focal point of electoral victories for the Islamists, and of social controversies for the military and the Turkish public at large. In the period beginning with the WP's electoral victories to today, I identify three main breaking points that resulted in what we can call Erdogan's war on media. The first breaking point, marking the first instance that the Islamist camp began to need and want its own media power lies in the WP's forced resignation from the government in February 1997. The second one involves a Constitutional Court plea in March 2008 for JDP's disbanding; and lastly, a corruption scandal extending as far as Germany. In all three cases, the media was perceived to play an anti-Islamist position by Erdogan and his comrades, thus further steering the political process against the WP at first, and JDP thereafter. It is important to understand that this process extends beyond the ten years that the JDP has been in office; however, it is in these ten years that the Islamists' struggle against a free and critical press took on the form of media seizure rather than competition.

In the beginning of the 1990s, the Welfare Party was in the parliament and part of the governing coalition (Kinzer 1995), and its political power rested in its control over the local elections, most notably the municipalities of Istanbul and Ankara (Akinci 1999). Prime Minister Erdogan rose from the ranks of WP, serving as the mayor of Istanbul from 1994 to 1998, until he

was convicted under the pretext of “incitement to religious and racial hatred,” and consequently had to resign from his mayoral post (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality 2011). The fall of the Welfare Party and its political cadres were not the result of electoral dissent with them, but the military’s belief that Turkey was being led down an anti-secularist path. The military’s opinions culminated in what went down in Turkish history as the ‘post-modern coup d’état,’ the February 28th Process. Beginning with a National Security Council meeting,ⁱ the process grew from a statement issued by the military listing its ‘concerns’ over regime stability and threats to secularism. The process was furthered by a Constitutional Court case, filed by the Head Prosecutor of the Supreme Court, on the ground that the WP was leading the country into a civil war. In the end, Prime Minister (PM) Necmettin Erbakan, head of WP, resigned, the WP was disbanded, and most of its high-ranking politicians were banned from politics, including the current PM Erdogan (Encyclopedia Britannica 2011).

The media played an instrumental role in the way in which the events unfolded during this process. Newspapers, news channels collaborated with the military in exposing the fundamentalist elements in WP, evoking a sense of distrust and fear in the public. The media’s stance on the tension between the military and the Islamist camp led the latter’s resentment and to feel the need for a press that would be on its side. Until this point, the Islamists controlled only one newspaper, which was small and negligible. The Islamist businesses began taking an interest in investing in media industries during this period. While the WP was disbanded and ousted from the parliament, they maintained a strong presence in the local governments and municipalities, and used this to establish Kanal7, a TV channel, and Yeni Safak, a newspaper (Akinci 1999). The

process of establishing and strengthening of the TV station Kanal7 ties into the corruption scandal that marks the third and final breaking point in the government's suppression of media.

Almost ten years after the February 28th process of 1997, the Islamist were back in power in 2002, this time with a majority government in the parliament led by Erdogan.ⁱⁱ The Welfare Party's successor Justice and Development Party had moved to a more moderate position after their experience. Nonetheless, the abatement of JDP did not satisfy the fears and suspicions of the secularist camp. This unrest reached its apex when the Head Prosecutor of the Supreme Court filed a suit against JDP with the claim that it had become the focal point of anti-secularist activity in Turkey, and asked for its suspension (Center for Strategic and International Studies 2008). In the end, the Constitutional Court ruled against the disbanding, but issued a fine to JDP; in effect, concluding that the party had indeed become the focal point of anti-secularist activity but the evidence was not enough for a disbanding. It was particularly the evidence folder of the case that triggered the second breaking point in the Islamist camp's anger at the media. The file consisted only of newspaper articles, editorials, and scattered pieces of news.ⁱⁱⁱ According to the rumors going around that time, once the JDP survived the trial, the Prime Minister intended to have a confrontation with the media groups that he blamed for the lawsuit.

At that juncture, it was revealed that the sale of a media group through bidding was rigged. The newspaper Sabah and the TV station Atv were handed over to the state's Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (SDIF, Turkish: TMSF) and were to be sold off through bidding. However, it was still in the now bankrupt owner's privileges to choose the buyer. It was revealed, through a separate series of events unrelated to JDP's disbanding case, that one of the buyers promised to pay the former owner a sum if he were to be chosen in the bid. However, in the end

he did not pay, thus leading the former owner to disclose their correspondence. The newspaper and the TV station were once again taken over by the SDIF, because the bid was rigged (TMSF Sabah 2007). This provided a window of opportunity for Erdogan's supporters and the Islamist wing to acquire more media power.

The process of acquisition of Sabah Media Group displays the personal involvement of Erdogan in the media sector. The new bid went to a man named Ahmet Calik, the owner of Calik Holding that was originally involved in the textile sector. Calik bought Sabah Media Group with credits mostly supplied by the state at rates that were not easily provided to anyone else. Furthermore, Calik was provided with credits from the Qatar Investment Authority, through Prime Minister Erdogan's and Head of State Abdullah Gul's personal involvement (Emir-Calik 2008). Calik was known to be close to Islamist capital, with his brother-in-law the owner of another strong Islamist paper, Zaman. Moreover, the Prime Minister's son-in-law's brother is the CEO of all of Calik's companies. Despite the fact that the media group was sold at an unreasonably low price to Ahmet Calik, it was known that the Prime Minister was nonetheless angry with the director of SDIF for raising the price (Ibid).

The last breaking point, and perhaps the most influential in shaping the war between the government and the media to its current state, was the news published in the still oppositional press regarding a corruption scandal case being processed in Germany. At the center of the scandal was Deniz Feneri Association, an NGO working in aid, food, and shelter assistance both in Turkey and also internationally. The corruption was revealed by a German court, showed that 41 million Euros summoned by Deniz Feneri e.V. were used for purposes other than the organization declared. As a result of the trial, the executives of the association were sentenced to

prison and the association's assets were transferred to public funds. Furthermore, the German court established that the actual perpetrators were in Turkey and the lost money also trailed back to Turkey and to the association there (Alman Savci 2008).

It is important to note that one of the perpetrators that the German court identified was Zahid Akman, who at the time was head of the state agency Radio and Television Higher Board (Turkish: RTUK), an ethics board that monitors the contents of radio and TV programs. Zahid Akman, along with Zekeriya Karaman, was the head of the Islamist TV channel Kanal7, established in the aftermath of the February 28th Process. At that time, Kanal7 was established through the transfer of frequencies in the Istanbul municipality's possession, while Erdogan was mayor. Since September 2008, the case has been transferred over to the judiciary in Turkey, however the process has not even reached the first hearing stage.^{iv} The remaining oppositional media groups, mostly belonging to Aydin Dogan, publicized the Deniz Feneri case in Turkey. Once the news was published the Prime Minister began the actual war with the media. He openly called on the public to boycott "these media groups," by which he meant the Dogan Media Group. After a couple of weeks, tax inspectors flooded into Dogan Media Group's head quarters, fining Aydin Dogan for underpaid taxes in a recent merger with the Springer Group.

In February 2009, the Dogan Group, an oppositional media group that publicized the corruption scandal to the Turkish audience, was obliged to pay 826 million Turkish Liras in tax fines; in September, a second tax fine of 2.5 billion dollars was handed out to the same group. In order to understand the magnitude of the tax fine, researcher-author Oray Egin points to the following comparison: according to Forbes Magazine's annual list "The Richest 100," the wealthiest man in Turkey, Husnu Ozyegin, possesses 2.9 billion dollars. Aydin Dogan, owner of

Dogan Media Group, has 750 million dollars, and ranks twenty-third in Turkey (Egin 2011). It emerges from these numbers that the state has fined Aydin Dogan a sum that exceeds beyond his own personal wealth and that of the richest man in Turkey. In the end, Aydin Dogan had to sell off two of his newspapers (Milliyet and Vatan), one TV channel (Star TV), and Petrol Ofisi, a well-established company in the energy sector in Turkey (Egin 2011). What was done to Aydin Dogan set the example for the limited number of groups in the media sector.

Another important media group, Dogus, has preemptively terminated the contracts of its dissident journalists for fear of backlash from the government. Most journalists openly write that everyone, including himself or herself, in the media sector is afraid of Erdogan. There are currently 700 journalists on trial (Egin 2011) in Turkey, and 71 in prison (Gulcan 2011). Despite these domestic issues, Erdogan was still on the front page of Time Magazine as the architect of pro-Western democracy in Turkey and possible example for the Arab Spring (Ghosh 2011). Moving from these discrepancies between Erdogan's image and his domestic practices, I will now present the evolution of media suppression in Russia under Putin in order to understand the divergent outcomes in the representations of the two leaders despite their similar attitude against their domestic presses.

Putin's Grip over Media

The form and extent of Putin's authoritarian tendencies are, of course, different than those of Erdogan. Both understand that in order to consolidate their personal power inside and above the state they need to control the kind of information that circles about their regimes. However, in Erdogan's case, the desire to have his own media seems to come into being as a response to the traditionally secularist, Kemalist^v camp's attempts at delegitimizing the political movement

Erdogan comes from; whereas, for Putin it seems to be not reactive, but rather preemptive. In this section, I will summarize the ongoing war between Putin and what remains of oppositional media in Russia, and present how Putin managed to create and control a media that is subservient to him. It will emerge from this account how one can understand Erdogan to be following Putin's model. The employment of state agencies, debts, and taxes as a means to purge dissident's voices from news outlets and force media bosses to comply with the government's standards of "acceptable" news is something we observe first in Putin, after which Erdogan follows suit.

Russia has a distinctly autocratic past, with a bureaucracy capable of controlling and infiltrating every aspect of political and social life. Even if the legal framework is changed, institutions can persist longer; when and if the person in power decides to mobilize the authoritarian capabilities of these institutions it is comparatively and relatively easier for him/her to do so in Russia than in an established and stable democracy. Putin, in particular, seems to have been aware of this fact and has been working towards centralizing and strengthening his power from the day he assumed office. Under Putin's framework of "managed democracy," the institutions of democracy and practices of authoritarianism work well together. The idea of "managed democracies," will sound familiar to the Turkish reader, reminding various statements by the military leaders of the 1970s and 1980s. But, when one leaves this paternalistic framework of 'managing democracy,' the picture changes dramatically. According to Freedom House, by the end of Putin's first term, he had moved to consolidate the power of central government (Freedom House 2011).

Under Putin, the Russian government has seized de facto control of two major television networks: ORT and NTV. The situation at ORT is slightly different than at NTV, for the former

was initially established as a state television. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the network was divided up between various state institutions and private investors, with the majority of shares remaining with the state (Lipman and McFaul 2001). ORT's main shareholder Boris Berezovsky, one of the famous Russian oligarchs, has been forced to withdraw from the media industry after a political confrontation with Putin. Putin began his war of economic coercion on oppositional media under a rubric of 'not tolerating oligarchs.' In a country where poverty runs deep and the transition from the communist regime seems to have benefited only a handful of people, allowing them to accumulate wealth beyond our imagination, a fight against oligarchs resonates with people. Berezovsky was charged for fraud from stealing the holdings of the Russian airline company Aeroflot. As a result of this power struggle Berezovsky had to seek asylum in Britain and sell most of his holdings in various industries (Bandakov 2011).

The government confronted another media group that same year, MediaMost, the owner of NTV. NTV's suppression was more significant in some ways, for it was regarded as the only 'truly independent' media. Founded in 1993 by Vladimir Gusinsky, NTV seemed to be the only news outlet not afraid of government's threats, earning it a respected position by the public. Additionally, it was not a pre-Soviet media outlet that was privatized; therefore Gusinsky and MediaMost were relatively politically and financially autonomous from the state (Lipman and McFaul 2001). However, neither the independence nor the respected credentials lasted long, for Gusinsky participated actively in a campaign to re-elect Yeltsin, at the end of which, the campaign succeeded but the reputation of the media group and its journalists were tarnished. However, when the deals Gusinsky struck with Yeltsin were not fulfilled in the aftermath of the election, MediaMost took a critical stance against the government once again, and with Putin, the

Prime Minister, running for elections, MediaMost did not support his candidacy. Once President, Putin sought revenge for all the times that MediaMost sided with the wrong camp. In this confrontation, the government through the judiciary sought to bring Gusinsky for criminal charges. The idea was to force Gusinsky and his media to intimidation, thus ending dissident commentary about the government. Through a series of charges, Gusinsky was prisoned, where he was offered his freedom in exchange for MediaMost's shares. The shares were sold to Gazprom, the state's enforcing hand in this drama. Gusinsky fled the country, like Berezovsky (Lipman and McFaul 2001).

There is very little doubt that both Berezovsky and Gusinsky were involved in criminal activity, forgery or fraud. It is a respectable and important effort on the Kremlin's part to distance itself from the ways of the old days when oligarchs could control politics and politicians; and it is important for the political executive to single out and punish those who try such things. However, it damages democracy and justice when these punishments are handed out for political partisanship. Therefore, viewing the situation in which Berezovsky and Gusinsky find themselves as a matter of deserving oligarchs will miss the main goal behind the state's choices, and that is having an obedient press.

The final move of the Putin government to eliminate any oppositional force in the media was the seizure of TV-6 in 2003, the last remaining independent media outlet in the country. This resulted in Freedom House lowering Russia's rankings from 'partially-free' to 'not-free' in its world press freedom rankings (Freedom House 2003). Similarly to the way in which Gazprom took over NTV, it was another oil company acting as the government's de facto enforcing hand, which initiated the legal process resulting in the liquidation of TV-6. LukOil, a minority

shareholder in TV-6, claimed that the company should be dissolved for it had not been operating with a profit for a while (Latsis 2002). The majority shareholder, however, was Boris Berezovsky, the former owner of ORT, a vocal critic of Putin. In the end, the courts decided in favor of LukOil and TV-6 had to be liquidated, thus allowing the government to finally have a dissenter-free media.

What both Erdogan and Putin share in common and, that is distinctly different from other authoritarian governments that suppress their presses, is their use of economic coercion in establishing their domination over the media. Economic coercion, whether it be through tax fines, profit disputes or owners' debt, is possible as a means for both leaders because the media operates within a market framework and is controlled by big business. The magnitude of Russian oligarchs' business activity goes without saying; similarly in the case of media bosses in Turkey Dogan Holding was one of the few big businesses in the country. At the time he was put on the Prime Minister's radar' Aydin Dogan possessed Petrol Ofisi, a major supplier of oil and gas products in Turkey; his own newspaper and magazine distribution net and firm, YAYSAT; an internet company, E-Kolay; seven newspapers, three television networks, including CNNTurk, and over thirty weekly or monthly magazines. Today, after having to sell close to half of his assets, Dogan is said to be ready to sell any and every one of his companies if suitable buyers can be found. As Freedom House also notes in its 2004 'Freedom of Press' report on Turkey, the ownership by large firms who have business interests outside the media sector make them prone to self-censorship for fear of government backlash (Freedom House 2004). This reflex on the part of the owners was obvious in Turkey in the summer of 2011, when a respected, critical news channel, NTV, terminated the contracts of its foremost anchors and reporters who were among

the best known dissident's of the government. Can Dundar, a famous researcher and critic of the government, wrote about the termination of his show, "after witnessing what Aydin Dogan has been put through, we cannot expect bravery from the bosses" (Dundar 2011). He aptly summarizes the state of media workers and owners in Turkey, and the kinds of decisions fear of Erdogan forces them to make.

The Result of Media Suppression: Varying Levels of Legitimacy

Despite the similarity in their methods of oppressing the media and the extent their domestic oppositional media fears the two leaders, the West has vastly different perceptions of Putin and Erdogan. Putin's heavy crackdown on the media seems to have resulted in, or contributed to, the decaying legitimacy of his government, whereas Erdogan's assault on media seems to be brushed aside, especially by the international community. As has been mentioned above, TIME magazine featured Erdogan on its cover and praising his commitment to and advancement of democracy in Turkey. In this section, I identify three main reasons I found to be resulting in this inconsistency: the legitimacy of elections in Turkey being the prime one, the alliance of the domestic liberal camp with Erdogan, and finally the interests of international powers of having Erdogan be the example of Islamic democracy in the region.

The Legitimacy and Reliability of Elections

Perhaps the most important factor in Erdogan's ability to preserve his legitimacy lies in the trust in the authenticity of the elections in Turkey. Russian elections, on the other hand, are marked by accusations of being rigged and a general distrust both by the domestic opposition and international community in them. Erdogan and JDP have been elected three times in a row while increasing their votes every time, a record in Turkish history. In 2002, 2007 and 2011, JDP

has won 34% (Ntvmsnbc 2002), 46% (Hurriyet 2007), and 49.90% (Ntvmsnbc 2011) respectively. In all three elections, the secularist and Kemalist camp wanted to believe that the elections were rigged because of the magnitude of JDP's electoral victory. However, no evidence of fraud has been found and today no one questions the validity of election results. In Russia, on the other hand, there is little belief in the legality of the election results in the past ten years, the last two in particular.^{vi} Thus, Erdogan's undemocratic practices do not allow one to go so far as to call his regime dictatorial; and even his most fierce opponents understand that Erdogan is the legitimate and deserving Prime Minister, chosen by half of the voters in Turkey.

The Liberal Camp Allies with Erdogan

Another aspect of JDP's continued legitimacy and position as the 'defender of democracy' stems from its opposition to military rule, and its ability to eliminate the military's tutelage over the regime. The liberal position identifies the military tutelage over the regime as the prime reason that democracy in Turkey could not flourish. Moreover, the liberals viewed E.U. membership as the sine qua non of economic and democratic development of Turkey. The expectations of liberals and JDP's desire to be in complete power overlapped. The JDP, to this end, worked significantly to meet the standard of the Copenhagen Criteria and, in fact, began the Accession Negotiations. To meet one important Copenhagen Criteria the JDP diminished the powers of the military, which met considerable support from the Islamists, liberals, and social democrats as well. The support of non-Islamist, and pro-democracy camps gave Erdogan's regime the kind of legitimacy and popularity it needed. This has stayed to a greater extent untouched; however the recent rounds of arrests and restrictions on freedom of speech seem to threaten this alliance. In the case of Putin, however, the immediate concern of liberals (here

understood more in economic terms, pro-market camp) was to find a non-Communist successor to Yeltsin. Their alliance with Putin began and ended there, not by their own choosing, but the resistance of Putin to be controlled by financiers of his political campaign (Lipman and McFaul 2001).

Conjunctures and Geopolitics: Preferences of the U.S.

Since the election of Erdogan and JDP into office, the U.S. has adopted a policy of unconditional support. Though representatives of American foreign policy address the issue of press freedom in almost all of their bilateral dealings with Turkey, in front of the international community they protect the image of Turkey as a model Muslim democracy. The U.S. has a vested interest in keeping Turkey and Erdogan as its ally for a myriad of reasons. Firstly, in the nuclear crisis with Iran, the U.S. wants to set up missile shields in Eastern Turkey, close to the Iranian border. Secondly, with the war in, and now the pullout from, Iraq, Turkey provides to be a useful ally in both its provision of military bases and its potential and capacity to oversee the regime in Iraq. Lastly, in the face of growing Islamic fundamentalism, and America's obvious unease with it, Erdogan's model provides a safe haven for the U.S. Within a framework of secular democracy, Erdogan and his party cadres are devout Muslims. Rather than focusing on Western examples, the U.S. can promote liberal democracy from the authentic experience of Erdogan. Therefore, despite acknowledging the oppression and imprisonment of journalists in its one to one dealings with Turkey, the U.S. foreign policy machine chooses to stay away from the subject in the international arena as much as possible.

Conclusion

Putin's Russia and Erdogan's Turkey bear striking resemblances to one another, as illustrated by the case of silencing the media. The main question guiding this paper sought to answer why, despite their similarly authoritarian tendencies towards the media, the images of Putin and Erdogan are so different? The image of Erdogan is one of a democracy champion; the creator of the authentic formula of democracy for the Middle East, while Putin's is one of shattering whatever reform towards democracy had been made in Russia. Erdogan, however, follows Putin's methods in establishing his control over the media industry. One can observe from the historical account presented here that Putin has employed economic coercion as a means to yield his authority over the extent and content of the criticism of the government. Both governments have resorted to the mobilization of financial institutions as debt, mergers, and tax fines to ensure the subservience of the media. However, the two regimes have qualitative differences that possibly yield the different outcomes in preserving legitimacy. Firstly, Erdogan enjoys an electoral legitimacy that Putin lacks. In Turkey, there are no suspicions of the accuracy and fairness of the elections, whereas in Russia, popular belief seems to have been doubtful to say the least, for the past ten years. Secondly, Erdogan has harnessed the support of domestic liberals with his attempts to curb the military's tutelage and work towards E.U. membership. The alliance of a traditionally liberal and pro-democracy camp with Erdogan fosters his image of being able to accommodate different sectors of society in his democracy. Lastly, it is in the benefit of the U.S. to retain a Turkey that is secular, democratic, yet still Muslim. Even though the U.S. regime acknowledges the undemocratic practices of Erdogan in their one on one

dealings with Turkey, they refrain from condemning Erdogan's regime publicly and internationally.

Perhaps aside from the electoral legitimacy of Erdogan, one cannot conclude that any one factor is necessarily more important than the other. While the U.S. interests may explain the promotion of Erdogan's image internationally, they cannot account for the fact that half of the Turkish population has just voted for him. Similarly, if the liberals' support could account for the legitimacy or popularity of any leader, Turkey would and could have been a much more democratic country a long time ago. Rather, the argument presented here argues for the combination of these factors as accounting for the differences in the images of Erdogan and Putin. Another important argument that this paper seeks to put forward lies in its assumption: Erdogan is following a Putin framework to tame the domestic media, and seems to have succeeded in intimidating it. The preemptive termination of contracts at an oppositional TV network that has not been prosecuted in any way attests to this.^{vii} It is important for Turkey's democracy to understand and learn from the situation in Russia if we intend to have free press in ten years from now.

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Notes

ⁱ National Security Council (Turkish: Milli Güvenlik Kurulu, MGK) is a body headed by the Head of the State, in his/her absence the Prime Minister, and composed of the Army Commander General, and other Army Generals and key ministries. It meets once every two months, barring any extraordinary circumstances. Its significance lies in the fact that it was established by the military regime of 1980, and continues to be the key institution through which the armed forces keep their control and influence over civilian politics. The main purpose of the body is identified as coordinating the institutions concerned with national security. The definition is broad enough for the army to identify any and every political issue as a matter of national security; in the case of the events described here Islamist politics have been a key example of a 'national security threat.' http://www.mgk.gov.tr/Turkce/index_tr.htm

ⁱⁱ Because of the political ban on Erdogan, Abdullah Gul, current Head of the State, led the JDP through the elections. After emerging victorious from the elections, the JDP formed the government with Abdullah Gul as Prime Minister. Under the leadership of JDP, the parliament passed a bill with majority support that lifted the political ban on Erdogan. Erdogan, then ran in the re-elections in the city of Siirt as a candidate from his party, JDP and was voted into office.

ⁱⁱⁱ The prosecutor's file was so based on newspaper articles, that the case came to be called "The Google File" by the public, implying that the prosecutor googled "JDP" and printed out every piece of news related to it.

^{iv} The slow process signals political involvement from the higher echelons of the political elite. Since the case file has been sent over from Germany, no prosecutor has been able to stay on the case for more than a year. The prosecutors are moved around and re-appointed at random times, thus creating a need for the new prosecutor to ask for additional time to review the case. The public believes that the judiciary is being stalled so that crimes can be dismissed based on time statute limitations.

^v The respected social research company KONDA categorizes this group as "worried moderns." According to KONDA's research, people in this category feel a constant threat to their lifestyles as Islamist politics gather momentum. They can, therefore, side with overly conservative politics in order to preserve the status quo, support military coups (as in the example of February 28th Process), despite their generally modern and liberal lifestyles. http://www.konda.com.tr/tr/raporlar/2010_06_KONDA_Toplumda_Siyasette_Kutuplasma.pdf

^{vi} The latest parliamentary election on December 10th, 2011 is considered to be rigged and has sparked massive unrest. The protests are reported to be the largest one in the last twenty years. (For more: "Russian election Protests. 10 Dec 2011. *The Guardian*. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global/2011/dec/10/russia-elections-putin-protest?INTCMP=SRCH>). Moreover, concerns over the freeness and fairness of the elections were expressed by the international community in late 2003. ("Observers condemn Russian elections. 9 Dec 2003. *The Guardian*. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/dec/09/russia.nickpatonwalsh1?INTCMP=SRCH>).

^{vii} The case of NTV in Turkey as explained above.