

Does Money Really Drive Turkey's Stance toward Arab Revolts?

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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The authors contend that the primary motive behind the AKP's stance toward the Arab regimes is not money, but rather the desire to show solidarity with certain anti-American regimes and distaste for pro-American ones.

A narrative has emerged to explain the varied responses of the Turkish government, led by the Justice and Development Party, or AKP, to the Arab revolts. The assertion is that Turkey's trade ties with the countries experiencing revolutionary tremors serve as the basis for its reactions.

Analysts add that, from calling for the Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak to leave at the onset of the Tahrir demonstrations -- Turkey was the first country to demand that Mubarak step down -- to voicing support for Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi and attempting to block NATO action against him, Turkey's policies toward the Arab revolts are simply driven by economic factors. They suggest that powerful Turkish financial interests in Libya forced Ankara to support Gadhafi, and that because Ankara did not have similar financial concerns regarding Egypt, it felt free to call for Mubarak's ouster.

Again, in contrast to its policy of confrontation toward Mubarak, the AKP vowed support for the Syrian dictator, calling for reforms, but not for Bashar al-Assad's departure. So what determines the AKP's position toward the Arab revolts?

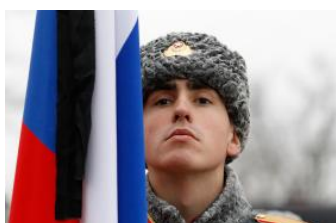
Our research demonstrates that the primary motive behind the AKP's stance toward the Arab regimes is not money. Rather, the desire to show solidarity with certain anti-American regimes and distaste for pro-American ones appears to have shaped the AKP's policies. Among the three countries mentioned, Turkey has significantly larger financial stakes in Egypt than in Syria or Libya. Yet, it has voiced support for these countries' regimes in reverse order. Political solidarity seems to be driving the AKP's varied responses toward the Arab revolts. Hence, should revolts unfurl in new Arab countries, expect the AKP to call for the ouster of regimes that are America's friends, while making it difficult to oust regimes that oppose the United States.

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