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Assessments of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East During the Arab Uprisings

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ABSTRACT *Using original public-opinion polls and elite interviews conducted in 2012, this article analyzes the perceptions of Turkish foreign policy regarding the Arab Uprisings and the Syrian conflict in three Middle Eastern countries, Egypt, Iraq and Iran. It finds that ethnic, sectarian and religious groups in these three countries vary significantly in their views on Turkish foreign policy regarding both the Arab Uprisings and the Syrian conflict, although the same identity-related factors have a less salient effect at the elite level. The findings also suggest that the intersection of ethnicity and sect shapes people's attitudes toward Turkish foreign policy in Iran and Iraq. Sunnis, except for Kurds in Iran and Iraq, tend to have a positive view of Turkish foreign policy, while Shia Turkomans in Iraq tend to have a negative one.*

The Arab Uprisings and their aftermath have had a significant effect on the foreign policies of countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Particularly important has been the effect on the foreign policy of Turkey, which has been actively involved in the region, especially since the early 2000s. Much like the period in the 1980s under then prime minister Turgut Özal, who promoted export-oriented policies, Justice and Development Party (JDP) governments in the 2000s have pursued close relations with neighboring countries. The policies of the JDP in the Middle East have marked the beginning of a new era, though these policies do not mark a complete rupture with the West.¹

With the JDP in power, Turkey has intensified its policy of political, economic and cultural engagement with the region, and “zero problems with neighbors” became the motto of Turkish foreign policy. Ankara signed several high-level cooperation and strategic partnership agreements with its Arab neighbors in political, economic and

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cultural domains, enhanced its role in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and strengthened relations with the Arab League. It has created new institutions, such as the Office of Public Diplomacy, and upgraded the activities of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) in neighboring regions and beyond.² While this policy became a keystone of Turkish foreign policy, the Arab Uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and then Syria affected Turkey's position, as a result of which Turkey has had to recalibrate its policy toward the region.³ Turkey itself has undergone a political and economic transformation throughout the last decade, and Turkish political elites have viewed the democratic demands in the MENA as positive developments. Consequently, Turkey has tried to side with the demands for political change and reform, which has brought another wave of changes in its foreign policy toward the region.⁴

The regime changes have created new political and economic opportunities for Turkey, but the danger of widespread conflict in the region has also brought new challenges. Academics, media analysts and politicians have raised concerns that sectarian conflict and clashes in Syria could threaten regional stability.⁵ Social and political cleavages within and across countries as a result of ethnic and sectarian differences are limiting the room for maneuver for any actor in the region and creating difficulties for the foreign-policy-makers.⁶

Despite the importance of these cleavages, we do not know the extent to which they are shaping public opinion or the attitudes of political, social and economic elites in the region toward Turkey and its foreign policy. In this study, we investigate how different ethnic, religious and sectarian groups in three MENA countries, namely Egypt, Iran and Iraq, vary in their assessment toward Turkish foreign policy. For that purpose, we conducted an extensive public-opinion poll and carried out elite interviews⁷ in 2012 to discover the differences in views between the public and elites.⁸

We find that ethnic, sectarian and religious groups vary in their attitudes toward Turkish foreign policy. Ethnic, sectarian and religious affiliations shape the way individuals view Turkish foreign policy. Our findings also suggest that ethnic and sectarian identities moderate each other's effect on attitudes toward Turkish foreign policy: Sunnis, except for Kurds in Iran and Iraq, tend to have a positive view toward Turkish foreign policy regarding the Arab Uprisings and the Syrian crisis, whereas Shia Persians and Azeris in Iran and Shia Turkomans in Iraq tend to have a negative one. Our study also highlights the absence of diversity in views toward Turkish foreign policy at the elite level in these countries and suggests that elites who do not display the diversity in the population develop attitudes toward Turkey marked by suspicion.

Recent Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East: Change or Continuity?

Before discussing the perceptions of the public and elites toward Turkish foreign policy in these three countries, it is essential to discuss Turkish foreign policy regarding the Arab Uprisings. The general aims of Turkish foreign policy under JDP

governments have been defined by former Prime Minister (now President) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and former Foreign Minister (now Prime Minister) Ahmet Davutoğlu as follows: normalization of relations and rapprochement with Iraq and Syria,⁹ a better political and economic relationship with Arab and non-Arab countries such as Iran, and to contribute to the solution of regional conflicts as an active third party.¹⁰

A new page was turned in Turkish–Syrian relations after the death of Hafez Assad in 2000, and the rapprochement with Syria that started after the 1998 Öcalan crisis between the two countries continued under JDP governments until the Arab Uprisings.¹¹ Apart from domestic factors in both countries, global and regional systemic factors pushed these two countries into a closer relationship with each other.¹² During this period, Turkey and Syria had their best relations in political, economic and societal terms in recent history.¹³

Until the Syrian crisis, Turkish foreign policy was regarded positively by many people in the region, and as something to be emulated by other states.¹⁴ This is mainly true for ordinary citizens with different political backgrounds, but less so for elites or statesmen.¹⁵ Just before the Arab Uprisings and in the early days of the protests, the Turkish approach to economic and democratic reforms was mentioned in academic circles as an appropriate recipe for problems in transition countries in the MENA,¹⁶ although some claimed that it was difficult to transfer the Turkish experience of political reforms to the “Arab World.”¹⁷ The idea that there was such a thing as a “Turkish model” was voiced not only by the United States, but also by the European Union, Turkey and public opinion in the Middle East itself.¹⁸ Different countries and different actors in these countries found different aspects of Turkish foreign policy of interest.¹⁹

Although there are several reasons for the portrayal of the Turkish political structure as a “model” for Middle Eastern countries, in this article we will analyze Turkish foreign policy and the image of Turkey under JDP governments. Turkish policy toward the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a turning point in perceptions of its foreign policy in the region.²⁰ For many people, Turkey’s refusal to allow the transfer of US soldiers across Turkey to Iraqi territory was an unexpected but welcome stance. From that point on, as Yuvacı and Kaplan have shown in their research on Turkey’s voting pattern in UN General Assembly resolutions, Turkey slowly deviated from its former alliance structures on other issues as well, and it tried to develop independent foreign-policy preferences.²¹ Recent studies have shown that Turkish foreign policy has increasingly used the tools of soft power in its engagement with the region, which has contributed to an improved image of the country in the Middle East.²²

Turkey’s new stance can also be observed in its attitude toward the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. Turkey’s increasing distance from Israel in the 2000s, and its vocal support for the Palestinians, was an important change that has had a direct impact on the perceptions of the country in the Middle East.²³ We can also add the change in Turkish foreign policy toward Syria and Iran in the 2000s, when these countries were described by the US Administration of the time as members of the “axis of evil.”²⁴ Turkish and Iranian interests in some cases overlapped in regional

politics after the US-led invasion of Iraq. But there have also been several differences between Turkey and Iran on regional and international issues. For example, Iran has not been happy with Turkey's mediation and the rise of its soft power in the region.²⁵

Some cases, such as the developments after the Arab Uprisings, have become a test case for Turkey and its image. Some critics have argued that, after the Arab Uprisings, "Turkey's ambition to play a major independent role has been compromised; in fact, a learning process for Turkish diplomacy has been initiated."²⁶ According to these studies, the limits of Turkey's ability to influence regional developments and to undertake a leadership role have become clearer.

Public Opinion and Turkish Foreign Policy

Given the claims for and against Turkey's increasing activism in the Middle East before and after the Arab Uprisings, the perception of Turkey's policies in the region needs to be determined empirically. Moreover, the foreign-policy views of the public in the targeted countries are crucial for the policy outcomes of any country.²⁷ The public's knowledge of foreign-policy issues is increasing and its preferences and expectations are becoming important for accountable governments. We should also underline the fact that not all foreign-policy issues are salient, and this is also true for many public policy issues. That is why we have chosen the most salient foreign-policy issues in the region. The different responses toward the Arab Uprisings and the Syrian crisis on the part of the population in general and of ethnic, sectarian and religious groups in particular make it possible to make a distinct assessment of each foreign-policy issue.

To the best of our knowledge, all the studies on attitudes toward Turkish foreign policy have investigated Turkish citizens' attitude toward Turkish foreign policy. The Pew Global Attitudes Program (GAP), the German Martial Fund's (GMF) Transatlantic Trends Survey, Kadir Has University's Turkey's Social and Political Trends Research and the Turkish Foreign-Policy Public-Opinion Research are primary examples of public-opinion research on foreign policy or international politics. Among those, the most cited surveys are Pew's GAP²⁸ and the GMF's Transatlantic Trends.²⁹ These surveys are mostly focused on the attitudes of Turkish citizens or the citizens of other countries toward US foreign policy. Except for TESEV's Perception of Turkey in the Middle East,³⁰ none of these surveys have specifically investigated how Turkish foreign policy is perceived by the public in the region. Even TESEV's studies are specifically interested in measuring attitudes toward Turkey, not toward Turkish foreign policy regarding the Arab Uprisings or the Syrian conflict. Lastly, the University of Maryland's Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development has conducted Arab public-opinion surveys for almost a decade (2003–11). However those surveys include very limited information about Turkey and Turkish foreign policy and overlook the impact of ethnic, sectarian and religious diversity on public opinion.

We expect ethnic or religious identities, as well as the intersection of ethnicity, sect and religion, to affect people's perception of the foreign policy of other

countries. This perception may be more positive in countries where the ruling elite belongs to a particular ethnic or religious group, as with Shia elites in Iran, or the minority Sunni elite in Iraq may tend to hold more positive attitudes toward a Sunni neighboring country. A recent study on social identity and foreign policy in Turkey has found that Turkish citizens with specific group identities, such as being Kurdish or Muslim, tend to develop different attitudes toward Turkish foreign policy.³¹

Our study builds upon these studies but differs from them in several important respects. Our main contribution is that we examine the extent to which these three identities and the intersection between ethnicity and sect affect attitudes toward Turkish foreign policy in three countries. We investigate how citizens of Egypt, Iraq and Iran assess Turkish foreign policy on three particular issues. Moreover, except for Çiftçi's ("Social Identity") work on perceptions toward Turkish foreign policy in Turkey, no other study has examined the impact of social identity on foreign-policy perceptions in the Middle East. In this respect, our study is unique in that it tests the impact of social identity on the perception of Turkish foreign policy in other countries. Finally, we examine the perceptions of elites in these countries toward Turkish foreign policy and the extent to which they differ from the perceptions of the general public.

Analyzing Perceptions Toward Turkey in the Middle East

Taking the positive and negative evaluations of Turkey and its foreign policy into account, this section analyzes the perception of Turkish foreign policy during the Arab Uprisings. In order to acquire this information, we designed original surveys for around 1100 respondents each in Egypt, Iraq and Iran. Public-opinion surveys in non-democratic contexts, including the Middle East, are not new.³² The reliability and validity of the questions in these surveys depend on whether researchers use questions that are politically sensitive (e.g. specific questions regarding the leader, the military and so on) or non- or less-sensitive questions (e.g. demographic questions or questions that tend to be of a general nature, such as attitudes toward democracy or questions such as ours on foreign policy); whether the regime is highly repressive or not; and whether an independent polling agency or a state polling agency runs the survey.³³ For our research, the post-Arab Uprising period that created a more democratic environment, especially in Egypt, and the less-sensitive nature of our questions increased the reliability and validity of our questions. At the time that the surveys were conducted, the major problem was the access to the regions of Iraq that faced security problems, which was overcome by conducting phone interviews in non-Kurdish parts of the country. Moreover, given that ethnic and religious identities are salient in countries where such identities are accepted but are not necessarily fully incorporated into the regime, our respondents were not reticent to answer our questions. In addition, we conducted interviews with social, political and economic elites in these three countries. Below, we will explain briefly these public-opinion surveys and go on with the elite interviews.³⁴

The Egyptian Public-Opinion Survey

The research in Egypt was conducted through the use of face-to-face surveys. We employed stratified random sampling, which enabled us to survey religious minorities that were heavily concentrated in some governorates and cities. First, we divided the country into officially designated governorates for our sampling. Then we determined urban and rural areas within each governorate. The next stage was to determine clusters in each urban and rural area and then randomly choose clusters and households in each cluster. Nevertheless, due to the difficulty in accessing remote areas, our survey remained urban-biased. The sample size of our survey was 1100. However, with missing observations (e.g. no response), the sample size decreased slightly, varying according to the question. Our team trained surveyors and conducted pilot studies to check the reliability of our questions.³⁵ Having increased the reliability of the questions, we ran the surveys between January 12 and January 25, 2012.

The Iraqi Public-Opinion Survey

The study's Iraq leg was planned with face-to-face surveys in mind. Accordingly, personnel employed by the survey company attempted to conduct face-to-face surveys. One of the problems was that of transportation due to security problems. Face-to-face surveys were completed in northern Iraq, where security did not pose a threat to our teams. However, in other regions we turned to CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing), using the equipment of a survey company with trained Arabic and Kurdish surveyors. Calls were made by taking into account demographic factors, and predetermined quotas based on age and gender were used. Because the calls were made by the random digit dialing (RDD) method, finding people appropriate for the survey posed a significant challenge. Another important problem was the refusal of women to participate in the survey. Female personnel were employed to increase the number of female respondents. The original sample size of the survey in this study was about 1000. The Iraq surveys began on September 28, 2012 and ended on December 2, 2012.

The Iranian Public-Opinion Survey

In the research's Iranian leg, face-to-face surveys were attempted at first. While a pilot survey was attempted by a group of administrators and academics, the structure of the region and security problems caused the group to abort it. The research was conducted via Persian-speaking Iranian personnel.³⁶ As in Iraq, we employed the CATI technique to create an approximate representation of the population in our survey. The RDD method was again employed to increase the representativeness of the sample.³⁷ The above-mentioned difficulties led to a significant reduction in some of the questions in our survey. For example, the two main questions that we use in this study for Iran were responded to by around half of the respondents with "no response" or "do not know." As a result, we have responses from only around

400 of 1100 respondents for these questions. For the Iran study, surveys began on March 29 and ended on June 29, 2012.

Elite Interviews

For the elite interviews, we aimed to conduct interviews with political, economic, social and academic elites. We tried to reach elites with different ideological, ethnic and professional backgrounds. Consequently, we carried out interviews in the three countries with politicians, academics, business people, state officials, journalists and researchers. We conducted semi-structured interviews with a total of 48 elites in the three countries so that we could compare our findings across these three countries. In selecting the interviewees, we relied on the “snowball technique,” which helped us increase our sample size in the politically sensitive environments of Iran, Iraq and Egypt. First, we benefited from our local contacts in reaching out to interviewees, and then we moved on to others following referrals from previous interviewees. However, we should note that the ethnic, religious and sectarian diversity of these countries is not reflected at the elite level. For example, Christians in Egypt and Sunnis in Iran and Iraq are underrepresented in the central governments of these countries. This lack of diversity has also had an impact on our findings at the elite level. For example, we cannot say much about the attitudes of Sunni and/or Kurdish elites in Iran toward Turkey. The exclusivist character of these states along ethnic, sectarian and religious lines creates elites that represent the major dominant group in the country.

Therefore, despite the fact that we have tried to incorporate elites from different ethnic, political and professional backgrounds, we cannot claim that we have been completely successful. These interviews provided us with important insights regarding the perceptions of elites, but also, indirectly, of the public. Since elite interviews were conducted with a small number of people, we do not make any generalizable claims regarding all elites in a given country.

The questions we asked on foreign policy in each of these countries were about their assessment of Turkish foreign policy in three specific areas: the Arab Uprisings, the Syrian conflict and the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. By doing so, we aimed to compare the findings from the public-opinion surveys with those from our interviews with elites.

Perceptions of Turkish Foreign Policy in Egypt

Public Opinion

We asked the respondents the following question:

How would you evaluate the approach of Turkish political leaders to the political developments in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, or briefly to the Arab Spring? Please respond on a scale where “1” corresponds to “Strongly negative” and “5” corresponds to “Strongly positive.”

Table 1 displays the results in terms of percentage, which suggests that the Egyptian public is generally supportive of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East. While the percentage of those who view Turkish policies toward the Arab Spring positively is 39.2 percent, the negative attitude is only about 16.1 percent. Even if we merge the partially positive with the positive category, the overall result clearly shows that the Egyptian public clearly has a positive perception of Turkish policies. We should also note that 8.5 percent of the respondents did not respond to our question and 13.7 percent answered that they did not know.

This positive perception of Turkey may derive from a couple of factors. First, in contrast to other countries in the region and the USA, Turkey’s reaction to the Arab Uprisings was unequivocal. Before the Arab Uprisings, Turkey had developed strong relations with the region’s political leaders regardless of their democratic credentials. However, during the transitions in the region, Turkey moved from pro-regime policies to pro-people policies; that is, it supported all the popular movements for democracy. One may argue that this was because the Islamic-rooted JDP wanted similar conservative political parties in government throughout the region. However, it is fair to say that the popular movements were initially led by diverse groups not strongly affiliated with any major political party or group. The Islamist movements came onto the scene after these movements had proved their strength against the regimes.³⁸

Second, and in parallel with the first factor, Arab media, in particular Al Jazeera, broadcasts on Turkey, and its stance on the Arab Uprisings increased Turkey’s popularity across the region.³⁹ Turkey was a vocal critic of Mubarak during the demonstrations and provided different forms of aid and assistance to the interim governments.⁴⁰ Third, during the social upheaval, many commentators widely discussed the Turkish model as a new political model.⁴¹ Turkey has provided a third model in the Middle East between authoritarianism and radicalism. This model is also meant to achieve economic success, which reduces poverty and creates a middle class in Arab countries.⁴²

However, this positive perception varies according to respondents’ religious identity. Table 2 shows that while Muslims tended to have positive attitudes toward Turkish foreign policy during the Arab Uprisings, Christians, mostly Copts, tended

Table 1. Egyptian Public Opinion on Turkish Foreign Policy Regarding the Arab Uprisings

Not positive at all (%)	Not positive (%)	Partially positive (%)	Positive (%)	Very positive (%)	No response (%)	Do not know (%)
6.5	9.6	22.4	24.6	14.6	8.5	13.7

Note: The question was “How would you evaluate the approach of Turkish political leaders to the developments in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, or briefly to the Arab Spring? Please respond on a scale where ‘1’ corresponds to ‘Strongly negative’ and ‘5’ corresponds to ‘Strongly positive’.” *N* = 846.

Table 2. Egyptian Public Opinion on Turkish Foreign Policy Regarding the Arab Uprisings by Religious Adherence

Identity		Not positive at all (%)	Not positive (%)	Partially positive (%)	Positive (%)	Very positive (%)
Religious	Christian (mean = 3.0)	13.3	23.3	37.8	25.6	10
	Muslim (mean = 3.3)	7.8	12.5	28.2	31.5	20

Note: The same question as in Table 1. *N* = 701. The numbers do not round up to 100 percent due to “no response” and “do not know” categories (not shown here).

to have less positive attitudes. Christians are slightly more critical of Turkish policy, 26.6 percent versus 20.3 percent. Furthermore, 51.5 percent of Muslims had a positive attitude, compared to only 35.6 percent of Christians. Although there was significant support for Turkish foreign policy during the Arab Uprisings, the divide across religious identities was significant.

We see a similar result regarding the other foreign-policy issue. For the sake of space, we will not display the results for the whole country and will instead show them by religious denomination. The respondents were asked: “How would you evaluate Turkish foreign policy regarding the Syrian regime? Please respond on a scale where ‘1’ corresponds to ‘I definitely do not approve/agree’ and ‘5’ corresponds to ‘I definitely approve/agree.’” Table 3 shows that the disapproval of Turkish foreign policy toward Syria is about 50.7 percent among Christians, while the approval for the same group is only 16.9 percent. In contrast, for Muslims the disapproval rate is 25 percent, which is far behind the approval rate of 49.3 percent.

Table 3. Egyptian Public Opinion on Turkish Foreign Policy Regarding Syria by Religious Adherence

Identity		Not positive at all (%)	Not positive (%)	Partially positive (%)	Positive (%)	Very positive (%)
Religious	Christian (mean = 2.8)	5.6	45.1	32.4	15.5	1.4
	Muslims (mean = 3.4)	8.7	16.3	25.7	28.8	20.5

Note: The question was “How would you evaluate Turkish foreign policy towards the Syrian regime? Please respond on a scale where ‘1’ corresponds to ‘I definitely do not approve/agree’ and ‘5’ corresponds to ‘I definitely approve/agree.’” *N* = 827. The numbers do not round up to 100 percent due to “no response” and “do not know” categories (not shown here).

The public-opinion data show a significant variation in attitudes toward Turkish foreign policy regarding the Arab Uprisings and the Syrian conflict across religious denominations. The mean difference between Christians and Muslims seems to be smaller than we would have expected: 0.3. However, this is mostly due to the size of the partially positive category, suggesting that Turkish policy toward the Arab Uprisings was widely popular and was not, at the time of the survey, perceived as negatively as was Turkey's policy toward the Syrian conflict, where the mean difference is 0.6. This result also suggests that Egyptians, whether Muslim or Christian, can assess another country's foreign-policy issues differently. What about elites? Do they show a uniform approval or disapproval toward Turkey and Turkish foreign policy?

The Views of Egyptian Elites

The perception among the general public is in line with perceptions among the elite. In Egypt, there is a belief that Turkey is pursuing an active foreign policy in the Middle East, and its image is generally positive in academic circles, in political circles, among business people and among state officials. At the time of our field work, our findings suggested that, especially in the last few years, Turkey is perceived positively for two reasons: its help to the Palestinians and its opening toward Arab countries.⁴³ In explaining the recent Turkish opening toward the Middle East, an Egyptian diplomat argued that Turkey turned toward the East and that the negative atmosphere between Turkey and Europe played a role in Turkey's decision. Although Turkish foreign policy in the last few years is seen positively, according to an Egyptian diplomat, its change in policy during the Libyan crisis is seen as opportunistic.⁴⁴

Turkish policy toward the Palestinian issue is critical to elites' positive image of Turkey. In this respect, the scene from the Davos meeting in January 2009, Erdoğan's storming off the debate, was in people's minds. An Islamist Egyptian politician argued that Turkey is becoming a very influential actor on the issue of Palestine, but also that Egypt will play the main role in the future and Turkey only a secondary role.⁴⁵ Beside its attitude to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, some elites pointed to the personalities of the policy-makers as the reason for the success of Turkey's foreign policy.

The elites interviewed in Egypt were generally positive about Turkey's policy toward Syria. We can say that supporting the change in Syria and Turkey's attitude toward Syrians escaping from violence are both highly appreciated by the Egyptian people. However, it should be kept in mind that these elite interviews were conducted before the military coup of July 3, 2013. We might expect some changes in the perception of Turkey, given the differences between Turkey and the new Egyptian administration after the coup. In particular, the Egyptian state and media have been extremely critical toward Turkey since the coup, blaming Turkey for supporting Morsi, the deposed president of Egypt. Most probably, the attitude toward Turkey will be less positive now than it was in the period under consideration here, but religious identity continues to shape the way people perceive the country.

Bureaucratic elites were more critical of Turkey. For example, an Egyptian diplomat argued that Turkey has been acting with the West in the case of Syria in general. The perception of Western countries among these elites is critical and negative because of their support for Israel, which affects their perception of Turkey. The same diplomat argued that Turkey is in the beginning stages of a paradigmatic shift in its foreign policy.⁴⁶

An Egyptian secular-liberal academic argued that Turkish foreign policy after the Arab Uprisings has been positive, except in the case of Libya, where Turkey at first seemed to side with the former Qaddafi regime.⁴⁷ The image of Turkish foreign policy changed after Davos, and the video of the Davos conference is very popular in Egypt. People expect their own political leaders to act with dignity in foreign policy.⁴⁸ An Egyptian liberal academic argued that Turkish policy toward Syrians escaping from violence has been very positive, and that “Turks, as half-brothers, did better than the full-brother Arabs in hosting Syrians.”⁴⁹

So we see that elites from different backgrounds, except for bureaucratic elites, are generally positive regarding Turkish policy toward Syria. Regardless of their political attitudes, support provided to the Syrian refugees has contributed positively to the image of Turkey among these elites. The experience of revolution and change and the predominantly Sunni Muslim background of these elites may be among the factors contributing to this perception.

Perceptions of Turkish Foreign Policy in Iraq

Public Opinion

In Iraq, half of the Kurds have a negative perception of Turkey’s foreign policy in the region. Understandably, this is mostly related to Turkey’s own Kurdish problem and its implications for other countries in the region. Table 4 suggests that Arabs have a more favorable perception than Kurds do toward Turkish foreign policy, with only 12 percent of Arabs saying they have a negative perception of Turkish foreign policy. Interestingly, 33.4 percent of Turkomans interviewed in Iraq have a negative perception of Turkey’s policies. Kurds, on the other hand, perceive Turkish foreign policy highly negatively, at 66 percent. Although there is also a very positive view among some segments of the Turkoman community, the negative perception among Turkomans may be attributed to the sectarian background of these people. Table 4 also shows substantial differences in Sunnis’ and Shiites’ perceptions of Turkey. Some 24 percent of Sunnis view Turkey negatively, versus 15.2 percent of Shiites. Sunnis have a slightly higher positive attitude toward Turkey, at 47.9 percent, compared to 42.6 percent for Shiites. Our further analysis suggests that the greater distrust toward Turkey among Sunnis is a result of the views of Iraqi Kurds. We see that sectarian background, for example being a Sunni, does not automatically translate into a positive view of Turkey, since important segments of Kurds have a negative view of the country despite being Sunni.

Table 4. Iraqi Public Opinion on Turkish Foreign Policy Regarding the Arab Uprisings by Ethnicity and Sect

Identity		Not positive at all (%)	Not positive (%)	Partially positive (%)	Positive (%)	Very positive (%)
Ethnic	Arab (mean = 3.8)	3.8	8.2	6.6	21.9	23.3
	Kurd (mean = 2.3)	43.8	11.7	0.8	8.6	15.6
	Turkoman (mean = 3.1)	25.6	15.4	5.1	2.6	30.8
Sectarian	Sunni (mean = 3.5)	16.4	7.5	4.4	17.1	30.2
	Shia (mean = 3.6)	3.7	11.5	8.4	28.0	14.6

Note: The same question as in Table 1. *N* = 650. The numbers do not round up to 100 percent due to “no response” and “do not know” categories (not shown here).

When we examine Table 5 for the Syrian crisis, we see that the mean scores for these groups (Arabs, Turkomans, Sunni and Shia except for Kurds) are mostly lower, compared to the Arab Spring mean scores. We also see that Kurds tend to have a higher rate of disapproval toward Turkish policy on Syria. The Turkomans come second. This may be due to the fact that Turkish governments’ struggle with Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) over the last 30 years has created a negative impression among Kurds in Turkey, Iraq and other countries.⁵⁰ Here again, we see the effect of the intersection between religion and ethnicity on attitudes toward Turkey. The rate of disapproval among Turkomans is noteworthy. It suggests that the Shia Turkoman population assesses Turkish foreign policy consistently with other Shias, while Sunni Turkomans do so consistently with other Sunnis. In sum, while ethnicity drives the results for Kurds, sectarian identity has significant effect on Turkoman attitudes. Arabs seem to have a higher approval rate for Turkey. Table 5 also discloses sectarian differences toward Turkey. Understandably, Sunnis are more supportive of Turkish policy (47.1 percent), but the approval rate among Shiites is moderate (24.5 percent).

The Views of Iraqi Elites

Here we see a difference between elites and the public, since the public is more supportive than elites. Shiite Arab elites criticize Turkey for being too close to Sunni groups in the region, and Kurds criticize it for not being close enough to Kurds. Among elites in these three countries, a fragmented picture emerges in Iraq, compared to the nearly monolithic perceptions in Iran and Egypt. During the interviews, it became obvious that there are serious differences between the various sects and ethnicities in Iraq in terms of their perception of Turkish foreign policy. Kurds are happy with the opening toward the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) but critical of operations against the PKK. Sunni Arabs are positive toward Turkey’s policy of engagement and even expect Turkey to become more active to balance other actors

Table 5. Iraqi Public Opinion on Turkish Foreign Policy Regarding Syria by Ethnicity and Sect

Identity		Not positive at all (%)	Not positive (%)	Partially positive (%)	Positive (%)	Very positive (%)
Ethnic	Arab (mean = 3.4)	9.6	10.1	9.5	14.1	22.4
	Kurd (mean=2.3)	44.5	15.6	3.1	5.5	16.4
	Turkoman (mean = 2.3)	35.9	17.9	0.0	5.1	23.1
Sectarian	Sunni (mean = 3.4)	18.7	10.0	6.2	13.1	34.0
	Shia (mean = 2.8)	15.2	16.8	11.5	14.3	10.2

Note: The same question as in Table 3. $N = 663$. The numbers do not round up to 100 percent due to “no response” and “do not know” categories (not shown here).

in the region. The general trend among the Shiite Arab elite is that Turkey played an inclusive foreign policy before the Arab Uprisings but afterwards started to favor one particular group. Bilateral difficulties between Turkey and Iraq, according to the same group of people, are resulting from Turkey’s attitude. Here, their argument implies that sectarian concerns have had an increasing impact on the making and implementation of Turkish foreign policy after the Arab Uprisings.

Iraqi Kurds from different political backgrounds are positive regarding the developing relations between Turkey and the KRG. Kurds with an Islamist background are happy with Turkey’s distancing itself from Israel.⁵¹ At the same time, however, most Iraqi Kurds stressed that Turkey should settle its own Kurdish problem in order to become a powerful player in the region. As a result of the increasing role of Turkey in the Middle East, Ankara’s prestige in Europe is also on the rise, according to Kurds interviewed in Iraq.

Apart from the positive views regarding Turkey, there were also some criticisms from some of the elites for various reasons, including Turkey’s perceived rivalry with Iran, its handling of relations with Israel and the Turkish attitude toward other Islamic groups in the Middle East.⁵² The differences between Turkey and Iran regarding the political future of the Middle East and the perceived rivalry between the two neighbors were also raised by Iraqi Kurdish and non-Kurdish elites.

Turkey’s relationship with the KRG is seen as an important transformation from enmity to cooperation on several issues over the last few years. Turkey has increased its engagement with Kurdish political figures in Iraq in the political and economic domains.⁵³ During the same period, Ankara’s relationship with Baghdad cooled off because of the improved relationship between Ankara and Arbil, political developments in Iraq, including the case of Tariq Haşimi,⁵⁴ and differences on Syria and other regional developments. During the autumn of 2013, a better relationship between Ankara and Baghdad developed, with several bilateral visits and positive signals from politicians. Domestic and regional factors have led the two sides to try to ameliorate bilateral relations.

During the interviews, criticism of Turkey from Iraqi Shiites was mainly related to Turkish support for some political groups and individuals in Iraq, including Tariq Haşimi. An Iraqi Kurdish politician from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan also argued that Turkey's policy on the issue of Haşimi showed its disregard toward domestic sensitivities in Iraq.⁵⁵

The editor of a newspaper in the KRG argued that Turkey is not a neutral actor in regional conflicts:

Turkey was too closely aligned with Islamist groups during Arab Uprisings, but these Islamist groups are not as rational as the JDP, and these groups will not be able to solve the problems in their countries when they come to power.⁵⁶

Similarly, an Iraqi Kurdish journalist claimed that Turkey has provided too much support to (Sunni) Arabs, and that it should extend the same support to the Kurdish opposition.

In a divided Iraq, sectarian differences have affected perceptions of Turkish foreign policy after the Arab Uprisings. Sunni Arabs, as stated above, think that Turkish policy regarding the Arab Uprisings was more positive than that of other states in the region, and they believe that Turkey should be more involved in regional problems. Shiites in Iraq, in contrast, are more critical of Turkey, and there are similarities between the arguments of Iranians and Iraqi Shiites. This can be expected, given the polarizing nature of the growing conflict in Syria along sectarian lines and the influence of Iran in some parts of Iraq. Kurds are critical of the Syrian regime's attitude toward its own people, but also argue that Turkey is too interventionist in the case of Syria.

A senior politician from the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq argued that Turkey acted in a hurry in the case of Syria and that the Syrian opposition is insufficiently inclusive, which poses a problem for Turkey.⁵⁷ Another Shiite politician claimed that Turkish policy is sectarian, and that Turkey is moving away from a balanced position toward supporting a particular sect in its regional policy. An Iraqi Sunni diplomat said that although the Syrian regime is a brutal one and should go, Turkish policy on this issue is in line with the agenda of the Gulf countries.⁵⁸

An Iraqi Kurdish journalist argued that Turkey's policy is problematic, because it supports only Arabs, and Kurds are not sufficiently represented in the opposition.⁵⁹ A senior figure from the Kurdistan Islamic Union Party said that Turkey should be careful in Syria since the Syrian regime will use any opportunity to harm Turkey. He compared Turkey's policy toward Libya and Syria and argued that Turkey's policy toward the latter is problematic: "Qaddafi may not create problems for Turkey, but Syria has some cards, and they can use these cards against Turkey."⁶⁰

In sum, the perception of Turkish foreign policy in Iraq is divided along ethnic and sectarian lines. Apart from the multiethnic and sectarian nature of Iraq, the lack of strong political parties/institutions in this country due to the former Ba'ath regime's legacy enhances the impact of ethnic and sectarian identities on people's interpretation of Turkish domestic and foreign policy.

Perceptions of Turkish Foreign Policy in Iran

Public Opinion

The public-opinion survey in Iran was conducted when the relationship between Iran and Turkey was strained as a result of differences over Syria and other regional issues. Iran's state security and intelligence services made it hard for researchers to run their survey. Our phone surveys were conducted under such a tense political environment that the number of no responses and "I do not know" was quite high. This reduced the number of responses to around 400, in contrast to our surveys in Egypt and Iraq, which received between 850 and 1000 responses.⁶¹ The main problem with this reduction in the response rate is that ethnic groups were underrepresented in our sample. As a result, we are not able to present the distribution of the responses by ethnic group. Table 6 shows the distribution of the responses by sectarian affiliation. The results show that Sunnis in Iran tend to have a higher positive view toward Turkish foreign policy regarding the Arab Uprisings. Not surprisingly, Shiites have a higher negative view. We suspect that the majority of Sunnis who view Turkish foreign policy negatively (12.7 percent) are Kurds, as was confirmed by our diagnostic tests with the available Kurdish citizens in the survey.

Table 7 focuses on Turkish foreign policy toward Syria. Given that Iran and Iranians have historical and religious ties to the Syrian regime, we would expect most Shiites to be critical of Turkey. The findings confirm this expectation. More than 35 percent of Shiites disapprove of Turkish policy, while only 1.4 percent of Sunnis do so. Around 34 percent of Shiites and 87.1 percent of Sunnis support Turkish foreign policy. In addition, a comparison of the mean score for each sect tells us how sectarianism affects people's views, but the differences are less marked regarding the Arab Uprisings. The mean score for Sunnis is much higher for Syria (4.4) than for the Arab Uprisings (3.6). In contrast, Shiites' mean score for Syria (2.9) is much lower than for the Arab Uprisings (3.2). The divide over Syria suggests that Sunnis and Shiites have completely different political attitudes, including foreign-policy attitudes. Overall, this finding also shows that sectarian cleavages are important in determining how Turkish foreign policy is assessed.

Table 6. Iranian Public Opinion on Turkish Foreign Policy Regarding the Arab Uprisings by Sect

Identity	Not positive at all (%)	Not positive (%)	Partially positive (%)	Positive (%)	Very positive (%)
Sectarian Sunni (mean = 3.6)	0.0	12.7	19.0	62.0	6.3
Shia (mean = 3.2)	12.0	12.9	26.4	42.6	6.0

Note: The same question as in Table 1. $N = 422$. The numbers do not round up to 100 percent due to "no response" and "do not know" categories (not shown here).

Table 7. Iranian Public Opinion on Turkish Foreign Policy Regarding Syria by Sect

Identity	Not positive at all (%)	Not positive (%)	Partially positive (%)	Positive (%)	Very positive (%)
Sectarian Sunni (mean = 4.4)	1.4	0.0	11.4	31.4	55.7
Shia (mean = 2.9)	16.5	19.1	30.1	26.2	8.1

Note: The same question as in Table 3. $N = 383$. The numbers do not round up to 100 percent due to “no response” and “do not know” categories (not shown here).

The Views of Iranian Elites

Elites in Iran generally agreed that Turkey has been pursuing an active and ambitious foreign policy in the last few years, and they held a generally negative view of Turkey, especially among those that are close to state structures. The image of Turkey and Turkish foreign policy among businesspeople and independent figures was more positive.

In Iran, the reasons for the activism in Turkish foreign policy are believed to be as follows: the character of the policy-makers, the economic needs of the country and the political and economic stability of the country. It is generally agreed that personalities play an important role here. Some people identify Turkish foreign policy with Erdoğan, but some others point to the vision of Ahmet Davutoğlu.

In addition to the personalities of policy-makers and the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, other factors that were mentioned as positively affecting the image of Turkish foreign policy were Turkey’s efforts at mediation in the region and its efforts to promote regional cooperation. In the last few years, regionalism has been the driving force in Turkey’s foreign-policy agenda, and cooperation with Iran on economic, strategic and social issues has been an important aspect of regionalism.⁶² An Iranian filmmaker defined Turkish foreign policy as “realist and providing answers to current problems, and successful, since Turkey avoids creating enemies.” A former Iranian MP said that “Turkey acted successfully in mediation efforts, presented a different regional Islamic model and acted properly against the tide of globalization.”⁶³ Iranian academics working on Turkey also said that Turkey’s efforts in mediating conflicts in the region can be credited partly to then Foreign Minister Davutoğlu’s personal inclination, but are mainly due to the lack of effective mediation in the region.⁶⁴ In analyzing Turkish foreign policy in the region, academics argued that in the last few years Turkish diplomacy has been directed toward the promotion of a multilateral settlement.⁶⁵

An Iranian businessman and member of the Turkish–Iranian Business Council argued that the most important success of Turkish foreign policy has been in attracting foreign direct investment, as “businessmen from different parts of the world are choosing Turkey, and this is a real success.”⁶⁶

In contrast, an Iranian expert on foreign policy argued that Turkey’s most important foreign-policy success in the last few years has been in developing relations with

Russia in the political, economic and cultural spheres, despite their differences on Syria.⁶⁷ Some experts at Iranian think tanks said that, over the last decade, Turkey has focused on developing its economy, and as a result of this Turkey has tried to develop relations with its neighbors.⁶⁸ Promoting economic relations with regional countries was assessed as a positive factor in the perception of Turkish foreign policy at the time when we conducted our interviews.

There are clear sectarian differences in the perception of Turkish foreign policy in Iran. Elites who are critical of Turkey and its foreign policy said that it is too early to judge the success or failure of Turkey's foreign policy. In the surveys, only a very small number of people were interested in foreign-policy issues; in short, an important segment of society does not have an interest in or knowledge of Turkish foreign policy.

Iranian elites argued that Turkish foreign policy had been perceived positively until three years ago, since it was seen as being in line with Iran's regional policies. Some of our interviewees saw this similarity as evidence of Turkey's observance of the "good example of the Iranian Revolution." More recently, however, Turkey's independent approach and differences with Iran over regional politics have affected the image of Turkish foreign policy in Iran negatively. The head of a research center in Tehran argued that "Turkey stopped pursuing its 'zero-problems policy' and started to act like a subcontractor of the US and NATO, and then its successes came to an end."⁶⁹ Another criticism of Turkey is that Ankara has been unable to achieve its desired results in some foreign-policy initiatives.

Similar to these criticisms, some other elites in Iran claimed that being opposed to Iran in regional issues and not developing military relations with Tehran have been a failure. According to these views, Turkey played a mediating role in the settlement of disputes over the Iranian nuclear program but could not achieve what it wanted from these mediation efforts.⁷⁰ These types of arguments mainly came from state officials and people close to the state ideology, whereas opposition figures in Iran perceived Turkish foreign policy positively. Critics argued that Turkey's stance toward Egypt, Libya and Tunisia was different from that toward Yemen and Bahrain. An Iranian researcher argued that Turkey's current regional policy has similarities with that of Algeria in North Africa in the past, and Algeria also acquired a good reputation by pursuing a peaceful foreign policy in its region. He argued that such a policy may enhance a state's reputation, but it does not always produce the desired results.

The perception of Turkish policy toward Syria is clearly negative among most elites interviewed. Among the few positive comments were those of an Iranian writer, who argued that Turkey was an aspirational ideal during the Arab Uprisings, and that its prestige and successes acted as a catalyst for them.⁷¹ One of the few Iranian experts in international relations who views Turkey's policy toward Syria positively concurred, but he argued that Turkey should avoid differing with Iran.⁷² Among those with negative perceptions of Turkish foreign policy is an Iranian journalist, who argued that after the Arab Uprisings Turks acted in a hurry, as always, and it was wrong to work on formulas that excluded Iran.⁷³ Iranian elites' criticisms of Turkish foreign policy on this issue can be summarized as follows: Ankara is too

interventionist, is too close to Muslim Brotherhood, is damaging the axis of resistance (meaning Iran, Syria and Hezbollah), is opposing Iran in the case of Syria and does not have the capacity to pursue such a foreign policy.

An expert on Turkey argued that Iran is indebted to Syria because of its support during the Iran–Iraq War, and that Iran is very concerned with the instability that may result from a transition there. As a result of their difference of opinion over Syria, relations between Turkey and Iran are strained, and it is up to Turkey to ameliorate the bilateral relationship.⁷⁴ An Iranian academic said that Turkey has acted rationally in Syria, which is good for Turkey. The problem with Turkey’s policy toward Syria, however, is that it relies heavily on Western powers and also ignores the possible demands of Syrian Kurds for autonomy.⁷⁵

In sum, elites in Iran are suspicious of and critical toward Turkey. Turkish foreign policy toward Syria is especially worrying for Iranian policy-makers because of the importance of Syria to Iran’s national interest. Syria is seen as an important element in Iran’s defense, and Turkey’s policy toward the country is perceived as a direct threat to Iran’s position in regional politics. Only some figures from the business community and academia differed from the general trend among Iranian elites. Here we see the importance of one’s background in how one defines the national interest, and therefore in the perception of Turkey’s policy toward Syria.

Conclusion

The Arab Uprisings have had very complicated and unsettling effects on the MENA region. It is difficult to make judgments about the success of the foreign policies of the various competing political actors in the region. Sweeping changes in the region and increasing polarization within and across countries have created unstable political environments in which regional and international actors find it difficult to formulate policies. We conducted our public-opinion surveys and field work during these dramatic changes in the MENA—specifically before the July 3 (2013) military coup in Egypt, when a relatively positive perception of Turkey predominated among both elites and the public in that country. In comparison, Turkey’s relations with Iran and Iraq were more negative during our field work. In the absence of any recent survey research, it is difficult to assess to what extent our findings may have changed over time. Therefore, we restrict our discussion to the period during which we conducted our research.

We would like to underline several important findings in our research. First, in all of these countries the overall findings suggest that liberals and the business community perceive Turkish foreign policy as successful, whereas state officials and people close to state structures are more critical. Economic elites tend to view Turkey as a role model and believe that economic cooperation between Turkey and their countries will be mutually beneficial. This win-win mentality and the positive views toward further regional collaboration is quite a solid finding, which may have the potential of positively influencing more competitive spheres, such as geopolitics. Bureaucratic elites, in contrast, are more skeptical of Turkey’s intentions and policies in the region. This may not be surprising, given that their duty is to defend the national interest of

their countries against other states. These elites are cautious about the popularity of Turkey among the public and the national and international media. In our interviews, bureaucratic elites did not hesitate to mention their concerns regarding Turkey's activism in their zones of influence. These elites want to see Turkey as an ally against their enemies rather than as a competitor in the regional struggle for influence. Despite high-level strategic contacts and confidence-building measures at the elite level, elites perceive ongoing policies in more competitive terms.

Second, our study's major contribution is to add ethnic and sectarian dimensions to previous studies on foreign policy and soft power. Apart from a few recent studies,⁷⁶ there are no empirical academic studies that examine the soft power of alternative actors from a comparative perspective. Previous studies on the MENA region, for instance by Akgün et al.,⁷⁷ and Telhami,⁷⁸ or the soft-power index by the *Monocle* journal, have investigated the level of soft power by Turkey, the USA, China and other countries. However, ethnic and religious dimensions were missing in these studies. In sum, this study has contributed to the elaboration of ethnic and sectarian factors in influencing the perception and evaluation of the policies of alternative political actors from a comparative perspective.

We have shown that ethnic, sectarian and religious minorities vary in their perception of Turkey and its policies. The intersection of ethnicity and sect shapes people's attitudes toward Turkish foreign policy. In general, the public is more positive toward Turkish foreign policy than elites in these three countries. Among the general public, it is clear that sectarian and ethnic backgrounds influence perceptions of Turkey and its foreign policy. However, we do not find the same diversity among elites, especially in Iran and Egypt, and therefore we cannot say that these identity factors shape their attitudes toward Turkish foreign policy as well. The underrepresentation of Christians in Egypt and Sunnis and Kurds in Iran and to some extent in Iraq at the elite level, and their underrepresentation in our elite interviews, should caution the reader that our findings among the general public may not hold among elites. For example, some Shiites in Iraq and Iran at the elite level blame Turkey for supporting sectarian policies because of the political difficulties of these countries with Turkey and the Syrian civil war. However, we cannot say whether Sunni elites in Tehran share this view.

Moreover, our findings on public-opinion data show that Turkomans in Iraq are divided in their perception of Turkey by their sectarian affiliation. Similarly, Sunnis in Iran hold a positive attitude toward Turkey, with the exception of Kurds. Our field work and the review of secondary works on Iraq suggested that continuing conflicts in the region and daunting political and economic challenges in most of the countries in the region are leading politicians and parties to resort to identity politics.

Finally, this study showed that these cleavages shape citizens' attitudes toward the foreign policy of another country. This presents a challenge to Turkish, Saudi, American or other countries' foreign-policy-makers, as their messages and policies will be filtered through ethnic and religious lenses. Public-opinion data provide strong evidence for this argument, and the elite interviews show greater challenges for Turkish foreign-policy-makers, given that ethnic and religious elites have stronger reservations

about Turkish foreign policy. In this respect, our findings not only speak to the foreign-policy literature, but also to the literature on soft power, which tends to dismiss ethnic, sectarian and religious heterogeneity in a given country. Future studies on soft power should incorporate these cleavages into their analysis.

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Notes

1. Öniş, "Multiple Faces," 47–65.
2. Ennis and Momani, "Shaping the Middle East," 1127–44.
3. Aras and Akarçeşme, "Turkey and the Arab Spring," 39–51 and Ennis and Momani, "Shaping the Middle East," 1127–44.
4. Öniş, "Turkey and the Arab Spring," 45 and Davutoğlu, *Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy*, 5.
5. Davutoğlu, "Ortadoğu'da savaş çıkarmak isteyenler var," *Radikal*, January 4, 2012.
6. Sale, "Cold Chill," 61.
7. Due to security concerns, we do not provide the names of our interviewees in this article.
8. One may argue that there is a possible endogeneity problem in this study, because Turkish foreign policy may exacerbate the lens of ethnic, sectarian and religious identity. However, we believe that the timing of the surveys in these three countries gives us some confidence that the lens of ethnic, sectarian or religious identity toward Turkish foreign policy and other issues was present even before the Syrian crisis escalated. The Syrian conflict had not yet become a civil war, and the military takeover in Egypt had not yet occurred, when we conducted our survey. The timing of the surveys reduces, but does not completely eliminate, the possible endogeneity problem. As suggested by the American politics literature (e.g. Page and Shapiro, *Rational Public*), public opinion changes slowly. In addition, the absence of any strong empirical evidence in the literature for the claim that these identity-related factors did not matter before the Syrian crisis leads us to believe that the substantial claims of this article are valid. See Page and Shapiro, *Rational Public*.
9. Jung, "Domestic Context," 23.
10. Noi, "Arab Spring," 64; Benli-Altunışık and Çuhadar, "Turkey's Search," 371–92; and Köse, "Transformative Conflict Resolution," 171–94.
11. Kanat, "Continuity of Change," 246.
12. Tür and Benli-Altunışık, "From Distant Neighbors to Partners?" 218.

13. The relations between two countries worsened after a Turkish jet was gunned down and Turkish territories in the border region were shelled in 2012. Clashes in Syria developed into a full-blown civil war, which created a security issue for Turkey, along with political, economic and social difficulties. The refusal of the Syrian regime to respond to demands for reform and its resort to force to crush opposition changed Turkish foreign policy toward Syria.
14. Bishku, "Turkish-Syrian Relations," 46 and Benli-Altunışık and Martin, "Making Sense of Turkish Foreign Policy," 569–87.
15. Telhami, *World Through Arab Eyes*, 82–3.
16. Benli-Altunışık, "Turkish Model and Democratization," 45–63; Tol, "'Turkish Model' in the Middle East", 350; and Kirişçi, "Turkey's 'Demonstrative Effect'," 33–55.
17. Mohapatra, "Democratization in the Arab World," 271–94.
18. Tocci, "Turkey and the Arab Spring," 4.
19. For a detailed analysis of Turkey's soft power and non-coercive potential in the MENA region, see Köse, "Türkiye'nin Kuzey Afrika ve Ortadoğu'daki Gücü," 29–61.
20. Özcan, "From Distance to Engagement," 72.
21. Yuvacı and Kaplan, "Testing the Axis-Shift Claim," 212–8.
22. Benli-Altunışık, "Possibilities and Limits," 49 and Oğuzlu, "Soft Power in Turkish Foreign Policy," 81–97.
23. Interview by the authors with academics with different political backgrounds in Cairo (January 27, 2012).
24. Ehteshami and Elik, "Turkey's Growing Relations," 647.
25. Uzun, "Arab Spring," 150.
26. Grigoriadis, *Learning from the Arab Spring*, 3.
27. Goldsmith and Horiuchi, "In Search of Soft Power," 556.
28. Cited by Kennedy and Dickenson, "Turkish Foreign Policy," 171–88 and Grigoriadis, "Friends No More?" 51–66.
29. Cited by Kardaş, "Turkey: Rebuilding the Middle East," 115–36.
30. (*Ortadoğu'da Türkiye Algısı* 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) <http://www.tesev.org.tr/ortadogu-da-turkiye-algisi-2013/Icerik/1579.html>. Accessed April 4, 2014.
31. Çiftçi, "Social Identity," 25–43.
32. Tessler, "Islam and Democracy," 337–54 and Tessler, Jamal, and Robbins, "New Findings," 89–103.
33. Welsh, *Survey Research*, 1–10.
34. We are aware that the dramatic changes the region has faced in recent years have required us to comment on a small number of issues. After the military coup that removed Morsi from power in Egypt, it is possible that the positive perception of Turkish foreign policy in Egypt might be much lower due to factors such as the media's negative coverage of Turkey and tense diplomatic relations. For Iran and Iraq, we would also expect a decline in public attitudes toward Turkey's foreign policy, but not as significantly as in Egypt. Therefore, the possible decline in Turkey's popularity may be temporary. Nevertheless, we believe that our main results still hold: ethnic, sectarian and religious identities matter in determining perceptions toward Turkish foreign policy regarding the Arab Uprisings and the Syrian civil war.
35. We worked with a Turkish company, called GENAR, and its local partners in Egypt and Iraq.
36. We used the survey company's office to conduct the phone surveys.
37. Nonetheless, the sample only covers those who have phones in their homes in Iran.
38. Ghatit, "Revolution Without Islamists?" 109–28.
39. Telhami, *World Through Arab Eyes*.
40. Ennis and Momani, "Shaping the Middle East," 1127–44.
41. Tol, "'Turkish Model' in the Middle East," 749–58; Yegin, "Turkey as a 'Companion' Not a 'Model' to the Middle East"; and Ülgen, "Future of Democracy in the Arab World."
42. Ennis and Momani, "Shaping the Middle East," 1127–44.
43. Interview by the authors with an independent Islamist academic, January 26, 2012, Cairo.
44. Interview by the authors with an Egyptian diplomat, January 27, 2012, Cairo.
45. Interview by the authors, January 26, 2012, Cairo.

46. Interview by the authors with a senior Egyptian diplomat, January 27, 2012, Cairo.
47. The academic identified himself in these terms, "secular and liberal."
48. Interview by the authors, January 28, 2012, Cairo.
49. Interview by the authors, January 26, 2012, Cairo.
50. Karakoç, "Ethnicity and Trust," 92–114 and Belge, "State Building and the Limits of Legibility," 95–114.
51. Interview by the authors, April 18, 2012, Arbil.
52. Iraqi Kurdish politician from KDP, interview, April 18, 2012, Arbil.
53. Özcan, "From Distance to Engagement," 71.
54. Iraqi Deputy President Tariq Haşimi, who had to leave Baghdad, took refuge in the Kurdish region after a legal case against him, which he argued was politically motivated, and then moved to Turkey.
55. MP in Kurdish Regional Government from PUK, interview, April 17, 2012, Arbil.
56. Interview by the authors, April 17, 2012, Arbil.
57. Interviewed with a senior figure from the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, April 25, 2012, Baghdad.
58. Interview by the authors, April 24, 2012, Baghdad.
59. Interview by the authors, April 18, 2012, Arbil.
60. Interview with a senior figure from the Kurdistan Islamic Union Party, April 18, 2012, Arbil.
61. This situation was to be expected, although our results would have been stronger if we had had more responses.
62. Oktav, "Gulf States and Iran," 144.
63. Interview, July 18, 2012, Tehran.
64. Tocci, "Turkey and the Arab Spring," 4.
65. Gürzel and Ersoy, "Turkey and Iran's Nuclear Program," 38.
66. Interview, July 25, 2012, Tehran.
67. Interview, July 1, 2012, Tehran.
68. Interview, June 26, 2012, Tehran.
69. Interview, August 2, 2012, Tehran.
70. Interview, July 20, 2012, Tehran.
71. Interview, July 20, 2012, Tehran.
72. Interview, July 24, 2012, Tehran.
73. Interview with a conservative journalist, August 4, 2012, Tehran.
74. Interview, July 26, 2012, Tehran.
75. Interview, August 3, 2012, Tehran.
76. Watanabe and McConnell, *Soft Power Superpowers* and Wang and Lu, "Conception of Soft Power," 425–7.
77. Akgün et al., *Perception of Turkey*
78. Telhami, *World Through Arab Eyes*.

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