The EU's New Neighborhood Policy and Turkey-EU Relations

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Abstract

The EU has been carrying out regional policies to its wider neighborhood countries within the framework of European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The ENP intends to promote "possible political association" and "the greatest possible degree of economic integration" on the basis of "common values" including "democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and social cohesion." The Arab uprising has challenged the parameters of the ENP and gave rise to the re-formulation of the EU's relations not only with the Arab world, but also with Turkey forming a buffer zone in between those two regions. On this basis, this article intends to explore the transformation that took place in the ENP of the EU in the aftermath of the Arab uprising and attempt to figure out to what extent Turkey-EU relations provide opportunities and constraints to the new ENP of the EU. On this basis, the paper will consist of three parts. In the first part, the paper will focus on the changes in neighborhood policy of the EU following Arab uprising. In the second part, it will analyze the EU's instruments and their effectiveness for addressing regional challenges. In the last part, how Turkey-EU relations provide opportunities and constraints to the new ENP of the EU will be analyzed.

Keywords: EU, Neighborhood Policy, Turkey, Turkey-EU Relations

Özet

Avrupa Birliği (AB), Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası (ENP) çerçevesinde komşu olduğu ülkelere yönelik bölgesel politikalar yürütmektedir. Bu anlamda Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası (ENP) AB'nin Kuzey Afrika, Orta Doğu ve Doğu Avrupa ülkeleri ile ilişkilerini biçimlendiren önemli bir dış politika aracıdır. Söz konusu ülkelerle Avrupa Birliği demokrasi, hukukun üstünlüğü, insan haklarına saygı ve toplumsal uyumu içeren ortak değerler temelinde mümkün olan en yüksek siyasi ortaklığı ve ekonomik bütünleşmeyi teşvik etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ancak Arap Isyanları Avrupa Komşuluk Politikasın ciddi bir biçimde meydan okumuştur. Avrupa Birliği bir dış politika enstrümanı olarak Avrupa Komşuluk Politikasını tekrar biçimlendirme zorunluluğu ile sadece karşı karşıya kalmamış, aynı zamanda Arap Dünyası ve Avrupa arasında tampon bölge işlevini yürüten Türkiye ile ilişkilerini de yeniden biçimlendirmesine neden olmuştur. Bu temelde, söz konusu makale Avrupa Komşuluk Politikasında Arap Baharının hemen ardından meydana gelen değişimi, içerik ve hedefler bakımından analiz etmektir. Makalenin hedefi AB'nin yeni politika yaklaşımında gerçekten önemli bir politika değişiminin olup olmadığını saptamaktır. Makale üç kısımdan oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölümde, Arap ayaklanmasının hemen ardından AB komşuluk politikasında meydan gelen değişiklikler üzerinde durulacaktır. Ikinci bölümde, AB'nin bölgesel sorunları ele alma araçlarının etkinliği tartışılacaktır. Son bölümde ise, yeni komşuluk politikasının Türkiye'ye sunmuş olduğu fırsat ve kısıtlar tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: AB, Komşuluk Politikaları, Türkiye, Türkiye-AB Ilişkileri

INTRODUCTION

The eruption of Arab uprising in the Middle East has presented an important challenge to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) of the EU. The instability in the MENA region following regime change in Libya, military coup in Egypt and Syrian civil war has posed great threats to the stability and security of the European Union. The EU found itself in the position of addressing refuges flows from Syria and the fighting with radical jihadist organization, namely the Islamic State (IS), which engages in terrorist activities both inside and outside Europe. In the mean time it has been attempting to deal with one of the most important crisis in the history of the European integration, which emerged following the decision of the United Kingdom to leave European Union after controversial BREXİT referendum in the UK. The campaign of the political parties, which supported to leave the European Union, was overwhelmingly based on the discussion of refuge flows in case the UK would stay in the European Union. As such, the transformation that took place in the MENA region has become closely relevant to the survival of the European Union as a project and sustainability of the European moral values that the European integration centres on. In this respect, exploring how the European Union has addressed the Arab uprising provided great insights over the extent of the EU's success and the failure of the EU in responding large-scale international crisis in its neighbourhood and therefore securing its own stability.

The EU has been carrying out regional policies to its wider neighbourhood countries within the framework of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) before the Arab uprising. The ENP intends to promote "possible political association" and "the greatest possible degree of economic integration" on the basis of "common values" including "democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and social cohesion." The EU has formulated the ENP to the countries where the possibility of membership doesn't exist. The ENP was developed as an endeavour of the EU to use its transformative power that come into being within the context of enlargement towards the countries which doesn't have membership prospect (Cadier, 2013 p: 52). It has been one of the most important foreign policy means of the EU to its surrounding region.

The Arab uprising has challenged the parameters of the ENP and gave rise to the re-formulation of the EU's relations not only with the Arab world, but also with Turkey, which forms a buffer zone in between Middle East and European Union. On this basis, this article intends to explore the transformation that took place in the ENP of the EU in the aftermath of the Arab uprising and attempt to figure out to what extent Turkey-EU relations provide opportunities and constraints to the new ENP of the EU. The paper will consist of three parts. In the first part, it will focus on the changes in neighbourhood policy of the EU following Arab uprising. In the second part, it will analyse the EU's instruments and their effectiveness for addressing regional challenges. In the last part, how Turkey-EU relations provide opportunities and constraints to the new ENP of the EU will be analysed.

EUROPEAN NEİGHBOURHOOD POLİCY AND MENA COUNTRİES

The European Union has developed close relations with the MENA countries since 1970s. This relationship has an economic and political character. The former includes trade, finance, energy and migration and the latter centres on security and stability aspects (Wouters and Duquet, 2013 p: 232). Moreover, different institutions of the European Union has developed diverse instruments which gave rise to the emergence of [1]different regional policies towards the MENA countries.

[1] Ufm sekcretariat. Availbale at: http://ufmsecretariat.org/who-we-are/.

The first instrument that regulates the relations of the EU with the MENA countries is Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). The objective of the instruments is to create Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area, whose objective is to remove restrictions to trade "in between both the EU and Southern Mediterranean Countries and the Southern Mediterranean countries themselves (European Commission, 2016)." The political objective of the EMP is to construct "a common area of peace, stability, and shared prosperity in the Euro-Mediterranean region (European Commission, 2016)." The Southern Mediterranean countries include "Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Turkey (European Commission, 2016). "

The second instrument of the EU that develops neighbourhood relation was the Union for Mediterranean (UfM). The UfM is an intergovernmental organization, which created a relationship in between member states of the EU and 15 Mediterranean countries. The UFM provides an important forum for "policy dialogue and exchange of project ideas, experiences and best practices among governments (EFM Sectariat)."

The third instrument that the EU also promoted its relations with the MENA countries is European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The aim of the ENP is "to establish closest possible political association and the greatest possible degree of economic integration." The participant states declares their consent that they act in parallel with ENP action plan and Association Agenda. They need to demonstrate "their commitment to democracy, human rights and rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development (ibid)." The EU supports the achievement of these objectives through the instruments of the Association Agreements and ENP Action Plan.

The Commission has been main actor behind those initiatives. Association agreements generally regulate trade, development and cooperation relationship. Its primary objective is trade liberalization among the actors. But association agreements also encompass human rights and democratization clause as an essential element of the agreements. As Wouters and Sanderijn (2013) mentions, however, bilateral relations have never suspended thanks to the human rights violations and democratic deficit. When the EU finds itself in the position to choose in between human rights and stability, it has chosen stability. According to Wouters and Sanderijn (2013) the EU's concern over trade, financial, energy and labour relations has been determining factor compare to democracy and human rights in the ENP frameworks.

THE RESPONSE OF THE EU TO ARAB UPRİSİNG

The outbreak of the Arab uprising in 2010 gave rise to some modification of the EU's wider neighbourhood policies. The initial reaction of the European Union to the Arab uprising was not very strong. The EU demonstrated important unwillingness to engage in the transformation that took place in the Arab world. The EU started to give its support to the resistance movements in the MENA countries since 2011 and attempted to utilize the instruments to at its disposal such as "Union for Mediterranean", "European Mediterranean Partnership" and "European Neighbourhood Policy."

The EU declared three instruments in 2011 in order to address the challenges that arise from Arab uprising. These are firstly the "Joınt Communication of High Representative and the Commission on a Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern

Mediterranean" in 2011.[2] Through this document the EU intended "to support democratic transformation and institution building of the MENA countries." It puts special emphasis on fundamental rights and freedoms, constitution reforms, economic growth and enhancement of civil society. [3] Moreover, the EU updated its neighbourhood policy by "the Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committed and the Committed of the Regions." The EU puts it clearly in this document that the overthrow of the repressive regimes, civil war in Syria and military intervention Libya necessitates reconsideration of the EU's relationship with its wider neighbours and developed new policy towards MENA countries. In this new neighbourhood policy, the EU puts the question of democratization as a priority.

In fact, the EU 's relationship with the MENA countries has developed in the aftermath of the Arab uprising on the basis of three dimensions. These are 1) economic relations 2) establishing stability and security, 3) consolidation of democracy and protection of human rights in the Arab uprising. However, when it is examined in depth, new neighbourhood policy of the EU represented continuity rather than change. Policy priorities and measures have not been changed, but conditionality is linked to democracy promotion (Tömmel 2013). One of the most important changes that were brought by the ENP is the adaptation of differentiated approach (Tömmel, 2013). European Neighbourhood Instrument, which was developed in the aftermath of the Arab uprising, has the objective of financing the ENP (European Commission 2011). It has linked differentiated approach with conditionality. The financial support granted to partner country under European Neighbourhood Instrument was conditioned upon the country's commitment to reforms and its progress in promoting democracy and human rights. The most important novelty of the new neighbourhood policy is use of differentiated approach and the conditionality in both its negative and positive form (Tömnel, 2013).

THE EFFECTİVENESS OF THE ENP IN RESPONDİNG ARAB UPRİSİNG

As it is mentioned above, the EU gave the decision to change its approach in addressing MENA countries and implemented more strict democratic conditionality to the MENA countries. The EU distributed additional rewards to the MENA countries, when they recorded important progress in terms of democratization and human rights reforms. As such the main objective of the EU's neighbourhood policy is to promote democracy and human rights through the use of economic instruments.

New European Neighbourhood Policy did not produce the results in the transition period of the Arab world. At the very beginning of the Arab uprising when the Syrian conflict was not intensified, European Neighbourhood Policy was based on functionalist perspective, which centres on the idea that economic reforms would have a spill over effect to the political realm. However, the intensification of Syrian civil war gave rise to the intensification of the EU's focus on security. Put it differently, the EU appeared to concentrate on the fight against terrorism and irregular migration. Democratic reforms and protection of human rights were given priority as long as they support democratic stability and security.

The new ENP policy of the EU gave also rise to a set of bilateral relations. Bilateral relations were designed in a way to satisfy particular needs of the partner countries in question.

[2] High Representative of the Union For Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joint Communication to the European Council, The European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the southern Mediterranean, Brussels, 8.3.2011 Com(2011) 200 Final.
[3] Ibid.

They were resorted in order to promote reform process in the specific issue areas. When devising new European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU attempted to develop a balance between security-stability and democracy. In fact, however, the EU's impact on democracy promotion is particularly restricted. The EU has chosen to be silent on the MENA countries with regards to democracy performance and has attempted to develop or maintain authoritarian regimes in the MENA countries in order to achieve stability. That is why the stated changes in the new neighbourhood policy were only minor and were in close continuity with the former ENP policies.

TURKEY-EU RELATİONS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ARAB UPRİSİNG

Turkey-EU relations, which carry an important potential in terms the EU's neighbourhood policy, appeared to deteriorate following the eruption of Arab uprising. In the aftermath of the Arab uprising, Turkey started to leave zero sum problems with neighbour.[4] Erdoğan government actively engaged in Syrian civil war and supported oppositional groups fighting against Assad regime. Moreover, Turkey has been accused for carrying sectarian and expansionist policies in the Middle East, which is one of the most dangerous fault lines in the region to increase Turkey's leverage, what Davutoğlu called, on its hinterland.

Domestically, Turkey pursued more and more authoritarian policies, which has been further intensified following failed military coup that took place in 15 June 2015. Turkey had already ended settlement process with the Kurds after 7 June elections. Despite serious human rights breaches and violation of rule of law in Turkey, the EU updated the relations with Turkey and concluded irregular migration deal. The main objective of the agreement is to deal the flow of asylum seekers coming from Turkey to the Greece islands. The agreement grants the right to Greece to send the asylum seekers to Turkey. In return, the EU member state will provide financial support to Turkey for hosting Syrian refuges and would liberalize its visa system for Turkish nationals. Considering stability and security and being under the threat of the AKP government to withdraw from the deal and send back to the refuges, the EU has so long closed its eyes widespread to human rights violations and democratization deficit in Turkey. As Kern (2016) puts it correctly the trapped into the "no win situation."[5] If the EU puts into practice visa-liberalization agreements, Turkish citizens would get an access to the European Union and if the EU would not implement visa liberalization agreement the EU would face the flow of refuges from the EU.

CONCLUSION

The Arab uprising has given rise to the re-evaluation of the EU its neighbourhood policy towards the MENA countries. The EU has to face security, stability, energy, political and moral challenges in the post-Arab uprising period. In response to these developments in its surrounding, the EU has developed new instruments and updated existing ones to address the hurdles of Arab transition. Currently, it is not possible to measure real impact of the EU, as

[4] See main parameters of Turkish foreign policy in DAVUTOĞLU, A. 2008. Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007. *Insight Turkey,* 10, 77-96, FIDAN, H. 2013. A Work in Progress: The New Turkish Foreign Policy. *Middle East Policy,* 20, 91-96, ÖZPEK, B. B. & DEMIRAĞ, Y. 2012. The Davutoğlu Effect in Turkish Foreign Policy: What if the Bowstring is Broken? *Iran & The Caucasus,* 16, 117-128, YALVAÇ, F. 2012. Strategic Depth or Hegemonic Depth? A Critical Realist Analysis of Turkey's Position in the World System. *International Relations,* 26, 165-180.

[5] Soeren Kern, Turkey Sets Ultimatum for EU Migrant Deal "Erdoğan is openly pursuing the Islamization of Europe"August 2, 2016. Available at: https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/8613/turkey-eu-migrant-dea l

there is an on-going conflict. However, so far, the EU's instruments were criticized for being "old wine, in new wineskin." According to many scholars, the development of new instruments did not generate the emergence of comprehensive strategy. Despite the fact that the EU has set moral priorities such as human rights and democratization, the EU has chosen its interests rather than those norms, when it comes to the question of its security and stability. This argument is particularly relevant when it comes to its relations with Turkey. Despite the fact that Turkey has been going through one of the most authoritarian periods in his history, the EU could not adopt a balanced approach and employ conditionality in a way that prevents authoritarian retreat in Turkey. As such, particularly after the failed military coup, the EU has lost almost its leverage on Turkey. This has detrimental impact on Turkey's democratic transition, as Turkey lost one of the most influential external dynamic for reform impetus in Turkey.

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