

EUROPEAN UNION and THE MEDITERRANEAN: BEFORE and AFTER THE ARAB SPRING

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Abstract

The Mediterranean region is always important for the European Union (EU) as historically and geographically. In 1972, the relationship between EU and the Mediterranean region began to shape under the Global Mediterranean Policy, in 1995 Barcelona Process and in 2007 the Union for the Mediterranean Process. In December 2010, the civil commotion started in Tunisia then spread to the Gulf region. In this context, this study will analyze EU's Mediterranean policy before and after the Arab Spring in two chapters. In the first chapter, how European policies take action toward the Arab World also to the Mediterranean Region and second chapter tries to analyze how Arab Spring has an effect on Mediterranean politics which EU tries to shape and develop since 1972.

Keywords: *European Union-Mediterranean Policy, Arab Spring and European Union, Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, Barcelona Process, Union for Mediterranean Process.*

Avrupa Birliği ve Akdeniz: Arap Baharı Öncesi ve Sonrası

Özet

Akdeniz bölgesi, Avrupa Birliği için tarihsel ve bölgesel olarak her zaman önemli olmuştur. 1972 yılında Avrupa Birliği- Akdeniz bölgesi arasındaki ilişkiler Küresel Akdeniz Politikası ile şekillenmeye başlamış, 1995 yılında Barselona Deklarasyonu ilanı edilmiş ve ardından 2007 yılında da Nicolas Sarkozy'nin önerisi ile Akdeniz İçin Birlik süreci başlatılmıştır. Aralık 2010 tarihinde Tunus'da başlayan kargaşa daha sonra Körfez bölgesine de sıçramıştır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma Avrupa Birliği'nin Akdeniz politikalarını Arap Baharı öncesi ve sonrası şeklinde iki bölümde inceleyecektir. İlk bölümde Avrupa politikaların Arap Dünyası ve Akdeniz

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Bölgesi için nasıl geliştirildiği, ikinci bölümde ise, Arap Baharı'nın, AB'nin 1972 yılından itibaren şekillendirmeye ve geliştirmeye çalıştığı Akdeniz politikasını ne yönde etkilediği analiz edilmeye çalışılacaktır.

***Anahtar Kelimeler:** Avrupa Birliği Akdeniz Politikası, Arap Baharı ve Avrupa Birliği, Avrupa-Akdeniz İşbirliği, Barselona Süreci, Akdeniz İçin Birlik.*

Introduction

Throughout the history Mediterranean has been a junction point on which the East and the West have met and political, economic and cultural exchanges have taken place. Furthermore, the increasing importance of Mediterranean due to its being a junction point of energy routes in the recent periods has made it an indispensable region for the powerful actors of the international system.

Being aware of this economic and strategic importance of Mediterranean, European Union (EU) has developed a policy of neighborhood for the purpose of creating a ring of friendship which has ended in creating a circle including not only the Mediterranean countries but also the East European countries which are outside EU. Attempts have also been made aiming at establishing a European– Mediterranean free trade zone and a proposal has been put forward by the French President Nicolas Sarkozy for the formation of a Mediterranean Union. EU has endeavored to increase its influence in the Mediterranean basin by means of the “European– Mediterranean Partnership” project. The statement of opinion announced by the commission of European Union about the “Barcelona Process” of the European Union and Mediterranean Partnership in 2001 has included headings on political, security, economic and financial cooperation and human rights for countries such as Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Tunisia, Syria, Morocco, Algeria and Jordan.

On December 17, 2010 the self-immolation of Mohammed Ben Bouazizi, a university-educated street vendor, in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid is seen as the symbolic trigger for Arab uprising. It set in motion a series of civil protests and revolutionary chain reactions against uncompromising and authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa during the half of 2011. The revolt erupted in the Middle East was an important test for Europe because of trying to create a common foreign policy since 1950. European Union is trying to establish the effectiveness of employees in the region with “Union for the Mediterranean” and “Neighborhood Policy”, was caught unprepared by the uprising.

In this context, this study will analyze European Union's Mediterranean policy before and after Arab Spring in two parts. In the first one, how European policies take action toward the Arab World also to the Mediterranean Region and in second which is the main target of the writing try to analyze whether European Union Mediterranean policy is successful during the Arab Spring in the region.

European Policies towards the Arab World and the Mediterranean Region

In this part, EU's policies are evaluated towards the Arab World and the Mediterranean Region until Arab Spring process.

Multilateral and Bilateral Agreements

The EU's relations with the Mediterranean countries began with the new dialogue that emerged in the 1960s. Desired synergy between parties was the efforts to respond to social and political needs of Mediterranean countries. Thus partnership and bilateral preferential trade agreements were held with Greece, Morocco, Tunisia, Cyprus, Turkey and Malta between 1961 and 1972. In this context, although the agreements are an important step towards free trade, practices of these agreements were insufficient.¹

Global Mediterranean Policy

The European Community began to generate new policies in different areas and to set new steps according to new requirements after having more institutionalized. It was to be seen that this situation prevails also in the relations with the Mediterranean Region and the bilateral relations were replaced by holistic policies and applications and economic considerations were important factors for these developments.² Due to the similarity of the agricultural products produced by the Mediterranean countries was the subject of the agreements between the Community members and Mediterranean countries generally these products. But the other Community countries objected these agreements due to the granted facilitations and with the concern that they would increase the compromises in the agricultural area and requested that all member countries concert their policies to Mediterranean countries. It would not be wrong to say that the community attached great importance

¹ Ömer Kurtbağ, "Avrupa Akdeniz Ortaklığı Barselona Süreci", **Ankara Avrupa Çalışmaları Dergisi**, Vol. 3, No. 1, Güz 2003, pp. 74-75.

² Filippos Pierros, et al., **Bridges and Barriers: The European Union's Mediterranean Policy, 1961- 1998**, England, Ashgate Publishing Limited, September 1999, pp. 82-83.

to generate independent policies from the United States of America (USA) and to establish its own influence area. And the first serious efforts as a result of these developments were realized in September 1972 and the Commission presented a suggestion regarding the establishment of a Global Mediterranean Policy (GMP), consisting of three main parts.³

There were also other developments, which converted the GMP, led by France, mandatory. The first was that United Kingdom (UK), Ireland and Denmark would get members of the Community and thus the first expansion of the European Community (EC) would be realized. The accession of these three countries required the implementation of changes both in the frame of the agricultural and industrial trade of the Community and several aspects of the relations between the EC and the Mediterranean countries. And this resulted in expectations of the Mediterranean countries regarding the subscription of new agreements after the expansion or the establishment of additional financial protocols in order to compensate their possible losses. The second was that the European countries intended to establish a basically more equal frame of relations which was to result to the favor of Mediterranean countries in order to balance the super powers in the region.⁴ The third one was that the flow of petrol from the Middle East to Europe gained a vital importance as a result of the energy crisis due to the petrol embargo initiated by the Arabic countries and this required the normalization of the relations with the Mediterranean Arabic countries. The fourth was that the EC, which started to establish its preferential system pursuant to the Generalized Preferential System brought to the agenda by developing countries in 1964, has completed this in 1971 and also many other Third World Countries were included into this frame along with the Mediterranean countries. As the trade of the Mediterranean countries started to be affected increasingly by this system, the countries of the region started to require the renovation of the existing agreements.⁵

The first as a result of this is to establish a free trade zone regarding industrial goods and it is foreseen were realized this until 1977 by decreasing the customs taxes to zero. Secondly, it was considered to take some measures like reducing the customs taxes for the agricultural products, which

³ Cemile Akça Ataç, "AB'nin Normatif Kapasite Sorunu, Akdeniz İçin Birlik ve Türkiye", *Ankara Avrupa Çalışmaları Dergisi*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2012, p. 7.

⁴ Richard Pomfret, "The European Community's Relations with the Mediterranean Countries", John Redmond ed., in *The External Relations of the European Community: the International Response to 1992*, New York, St. Martin's Press, September 1992, pp. 77-79.

⁵ Kurtbağ, *Ibid.*, p. 76.

was the most sensitive issue in terms of the relations with the Mediterranean countries, and to apply some restrictions to the export of agricultural products of the Mediterranean countries against this. And, as the third point, technical and industrial cooperation and financial aids were planned to be particularly realized as an aid of the Community. The main principles of the GMP, adopted at the Summit of Paris in 1972, were accepted by the Council of Ministers, assembled in November 1972.⁶ The Community declared here in brief that it is ready to enter into negotiations in the shortest possible time in order to establish stable and balanced economic relations in commercial and monetary issues pursuant to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) procedures with the Mediterranean countries and based on the principle of mutuality. The community tried with the GMP to develop a sense in regional dimensions, and not in bilateral sense. Whilst northern countries like the UK supported the Mediterranean policy due to the possibility that the consumers could access cheaper agricultural products by the agreements entered into with Mediterranean countries, member countries like France and Italy, which produce the similar products via the GMP were considering the competition to be generated by the Mediterranean countries.⁷

Looking at the agreements entered into with Arabic countries after the implementation of the GMP, it is to be seen that preferential trade agreements are undersigned with Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan at the beginning of 1977. That the EC entered into agreements with these countries during the same period had the purpose to emphasize the global feature of the Mediterranean Policy and that a regional approach was adopted. These agreements included, as indicated in the common frame above, the financial aid and economic cooperation. It was targeted to assist the development of local enterprises in the region and to focus on the infrastructure and agriculture, whereby the Integral Mediterranean Policy remained limited to the trade and aid of the EU. The GMP provided relatively more facilitations in terms of the industrial products, in which they were weak and their chance for a competition was nearly to no but not in the agricultural products, in which they were strong and had a chance to compete with European coun-

⁶ Serpil Kahraman, "AB-Akdeniz Bölgesel Politikaları ve Türkiye'nin Uyumu", **Journal of Yasar University**, Vol. 3, No. 12, October 2008, pp. 1732-1733.

⁷ Neville Waites and Stelios Stavridis, "The European Union and Mediterranean Member States", Theodore A. Coulombis, et al. ed., in **Foreign Policies of the EU's Mediterranean States and Applicant Countries in the 1990s**, New York, St. Martin's Press, December 1998, pp. 29-30.

tries. The expected trade differences between the members of the community and non-member Mediterranean countries increased more as this was the case. The accession of Greece during the second expansion and Spain and Portugal during the third expansion had a negative influence on the inability to achieve the desired result at the GMP in 1980.⁸

This negative effect has shown itself particularly because of the fact that commercial compromises could not be implemented due to the agreements made with Mediterranean countries in these issues since the new members were agricultural producers and exporters and the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) of the Community, having a protective feature, played a great role within this. The internal demands of the community started to be met by the new members by now. And the new accessions did not influence the policy much negatively in terms of the industry. That's because the trade hindrances were already eliminated regarding to the most industrial products incoming from the Mediterranean countries.⁹ As thus the successful result of the GMP was threaded by the negative effects of the energy crisis, stagnation and the following developments, thoughts to set steps in order to compensate the losses of the Mediterranean countries and to put weight on the application of the commercial provisions of the agreements by the Community by the mid of the 1980's are set forth. And there were requests of the Mediterranean countries to make changes to the agreements and to provide more commercial compromises in terms of agriculture. All these issues were brought clearly to the foreground in the document of the commission of 1989 titled with Report Regarding the Mediterranean Policy of the Community (1975-1988). The European Parliament (EP) has mentioned the similar considerations in 1991 and emphasized revelation of the insufficiency of the Mediterranean Policy of the EC.¹⁰

Renovated Mediterranean Policy

A new frame was brought to the agenda with the title Renovated Mediterranean Policy instead of the GMP upon that the EC, which concentrated on the establishment of a Single Market by the end of the 1980's, could not meet the demands from the Mediterranean countries. The cold war ended by

⁸ Kurtbağ, Ibid., pp. 77-78.

⁹ Virginie de Moriamé, "Euro-Mediterranean Relations in Words: A Preliminary Journey", 16 April 2013, <https://www.uclouvain.be/cps/ucl/doc/spri/documents/texte_du_30_avril.pdf> (13 December 2014), pp.13-18.

¹⁰ Alfred Tovas, "The EU's Mediterranean Policy Under Pressure", Richard Gillespie ed., in **Mediterranean Politics**, London, Pinter Publishing, 1996, pp.12-13.

now, and whilst the former countries of the Eastern Block slowly got closer to the EC and they mentioned their intention for the participation to the Community, the EC initiated its aid program regarding these countries. The new policy foresaw the focus on regional cooperation, the compensation of the losses due to the support of the development projects beyond the financial protocols and the structural reforms imposed by the IMF to the Mediterranean countries and by the Mediterranean countries. The financial aids for Mediterranean countries pursuant to the suggestions of the commission, particularly to Middle-East countries, increased by two fold between 1992-1996. In 1992, the horizontal cooperation program, called Europe in the Mediterranean (MED) Programs, was initiated. The purpose of this program was to develop the contacts, understanding and cooperation between non-governmental organizations. These programs particularly focused on the cooperation between universities (Med-Campus), the establishment of communication networks between municipalities and local administrations (Med – URBS) and the encouragement of SMEs (Med – Invest).¹¹

Worldwide economic depression during 1980s caused the European Union's dealing with the internal problems. The European Union was prevented from pursuing an active foreign policy after full membership of Greece, Spain and Portugal and recession in the world market. However, the developments in the international arena and in the world economy, the gradual realization of the Community's single market objectives; level of international economic and political role has revealed the need to redefine the Community. For that reason, the European Union had to maintain economic competitiveness against America and Asia and to strengthen common market needs. In this process, the Mediterranean was very important area.¹² Even though the Union's economic and social success, there were the growing economic and social differences between the two groups in Mediterranean basin and this situation has prepared the environment developed Renovated Mediterranean Policy (RMP).

Commission Report to the Community's Mediterranean Policy (1975-1988) and also European Parliament declared the failure of Mediterranean policies. The paper presented to the Council by the Commission, stressed that the period should be redirected to the Community's policy towards the Mediterranean and determined the general framework RMP notice. On December 18-19, 1990 Council of Ministers provided the consensus on the

¹¹ Filippou Pierros et al., *Ibid.*, pp. 126-134.

¹² Şebnem Karauçak Oğuz, **Avrupa Topluluğu'nun Akdeniz Politikası**, İstanbul, İktisadi Kalkınma Vakfı Publications, No. 90, 1991, pp. 15-17.

general framework. According to consensus, horizontal financial cooperation, trade, the protection of human rights and the environment were decided as main five major issues for RMP.¹³

Main focuses of policies were explained as follows:¹⁴

- Promotion of economic reforms and reinforced the economic dialogue,
- The promotion of private investment and investment,
- Keeping open the Community market for manufactured goods,
- Community development process with the Mediterranean countries.

Euro-Mediterranean Partnership or Barcelona Process

Following the Maastricht Treaty, Lisbon European Council in June 1992 concluded that a regional dialogue and cooperation among the Maghreb countries was necessary. The Council stressed that the Mediterranean is a region where social stabilization and provision of security are of vital importance. Realizing this, it was observed that the Council states the necessity of creating a framework of regional cooperation and integration to foster Maghreb economy and to promote European values, which helped engender political stability.¹⁵

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Framework was after the Presidency decisions of the Cannes European Council that Spain took the initiative to hold a Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, in order to realize the objectives as laid down previously. Participants were the foreign ministers of the EU-15 as well as 12 Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and the Palestinian Authority as Mediterranean partner countries and Malta, Cyprus and Turkey as partner countries with a membership prospect. The country holding the Presidency was Spain, so it was Javier Solana from Spain and the Vice President of the European Commission Manuel Marin, who represented the Council and the Commission respectively. Barcelona Declaration, fed by and large

¹³ Senem Çeşmecioğlu, *Avrupa Akdeniz Ortaklığı ve Türkiye*, İstanbul, İTO Publications, No. 34, October 2003, pp. 18-19.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁵ "The Maastricht Treaty: Provisions Amending The Treaty Establishing The European Economic Community With A View To Establishing The European Community", 7 February 1992, <<http://www.eurotreaties.com/maastrichtec.pdf>> (13 December 2014), pp. 7-11.

from the Cannes framework, was the end product of this Euro-Med Ministerial Conference, signed in November 1995.¹⁶ Declaration also created a Work Program named the Euro-Mediterranean Policy (EMP) which shows the desire of participants to create stability, peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean region. They agreed to further bilateral and multilateral relations or regional cooperation named the Barcelona Process.

The Barcelona Process is based on three main guiding principles: equality in the partnership; complementing rather than displacing bilateral activities; comprehensiveness, decentralization and gradualism in the approach. Underlying goals in the Partnership were improving democratic structure in the region, enhancing liberalized trade and free market, achieving peaceful settlement of disputes, regional cooperation and cultural dialogue. The EMP was an ambitious regional co-operation programme covering all aspects of the social, economic and political relations between the EU and the states on the southern shores of the Mediterranean.¹⁷

In practice, this partnership was organized into three ‘pillars’ or ‘baskets’. The three baskets of the EMP reflect those goals and they were declared to be complimentary. These baskets were:¹⁸

- Political and Security Partnership proposing establishing a common Euro-Mediterranean area of peace and stability based on fundamental principles including respect for human rights and democracy,
- Economic and Financial Partnership sought to create an area of shared prosperity through liberalization of economies in the region and formation of free trade area by 2010 supported by substantial EU financial support for economic transition and for reform process,
- Social, Cultural and Human Partnership aiming at creation of cross-cultural interactions and exchanges as well as support for

¹⁶ Yiannis Tirkides and Andreas Theophanous, “From the Barcelona Process to the Union for the Mediterranean: Rhetoric versus the Record”, Miroslav N. Jovanović ed., in **International Handbook on the Economics of Integration Volume 1: General Issues and Regional Groups**, Massachusetts, USA, Edward Elgar Publishing, March 2011, pp. 326-328.

¹⁷ Ertuğrul Uzun, “Avrupa Birliği’nin Akdeniz Politikası ve Barselona Süreci”, **Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi**, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2003-2004, pp. 13-19.

¹⁸ “Final Declaration of Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference of 27 and 28 November 1995”, <http://www.ceas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/bd_en.pdf> (13 December 2014), pp. 2-6.

development of civil societies which will generate political pluralism and democracy.

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