Foreign Policy of the European Union towards the Arab Uprisings

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Abstract

The emergence of the Arab Uprisings started a regional transformation and led to changes of the policies of the regional and external actors. Although the EU had close economic and political relations with the regional actors, the EU, like many other actors, was caught unprepared against the regional upheaval. The EU's wait-and-see policy and cautious steps towards different cases of the Arab Uprisings increased criticisms against the EU as a normative power and global actor. Due to lack of cooperation for determining and implementing a common foreign policy especially in case of surprising events and the diverging interests of the EU member states, the EU could not play a leading role during the Arab Uprisings. Therefore, the low performance of the EU meant a missed opportunity in its neighborhood. Additionally, the EU had to encounter new problems stemming from the Uprisings such as influx of refugees and increase in terrorist actions. This article will qualitatively analyze the foreign policy of the EU towards the different cases of the Arab Uprisings by using the research method of process tracing.

Keywords: Arab Uprisings, European Union, Foreign Policy, Normative Power, Global Actor

Avrupa Birliği'nin Arap İsyanlarına Yönelik Dış Politikası

Öz

Arap İsyanlarının ortaya çıkışı bölgesel bir değişim ve dönüşümü ortaya çıkardı ve bölgesel ve küresel aktörlerin politikalarının değişmesine yol açtı. Avrupa Birliği bölgesel aktörlerle yakın ekonomik ve siyasi ilişkilere sahip olmasına rağmen Avrupa Birliği de diğer birçok aktör gibi bölgesel ayaklanmalara hazırlıksız yakalandı. Avrupa Birliği'nin farklı ülkelerdeki Arap İsyanlarına yönelik izlediği bekle-gör politikası ve temkinli adımları, normatif bir güç ve küresel bir aktör olarak Avrupa Birliği'ne karşı eleştirilerin artmasına sebep oldu. Avrupa Birliği üyesi ülkeler arasındaki çıkar çatışmaları ve özellikle beklenmeyen olaylara yönelik ortak bir dış politika belirleme ve uygulama anlamındaki işbirliğinin eksikliği nedeniyle Avrupa Birliği, Arap İsyanları sürecinde öncü bir rol oynayamadı. Bunun aynı zamanda Avrupa Birliği'nin göstermiş olduğu düşük performans

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nedeniyle kendisine komşu olan bir bölgede kaçırdığı bir fırsat olduğu söylenebilir. Dahası, Avrupa Birliği mülteci akını ve terörist eylemlerdeki artış gibi Arap İsyanları kaynaklı yeni problemlerle yüzleşmek zorunda kaldı. Bu makale, Arap İsyanlarının farklı ülkelerdeki yansımalarına yönelik AB dış politikasını süreç izleme (süreç takibi) araştırma yöntemini kullanarak niteliksel olarak analiz edecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap İsyanları, Avrupa Birliği, Dış Politika, Normatif Güç, Küresel Aktör

1. Introduction

The Arab Uprisings have shaken the ground and shattered the myths towards the Middle East. The Middle East had long been identified with authoritarian stability but the Arab Uprisings emerged as a great challenge to this order. It was unexpected for almost all regional and global actors so these actors had to adjust their policies which were previously designed according to the status quo in the region. The European Union, which has a unique character due to its supranational entity and having 27 members (after Brexit) under its umbrella, was among those actors and it already had different economic and political relations with the individual or state actors before the eruption of the mass protests. Since the EU member countries had some individual interests and different priorities in accordance with their foreign policy agendas, the position of the EU should be evaluated from different perspectives and it has peculiar aspects in that sense compared to other regional and global actors. Furthermore, the EU is an institution which is based on certain shared values, norms and rules. Some of these norms are namely basic human rights, liberties, democracy and rule of law. One of the primary goals for the EU can be considered as the promotion of these values and norms first among the EU members, and then towards its neighborhood and other parts of the world. This promotion leads to debates about the notion of normative power which is used for the EU. The Arab Uprisings emerged as a significant test for both global and normative aspects of the EU and the process is still ongoing in some countries.

In this article, I would like to propose a study examining the foreign policy of the EU towards the different cases of the Arab Uprisings. Because the EU has a unique character in terms of its organization, decision-making style, the functions of its institutions, and the roles and policies of its member states, the EU should be evaluated with different criteria unlike nation-state actors. The first thing I will focus on the debate over whether the EU, as an institution and actor, has a foreign policy independent from its member states or its position is shaped or determined by the policies and acts of individual states towards different cases. This is a fundamental question and it is necessary to make a decision about it to make analyses further. In addition to this, I will concentrate on the debates related to what kind of actor the EU is in the international arena. Since the establishment of the EU until today, the EU has been considered or conceptualized as different kinds of actors depending on its peculiar aspects and changing roles in the particular contexts. Throughout the article, I will discuss if the EU could play an effective role expected from a normative power or not. Apart from that, the EU is also considered as a global power. Since the role and policies of the EU in the Arab Uprisings will be explained, it is also needed to clarify to what extent the EU policies towards the Arab Uprisings reflected its position as a global actor and how they influenced the EU's stance in the international arena. On the other hand, the Arab Uprisings led to different consequences and divergent paths in different countries; therefore, they should be considered case-by-case rather than as an undivided whole. More specifically, I aim to

investigate the underlying factors for the position and policies of the EU, implying the effectiveness and the type of actorness in the critical regional and global affairs in the world. The Arab Uprisings will be used as a kind of test and point of reference for the performance and foreign-policy mechanism of the EU. In sum, the role and position of the EU towards the different cases of the Arab Uprisings will be helpful for us to understand the international stance and place of the EU.

2. The Arab Uprisings and Diverging Paths

The Arab Uprisings and the following events in the Middle East created important changes in the regional and international affairs. The Middle East has always been a popular research area but the current developments on the ground increased the attention of the scholars towards the region and led to new debates. Whereas many countries in the region experienced similar protest movements and uprisings as a part of so-called domino effect, the differences in their experiences began to be seen more apparent with the help of next events. For instance, Egypt encountered a military intervention after one-year long Morsi Presidency and two-and-a-half year after the fall Mubarak while Syria has been in a chaotic situation due to long term civil war. In Libya, Qaddafi could be overthrown as a result of the NATO intervention but the political instability and increasing problems among different groups created another civil war and military conflict. Tunisia followed a smoother process but the political situation could not reach the level of stability as well. On the other hand, the oil-rich Gulf countries faced some limited impacts of the uprisings and they could protect themselves with the help of preventive policies of their rulers. Scholars have tried to explain the emergence and diffusion of the protest movements and uprisings in different parts of the region and the differences in terms of the evolution of the events and dynamics. It was underlined that "each individual Arab state has had a distinct identity based on separate origin, political history, and extreme variance in per capita income, in ethnic mix, social norms, educational systems, and in many cases religious distinctiveness" (Harik, 2006, p. 682). Thus, their diverging paths can be regarded as a more likely result rather than a surprising event. The peculiarities of each country and their contextual differences should be analyzed carefully in that sense.

The Arab Uprisings turned into a combination of different cases after some turning points and dramatic shifts in particular countries of the region. After these events, the gap between expectations towards the popular movements and realities on the ground inevitably widened. The different experiences were summarized as follows:

> Up to this time, rulers in some parts of the Arab world such as Tunisia, Egypt (twice), Libya and Yemen have been dethroned from the mantle of leadership; civil rebellions have erupted in countries like Syria and Bahrain; major protests to show dissatisfactions with the government have broken out in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Sudan; and similar but small scale protests also engulfed places like Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Western Sahara, and the Palestinian territories (Abdel Salam, 2015, p. 121).

There were some common motivations for the protestors in each country and the uprisings obviously inspired one another but "each uprising was a national uprising" (Pierce, 2014, p. 74). Therefore, the different outcomes were more probable as they were realized because of the contextual differences in each case.

3. The Role of External Actors in the Arab Uprisings

The external actors have always played a role in the regional affairs of the Middle East because of the political and economic significance of the region so much so that controlling the Middle East was considered as the indicator of leading international politics. Thus, an extraordinary phenomenon for the region like the Arab Uprisings cannot be analyzed without addressing the role of outside powers. Although there were some important domestic motivations behind the protest movements such as problems in socioeconomic conditions and displeasure of the people for their long-term rulers, the involvement of the external powers and their policies began to play more or less decisive roles for the dynamics and evolution of the uprisings in different cases. Furthermore, there were even some claims about the role of external actors on the emergence of the uprisings. For example, the eruption of the Arab Uprisings was considered as a failure of the EU policies and their triggering effect on the opposition groups (Hollis, 2012, p. 81). The EU or the European actors did not prefer to adopt a central position about the Middle Eastern issues so a central role cannot be attributed to them in that sense but they had close relations with the regional actors on the ground in the previous periods. Therefore, the main motivations of the protest movements and the relative weights of domestic or external factors were also controversial. Tariq Ramadan proposes a middle path between the idea of completely internally driven movements and the conspiracy theories. For him, "to suggest that these events came from nowhere is naïve" (Ramadan, 2012, p. 9). He points out the role of Western experts in educating the leaders of some social movements; thus, they could be more successful in mobilization of the people. It was also argued that "the Arab Uprisings were initially relatively peaceful, home grown affairs but the next wave of protests quickly turned nasty" and external actors involved in the following period (Ghilés, 2012, p. 15). The role of external actors in the later period was decisive and undeniable but their role for the emergence of the protests was not so clear. As a result, the role of external factors should not be ignored in both the emergence and evolution of the movements.

In terms of the external actors for the Middle East, the US and European states come to the forefront depending on their activities and special relations with the regional actors. Russia and some non-Arab regional countries such as Turkey and Iran can be considered as other prominent external actors for the Middle East. Since the Western countries express some values and norms as their priorities in their foreign policy agendas, the people participating in the initial protests of Arab Uprisings expected strong support of the Western actors on behalf of them. However, the policies of the Western powers during the whole process created disappointment among the Arab people and led to some doubts about the sincerity of their discourse. The Western actors pursued tactical policies and prioritized their interests instead of a principle or moral-based foreign policy: "Tactically, the United States resorted to the 'case-by-case' approach and Europe chose the 'wait and see' approach, albeit with different, fragmented and heterogeneous reactions in addressing the Arab Spring" (Metawe, 2013, p. 143). The Western actors have always been criticized by the scholars and the Middle Eastern people because of the gap between their discourse and policies on the ground. Put differently, their foreign policies based on prioritizing their geopolitical and strategic interests rather than some basic values and principles increased criticisms. Consequently, the policies of the Western powers were far from meeting the expectations of people especially in terms of democracy promotion and supporting human rights and values so they remained to be at the target of criticisms due to the gap between their discourse and policies.

4. The EU as an Actor in International Relations

The EU is a unique actor in international relations because of its institutional character, member states and the role it plays in different contexts. Although some of its members are among the most powerful individual actors in the regional and global affairs, the performance and special role of the EU as an actor has always been open to question. There is no doubt that the EU, with its supranational identity, can be seen as one of the most successful examples of regional alliances in the institutional base. Furthermore, the sphere of influence for the EU goes beyond the European territories; thus, it is not possible to limit its place in the international arena just around Europe and its neighborhood. Apart from that, the EU was established upon certain shared norms and values some of which are human rights, liberties, rule of law, and democracy; and it has a strong discourse about spreading those values to other parts of the world starting with its neighborhood. This normative character also enriches the features and toolkit for the EU. However, the actual performance of the EU towards different regional and global affairs has long been debated and criticized. In other words, the EU could not meet the expectations in most cases and there emerged a gap between its rhetoric and practice through time. Therefore, the first thing before evaluating its policies during the Arab Uprisings will be to focus on different aspects of the EU as an actor in the international arena and to determine under which category the EU can be put according to different classifications. More specifically, I will try to deal with the question of whether the EU could play an effective and decisive role expected from a global actor and a normative power. It will also include the evaluation of its performance and practices on the ground especially towards the different cases of the Arab Uprisings.

The first aspect in terms of EU's stance in international relations will be its global character and I will use different ideas asserted in the literature related to the theoretical and practical dimensions of the EU as a global actor. EU's "natural inclination towards cooperation and the complex character of its decision-making procedures" were depicted as the important components of the EU foreign policy (Lexmann, 2017, p. 49). Joakim Kreutz puts forward the main idea which lies beneath under the global character of the EU: "The EU should be considered as an actor with global ambitions in its foreign policy, meaning that studies focusing on just its relations in the near neighborhood may be too narrow" (Kreutz, 2015, p. 207). Actually, state of being a global actor not only includes getting involved in different affairs in all over the world but also being an influential actor in the outcomes or evolution of the events in those affairs; therefore, effectiveness is as important as involvement and it has always been the main point of reference for the criticisms towards the EU. The EU has tried to adjust its mechanisms and institutions in order to increase its effectiveness in the international affairs because there are certain reasons, including some institutional or decision-making mechanisms, preventing the EU from acting rapidly and more effectively. The Lisbon Treaty, which was put into practice in 2009, was regarded as a positive step in that sense (Fabbrini 2014; Irimie 2014). Irimie claims that "the Lisbon Treaty has upgraded the EU's role as a global actor" and she explains her argument by addressing the regulations of the Treaty: "The Lisbon Treaty considerably strengthens the EU as an international actor, through the precise provision of the EU's legal personality, with its own external instruments to implement the CFSP and its own institutions, and by the re-organization of the EU's diplomatic relations" (Irimie, 2014, p. 105). As a result, the EU is a global actor and its involvement in the regional and global affairs can be seen as an indicator of its global role.

On the other hand, the practices and policies of the EU have been far from being satisfactory and meeting the expectations from a global actor. Thus, it almost always seemed passive or indecisive especially towards the more complicated issues.

Furthermore, the level of effectiveness of the EU policies compared to other global actors such as the US, Russia and China is hotly debated. Of course, the EU has some limitations due to its organizational character and it resembles to the international institutions like the UN rather than the nation-states but the potential and power of the European states increase expectations from the EU. There are many reasons for the EU's relative passivity in the international affairs. Among them, the diversity of interests among the European states and institutional mechanism of the EU can be highlighted. For example, Schumacher points out the impact of the diverging interests among the EU members despite some improvements like gradual supranational features with the Lisbon Treaty (Schumacher, 2011, p. 115). In addition, the mechanism in the EU was thought as the reason for its inactive role: "Without revisiting the intergovernmental basis of the EU foreign and defence policies, it will be unrealistic to expect a more significant role for the Union in international politics in the future" (Fabbrini, 2014, p. 178). Because of the diverging interests and policies among the EU members, the foreign policy preferences of the European actors were formulated as "more of the member states, less of the EU" for 2010s (Persson, 2020, p. 148). Apart from that, the migration influx from the Arab countries towards the European countries led to a significant and alarming problem for the European actors. The EU's migration policies resulted in "reduced solidarity and importance as a global actor" due to shifting responsibilities to third parties so the migration crisis became another source of questioning EU's global actorness (Yilmaz-Elmas, 2020, p. 168). The EU-Turkey refugee deal served the global role of the EU but it undermined the normative characteristics of the Union and it did not fully worked as it was planned. In short, the EU is certainly a global actor but there are contradictory views about the effectiveness of the EU policies. The Arab Uprisings emerged as a great challenge not only for the regional order but also for the policies of the regional and global actors. Therefore, the role of the EU as an actor in international relations will be discussed while focusing on different cases of the Arab Uprisings.

The second aspect of the EU's foreign policy is its normative character and there are many positive or negative comments on this dimension. The concept of "Normative Power Europe" was formulated by Ian Manner, in his famous 2002 article, as follows: "EU represents a new kind of power pursuing normative aims (as opposed to self-interested material gains) through predominantly normative means (as opposed to predominantly military and economic means)" (Diez, 2013, p. 194). Ian Manners argues that Manners explains three different meanings of normative power as "its emphasis on normative theory, a form of power that is ideational rather than material or physical, and a characterization of an ideal type of global actor" (Manners, 2013, pp. 308-309). For Manners (2008), the EU is a normative power because "it changes the norms, standards and prescriptions of world politics based on state-centricity" (p. 45). He points out that "the EU normative power derives from three sources: historical context, hybrid polity and political-legal constitutionalism (Whitman, 2013, p. 175). Moreover, he underlines the fact that "The EU placed universal norms and principles at the center of its relations with its member states and the world through a number of policies, criteria and legal frameworks" (Karakır, 2014, p. 35). The norms, values and principles the EU attribute significant importance are diverse but commitment to democracy promotion, multilateralism, encouragement of regional cooperation, introduction of human rights to agreements, focusing on rule of law and political dialogue, strengthening international institutions and concerning security, peace, equality, prosperity, social solidarity and good governance constitute the prominent elements of EU's normative power (Manners, 2008, p. 46; Oktav and Celikaksoy, 2015, p. 410; Fioramonti and Poletti, 2008, p. 168). Kreutz attracts attention to the "humanitarian concerns" in the EU foreign policy: "Foreign policy can be based on normative concerns rather than realist objectives and suggests that

the EU may not be unique in this respect" (Kreutz, 2015, p. 213). Bengtsson and Elgström (2012) define the EU as a "normative great power" in the sense that it "influences the thinking of other actors in the international system rather than through coercive means to achieve its goals" (p. 95). This definition based on persuasion instead of coercion reminds Joseph Nye's concept of "soft power".

Since the EU has a strong discourse about its norms and values, this normative character gains importance in the eyes of the people and this creates more expectations especially among the victims of humanitarian problems. Therefore, the EU becomes the target of criticisms when it could not play an active role to overcome the humanitarian problems. Lenz (2013) describes the ideational influence of Europe as an indirect process of socialization and emulation, and "the EU ideational diffusion rarely leads to similar or even comparable institutional practices and outcomes" due to the structural differences among regions (p. 212). Furthermore, democracy promotion is one of the tools for spreading the norms throughout the world but some policies clashing with the idea of democratization like improving relations with the authoritarian regimes lead to ideas about the failure of normative power of the European Union. This normative power is considered in relation with the EU's soft power. Karen Smith argues that "the EU's soft power is still quite formidable" despite the existence of some problems such as 2008 Euro crisis and the criticized policies of the EU during the Arab Uprisings (Smith, 2014, p. 109). Furthermore, Kavalski and Cho (2018) rejects the Euro-centric frame of the concept by comparing the European and Chinese definitions of the "normal" and they underline the fact that "normative powers are not in the business of enforcing orders over other actors, but of engaging other actors in shared practices" (p. 50).

There were some other concepts that were used to explain the role of EU in international relations. The concept of "civilian power", first offered by François Duchene in the 1970s, refers to "a power pursuing its interest by non-military means and aiming to civilize international politics by making war a non-acceptable instrument" (Diez, 2013, p. 197). It can be claimed that the concept of normative power includes many aspects attributed to "civilian power"; however, it differs from civilian power in the sense of using military power and binding to international norms (Manners, 2013, p. 309). Whereas some leading scholars such as Duchene and Jean Monnet attributed the particularity of European power to its civilian character, many others supported the idea of compatibility between Europe's normative power and certain military capabilities (Tiilikainen, 2014, p. 128). Parallel to idea of the latter group, Wichmann (2007) reaches the conclusion that "the EU displays elements of both a normative and a strategic power" in terms of bureaucratic politics, foreign policy objectives and outcomes (p. 99). Wood (2011), on the other hand, defines the EU as a "pragmatic power" by giving the examples of its partnerships with Russia and China and he underlines that the EU reflects a composite character instead of a unified actor (p. 242). Apart from that, the EU was depicted as an "ethical power" in terms of contributing to "a better world" (Aggestam, 2008, p. 2). Manners (2008) also used the term "normative ethics" but he points out the need for principles, actions and impacts on other actors in order to achieve the EU's ethical mission in that sense (p. 60). The EU was considered as a "soft imperialist" due to the importance of values and norms as well as the style of negotiations based on imposition rather than a symmetric way (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2005, p. 535). Additionally, there were some other concepts attributed to the EU such as "realist power", "quiet superpower", "trade power" or "responsible power". They generally point out the primacy of economic and financial relations in the EU policies and concerning the values and norms besides the political and strategic interests. As a result, the EU is a unique actor having different characteristics so many concepts were used in order to define it with its various features including its contradictory aspects and policies.

As I have mentioned above, there are serious criticisms against the effectiveness of EU's normative power depending on the policies and practices of the EU as an actor. The EU and its member states are mostly criticized because of prioritizing interests rather than the normative concerns. The clash of interests and values is one of the most problematic issues that different actors have to encounter in particular contexts. Since the EU is a normative power, it encounters such dilemmas more often than other actors. However, the general perception about the policies of the EU is its preference of the interests rather than values and norms when they clash so the EU could not play the role of an effective normative power in most cases. Bishara (2019) considers the European position skeptical both for the current period and the long run (p. 42). The existence of such arguments shows the low performance of the European actors in the previous periods. It was also argued that "EU democracy promotion sequences security first, democracy second so it prioritizes the building of security and stabilization instead of democratic institution building especially in post-conflict contexts" (Grimm, 2018, p. 16). Webber (2016) addresses the extent of the EU's success in promoting the norms as the measure of its normative power and claims that "the EU is not so much a transformative, normative, quiet, trade or 'realist' power', but rather a declining one" (p. 46). The Arab Uprisings were also a challenge for the EU and they strengthened the general perception about the EU, which is criticized for preferring the interests while clashing with the norms. Thus, it was considered as a failure for a normative actor (Karacasulu and Karakır 2014; Karakır 2014). It can be said that the social upheavals or regional transformations as well as stable relations with different actors can all be seen as tests for the actors in the international arena. They show the practices and policies of the actors rather than their discourses so they are much more useful points of reference to evaluate the role and place of an actor. The Arab Uprisings have been one of the most current and relevant tests for the EU foreign policy in that sense.

5. The Foreign Policy of the EU towards the Arab Uprisings

The EU is considered as a unique actor in international relations due to its supranational identity. Since the member states voluntarily transfer part of their sovereignty to the supranational level, the EU constitutes the prominent example of regional alliance and integration of states, and it has different features compared to nation-states. The supranational identity of the EU affects the process of foreign policy making in terms of objectives, decision-making and outcomes. According to Whitman (2013), "the foreign policy of the EU is set between three dimensions: Member states, the supranational EU and the cosmo-political world society" (p. 175). Despite the differences of interests and priorities among the member states, it is generally stated that the EU has a united foreign policy independent of the member states' positions after the coming into effect of the Lisbon Treaty and the establishment of the European External Action's Service as a diplomatic tool. The development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy in the Lisbon Treaty led to new debates about the EU as an actor in international relations (Diez, 2014, p. 320). These developments in the foreign policy making are crucial steps for further integration of member states but they obviously cannot guarantee to act as a unified actor especially for the conflict-ridden cases where the member states have clashing interests. The process of the Arab Uprisings can be regarded as an example of such situations. Furthermore, the normative power discourse in the EU attracts attention of the other actors to the foreign policy decisions and outcomes of the EU. Diez (2014) explains the relationship between discourse and foreign policy in the way that "the normative power discourse sets the limits of legitimate foreign policy and these limits need to be constantly rearticulated as part of a struggle about the borders of the

discourse" (p. 330). As a result, each foreign policy case, including those belong to the Arab Uprisings, should be considered as a part of this struggle. The struggle also helps shape the identity and interests of the EU. Apart from that, Kreutz (2015) focuses on the EU foreign policy actions in response to humanitarian atrocities but he also underlines the impact of geostrategic concerns on the EU actions (p. 195). Therefore, the EU foreign policy can only be explained through a multi-dimensional and multi-causal way. The cases where the EU norms and interests do not go hand in hand may lead to different EU foreign policy actions and outcomes reflecting the priorities of the EU.

The Arab Uprisings emerged as a great challenge for the EU like all other external actors getting involved in the Middle Eastern affairs so it was not so surprising that the EU and the European states were caught unprepared in the beginning. Before focusing on the details of the analyses of the scholars about the EU's foreign policy, it is better to present the traditional interests and priorities of the EU in the Middle East. The importance of preserving stability in the region for the European priorities such as "energy security, bilateral trade and economic relations and containments of migration" was argued (Karacasulu and Karakır, 2014, p. 209). This analysis summarizes the main points about the EU agenda in the region. Stability has been the key word not only for the EU and European states but also for all the external actors in the region. They established good relations with the authoritarian rulers and they aimed to get more benefits by preservation of the existing regimes before. Therefore, the challenge of the Arab Uprisings against this regional order created shock for the external actors, including the EU. While they were cautious in the beginning, they tried to readjust their foreign policies according to the changes on the ground. "The Uprisings induced a radical change of the choices in matter of EU foreign policy" in that sense (Rouet, 2014, p. 9). As it was mentioned in the previous parts, the Arab Uprisings cannot be seen as an undivided whole so the responses of an actor, the EU in this article, should be analyzed case-by-case before reaching more general conclusions.

The Arab Uprising started with the self-destruction of Mohammed Bouazizi in Tunisia and spread to the other countries in the region. The EU could not show strong reactions due to some reasons and preferred to adopt a wait-and-see approach. It was interpreted in different ways in the literature: "Initial reactions to the uprisings showed European reluctance and indecisiveness, as the EU and certain Member States were unsure about which side to support" (Wouters and Duquet, 2013, p. 238). This initial reaction was generally explained by lack of a coherent policy and common understanding among the EU member states and the later developments and contradicting policies among them strengthened this view. After the initial shock was overcome, the EU and European powers tried to determine their policies carefully but more confidently compared to the first period. Since the long rule of the authoritarian leaders came to an end in a short period in Tunisia and Egypt, the European actors preferred to choose their side with the protestors instead of defending the authoritarian leaders. It was obviously pragmatic and tactical way of dealing with the crisis. In the following period, a military intervention under the leadership of General al-Sisi targeted the Morsi administration in Egypt and Morsi was removed from the office in 2013. Against the overthrow of Morsi as a result of military intervention, EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton condemned the violence and urged "all sides to return to the democratic process and an inclusive new administration" ("World Leaders", 2013). Obviously, this statement did not mean a rejection of military intervention and support for democracy in principle. As a result, this interest-based policy of the EU and European actors increased criticisms against their democracy promotion. Therefore, the Egyptian case created another disappointment for the normative power of the EU.

Libya became a critical point for the European actors because the European states preferred to pursue divergent policies instead of a common policy. As it was demonstrated in the literature, discrepancies within the EU became apparent with the Libyan case and the possibility of intervention:

> While the president of the European Council affirmed that the goal of the intervention should have been the regime change, the HR on the contrary delineated a less confrontational approach with the Libyan regime. As permanent members of the UNSC, both French and UK governments left their initial cautious position to a more active intervention in Libya (Fabbrini, 2014, p. 184).

Germany, on the other hand, openly distanced itself from any kind of military intervention. It has deliberately and explicitly distinguished itself as a distinct a foreign policy actor in that case. Edmund Ratka addresses to the difficulties for a common foreign policy in the EU: "Differences in interests among the member states persist, the EU institutions in charge of external relations such as the High Representative and the External Action Service have been rather disappointing, and the EU's financial and currency crisis is tying up both attention and money" (Ratka, 2012, p. 69). Although different European states had good relations with the Qaddafi regime before the eruption of the Uprisings, their strategies and policies differed from one another. They preferred to take critical decisions after the first wave of upheavals in the Middle East. Libya has been a breaking point in that sense and showed the divergences among the European states. After the end of the Qaddafi regime, the conflicts in Libya and political instability turned into a civil war. The main result of the Arab Uprisings and civil war in Libya was "a main influx of migrants" especially towards the Mediterranean basin (Wardin, 2018, p. 223). Although the EU could react to the immediate threats through some operations, the continuing impacts of the civil war and fragile state in Libya required a long-term strategy and more comprehensive approach. As a result, the humanitarian problems and security risks stemming from the situation in Libya could not be resolved due to ongoing conflicts.

Syria has also been one of the most critical tests for the foreign policies of the EU and other actors. The civil war started in the beginning of 2011 has continued until today and there emerged different dynamics affecting the policies of the actors in this long period. Since Russia, Iran, the US and Saudi Arabia have involved in the struggle and also there are several non-state actors fighting in Syria, the European states and the EU did not prefer to play a leading role in this complicated atmosphere. In the initial period of the uprisings in Syria, the core of the EU's response to the conflict in Syria was based on imposing sophisticated sanctions against the regime (Portela, 2012, p. 151). There is no doubt that these sanctions did not produce direct or decisive outcomes for the regime and protestors as well. In the later period, the number of migrants from Syria to the other countries increased through time and European countries were among the main destinations that the Syrian migrants preferred to go and live with their families. This new wave of migrants alarmed the European states and the EU in order to determine a long-term strategy for the migration issue. Actually, it was not the first time the Europeans had to deal with the migrants but huge number of migrants increased the anxiety and perception of threat among them. Therefore, migration issue or the Syrian refugees have been one of the most prominent and debated issues in the political agenda of the European decision-makers. They could not produce a common policy in this case either. While some states like Germany took initiative in order to find a solution for the migration issue in collaboration with Turkey, some other European states preferred to close their borders against the migrants. The initial policy of the EU strengthened this anti-migrant group because the EU put into practice two methods to solve the problem: "the externalization of border control and increased surveillance" (Benam, 2011, p. 191). The

German initiative resulted in the readmission agreement with Turkey but it was still far from reaching a permanent solution despite the possible impacts of Turkey's collaboration with the EU and contribution to EU's global power in the next period (Wodka and Kuzmicz, 2013). The readmission agreement also provided some opportunities but the issue turned into a "migration paradox" in EU-Turkey relations (Benvenuti, 2017, p. 12). It was also heavily criticized by other actors in Europe and the migration issue turned into a crisis for the EU and European states. In addition to the need for "controlling the outpouring of refugees", "dealing with the growing threat of terrorism, mainly the ISIL threat" constituted the other main issue and priority determining the EU's approach to the Syrian conflict (Nas, 2019, p. 45). The need for an EU common foreign policy and coordination with other intergovernmental entities against two main threats was also pointed out (Martinez and Martinez, 2017, p. 290). Isleyen points out the growing securitization of the issue in the EU discourse. For her, the EU's counter-terrorism discourse addresses the events under the framework of the Arab Uprisings as "security risks with possible security risks for the EU" while positing them as a chance for non-violent transformation in the region (Isleyen, 2017, p. 71). European concern for security risks and increasing number of foreign fighters and migrants were mostly related to the deepening crisis in Syria (Tausch, 2019, p. 65). Different policies and perspectives among the European states not only indicated the existing divergences but also they deepened the crisis within the EU.

Having presented the EU reactions and policies towards the different cases of the Arab Uprisings, it is now possible to evaluate the general policy of the EU and the European states. As it was mentioned above, the Arab Uprisings emerged as a great challenge for the EU and each case was a critical test for the performance and practices of the EU. However, the EU's reactions against the Uprisings were unsatisfactory in general, and disappointing in some cases. Schumacher summarizes the role of EU in the Middle East: "The EU continues to be torn between being a relevant political actor in the MENA region and a simple spectator that continues to be overwhelmed by local and regional political developments" (Schumacher, 2011, p. 108). Moreover, the author underlines the importance of "the imbalance between divergence and convergence of interest" as the key impediment to greater EU actor capability. Apart from that, the normative aspect of the EU policies has lost its popularity because of its secondary importance compared to the interests of the EU and European states. This perception was strengthened during the whole Arab Uprisings process: "The ethical dimension of EU foreign policy is functional only when it does not contradict with its stability-related interests" (Karakır, 2014, p. 56). In other words, the victory of power politics over the normative dynamics has been accepted after several tests. It was claimed that the Arab Uprisings "highlighted the weakness of the EU as a promoter of values and normative power, and inconsistency in pursuing these values" (Gora, 2019, p. 37). Furthermore, "the EU's reaction to the Uprisings revealed its limited capacity to promote political change" (Thyen, 2018, p. 5). The Arab Uprisings ended in failure for the normative dimension of the EU in that sense. There were some humanitarian policies and practices during the process and they were exceptional cases over which the European states could create a common policy but they were not sufficient for being an effective normative power. The EU assumes an active role in the MENA region. However, the policies of the EU and its low level of effectiveness compared to other global actors during the Arab Uprisings will most probably increase negative comments and views towards the EU in the long-run so the EU has to make radical changes in order to get more credibility. In terms of the EU foreign policy, the cases of the Arab Uprisings have shown that the EU should strengthen its mechanisms in addition to the ones established with the Lisbon Treaty in order to decide and implement

common policies especially towards more complicated cases where the Member states have diverging interests.

6. Conclusion

The Arab Uprisings emerged as a great challenge for the EU and other actors as well as the regional order. It has turned into a test for the role and stance of the EU in international relations. The EU responded the movements cautiously and it presented a less active profile during the whole process. While the leading EU members began to take bold steps and make initiatives, lack of common understanding among the EU members and their divergent interests increased the gap between the expectations and realities for the EU as an institution. The policies of the EU towards the different cases of the Arab Uprisings strengthened the negative perception of the EU and confirmed the criticisms towards it. In other words, the Arab Uprisings created a window of opportunity for the EU in order to play a more decisive role as a global actor and to put its normative aspects into practice throughout the region but the EU missed that opportunity. On the contrary, the Arab Uprisings showed the inconsistency in the EU's normative dimension. Additionally, the EU could not act as a collective body and this dividedness reflected the problems and internal crisis within the EU. The low level of effectiveness during the Arab Uprisings increased the debates over the EU as a global actor and a normative power. The effects of the Arab Uprisings are still ongoing but the failure in the performance of the EU will certainly have long-term results. The refugee problem alarmed the European states and the EU faced new problems coming out of the Uprisings. The current situation shows that the EU members and their leaders have to cooperate to overcome the new wave of problems. Their will to cooperate will be decisive for both coping with the problems and establishing a better future for the EU.

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Özet

Tunus'ta başlayan Arap İsyanlarının Mısır'a, Libya'ya, Suriye'ye ve Ortadoğu'daki diğer ülkelere yayılmasıyla bölgesel bir nitelik kazanması, bölgede bir değişim ve dönüşüm dalgasını başlattığı gibi küresel ve bölgesel aktörlerin politikalarını yeniden şekillendirmesini zorunlu kılmıştır. Avrupa Birliği'nin bölgedeki aktörlerle yakın ekonomik ve siyasi ilişkileri bulunmasına rağmen kurulan ilişkilerin bölgede uzun yıllardır devam eden otoriter istikrar temeline dayanması, Avrupa Birliği'nin Arap İsyanları sürecine hazırlıksız

yakalanmasına neden olmuştur. Özellikle rejim değişikliği ve otoriter liderlerin devrilmesine yönelik siyasi taleplerin oluşmasında ABD ve Avrupalı aktörlerin etkisine yönelik iddialar söz konusu olsa da Arap İsyanlarının ortaya çıkışında sosyoekonomik faktörlerin yanında uzun yıllardır devam eden otoriter yönetimlerden duyulan memnuniyetsizlik gibi iç etkenlerin daha ön planda olduğu söylenebilir. Avrupa Birliği, hem ortaya çıkan bölgesel değişime hazırlıksız yakalanmanın hem de üye ülkeler arasındaki çıkar çatışmaları ve ortak bir dış politika belirlemenin güçlüğü gibi sebeplerle Arap İsyanlarının başlangıcında temkinli bir yol izlemeyi tercih etti. Tunus ve Mısır gibi ülkelerdeki otoriter liderlerin görevi bırakmaları olumlu karşılanmakla birlikte Avrupa Birliği "bekle-gör" siyaseti izlemeye devam etti. Bölgedeki aktörlerle yakın siyasi ve ekonomik ilişkilerine rağmen Avrupa Birliği'nin bu süreçte nispeten pasif bir politika izlemesi, küresel bir aktör olma iddiasını olumsuz etkileyen bir durum oldu. Arap İsyanları, bu anlamda Avrupa Birliği'nin komşu coğrafyasında ortaya çıkan ve Avrupa Birliği'nin küresel rolünü ve etkisini kanıtlama anlamında bir fırsat penceresi olarak görülebilir. Ancak Avrupa Birliği, aktif ve öncü bir rol oynamak yerine daha pasif ve temkinli hareket etmeyi tercih ederek hem küresel bir aktör olma iddiasının sorgulanmasına yol açtı, hem de değişim talep eden halkların Avrupa Birliği'nden beklentilerinin karşılıksız kalmasına ve kendisine yönelik eleştirilerin artmasına zemin hazırlamış oldu. Bir başka deyişle, Avrupa Birliği Arap İsyanlarına yönelik dış politikasıyla küresel ve öncü bir aktör olarak ön plana çıkma fırsatını iyi değerlendiremedi.

Arap İsyanlarının ilk ortaya çıktığı Tunus ve Mısır gibi ülkelerde protestoların başlamasından kısa süre sonra liderlerin devrilmesi, dış aktörler açısından da büyük bir meydan okumanın yaşanmamasına ve izlenecek politikanın belirginleşmesine yol açtı. Avrupa Birliği de bu ülkelerde yaşanan lider değişimini olumlu karşıladığını dile getirerek pragmatik bir tutum takındı. Avrupalı aktörlerin daha aktif bir politika izlediği Libya örneği ise Avrupa Birliği'nin durumunu daha iyi yansıtan bir olay olarak ön plana çıktı. Libya'daki Kaddafi rejimine yönelik operasyon yapılmasını destekleyen ülkelerin başında Fransa ve İngiltere gelirken, Almanya böyle bir müdahaleye açık bir destek vermeyen bir pozisyon aldı. Daha sonra operasyonun NATO çerçevesinde yapılması kararlaştırılınca Avrupalı ve diğer birçok aktörün de destek verdiği şekilde operasyonun kapsamı genişletilebildi. Libya örneği Avrupa Birliği üyesi ülkelerin bölgeye yönelik çıkarlarının ve politikalarının tam olarak uyuşmadığını ve bu nedenle AB'nin ortak bir dış politika geliştirmekte zorlandığını gösterdi. Suriye'de ise Esed rejimine karşı oluşan muhalif hareketlerin ve protestoların gücü liderin ve rejimin devrilmesine yetmediği için ülkede yaşanan mücadele bir iç savaşa dönüştü ve uzun zamana yayıldı. AB'nin Suriye'ye yönelik dış yaptırım merkezli politikası ciddi bir sonuç üretmedi ve ülkedeki durumu değiştiren bir rol oynamadı. Rusya, İran, ABD ve Türkiye gibi sahada doğrudan yer alan ve aktif bir rol oynayan aktörlerin yanında AB'nin rolü yine oldukça pasif ve sınırlı kaldı. Dahası, AB ülkeleri Suriye kaynaklı yoğun bir mülteci akını, artan terörizm dalgası ve yabancı savaşçılar gibi yeni problemlerle karşı karşıya kaldı. Özellikle mülteci krizi, AB'nin geleceğini de ilgilendiren önemli bir mesele haline dönüştü. Bunun yanında 2013 yılında Mısır'da yaşanan askeri müdahaleye karşı AB'nin seçilmiş lideri ve demokrasiyi şartsız bir şekilde savunmaması ve genel anlamda etkin bir rol oynamaması, AB'nin demokratik değerlere ve demokrasiye yönelik vurgusunun sorgulanmasına yol açtı.

"Ekmek, özgürlük, adalet ve insan onuru" gibi değerleri slogan haline getirerek ortaya çıkan Arap İsyanları, AB'nin normatif bir güç olma yönündeki iddiası açısından da bir test niteliği taşıyordu. Arap İsyanlarını ortaya çıkan iç dinamiklerin AB'nin savunduğu evrensel insan hakları, özgürlük ve demokrasi gibi değerlerle genel anlamda örtüştüğü söylenebilir. Bu nedenle bölge halklarının normatif bir güç olarak gördükleri AB'den kendilerine destek vermeleri için beklentileri yüksekti. Buna karşın, AB ve Avrupalı ülkeler savundukları temel değerler ve normlar yerine bölgedeki siyasi istikrarı ve çıkarlarını önceleyen politikalar izleyerek hem etkin bir normatif güç olma iddialarının büyük ölçüde

zarar görmesine hem de AB'nin sergilediği performansın beklentilerin çok uzağında kaldığına yönelik eleştirilerin artmasına neden oldular.

Sonuç olarak; AB'nin Arap İsyanlarına yönelik izlemiş olduğu dış politika, küresel bir aktör ve normatif bir güç olma iddiasındaki AB'nin politikalarının sorgulanmasına ve kendisine yönelik eleştirilerin artmasına yol açtı. AB, izlemiş olduğu politikalarla bölgede öncü bir rol oynayamadığı gibi Ortadoğu'daki çatışmalardan kaynaklanan yeni krizler ve problemlerle yüz yüze gelmek zorunda kaldı. Komşu coğrafyalarda meydana gelen gelişmelerin AB'nin geleceği açısından önemli kararlar almayı ve yeni meydan okumalara her zaman hazırlıklı olmayı gerektirdiği, Arap İsyanlarıyla yeniden anlaşılmış oldu. Lizbon Anlaşması'yla geliştirilmiş olan ortak dış politika vizyonu ve mekanizmalarının yeni adımlarla ve politikalarla desteklenmesi gerektiği de ortaya çıktı.