

# Understanding the Continuity and Change in the European Union's Policies on the Mediterranean and the MENA Region after the Arab "Spring" Uprisings

Arap Baharı Sonrası Avrupa Birliği'nin  
Akdeniz ve MENA Bölgesine Yönelik Politikalarındaki  
Devamlılık ve Değişimi Anlamak

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## **Abstract**

*The literature on traditional and critical security studies mostly point out at a paradigm shift concerning the nature of security threats and challenges either caused or impacted upon by state, non-state, and transnational actors. From a security perspective, the European Union (EU) has been one of the most influential actors in its southern neighborhood covering the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and North Africa (MENA) regions particularly due to its active foreign policy influence mechanisms including European Strategy, European Neighborhood Policy, and most recently through its Global Strategy. Nonetheless, the EU foreign policies in the MENA region after the Arab uprisings have not been very successful in terms of promoting social, political, and economic stability and cooperation; and thus, it achieved mixed results instead of integrated outcomes. This paper addresses the difficulties and expectation-capability gaps in the EU's foreign policies in the Middle East with a particular emphasis on the changing security*

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*structure and threats in the post-Arab Spring period. Therefore, this paper aims to assess the effectiveness of the Union's regional strategies through the evaluation of its policies on volatile regions such as the Middle East.*

**Keywords:** *European Union, Middle East, Arab Spring, Security, Global Strategy.*

### **Öz**

*Geleneksel ve eleştirel güvenlik çalışmalarına ilişkin literatür günümüzde yaşanan risk ve tehditler ile devlet, devlet dışı ve uluslararası aktörleri etkileyen güvenlik sorunlarında gözlemlenen paradigma değişimine dikkat çekmektedir. Güvenlik perspektifinden bakıldığında, Avrupa Birliği (AB); Avrupa Stratejisi, Avrupa Komşuluk Politikası ve yakın dönemde oluşturulan Küresel Strateji gibi sahip olduğu dış politika etki mekanizmalarıyla kendi bölgesinde ki en etkili aktörlerden biri olarak görülmektedir. AB'nin Orta Doğu'ya yönelik politikaları ise sosyal, siyasi ve ekonomik istikrarın sağlanması ve iş birliğinin geliştirilmesi açısından beklendiği kadar başarılı olamamış; bütünlük çıkarımlar elde etmek yerine farklı sonuçlar doğurmuştur. Bu çalışma; Orta Doğu politikaları kapsamında Birliğin politika beklentileri ile politika uygulama kapasitesi arasındaki boşluğu Arap Baharı sonrası dönemde ortaya çıkan güvenlik mimarisi ve güvenlik tehditleri üzerinden değerlendirmektedir. Bu kapsamda çalışma, AB'nin Orta Doğu gibi kırılgan bölgelere yönelik politikalarının incelenmesi vasıtasıyla Birliğin bölgesel stratejilerinin etkinliğini değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Avrupa Birliği, Orta Doğu, Arap Baharı, Güvenlik, Küresel Strateji.*

### **Introduction**

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the wider Mediterranean region has always been a central geopolitical spot for external intervention due to the conspicuous regional dynamics involving political, economic, societal, and security matters emerging

from asymmetrical relationships among various regional actors. In fact, since the end of the Cold War, the major regional dynamics in the MENA have been structured around the penetration of authoritarian regimes and the diffusion of their power politics causing instability in the region. These interventions by external actors thus have been widely justified in the cause of creating a durable state system and building a stable regional order in the MENA, due to its geopolitical importance for the concerning external actors. Nowadays, the outlook of the Mediterranean and the MENA region embraces the exact situation of dynamic change in the lack of a security architecture steered by the increasing involvement of external powers such as the United States (US), Russia, Iran and Turkey that are engaged in armed conflicts.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, the major academic debates on the issue of external involvement on the region-building efforts in the MENA mainly concern the political strategies of the external powers in the formation of regional structures and their level of effectiveness.<sup>2</sup> This statement by no means indicates any strict equalization of the ability of the concerning external actors: in fact, these external actors such as the US, China, Russia and the European Union (EU) have always had different strategic objectives and agendas as well as capabilities that shape the local and regional transformation in the MENA region. In other words, even the impact of external powers has been a constant factor for the shaping of the MENA, their level of contribution and

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Strategic & International Studies, "The Strategic Seam Between Europe and the Middle East: Rethinking U.S. Bilateral and Regional Policies Towards the Mediterranean", <https://www.csis.org/events/strategic-seam-between-europe-and-middle-east-rethinking-us-bilateral-and-regional-policies> (Date of Access: 21.04.2018)

<sup>2</sup> Raymond Hinnebusch, "Foreign Policy in the Middle East", Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, (ed.), *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2014, 1-34; Karim Makdisi et al., "Regional Order from the Outside in: External Intervention, Regional Actors, Conflicts and Agenda in the MENA Region", *MENARA Methodology and Concepts Papers*, 2017, No.5, 1-24, pp. 1-2.

commitment has involved disparities based on their interest-based strategies and bilateral relationships with the local states of the region.<sup>3</sup>

For decades, the EU as a regional actor has served a pivotal function in numerous attempts of sustainable region-building in its neighborhood covering a wide geographical area inclusive of the Mediterranean along with the MENA region.<sup>4</sup> The EU's primary objective in this part of the world has always been to establish stability and to support the democratic transformation of the MENA states by bringing its soft power characteristics and normative transformational impact aiming to find peaceful and constructive solutions to conflicts and crises destabilizing the region.<sup>5</sup> However, the Arab "Spring" uprisings in 2011 have brought forward a very serious challenge for the EU's Mediterranean and MENA strategies: the capability gap of implementing effective security strategy consisted of short-, medium-, and long-term measures based on its own needs and objectives in the region. It would appear that the EU's already existing endemic problem of collective action due to the EU member states' conflict of interests and insufficient levels of solidarity in the area of foreign and security policy, the fragmented outlook of the EU institutions and the weak leadership has become more apparent in the aftermath of the uprisings. The institutional limitations and problems associated with the common policy-formation and decision-making in the EU, in turn, limited its ability to follow a solid foreign policy line specific to the MENA region and necessitated the adoption of a new comprehensible and resolute security approach.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> László Csicsmann et al., "The MENA Region In The Global Order: Actors, Contentious Issues and Integration Dynamics", *MENARA Methodology and Concepts Papers*, 2017, No.4, 1-23, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Rosemary Hollis, "Europe and the Middle East: Power by Stealth?", *International Affairs*, 1997, Vol: 73, No: 1, 15-29.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Blockmans, "Can the EU help prevent further conflict in Iraq and Syria?", *CEPS Commentary*, 2016, 1-5.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Hill, "The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualising Europe's International Role", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 1992, Vol: 31, No: 3, 305-332;

The research focus of this article is to assess the effectiveness of the security strategies of the EU as a regional actor in general and to discuss the EU's response to the changing security structure in the MENA region in the post-Arab uprisings period from the viewpoint of its latest strategies in specific. This paper primarily argues that the EU's attempts to bring stability and democracy in MENA region prior to the Arab uprisings in 2011 has to a great extent contributed to the achievement of multilateral and bilateral relations with the state actors in the region in support of regional stability; but the Arab uprisings in 2011 have created a continuity-change dichotomy in the EU's policies towards region. This dichotomy involves the understanding of the verifiable shift from the EU's normative approach to a more security-approach in defiance of altered outcomes. Therefore, the intention here is to show why and how the EU is searching for a new concrete strategic plan to solve the security problems directly affecting its own security structure and whether this neoteric approach will bring novelty to the decisiveness of the EU as an external actor in the Mediterranean and the MENA region.

This article thus unfolds as follows: First, a general overview of the EU as a regional actor in the Mediterranean and the MENA region will be presented in order to explain the historical development of its conventional methods on regional change in the context of its southern neighborhood. Second, the analysis of the EU's changing perspective on regional stability and security in the context of the Arab "Spring" uprisings will be presented in order to assess the continuity and change dichotomy in the EU's policies on the region and identify the key aspects of these dynamics. Third, a particular emphasis will be given on the EU's Global Strategy (EUGS) formulated in 2016 as the most recent security strategy in the

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Roy H. Ginsberg, "Conceptualizing the European Union as an International Actor: Narrowing the Theoretical Capability-Expectations Gap", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 1999, Vol: 37, No: 3, 429-454; Fredrik Söderbaum and Patrik Stålgren (eds.), *The European Union and the Global South*, Lynne Rie, Boulder, CO, 2010.

post-Arab uprising period with the intention to discuss whether the EUGS relates to the realities of the Mediterranean and the MENA region; and has the potential to serve as a grand strategy or even for a longstanding foreign policy doctrine.

### **1. EU as a Regional Actor in the Mediterranean and the MENA Region**

The idea behind the formation of a union in Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War was centered upon a single nested dynamic: bringing durable peace and preventing wars in the continent. The agelong European integration process started in the economic realm successively spilled over to other areas including the political and security realms of international relations. With the extension of issue areas covered in the EU's proposition, the Union soon became involved in the external political dynamics at the regional and global level, ultimately shedding light on its actorness in world politics. Nonetheless, the famous statement of the then-Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Eyskens, "Europe was an economic giant, a political dwarf and a military worm" symbolizes the general opinion on what type of an actor the EU is and justifies the motives for acquiring more effectiveness in the sphere of external relations in general and the Union's foreign and security policy in specific.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to the economic and political integration process, the formation of a foreign and security policy has been overly time-consuming for the EU. It was only with the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 that the EU successfully set a new pillar in its institutional structure -the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP);<sup>8</sup> conducted its first "operational" external missions in 2003; and included humanitarian aid and rescue tasks along with extended

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<sup>7</sup> Mark Corner, *The European Union: An Introduction*, 2014, I. B. Tauris, London and New York, p. 170.

<sup>8</sup> Barış Özdal, *Avrupa Birliği Siyasi Bir Cüce Askeri Bir Solucan mı?*, 2013, Dora Yayınları, Bursa, p. 253.

military capabilities such as crisis prevention, peace-building, peace-keeping, and post-conflict stabilization efforts with the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. Although the EU has come a long way in strengthening its international actorness in the realm of foreign and security policies, there are still extensive academic and political debates concerning the EU's marginal role as a global security provider in its neighborhood. Two fundamental weaknesses become apparent when discussing the EU's level of foreign and security policy integration: persistence on following an intergovernmental approach on decision-making process; and its heavy reliance on the idea of building security through normative stances such as regional integration compositing partnership, cooperation, democracy promotion, global governance, etc.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, a number of studies on the international actorness of the EU define the Union primarily as a "civilian",<sup>10</sup> "soft"<sup>11</sup> or "normative"<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> European External Action Service, "European Union as a Global Security Actor and its Contribution in the GCC and the Middle East", 2017, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/32019/european-union-global-security-actor-and-its-contribution-gcc-and-middle-east\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/32019/european-union-global-security-actor-and-its-contribution-gcc-and-middle-east_en) (Date of Access: 07.05.2018); Rikard Bengtsson, "The European Security Order: The EU and the Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion", 2011, [https://www.gu.se/digitalAssets/1333/1333629\\_rikard-bengtsson.pdf](https://www.gu.se/digitalAssets/1333/1333629_rikard-bengtsson.pdf) (Date of Access: 14.05.2018), pp. 324-326.

<sup>10</sup> François Duchêne, "Europe's Role in World Peace", Richard Mayne, (ed.), *Europe Tomorrow: Sixteen Europeans Look Ahead*, 1972, Fontana, London, 32-47; François Duchêne, "The European Community and the Uncertainties of Interdependence", in Max Kohnstamm and Wolfgang Hager, (ed.), *A Nation Writ Large? Foreign-Policy Problems before the European Community*, 1973, Macmillan, London, 1-21; Jan Orbie, "Civilian Power Europe: Review of the Original and Current Debates", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 2006, Vol: 41, No: 1, 123-128; Björn Hettne and Fredrik Söderbaum, "Civilian Power or Soft Imperialism? The EU as a Global Actor and the Role of Interregionalism", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 2005, Vol: 10, 535-552.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Hill, "European foreign policy: Power block, civilian model—or flop?", Reinhard Rummel, (ed.), *The Evolution of an International Actor: Western Europe's New Assertiveness*, 1990, Westview Press, Boulder, CO; Anna Michalski, "The EU as a Soft Power: the Force of Persuasion", Jan Melissen, (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy—Soft Power in International Relations*, 2005, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke,

power and shed light on the strategic culture that incites the Union to become a global power through the notions of capacity, efficiency, coherence and normative consistency.<sup>13</sup> The common thread to all these studies is that the EU -either as a regional or global actor- needs to adopt a comprehensive approach in order to have a central role in the international system immersed in complicated inter-relations between state and non-state actors occupied with far-reaching security threats.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the urgent need of finding common solutions to common security problems in today's interconnected and interdependent world order, it would be unfair to expect the EU to fulfill the need for having a front-runner international actor capable of resolving any regional or global conflicts and managing security threats single-handedly. Instead of having such an impracticable expectation, the rallying point should be directed on the tangible multilateral efforts of actors in creating a better world order. Any assessment made from this point of view would then imply that the EU can potentially serve for the creation of a more

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Hampshire, 124-144; Janne Haaland Matlary, "When Soft Power Turns Hard: Is an EU Strategic Culture Possible?", *Security Dialogue*, Vol: 37, No: 1, 105-121.

<sup>12</sup> Nathalie Tocci, "The European Union as a Normative Foreign Policy Actor", *CEPS Working Document*, 2008, No: 281, 1-34; Tereza Novotná, "The EU as a Global Actor: United We Stand, Divided We Fall", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2017, 1-15; Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2002, Vol: 40, No: 2, 235-258.

<sup>13</sup> Karolina Pomorska and Sophie Vanhoonaeker, "Europe as a Global Actor: Searching for a New Strategic Approach", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2016, Vol: 54, Annual Review, 204-217; Richard G. Whitman, *Normative Power Europe—Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*, 2011, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; Jolyon Howorth, "The EU as a Global Actor: Grand Strategy for a Global Grand Bargain", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2010, Vol: 48, No: 3, 455-474.

<sup>14</sup> Diego Borrajo and José Luis de Castro, "The EU's Comprehensive Approach as an Alternative Strategic Framework for a Security Provider: The Case of EU NAVFOR Somalia", *Global Affairs*, 2016, Vol: 2, No: 2, 177-186; Wolfgang Mühlberger and Patrick Müller, "The EU's Comprehensive Approach to Security in the MENA Region: What Lessons for CSDP from Libya?", Laura Chappel, Jocelyn Mawdsley, Petar Petrov (ed.), *EU Strategy and Security Policy: Regional and Strategic Challenges*, Routledge, London, 2016, 51-67.

stable, secure and congruent world order if it follows an effective strategy and modus in multilateral bargaining and negotiation processes aiming to find consensual solutions to security problems.<sup>15</sup> In this context, having a substantial strategy incorporating transformational tools and mechanisms is vitally important for the EU to achieve its premeditated security objectives within the region.

### ***1.1. The Conventional EU "Toolbox" in its Southern Neighborhood***

The EU's regional actorness in the Mediterranean and the MENA region can be traced back to the 1960s when the Union started its economic with the Arab countries in its southern neighborhood. In 1972, the formation of the Global Mediterranean Union (GMU) Policy allowed the EU to extend its economic relations with states in the same region through the addition of new cooperation frameworks covering financial, technical, and social issues as short- and medium-term means to establish a free trade area in the long term. However, the EU's monolithic treatment of region states and the institutional limitations of the Union itself had downgraded the transformational impact of the GMU policy to a marginal level.<sup>16</sup> The oil crisis in 1973 has also negatively contributed to the already challenging implementation of the GMU since it forced the EU to revise its relations with the Mediterranean and the MENA states due to its dependency on the energy resources in the region. In this context, the EU's relations with its southern neighborhood had remained rather limited until the end of Cold War and pursued through intergovernmental relations mainly due to the lack of a common position among the then EU member states.

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<sup>15</sup> Jolyon Howorth, op. cit., p. 457; Elina Viilup, "The EU, Neither a Political Dwarf nor a Military Worm", *Peace in Progress*, 2015, No: 23, <http://www.icip-perlapau.cat/numero23/pdf-eng/Per-la-Pau-n23-ac-2.pdf> (Date of Access: 13.03.2018)

<sup>16</sup> Ricardo Gomez, "The EU and the Mediterranean", Jackie Gower (ed.) *The European Union Handbook*, 2002, Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, London and Chicago, 341-356, pp. 341-342.

However, the relations had a sudden revamp in the course of the ending of the Cold War. The new security threats emerged in the post-Cold War period and the changing world order necessitated the EU to review its policies in the Mediterranean and the MENA region and triggered the adoption of a renovative security approach.<sup>17</sup>

The first concrete step towards establishing a promising strategy towards the region in the post-Cold War period came into being with the renewed “Mediterranean Policy” which then reframed as the “Euro-Mediterranean Partnership”<sup>18</sup> through the “Barcelona Process” initiated in 1995.<sup>19</sup> The main objectives of these initiatives focus on the intention for region-building through bilateral and multilateral cooperation in support of political dialogue and security, building of partnerships concerning financial, economic, social, and cultural matters.<sup>20</sup> In that respect, the EU exclusively aimed to create a free-trade zone involving states in its southern neighborhood, improve regional security conditions and prevent illegal migration.<sup>21</sup>

Through these objectives, the EU wanted to enjoy the best of two worlds: the effective response to the Union’s security need and the

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<sup>17</sup> Munawar Ali Bhutto, “The Barcelona Declaration and the Role of EU in the Development of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries”, *Adam Akademi*, 2013, Vol:3, No: 1, 63-82, p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> European Union, “Barcelona Declaration and Euro-Mediterranean partnership”, 1995, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=LEGISSUM:r15001&from=EN> (Date of Access: 11.05.2018)

<sup>19</sup> Marjorie Lister, *The European Union and the South: Relations with Developing Countries*, Routledge, New York, 1997.

<sup>20</sup> Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford, “Normative Power: The European Practice of Region Building and the Case of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)”, *eScholarship.org Working Paper*, 2004, 1-61, pp. 24-25, <https://cloudfront.escholarship.org/dist/prd/content/qt6xx6n5p4/qt6xx6n5p4.pdf?t=kro7v6>, (Date of Access: 11.05.2018); Hollis, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> Sanam Noor, “European Union and the Middle East: A Historical Analysis”, *Pakistan Horizon*, 2004, Vol: 57, No: 1, 23-46, p. 36.

successful support for regional stability.<sup>22</sup> However, the Barcelona Process did not live up to the expectations on achieving regional stability in the Mediterranean and the MENA. The main political reason for this failure is based on the lack of incentives necessary for the deepening of political integration with the partner states. Although a wide range of political dialogue and cooperative tools had been utilized in this context, none of them had the leverage to impose permanent stabilization in the region as they failed to get authoritarian regimes to cooperate with the EU. The economic reason for this failure accounts for the low levels of investments and financial assistance provided for the political reforms.<sup>23</sup> Last but not least, the structural reason for this failure is explained by the institutional and bureaucratic weaknesses caused by the lack of consensus on decision-making among the EU member states, on the whole, resulting in the impediment of the Barcelona Process.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, at the outset of the post-Cold War period when the liberalization process gained momentum, the EU has had confidence in developing a global governance scheme. The EU proposed a scheme based on a diplomatic approach through which existing regimes would be convinced in conducting rule-based and cooperative relationships with legitimate international actors.<sup>25</sup> This proposal soon after materialized through the adoption of the first "European Security Strategy" (ESS) in 2003. Similar to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the ESS has set the EU's security interests in the Mediterranean and the

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<sup>22</sup> Barış Özdal ve Esra Vardar Tutan, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Düzenli Göç Politikası'nın Türkiye'ye Etkileri", Barış Özdal (ed.), *Uluslararası Göç ve Nüfus Hareketleri Bağlamında Türkiye*, Dora Yayınları, Bursa, 2018, p. 277.

<sup>23</sup> Aslihan Turan, "AB Akdeniz Politikası ve Arap Baharı", Bilgesam, 2012, [http://www.bilgesam.org/incele/742/-ab-akdeniz-politikasi-ve-arap-bahari/#.WyO5cS\\_7mgQ](http://www.bilgesam.org/incele/742/-ab-akdeniz-politikasi-ve-arap-bahari/#.WyO5cS_7mgQ) (Date of Access: 19.05.2018).

<sup>24</sup> Claire Spencer, "The EU as a Security Actor in the Mediterranean Problems and Prospects", *Connections*, 2002, Vol: 1, No: 2, 135-142, pp. 136-137.

<sup>25</sup> Stefan Lehne, "Is there hope for European foreign policy?", *Carnegie Europe*, 2017, pp. 1-22.

MENA region as “having stable region states with good governance, developing cooperation efforts on regional security, nuclear disarmament, as well as management of migration”.<sup>26</sup> Identifying terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, regional disputes, failed states and organized crime as the main security threats for the EU, the ESS has anchored a new security perception requiring pre-emptive measures rather than preventive ones embedded on the idea of “effective multilateralism”.<sup>27</sup>

In this line of reasoning, the ESS represents a continuation of the EU’s policies on the Mediterranean and the MENA with a particular emphasis on building regional stability in its neighborhood through the creation of a ring of well-governed states and, in this context, makes a direct reference to the “security-development nexus”.<sup>28</sup> This nexus provides a direct correlation between the two by hypothesizing that development in the cause of regional stability cannot be attained if security is not provided at the outset. In that respect, with the ESS, the EU has shown an inclination towards attaining a “comprehensive notion of security” along the line of its own security interests in the region; and with its sense of regional mission set the scene for its active engagement through a civilian and military set of instruments.<sup>29</sup> The increase in crisis management operations undertaken by the EU towards this region contributed to the development of “European crisis management method”.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, another distinctive feature of the

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<sup>26</sup> European Union, “European Security Strategy–A Secure Europe in a Better World”, <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/european-security-strategy-secure-europe-better-world>, 2003, (Date of Access: 13.03.2018).

<sup>27</sup> Tomáš Karásek, “EU Military Intervention in the Middle East? The Limits of ‘Soft Security’”, *Obrana A Strategie / Defence & Strategy*, 2007, Vol: 2, 39-51, p. 42.

<sup>28</sup> General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, “European Security Strategy–A Secure Europe in a Better World”, 2009, 1-43, p. 19, [https://www.learneurope.eu/files/4413/7509/0813/A\\_secure\\_Europe\\_in\\_a\\_better\\_world\\_en.pdf](https://www.learneurope.eu/files/4413/7509/0813/A_secure_Europe_in_a_better_world_en.pdf) (Date of Access: 19.05.2018)

<sup>29</sup> Gerrard Quille, “The European Security Strategy: a framework for EU security interests?”, *International Peacekeeping*, 2004, Vol: 11, No: 3, 422-438, pp. 423-424.

<sup>30</sup> Emine Akçadağ, “Yeni Güvenlik Tehditleri, Avrupa Birliği’nin Geleceğine İlişkin Sonuçları ve Türkiye Faktörü”, *Bilge Strateji*, 2010, Cilt:2, No:2, p.83.

ESS embodies the Union's uniform response to challenges taking place at the regional and global level appears as the idea of "effective multilateralism", in a way, stressing the position the EU should acquire as a global power whilst forming global governance system.<sup>31</sup>

### ***1.2. The EU's Stability Preference over Democracy Promotion***

When assessing the EU's role in the Mediterranean and the MENA through a strategic lens, in addition to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the ESS, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) adopted in 2003 posits another distinctive prominence. As the mandatory signs, the 2004/2007 enlargement waves not only allowed the EU to build cross-border cooperation and adopt a new regional governance system with its new neighbors but also created the need of forming a defense area to cope with the new security challenges. In truth, the EU's geographical proximity to the Mediterranean and the MENA, its energy independence on the resources in the region, the welfare problems associated with the existing discrepancies among the region states in terms of their economic integration with the EU, on top of the risk of migration flows legitimizes the EU's security-oriented approach to the region.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to the traditional geopolitical paradigms, the ENP is designed to follow a long-term profound cooperation process wherein economic incentives such as financial support and trade agreements have been used as means for the achievement of structural reform processes within the region. In this line of reasoning, it is expected that the ENP would assist the democratization processes of region states at

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<sup>31</sup> Elena Korosteleva et al., "Towards a European Global Security Strategy: Challenges and Opportunities", *Global Europe Centre Policy Paper*, 2015, 1-11, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Rory Miller, "Europe's Palestine Problem: Making Sure the EU Matters to Middle East Peace", *Foreign Affairs*, 2011, Vol: 90, No: 5, 8-12, p. 9; Bessma Momani, "The EU, the Middle East, and Regional Integration", *World Economics*, 2007, Vol: 8, No: 1, 1-10, p. 5; Ashhan Turan, 2012, op. cit.; Barış Özdal, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Göç Politikası ve İstihdam Stratejisi Bağlamında Türkiye'nin Üyelik Süreci", Barış Özdal (ed.), *Uluslararası Göç ve Nüfus Hareketleri Bağlamında Türkiye*, 2018, Dora Yayınları, Bursa, pp. 243-245.

the secondary stage and increase their economic welfare levels so that they can integrate further with the EU's single market in the long-run.<sup>33</sup> It was, therefore, premeditated that the ENP would serve as an effective external influence mechanism for the EU intending to secure its member states against any security threat that might arise in the region due to instability.<sup>34</sup> In this regard, democracy and the consolidation of it within the context of the ENP have intentionally served as a means for the EU to achieve security in the region.<sup>35</sup>

Being one of the most effective external influence mechanisms the EU is known for, the principle of conditionality has been utilized both in its enlargement and in its neighborhood policies. However, the conditionality used in the context of the EU's enlargement policy (particularly in the 2004/2007 enlargement wave) and the conditionality used in the ENP idiosyncratically differs in terms of both its scope and the regional realities of the EU's eastern and southern neighborhoods. This perlocutionary difference, thus, sheds light on the dynamics of "inclusion" and "exclusion" in the scope of the EU foreign policies,<sup>36</sup> by reflecting on the importance of the regional differences wherein states in the wider Europe are considered as potential members and the states in the MENA as non-members of the EU. Particularly due to the threat perception arising from the security threats such as terrorism, fundamentalism, and migration spreading from the MENA region, the EU's conditionality loses its effectiveness as the EU follows a different line of reasoning by considering the region states as non-members,

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<sup>33</sup> Stefan Lehne, "Time to Reset the European Neighborhood Policy", *Carnegie Europe*, 2014, 1-16.

<sup>34</sup> ORSAM, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Komşuluk Politikası Çerçevesinde Orta Doğu", 2009, <http://orsam.org.tr/orsam/gencorsam/10511?dil=tr> (Date of Access: 20.05.2018)

<sup>35</sup> Müjge Küçülkçeş, "AB'nin Orta Doğu Politikası ve Arap Baharına Bakışı", *SETA Analiz*, 2013, No: 63, 1-27, p. 8; Aslıhan Turan, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Akdeniz'de Normatif Güç Olma Arayışı ve Arap Uyanışı", Uğur Burç Yıldız, (ed.), *Avrupa Birliği'nin Dış İlişkileri: Bölgesel Politikalar, Bölgeler ve Uluslararası Aktörler ile İlişkiler*, 2015, Nobel Yayınları, Ankara, 209-238, p. 224.

<sup>36</sup> Rikard Bengtsson, op. cit., pp. 327-328.

bringing an "inherent weakness" to the implementation of the ENP in the region.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the EU's leverage on the Mediterranean and the MENA states is found to be extremely low, compared to the states in its eastern neighborhood, due to the fact that the ENP does not embody a membership perspective.<sup>38</sup>

In order to surmount its leverage problem and revitalize its transformational power in the Mediterranean and the MENA region, attributable to France's persistency the EU leaped forward with the adoption of the "Union for the Mediterranean" (UfM). The UfM, referred to as the "venue for project-based multilateral cooperation",<sup>39</sup> mainly aimed to improve the EU's cooperation and partnership programmes on energy resources, fight against international crimes, terrorism, and migration within the region. Even if the UfM followed more of a security-oriented logic than normative approach, the course of events alongside of the financial crisis throughout Europe in this period limited the allocation of resources in the UfM framework sufficient enough to bring about real change in the region; thus, weakened the effectiveness of the UfM on the whole.

Overall, contrary to expectations, none of the policies and strategies discussed above could find permanent solutions to the prevailing security problems and bring real change in line with its normative values in this period. One of the primary reasons for this failure lies in the fact that the EU has suffered from the expectations-capability gap as in almost all of its foreign policies; hence proving the policy adoption vs implementation inefficiencies concerning the

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<sup>37</sup> Rikard Bengtsson, "Constructing interfaces: The neighbourhood discourse in EU external policy", *Journal of European Integration*, 2008, Vol: 30, No: 5, 597-616.

<sup>38</sup> Vincent Durac and Francesco Cavatorta, "Strengthening Authoritarian Rule through Democracy Promotion? Examining the Paradox of the US and EU Security Strategies: The Case of Bin Ali's Tunisia", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2009, Vol: 36, No: 1, 3-19, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Münevver Cebeci and Tobias Schumacher, "The EU's Constructions of the Mediterranean", *MEDRESET Working Papers*, 2017, No. 3, 1-29, p. 6.

Mediterranean and the MENA region. Secondly, the use of conditionality as the main external influence mechanism did not make effective political transformation happen in the region, which is mostly explained by the limitations on the external incentives provided by the EU. Thirdly, it is argued that instead of pushing forward idealistic form of political reforms for a real transformation, the EU retreated its position for the sake of preserving the status quo in the region.<sup>40</sup>

## **2. The Arab Uprisings: (Lost) Opportunity for a Paradigm Shift in the EU's Policies on the Mediterranean and the MENA?**

Despite the rapid liberalization processes in different parts of the world as the new normal of the emerging multi-polar international system, certain setbacks and breaking points in the security realm of international relations have directly impacted on the Mediterranean and the MENA region that has been on the rocks security-wise ever since the unipolar and bipolar eras. In fact, the 9/11 attacks in 2001 made it clear that in the age of globalization, the level of interconnectedness has reached to a point, where any local, national, and even regional security conflicts have dire global constraints and security problems for any actor regardless of their geographical proximity to the regions in conflict. For instance, by the year 2010, the retreat of the external forces from Iraq has had dire constraints for the wider region. Terrorist networks associated with the insurgency movements in Iraq have not only caused the weakening and even the failing of states such as Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia thus posing a threat at the regional level. These regional dynamics have also posed a great security constraint on the western powers.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Zerrin Torun, "The European Union and Change in the Middle East and North Africa: Is the EU Closing Its Theory-Practice Gap?", *Orta Doğu Etüdüleri*, 2012, Vol: 4, No: 1, 79-97, pp. 81-82.

<sup>41</sup> Erika Holmquist and John Rydqvist, "The Future of Regional Security in the Middle East—Four Scenarios" *FOI Report*, 2016, FOI-R-4267-SE, 1-45, p. 15.

The perception on the political and security volatility in the region and the risk of the leaping forward of these conflicts into Europe have in fact compelled the western powers, primarily the EU, to adopt a paradigm shift in its foreign and security policies - a paradigm that necessitates increased activeness in foreign policy actions and strategies of "pre-emptive self-defence and preventive war".<sup>42</sup> In this context, the EU has set the scene for a double-barrelled approach towards the regions wherein conflicts and crises cause direct security threats for the Union itself, such as the Mediterranean and the MENA region. When unfolded, this double-barrelled approach displays the basis for the EU's normative character through stabilization and democratization efforts on one hand, and its pragmatic reorientation through securitization of regional dynamics on the other.

In the meantime, the Arab uprisings started in 2011 has initiated an unanticipated wave of transformation in the Mediterranean and the MENA, turning it into the main setting for a series of major local, national and regional conflicts that dragged the region into the predicament of political instability. The regional turmoil started symbolically when a Tunisian named Muhammad Buazizi who set himself on fire on 17 December 2010 after having an argument with a police officer and being rejected by the municipality officials when intended to put forward a formal complaint. The rallying of Tunisians after this incidence turned into nation-wide protests against the policies of the Tunisian President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Despite all efforts to suppress the protests, Ben Ali resigned from his political position on 14 January 2011. The success of the political revolt in Tunisia against Ben Ali triggered a region-wide transformation first spreading into Egypt. Hosni Mubarak who had been the leader of Egypt since 1981 initially tried to remedy the course of events by making amendments to the existing political positions so as far as setting up a new government.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

However, not being able to counteract the demonstrations, Mubarak had finally resigned from his position as the leader of Egypt.<sup>43</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the successful protests in Tunisia and Egypt encouraged uprisings in Yemen, Bahrain, Libya, and Syria in the course of January to March 2011. One major difference though was that the uprisings in the latter countries turned into violent clashes between the ruling regimes and the protesting groups. For instance, protests against Muammar Qadhafi broke out in Benghazi soon turned into an armed revolt between pro-regime loyalists and rebel forces. After months of violent attacks and around tens of thousands of casualties, Qadhafi's regime fell down and Qadhafi was killed brutally on 20 October 2011. Pro-democracy protesters in Yemen and Bahrain on the other hand, demanded the political leaders Ali Saleh and King Hamad, respectively, to step down. After forceful clashes, in Yemen, Ali Saleh transferred political power to the Vice President Abdurabbu Mansur el-Hadi; whilst in Bahrain, an independent investigation carried out on the uprisings. The investigation report stated that the Bahraini government had used "excessive force and torture against the protesters" and government later gave assurance on following the recommendations of the report.<sup>44</sup> Syria on the other hand, Bashar al-Assad's responses to the protests and demonstrations soon turned out to be even more violent, involving brutal and repressive regime counter-actions, which subsequently led to internal fractions<sup>45</sup> ultimately turning into a bloody civil war.

The mass movements initially branded as "Arab Spring" or "Democratic Tsunami"<sup>46</sup> triggered by civilians, who were subordinate to the authoritarian regimes and sought to overthrow the oppressive

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<sup>43</sup> Katerina Dalacoura, "The 2011 uprisings in the Arab Middle East: political change and geopolitical implications", *International Affairs*, 2012, Vol: 88, No: 1, 63-79, pp. 63-66.

<sup>44</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Arab Spring: Pro-Democracy Protests", <https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Spring> (Date of Access: 10.01.2019)

<sup>45</sup> Dalacoura, op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Seeberg and Musa Shteivi, "European Narratives on the 'Arab Spring'—from Democracy to Security", *DJUCO Working Paper*, 2014, 1-12, p. 2.

governments. Soon after the uprisings, the international community openly welcomed the civilian democratization motion set by the citizens of the region states.<sup>47</sup> They regarded the uprisings as a chance for liberalization of the region's political and economic systems with a potential for an internally instigated stabilization endeavor.<sup>48</sup> The course of events however rapidly turned the regional balance of power upside down and created a colossal regional (dis)order. In fact, the eruption of the uprisings brought forward the neoteric dynamics of the regional system in the Mediterranean and the MENA changed by the endemic processes of the armed conflicts and military interventions involving external actors, the intensification of power politics and aggressiveness of regional powers, the wearing down of the state governance systems, the spread of migration and refugee flows, and the greater risk posed by the escalating hybrid actions by non-state actors.<sup>49</sup> More specifically, the mass movements soon turned into violent clashes and armed conflicts, hampered regional alliances, caused an US-led international military intervention in Libya, and ignited civil war in Syria; which then set the scene for a massive influx of refugees into the European continent; caused the emergence of ISIS; and even resulted in the collapse of several states down to the resistance of the regimes to protect their political structures.<sup>50</sup>

As a result of the uprisings and changing power dynamics, the region states have drifted apart from the EU and its universal values

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<sup>47</sup> Rosa Balfour et al., "Report on Democracy Assistance from the European Union to the Middle East and North Africa", *EU Spring Report*, 2016, [http://aei.pitt.edu/75714/1/euspring\\_eu\\_demo\\_assistance\\_on\\_template.4.pdf](http://aei.pitt.edu/75714/1/euspring_eu_demo_assistance_on_template.4.pdf) (Date of Access: 06.05.2018).

<sup>48</sup> Muriel Asseburg, "The Arab Spring and the European Response", *The International Spectator*, 2013, Vol: 48, No: 2, 47-62, pp. 47-48;

<sup>49</sup> Karim Makdisi et al., op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Niklas Bremberg, "Making sense of the EU's response to the Arab uprisings: foreign policy practice at times of crisis", *European Security*, 2016, Vol: 25, No: 4, 423-441, p. 423; Shadi Hamid and Daniel Byman, "Religion Matters: How Islam Relates to Politics", *Clingendael Report on Adversity and Opportunity—Facing the Security and Policy Challenges in the Middle East*, 2015, 1-42, pp. 5-7; Asseburg, op. cit., p. 48.

more than ever before. The uprisings and the counter reactions of authoritarian regimes broke the region's stride on economic and democratic development that had been externally supported by the EU in the earlier periods. At this point, it must be noted that initially there was an unrealized expectation from the EU in bringing stability back in the region.<sup>51</sup> It was assumed that the EU, if followed its conventional method of external influence through its "soft power" contrivance of voluntary participation and cooperation, would be successful in managing the emerging regional disorder by retaining on to support structural reforms, further economic integration, and political modernization. However, the uprisings proved that the EU's soft power stance on transforming the region and supporting regional stability through its conventional methods has been poles apart from being triumphant.<sup>52</sup>

However, soon after the immediate spread of instability in the wider region, the EU became conscious of its weaknesses as a security provider and its failure to analyze the expectations from and probabilities of the Arab Spring uprisings. In line of this reasoning, it would be inequitable to assume that the EU's weaknesses in the stabilization efforts in the region only transpired by the structural changes in the security threats after the uprisings; in fact, the existential problems of the EU's CFSP along with the political unwillingness of and the lack of cohesion among the EU member states have adversely played a part this state of affairs. In that respect, the diuturnal institutional shortcomings, internal impediments in the interim period and the lack of establishing a common European front when faced with regional conflicts seem to be the most decisive factors in explaining the EU's vain

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<sup>51</sup> Michael Young, "Seven years after the Arab Spring, what happened to calls for positive change", *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 2017, <http://carnegie-mec.org/2017/12/11/seven-years-after-arab-spring-what-has-happened-to-calls-for-positive-change-pub-74983> (Date of Access: 05.05.2018)

<sup>52</sup> Zerrin Torun, op. cit., p. 81.

initial reaction to the uprisings.<sup>53</sup> For instance, the global financial crisis in 2008 has drastically changed the EU's policy priorities, particularly on foreign policy matters. By putting a heavy constraint on the EU's budget, the crisis incidentally initiated the "re-nationalization" of foreign policies and more "inward-looking" decision-making process at the supranational level,<sup>54</sup> thus limiting its own effective responsiveness as a regional actor in conflicting regions.

Nonetheless, subsequent to the Arab uprisings, it was observed that the EU's policies on the Mediterranean and the MENA had a rhetorical change concerning the parameters defining the EU's multilateral relations with the region. Whilst the former strategies adopted earlier were constructed around normative stances of economic development, democratization and stabilization, the chain of sudden uprisings brought forward a distinct security opening in the EU policies. In fact, issues such as terrorism, illegal migration, conflicts in Syria, economic ambiguities, radicalism, and fragmentation of state authorities became high priorities in the EU's foreign policy agenda.<sup>55</sup> These realpolitik factors considered as the main security threats for Europe compelled the EU as a regional actor to adopt an interest-driven strategy to respond effectively to the emerging regional (dis)order in the Mediterranean and the MENA and protect its own security structure. The new "synthesis" of the EU's security strategy, hence, combined three main factors: the revival of conventional alliances, the identification of new strategic reference points, and the promotion of enterprise system in the region.

Despite these clearly defined objectives, it is a well-known fact that the EU's conventional methods used in the region prior to the uprisings have become unprosperous thereafter. This soon necessitated

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<sup>53</sup> Timo Behr, "The European Union's Mediterranean Policies after the Arab Spring: Can the Leopard Change its Spots?", *Amsterdam Law Forum*, 2012, Vol: 4, No: 2, 76-88, p. 81.

<sup>54</sup> Kristina Kausch, "Competitive Multipolarity in the Middle East", *IAI Working Papers*, 2014, No: 14 / 10, 1-19, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Taylan Özgür Kaya, "Avrupa Birliği'nin Orta Doğu Barış Sürecindeki Rolünün Analizi", *Ortadoğu Etütleri*, 2010, Vol: 2, No: 3, 77-106.

the EU to restructure its approach towards the region for deciding upon its appropriate regional role and its level of engagement, along with the utilization of proper tools and influence mechanisms.<sup>56</sup> In that respect, the EU realized that the effective reframing of its policies in the post-Arab uprising period should involve “inclusive process of mutual compromise”<sup>57</sup> based on consensus-building in its diplomatic efforts and open dialogue on political and security matters. At this point, the most striking feature of the EU’s new approach emerged as the shift from “EU normativism” to “pragmatic idealism” intersecting stabilization and democratization efforts at the rallying point of security.<sup>58</sup> However, this has raised the topic of continuity-change dichotomy in the EU’s strategies by bringing the EU to a new decomposition point of acting preferences. From then on, it was expected that the EU would either continue to have a normative role and maintain its universal values in the region or would act strategically and secure its own interests.<sup>59</sup>

### ***2.1. Search for a New EU Approach in the Mediterranean and the MENA Region: From Stability to “Deep Democracy”***

As previously noted, the EU’s policies on the Mediterranean and the MENA region before the Arab uprisings were centered on its interest in stabilizing the region where the democratization process had a secondary position.<sup>60</sup> In this fashion, the EU conducted its stabilization efforts in cooperation with the authoritarian regimes as they were accepted as the only legitimate actors to establish bilateral and multilateral relations

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<sup>56</sup> Center for Strategic & International Studies, op. cit.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Youngs, “From Transformation to Mediation: The Arab Spring Reframed”, *Carnegie Europe*, 2014, 1-20, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Karolina Pomorska and Gergana Noutcheva, “Europe as a Regional Actor: Waning Influence in an Unstable and Authoritarian Neighbourhood”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2017, Vol: 55, 165-176.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>60</sup> Assem Dandashly, “The EU Response to Regime Change in the Wake of the Arab Revolt: Differential Implementation”, *Journal of European Integration*, 2015, Vol: 37, No: 1, 37-56.

and partners in the EU's fight against radicalism in the region.<sup>61</sup> However, the Arab uprisings have turned the tide against the position of these regimes vis à vis the EU. Due to their disproportionate use of force, the EU has deemed them one of the principle actors causing the escalation of conflicts and regional disorder. Accepting the regimes as one of the sources of regional conflicts, the EU has changed its position to limit the risk imposed by the regimes for the sake of attaining a stable neighborhood. In this context, the long-awaited EU policy change came in the form of a shift from "standard stability" approach to an approach embracing "sustainable stability and deep democracy" in the region,<sup>62</sup> and the pole position of this shift was allotted to the renewed ENP in 2011. The renewed ENP in this context aimed to form a chain of good governing states in the region by forging closer political, economic and security relations.<sup>63</sup>

The EU's new approach on "deep democracy" is primarily based on political conditionality, which has been heavily used by the EU as an external influence mechanism in its enlargement policy.<sup>64</sup> In the context of the EU's policies on the Mediterranean and the MENA region, the political conditionality epitomizes an incentive-based tactic-taking cognizance of differentiation among region states. The renewal of the ENP, in turn, embodies two important features regarding the deep democracy incentive-based tactic: "increased differentiation" between ENP partner states and the principles of "more for more" and "less for less".<sup>65</sup> Firstly, the increased differentiation in the renewed ENP represents a breaking point from the EU's previous inclination of providing standard incentives to ENP partner states in return for

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<sup>61</sup> Eva-Maria Maggi, "The Arab Spring, Europe, and the Middle East: Everything Changes to Stay the Same", *Friends of Europe*, 2015, <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/global-europe/arab-spring-europe-middle-east-everything-changes-stay> (Date of Access: 09.05.2018).

<sup>62</sup> Timo Behr, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

<sup>63</sup> Ben Fishman and Erik Brattberg, "Transatlantic Security Cooperation in the Middle East-Recommendations for the New Administration", *CNAS Report*, 2017, 1-16, p. 9.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Seeberg, op. cit., p. 2.

compliance with the EU requirements, regardless of their individual needs and conditions. With the new element of differentiation, the EU has left astern the “one size fits for all”<sup>66</sup> approach and started to adopt specific criteria, tailor specific action plans, and provide financial and technical aid on an individual basis. As a sequel to the differentiation element, the “more for more” principle implies the EU’s attitude of providing necessary incentives equivalent to the progress made and compliance achieved by the target states. In other words, it shows the good side of obtaining European assistance when acted willingly in terms of improving domestic conditions.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to the renewed ENP, the EU’s deep democracy approach has been materialized through two subsequent policy initiatives: the proposal on the “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity” in 2011 and the establishment of “European Endowment for Democracy” (EED) in 2012. Soon after the Arab uprisings took a negative turn, the EU has accepted the fact that its southern neighborhood has been subject to a radically changing political setting, which requires a parallel change in its own policies on the Mediterranean and the MENA. The main reference points connoted in this proposal includes deep democracy, economic development and society-to-society communication with a focal point of the establishment of political stability.<sup>68</sup> In that respect, the EU has confirmed its commitment on a new approach bringing features of “differentiation, conditionality, and partnership” together which was believed to better equip the EU as a regional actor looking out for the differences in the

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<sup>66</sup> Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, “One Size Fits for All!—EU Policies fort he Promotion of Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law”, *Workshop on Democracy Promotion—Center for Development, Democracy, and the Rule of Law, Stanford University*, 4-5 October 2004.

<sup>67</sup> Timo Behr, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>68</sup> Müge Kınacıoğlu, “Eski Şarap Yeni Şişe?: Bölgedeki Son Gelişmeler Işığında AB Dış Politikasında Akdeniz Havzası ve Orta Doğu”, *Hacettepe Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2015, 137-156, p. 150.

region states.<sup>69</sup> Besides, the main aim of the EED is stated as to advance "deep and sustainable democracy" in the Mediterranean and the MENA states, which are having difficulties in their democratization process due to the Arab uprisings. In that respect, as a noticeable change from the previous approaches, the EED, similar to the renewed ENP, introduced the new feature of "flexibility" in the EU instruments including the financial assistance specifically allocated for states in compound change and authoritarian states in the process of democratization.<sup>70</sup>

Despite all these changes in the EU's policies on the Mediterranean and the MENA region, the outcomes proved that the EU failed to bring about a real adjustment to its previous "top-down" approaches to support democratic transition process across the region. There are several reasons accounting for the marginal difference caused by the transformative policies of the EU. First and foremost, the division among the EU member states in foreign policy decision-making and their tendency to preserve their own interests once again made the EU's external actions and foreign policy initiatives futile in this period. Secondly, the insufficient levels of political and financial incentives along with the exclusionist version of political conditionality and the long-term nature of the transformation process did not give rise to the expected impact of the EU as a regional actor.<sup>71</sup>

### **3. The EU Global Strategy: A New Façade for a Historical Artifact?**

By 2015, the EU found itself in line of fire due to its ineffective and fragmented response to the regional changes caused by the

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<sup>69</sup> European Commission, "A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean", 2011, [https://ec.europa.eu/research/iscep/pdf/policy/com\\_2011\\_200\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/iscep/pdf/policy/com_2011_200_en.pdf) (Date of Access: 25.05.2018).

<sup>70</sup> European Parliament, *European Endowment for Democracy: hopes and expectations*, *European Parliament Library Briefing*, 2013, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2013/130458/LDM\\_BRI%282013%29130458\\_REV1\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2013/130458/LDM_BRI%282013%29130458_REV1_EN.pdf) (Date of Access: 25.05.2018).

<sup>71</sup> Timo Behr, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-87.

escalation of conflicts in the Mediterranean and the MENA; and realized that there would be no room for waiting for a resolution to the regional conflicts without its external support inclusive of a comprehensive strategy for conflict resolution. In the European Parliament report of 2015 on the security challenges in the region following the Arab uprisings, the EU stressed the urgent need for developing a “strategic global and multifaceted policies” that would find abiding solutions to the security threats such as the spread of ISIS, increased destabilization in Syria, Iraq, Yemeni and Libya, violation of human and minority rights, displacement of people and the burden it created on the transit and host states.<sup>72</sup> Along with these triggering factors part in the Mediterranean and the MENA region, the EU aimed to restructure its policy framework with the incorporation of new narratives of “opportunity and necessity” instead of the “crisis discourse” dominated the EU’s external security policies in the post-Arab uprisings period.<sup>73</sup> The EU Global Strategy (EUGS) is thus formulated with the lead of the EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini in 2016 aiming to provide a more progressive method in the foreign policy making in general, and finding long-lasting solutions to regional conflicts in specific.<sup>74</sup> More specifically, the EUGS aims to build a “rules-based” global order;<sup>75</sup> and to bring “‘cross-institutional’ and ‘cross-thematic’ global vision on European security”.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> European Parliament, “Report on the security challenges in the Middle East and North Africa region and the prospects for political stability”, 2015, 1-25, p. 5, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A8-2015-0193+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN> (Date of Access: 22.05.2018)

<sup>73</sup> Anneget Bendiek, “A Paradigm Shift in the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy: From Transformation to Resilience”, *SWP Research Paper*, 2017, No: 11, 1-30, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup> European Union, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe—A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy”, 2016, [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf) (Date of Access: 18.05.2018)

<sup>75</sup> Giovanni Grevi, “A Global Strategy for a soul-searching European Union”, *European Policy Centre Discussion Paper*, 2016, 1-11, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> Elena Korosteleva et al., op. cit., p. 6.

The EU's new toolbox to bring into the life of its global vision on European security is centered on the notions of resilience, cooperative regional orders, and principled pragmatism. The EUGS is primarily built upon the concept of resilience, resonating a "capacity to resist and regenerate" of the "normative" objectives of the EU's external policies on transformation; hence provides a suitable platform for the combined execution of normative goals and self (security) interests of the EU. This implies that the EUGS aims to attain resilience of its member states and states in its neighboring regions in order to have the capacity in resisting security threats in all shapes and forms and to rectify potential damages caused. In that respect, resilience symbolizes a new version of the EU coveted as a regional actor capable of deflecting external security threats and stabilizing states in its neighborhoods.<sup>77</sup>

The concept of resilience in that respect represents a change towards a "realpolitik approach" within the EU's new strategy opening. This implies that the EU's values and norms based "deep democracy" approach is no longer valid under the current political conditions in its neighboring regions given that it has turned out to be ill adapted for security-related challenges. This logic, then, follows the adoption of a "multi-faceted" approach to resilience wherein the EU policies are individually and inclusively presented to each and every state and non-state actors in a multi-layered fashion, i.e. bilateral or multilateral.<sup>78</sup> However, the resilience concept bears a resemblance to the deep democracy incentive-based tactic of differentiation within the context of renewed ENP. Indeed, similar to the ENP, this element can potentially lead to the implementation of "double-standards" among states located in the geographical context of the EUGS; hence reducing its effectiveness and credibility in the long-run.

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<sup>77</sup> Anneget Bendiek, op. cit., p. 6; 14.

<sup>78</sup> Erwan Lannon, "The Mediterranean in the EU's 2016 Global Strategy: Connecting the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa" *IEMed. Mediterranean Yearbook*, 2017, 213-216, p. 213.

It is also argued that the EUGS's incorporation of an objective of cooperative regional orders in its broader neighborhood highlights its security-oriented viewpoint with a political character and geographical sensitivity. This current approach indicates that international actors, when faced with sudden security crises or conflicts, are more inclined to act as per their self-interests. In this line of reasoning, it can be argued that the EU prioritizes its cooperative efforts in the regions, such as the Mediterranean and the MENA, because they are in great political disorder since the Arab uprisings posing a great threat to the EU, its member states and European citizens on the whole. In that respect, the EU deems it necessary to solve conflicts and support development in these regions in order to overcome problems posed by major security threats such as terrorism and migration.<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, the EUGS maintains its equilibrium concerning its external actions by the feature of "principled pragmatism". Representing a different way of assessing the regional and global developments, the principled pragmatism interconnects two fundamental aspects of the EU's transformative power: "realistic assessments of the environment" and "idealistic aspirations to shape a better world".<sup>80</sup> This pragmatic turn in the EUGS points at the necessity of finding "functional and cooperative formats" to cope with security issues in conflictual geopolitical regions such as the Mediterranean and the MENA; and highlights that the EU should focus on its strategic interests in the Middle East and the MENA and needs to "adapt to the region, rather than seeking to adapt the region to its own prisms".<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 214; Eduard Soler i Lecha and Nathalie Tocci, "Implications of the EU Global Strategy for the Middle East and North Africa", *MENARA Project Future Notes*, 2016, No. 1, 1-4, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Stanislaw Koziej, "EU global strategy: opportunities and challenges of further implementation", *Pulaski Policy Papers*, 2017, 1-10, p. 4; Grevi, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Youngs, "The EU's geopolitical crossroads in the Middle East", *Fride Policy Brief*, 2015, No: 197, 1-8, p. 7.

A number of propositions on the role and the impact of the EUGS can be made when the concepts of resilience, cooperative regional orders, and principled pragmatism are analyzed in the context of the Mediterranean and the MENA. To start with, it is observed that the EUGS hypothetically envisions the continuation or escalation of regional turmoil, wherein the resilience scheme can potentially serve for having pre-emptive measures and prevent any unexpected regional development that can cause acute harm both for the wider region and for the EU itself. Secondly, the EU's approach on building cooperative regional orders placed in regional development and security nexus has certain implications for the region such as: the intensification of political conditionality and incentives in the Mediterranean; strengthening of political dialogue between Europe and the League of Arab States; providing new cooperative areas for the Maghreb states and their African neighbors; and intention of initiating a political dialogue process between Iran and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Thirdly, the principled pragmatism indicates the EU's new approach on the region, leaving the old tendency of purely idealistic notions of stability and democracy behind, and shifting towards a more reserved and precautionous realistic supervision of the region such as the support on resilience and regional dialogue.<sup>82</sup>

Although these new features of bringing idealistic notations together with more realistic fundamentals of the EU foreign and security policies set the scene for a radical change in transformative power of the EU as a regional actor in the future, there are certain obstacles that might continue to limit the effectiveness of this strategy as happened in all previous initiatives of the EU. The first obstacle concerns the difficulties in EUGS's implementation stage. As previous EU strategies on the Mediterranean and the MENA demonstrate, whilst the adoption of a grand strategy with high objectives and motives constitutes only the starting point, its substance, however, lies in its

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<sup>82</sup> Eduard Soler i Lecha and Nathalie Tocci, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

implementation stage. The key point achieving this is centered on the adoption of a “long-term structural engagement with short-term influence mechanisms” by the EU.<sup>83</sup> This, in turn, evidently requires the having a strategic consensus among the EU member states, the lack of which has been causing the biggest obstacle for the EU to follow an effective strategy in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings and even before.<sup>84</sup>

However, it is highly likely that the EU might encounter another major difficulty: Would the EUGS really be a remedy for the EU’s trembling regional actorness in the Mediterranean and the MENA or would it just be a new façade for a historical artifact of the EU’s regional security strategies? The current course of events and obtained outcomes show that the EUGS symbolizes a concrete “medium-term” strategy but not yet a “doctrine” longed for a while now. One of the factors that might limit the effectiveness of the EUGS is explained by the lack of additional financial resources. In fact, the EU is in the multiannual financial framework that would end in 2020, which leaves the EU no room with the reallocation of financial means necessary for the effective implementation of the strategy. Additionally, Britain’s decision to leave the Union has created a tremendous financial burden for the EU, which in turn, limited its financial capacity to provide more incentives neither for issues covered in its neither internal nor external policies.<sup>85</sup>

There is a high level of vagueness in terms of the role and effectiveness of the EUGS specific to the Mediterranean and the MENA regions since they are in a state of constant political change. For the EUGS to be effective in this region, it is crucial to identify the key (f)actors of re-building of the regional order. For this particular region, the EUGS notes that the “endogenous” factors, rather than “exogenous” ones, are more likely to be decisive in terms of the restructuring of the current political (dis)order in the region. In that

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<sup>83</sup> Stefan Lehne, 2014, op. cit.

<sup>84</sup> Erwan Lannon, op. cit., p. 214.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

respect, it is highly crucial for the EU to follow a tactic that would consolidate exogenous actors to turn the notions of resilience and principled pragmatism into reality in a way encouraging the region states to have closer cooperation with the EU.<sup>86</sup>

Last but not least, it is argued that the reconstruction of the EU-US transatlantic cooperation is vital for the effective implementation of the EUGS and for its positive impact in the Mediterranean and the MENA region. It is a well-known fact that the EU and the US have been the ideal partners for the establishment of transatlantic cooperation not only in the realm of economics but also in politics and security. Both actors have long been involved in cooperation to resolve prolonged regional conflicts.<sup>87</sup> Overall, it became obvious that without the adoption and the implementation of a coordinated and comprehensive security strategy and the attainment of a regional consensus, there is a little chance for the EU to be able to successfully bring stability and democracy in the Mediterranean and the MENA region on its own. Therefore, in order to overcome this weakness and defend its own territory through the implementation of the EUGS, the EU should re-institute its transatlantic cooperation with the US.<sup>88</sup>

### Conclusion

In the past decades, the EU has been one of the leading external actors in support of a stable region-building in the Mediterranean and the MENA. Without a doubt, the successful transformation of the region means would reduce the security risks for the EU and strengthen its cooperation with the states of the region in political and economic terms. The EU's transformational impact in this context rests in various external influence mechanisms such as economic cooperation and political dialogue.

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<sup>86</sup> Eduard Soler i Lecha and Nathalie Tocci, op. cit, p. 4.

<sup>87</sup> Volker Perthes, "Europe and the Arab Spring", *Survival*, 2011, Vol: 53, No: 6, 73-84, p. 81.

<sup>88</sup> Anneget Bendiek, op. cit., p. 6; 18; Eva-Maria Maggi, op. cit.

The historical overview of the EU's support for the regionalism in the Mediterranean and the MENA shows that the EU's overall transformative policies, along with the incentives and mechanisms used for the building of a stable and prosperous region in the Mediterranean and the MENA have not resulted in a compound change in the region. In fact, the EU policies to date including bilateral economic relations until late 1980s, the cooperation and stabilization efforts in 1990s, and the shift towards deep democracy approach in mid-2000s prove that the EU's normative and security objectives cannot be met to the fullest in the absence of a clear and comprehensive grand strategy mutually accepted by its member states and supported with the allocation of sufficient financial resources.

Putting the previous regional dynamics aside, currently, political realism seems to be permeating the Mediterranean and the MENA region. With this line of reasoning, it can be argued that two opposite developments are taking shape concurrently: whilst all strategies based on universalist and normative intentions of region-building and stabilization are fading away in haste, security-oriented and pragmatist strategies supported with self-interests are rising. This, in turn, brings about the paradox of sorts involving the discussion on idealpolitik vs realpolitik elements when forming a new grand security strategy.

In fact, the march of events concerning the most recent developments after the Arab uprisings can be considered as a breaking point for the EU's security strategy in the Mediterranean and the MENA. First and foremost, the uprisings have created a menacing political and security environment in which major global actors including the EU itself had to make drastic readjustment to its security strategies in order for the region to regain stability. Secondly, the Arab uprisings forced the EU, suffering from the endemic structural problem of the obstinacy of the EU member states in keeping their sovereignty on decisions concerning foreign and security policies at the national level, to get things back on track by drifting away from its conventional toolbox of external influence in its southern neighborhood. In that respect, by adopting a two-barrelled approach, the EU has directed its focus in favor of democratization processes along with stabilization efforts and

combined this tendency with its security-oriented pragmatist approach, thus procuring a relatively comprehensive attitude in the region.

Nonetheless, this alteration in the EU's policies towards the region after the 2011 Arab uprisings proves that the EU has yet to re-define its perception of regional stability in the context of the Mediterranean and the MENA region afresh. In this context, the EUGS of 2016 is believed to bring the old EU policies to an end by presenting a significant paradigm shift from purely normative or security-oriented approaches towards an amalgamated version combining idealistic goals and realistic perceptions together. Although the end results of the EUGS is yet to be seen, based on the current flow of events in mid-2018, it is possible to assume that regional uncertainties and security challenges in various forms will continue to predominate the Mediterranean and the MENA region for some time. The EU can only make a difference as a regional actor if it manages to successfully implement the EUGS's new toolbox consisting the elements of resilience, cooperative regional orders, and principled pragmatism and if it reignites its transatlantic cooperation with the US.

To conclude, the cross-period analysis of the EU's policies on the Mediterranean and the MENA shows that there is concurrent execution of continuation and change within their scope and implementation. Even if the EU has maintained its influence in the Mediterranean and the MENA as a regional actor prior to the Arab uprisings, its security strategies and influence mechanisms had not allowed the EU to act as the key security provider in the absence of a proactive strategy. Form this viewpoint, the EU must make its support for the democratization of the region more concrete by abandoning its exclusionist inclination towards those states that have been failing in pursuing political reforms and successful transformations. The EU must, therefore, adopt a more inclusionist approach and build confidence in the region as a credible external actor providing sufficient levels of both political and financial incentives. Only after the attainment of these objectives, the EU can break the continuity notion and set the scene for a real change concerning its policies on the Mediterranean and the MENA region.

## Özet

21. yüzyılda güvenlik sorunlarının her geçen gün paradigma değiştirdiği uluslararası sistemde, devlet ve devlet dışı aktörlerin önceki dönemlerin ihtiyaç ve gerekliliklerine göre hazırlanmış ve izlemiş oldukları tüm politika ve stratejileri zaman aşımına uğratmıştır. Bu sebeple uluslararası sistemdeki tüm aktörler yenilikçi, daha kapsamlı ve etkin politikalar geliştirmeye zorlanmıştır. Henüz tam anlamıyla kendini yeni düzene adapte edemeyen AB’de istisnasız bu durumdan nasibini almıştır. Zira AB, özellikle son 10 yıldır yeni liberal düzenin bir öncüsü olmaktan ziyade ortaya çıkan realpolitik unsurlarla kuşatılmış durumdadır. Ancak AB’nin yeni sistem içerisinde yaşadığı adaptasyon sorunlarını sadece uluslararası sistemde yaşanan paradigma değişimine bağlamak yeterli olmayacaktır. Bilfiil bu durumun Birliğin son dönemde yaşadığı iç karışıklıklar ve derin yapısal sorunlarla da ilintili olduğu unutulmamalıdır.

AB’ye üye devletler arasında Ortak Dış ve Güvenlik Politikası (ODGP) kapsamında görülen kolektif eylem zorlukları ağırlıklı olarak egemenlik algısı, üyeler arası çıkar çatışmaları, yetersiz dayanışma, ulus-üstü kurumların parçalı görünümü olması ve zayıf liderlik gibi yapısal sorunlara bağlı olarak etkin bir gelişim gösterememiştir. Keza bu durum, AB’nin Orta Doğu politikaları için de geçerlidir. Özellikle Arap Baharı Sonrası Dönem’de bölgeye nüfuz eden istikrarsızlık ve düzensizlik AB’nin dış politika kapsamında daha belirgin ve daha cesur bir stratejiye ne kadar ihtiyacı olduğunu net bir biçimde gözler önüne sermektedir. Zira AB ancak böyle bir strateji aracılığı ile bölgeye yönelik müdahalelerinde başarılı olabilir ve hem kendi vatandaşları nezdinde, hem de uluslararası kamuoyunda itibarını koruyabilir.

Bunların yanı sıra, Arap Baharı Sonrası dönemde AB-Orta Doğu ilişkilerini tanımlayan parametrelerde de değişim yaşandığı görülmektedir. Önceki dönemlerde geliştirilen iş birliği, istikrar ve derin demokrasi anlayışına dayalı strateji ve politikaların her ne kadar güvenlik açılımı olduğu bilirse de, ekonomik kalkınma, demokratikleşme gibi ekonomik ve siyasi unsurlara yapılan referanslar bu dönemde daha muğlak hale gelmiştir. Bu bağlamda AB’deki retorik değişimiyle birlikte terörizm, aşırıcılık ve radikalleşme ile mücadele, yasadışı göç ve enerji kaynaklarına olan bağımlılık gibi unsurlar daha ön plana çıkmıştır. Diğer bir ifadeyle,

AB'nin realpolitik unsurların yarattığı ağır baskı sebebiyle, güvenlik perspektifinde, çıkar odaklı politikalar geliştirme eğilimi gösterdiği görülmektedir.

Özellikle Arap Baharı sonrası dönemde ekonomik, sosyal, siyasi ve güvenlik alanlarında yaşanan değişimler, AB'yi çevreleyen bölgesel ortamın ve küresel etkileşimlerin analizini yapmaya zorlamıştır. ODGP'nin etkinliğini arttırmaya yönelik en güncel gelişmelerden biri ise, AB Yüksek Temsilcisi Federica Mogherini tarafından 2016 yılında açıklanan "Küresel Strateji" belgesidir. Küresel Strateji, 2003 yılı Avrupa Güvenlik Stratejisi'nden farklı olarak AB'nin dış politika alanındaki öncelik ve çıkarlarını daha kapsamlı bir şekilde yansıtmının ötesinde, dış eylemlerini uygulama esaslarını içermekte ve AB'nin bölgesel veya küresel düzeyde oluşabilecek güvenlik sorunlarının çözümünde daha etkin bir rol üstlenmesini hedeflemektedir. Bu gelişmelere karşın, söz konusu stratejinin henüz beklenileni karşılamamış olması sebebiyle AB'nin, başta Orta Doğu olmak üzere, kendi sınırlarının dışında gelişen olaylara müdahale becerisi ve yeterliliği hâlâ istenilen düzeyde gelişmemiştir.

AB'nin günümüzde ve bundan sonraki süreçte Orta Doğu'da ne kadar etkin bir aktör olabileceğine ve geliştirdiği stratejilerin ne tür kalıcı sonuçlar doğurabileceğine dair tespit ve öneriler henüz kesinlik kazanmamıştır. Buna karşın, AB'nin bugüne kadar geliştirdiği tüm stratejilerin dönüşümsel olmaktan ziyade, stratejik hedeflere ulaşma isteği uyandıran bir nitelik taşıdığı görülmektedir. Son dönemlerde AB'nin bölge özelinde giderek güç kaybettiğine ilişkin genel bir algı oluşmasına karşın, Birliğin siyasi ve kurumsal zorlukları aştığı takdirde, bölgede istikrarı sağlayan ve düzeni yeniden kuran belirleyici bir güç haline gelmesi oldukça muhtemeldir. Zira AB, sorunları pragmatik bir yaklaşımla ele alıp kısa vadeli çözümler bulmak yerine, geliştirdiği dış politika araçları yardımıyla uzun vadede siyasi nüfuzunu öne çıkaracak politika ve stratejiler oluşturabilecek bir aktördür. Ayrıca çok taraflılık üzerinden transatlantik ortaklık geliştirebilirse AB'nin bölgedeki en önemli dönüştürücü güçlerden biri haline gelebileceği çok açıktır. Bu açıdan, Orta Doğu'ya yönelik Birlik politikalarının etkinliği, üye devletlerin izlediği politikalar arasındaki uyum ve tutarlılığa bağlı olacaktır.