European and Turkish Humanitarian Response during the Syrian Crisis

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Abstract: The ongoing conflict in Syria has created one of the most pressing humanitarian crises in the world. Humanitarian needs continue to rise, population displacements are increasing and an entire generation of children is being exposed to war and violence, increasingly deprived of basic services, education and protection. The European Union and its member states collectively are leading the international response. More than €5 billion have been mobilized for relief and recovery assistance to Syrians in their country and to refugees and their host communities in neighboring Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt. Turkey above all is currently hosting more than 2.5 million Syrian refugees, the largest number of Syrian refugees in one country in the world, even during last summer. The article aims to provide a general overview of the Syrian crisis after the so-called “Arab Spring” in 2011, particularly from a humanitarian point of view. After this step, the article will focus on the Turkish humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis itself, including the initiatives that the EU has created to deal with the problem.

Key Words: Turkey; Syria; Refugees; EU; Humanitarian Response

Introduction

The Syrian civil war, degenerated after the beginning of the popular mobilization on March 15, 2011, is one of the wars near the European doors, together with the Ukrainian one. It involves both Mediterranean landscape and Arab world, and it is compounded by the involvement, directly or indirectly, of intrigues of regional powers: the relentless battle, initially characterized by peaceful demonstrations, is far to gain a solution. The human cost of the first two years of the revolts was high: as the conflict enters its sixth year, Syria could be considered as one of the most complex and dynamic humanitarian crises in the world today. “Since March 2011, over a quarter of a million Syrians have been killed and over one million have been injured. 4.8 million Syrians have been forced to leave the country, and 6.5 million are internally displaced, making Syria the largest displacement crisis globally”. 

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Syrian President Bashar al-Assad refused to implement the meaningful reforms demanded by protestors and started to attack the rebels, including the use of heavy artillery, detention and torture. Besides the worsening of the violence, denied access to humanitarian aid from NGOs and international organizations caused a severe shortage of food, water and healthcare in the country. “In 2016, an estimated 13.5 million people, including 6 million children, are in need of humanitarian assistance. Of these 5.47 million people are in hard-to-reach areas, including close to 600,000 people in 18 besieged areas. According to current figures, 11.5 million Syrians require health care, 13.5 million need protection support and 12.1 million require water and sanitation, while 5.7 million children need education support, including 2.7 million who are out of school in Syria and across the region. About 2.48 million people are food insecure, while more than 1.5 million need shelter and household goods”.

The ongoing conflict in Syria complicates the humanitarian access to people in need. At the same time, shifting borders, administrative and bureaucratic obstacles, violence along access routes and general safety and security concerns in contravention of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law prevented the resolution of one of the most disruptive contemporary emergency issues in the Middle East. Although the massive flux of migrants through the Mediterranean Sea, Turkish borders and Europe, it is increasingly difficult for Syrians to find safety or to seek asylum. These difficulties have resulted in a marked decline in the number of newly arriving registered refugees and in their ability to access international protection. While the cessation of hostilities, since February 27, 2016, is a welcome improvement which enabled some temporary relief, those in besieged and hard-to-reach areas need regular and sustained assistance.

Europe is a leading donor among the international community to address the Syrian crisis. The European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) is in daily contact with its humanitarian partners and is coordinating its humanitarian activities with EU member states and all other significant donors. In this horrific context, cross-border assistance plays a vital role. Turkey’s aid system, the so-called “zero-point delivery system”, is still in place. However, after six years of the Syrian conflict, it is time to question and to examine whether this humanitarian approach is operational and functioning.

**I. Responsibility to Protect and Middle East Upheaval**

To better analyze the humanitarian emergency in Syria and the Turkish and European response, it is important to bridge the concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) with the ongoing conflict. Both are created by a “normative shift away from a state-centric conceptualizations of authority and towards collective efforts to address transnational problems where traditional (State) governance mechanism are absent or have failed”. At the same time, the R2P measures are probably the most important innovations in human

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1. Ibid.
rights protection for decades. Kofi Annan explained the significance of R2P, after the 2005 World Summit’s endorsement of its principles, as follows: “human life, human dignity, human rights raised above even the entrenched concept of State sovereignty. Global recognition that sovereignty in the twenty-first century entails the responsibility to protect people from fear and want. A global declaration that reinforces the primacy of the rule of law”.

However, the situation in Syria, and in Sri Lanka too, demonstrate how much the R2P is in crisis: in Syria, over a quarter of a million Syrians have been killed and over one million have been injured since 2011, many of whom non-combatants and including 6 million children who are in need of humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the R2P is an international norm, but it does not possess independent agency. “The failure to end atrocities and protect civilians in Syria is not a failure of R2P, but of the imperfect actors and institutions charged with its implementation”.

Syria has brought into stark relief the reality of a twentieth century UN struggling to respond to 21st century challenges. The R2P means that the permanent members of the Security Council have a responsibility not to veto when the world is confronted with these most heinous crimes. With or without reform, the Security Council is still obligated to help end war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria. Issues relating to humanitarian access, negotiating a political solution and ending impunity for mass atrocities remain complex and fraught with political danger.

II. Syrian Crisis and the Humanitarian Emergency

As the crisis continues to escalate, the opposition to the Assad regime organized itself through the SNC, an umbrella organization of exiled Syrians, and the Free Syrian Army (FSA), a militarized element composed largely of Syrian military defectors and armed rebels. The United Nations Human Rights Council established an independent International Commission of Inquiry in September 2011 in order to investigate the alleged human rights violations. Seven reports were concluded and established that the Syrian government, Shabiba and anti-government groups committed war crimes. As a response to the crisis, regional and international actors have tried, at different levels and with different approaches, to intervene: the EU imposed economic sanctions in May 2011, including an arms embargo, visa ban and assets freeze, against the Syrian regime, and intensifying the sanctions periodically since then. Moreover, in November 2012, the EU recognized the National Coalition of the Syrian opposition in order to legitimate the representative of Syrian people. On January 6, 2013, Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union, affirmed that it was better if Bashar al Assad resigned to permit a political transition. She made reference to the last Assad’s discourse, his first speech since June, during which he

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This Arabic term, which means “apparitions” or “ghosts”, is generally used to indicate the armed groups and militia in support of Ba’ath Party government of Syria. According to Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, some of them are mercenaries.
denied every possibility to have a dialogue with “a puppet made by the West” and declared his decision to abandon every relationship with Europe and the US. Above the audience, there was also Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN mediator who had met Assad in Syria and has been meeting US and Russian officials to try to narrow differences between Washington and Moscow over a peace plan. Assad seemed to have created a power vacuum around him: the US, European Union, Turkey and most Arab states have called on him to quit. In March 2013, the EU foreign ministers modified the imposed sanctions, and on May 28, 2013 the EU ended the embargo on the opposition in Syria. It also opened up the possibility to arm anti-government rebels while upholding the arms embargo on the Assad government. Only the United Kingdom and France have expressed the possibility of sending arms, while the majority of the remaining EU member-states are worried that further militarization will only fuel more violence. On March 15, 2014, Ashton once again expressed her concern about reports, which “confirmed the regime’s indiscriminate use of murder, torture, rape, hostage-taking, and sexual violence. These are crimes against humanity, war crimes and blatant breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law”.\(^4\) For its part, Russia, which sells arms and has a naval base in Syria\(^5\), has agreed with a transition of power but, at the same time, has said that Assad’s departure should not be a precondition for any talks. The US government, continuously from 2011 to 2013, invoked several times the Responsibility to Protect norm to justify a military intervention\(^6\), but the Russian and Chinese veto stopped the process: Moscow and Beijing have in fact stated that the US attempt is a pretext for regime change and that the Syrian situation is totally different from Libya’s. The crisis in Syria, in sum, worsened Middle Eastern and Mediterranean equilibrium and could infect the regional stability. The Arab revolts were obliged to take stock of European politics in the Mediterranean space since the Barcelona process (EMP) started in 1995. During the last decade, the European Union has constituted a benchmark for neighbors, but, with the transformation in political panorama lead by the so-called “Arab Spring”\(^3\) and in the vision of the construction of democracy and of the defense of security, Mediterranean area could be a possibility for the future to build a geopolitical European space of representation.\(^7\)

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\(^1\) Catherine Ashton on the 3rd Anniversary of the Syrian Uprising stated the discourse.

\(^2\) The harbor is in Tartus, on Mediterranean Sea, which is the second largest Syrian port after Latakia.

\(^3\) Responsibility to Protect (R2P) could be defined as norm linked to international security and humanitarian law that could intervene in order to address the international community’s failure to prevent and stop genocides, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. World Summit Outcome Document agreed in 2005 that the norm doesn’t consider a unilateral military response but has to be authorized by Security Council.

\(^4\) The term “Arab Spring” could be considered as an inappropriate definition: used for the first time on the Foreign Policy Magazine, it has been monopolized since 2011 with the attempt to be referred to the revolts emerged in Middle East and Maghreb during the last three years. On January 6, 2011, two days after the death of Tunisian Bouazizi, March Lynch wrote on Foreign Policy the article “Obama’s Arab Spring”, in which he spoke about revolts exploded in Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt and Kuwait. Arabs intellectuals and scholars have been reluctant in front of this term both for the cyclic nature of the seasons as for the real consequences of the revolts: the question is if it would be better to speak about “Arab Winter” or “Arab Fall”.

Crisis of legitimation in Syria continues to unfold and it is clear that the region is undergoing a profound transformation. “The democracy promotion policies that emerged in the form of the America’s Freedom Agenda and the EU’s European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) attempted to square this circle by operating within a neoliberal paradigm”. The roots of the turmoil in Assad’s state, called the “struggle for Syria” in the scholarly literature, are embedded to a large extent, both in internal and external conditions, to weaken the country from an institutional point of view: this includes difficulties faced by Syria’s regime in establishing and maintaining a political center capable of imposing its authority over the fragmented population and of widening the gap between the urban centers and the countryside and peripheral regions.

While the Syrian Free Army resistance has advanced in the regime’s strongholds, the situation inside continues to be quite fragmented, from a social, political and military point of view. It constitutes a huge problem for European intervention in this conflictual situation. In this sense, in order to better analyze the Syrian situation and the possible European intervention, it is important to split the overview into two routes, one more strategic, linked to the objective situation of the conflict, and one related to the Syrian domestic unhealthy conditions.

a. The situation in Syria

The explosion of the Syrian conflict differs from the other of the so-called “Arab Spring” because the first centers involved in the tensions were not the big cities or Damascus, where only intellectuals and families of detained politicians participated to the revolts, but the agricultural and peripheral ones in the south, where tribes hold power on local affairs. By the time, the rebellions were extended to the rest of the country: in the northeastern at Qamishli e Dayr az Zor; in the north-western at Baniyas and Latakia; in the center, at Damascus and in its suburbs like Duma; in the south at Quneitra and Daraa. Here, and in particular in the entire southern region of Hawran, one of the poorest regions of the country, the unrest is sensibly widespread, causing a sense of ostracism from Damascus and water scarcity. Latakia too was involved in the conflict: the family of Assad and of Makhluf, who manage the majority of the Syrian public and private affairs, come from this Alawi region, which is also the most important harbor of the state. When protests reached Deraa in March 2011, the population asked Assad to undertake reforms, but faith in their leader soon evaporated. The Syrian leader approved reforms that deal with the end of the

2 Ibid.
monopoly of the Baath Party, and with the abolition of the regime of national emergency that is in force in the country since 1963, but then he accused the United States to be involved in a Zionist plot to destabilize the region. The Muslim Brotherhood was also accused of involvement, also if there is no direct proof of their real participation in the conflict. After the first revolts, State security forces responded to protests killing hundred in Deraa and elsewhere, while the president offered only piecemeal reforms. Criminal armed gangs divided the population in Syria, and sectarianism grew. Yet the regime still appears far from collapse, and Assad had declared several times that the Syrian revolts are far from being part of the called “Arab Spring”. The opposition, both within Syria and exiles abroad, has tried to awaken the Syrian population and to respond to the attack. The international community is frozen, between the possibility to intervene or to stay outside from violence. Kofi Annan did not succeed in his attempt to mediate and eventually resigned. In the meantime, Russia, China and Iran continue to explicitly or implicitly back Assad. The conflict has now become a bloodbath between a regime and a poorly armed but determined opposition, and it could continue to turn into a powder keg for the entire Middle East.

Since the Syrian uprising started in March 2011, with anti-government protests in the provincial areas, President Bashar al-Assad responded with a bloody crackdown on initially peaceful gatherings, along with piecemeal process of concessions of weak political reform. After almost two years of clashes, the escalation to a civil war saw the confrontation between the regime and the opposition: armed groups have supplied guerrilla war against government forces. Damascus and Aleppo have been reached by the fighting, with growing numbers of senior army officers deserting Assad. Key army units remain however loyal to Assad, and even if the regime seemed to be several times on the point to crash, Assad is far from finished. His fall would have disastrous consequences for Syria’s multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. By late 2012, the Syrian Free Army controlled the countryside in the north and the east of the country, and Aleppo, with the suburbs of Damascus, is strongly occupied by rebels. Since the start of the revolts, the role of Islamist rebel groups, probably linked to Al Qaeda, were playing a key role in the fight against Assad and has vowed to establish an Islamist state in Syria. Syria’s conflict resembles a slow, painful slog, punctuated by intermittent accelerations and apparent tipping points, influenced by international activity. The capacity of regular armed forces to face different rebel groups is one of the principal uncertainties in the conflict. The use of naval mines and explosives dropped from helicopters probably means that the regime has a fault in the security system, even if regular armed forces supporting Assad are substantial. Data on desertions are substantial: to prevent this phenomenon, Assad, during the last months, recalled Alawi reservists (dealing with his same confessional groups, equal to 12% of population), who are considered the only reliable elements. In spite of the European embargo of May 2011, reinforced in July 2012, the Free Syrian Army controls different and important cities in the north of Syria and at the borders with Turkey. Anarchical attempts are stopped in “free” areas, in particular in this period of transition. Iran has been supporting the regime with both expertise and munitions. Equally, the opposition has been receiving directly or indirectly both small arms and man-held anti-aircraft missiles from the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia to counter the regime’s use of air power. “The regional
Strategic ambitions of Iran and its proxy Hezbollah-led conflict with Israel have critically exacerbated the war. Rebels’ actions continue to be now more incisive: for the first time, some anti-aircraft missiles shot down the regime’s helicopters, moderating the regime’s control of the sky. Fragmentation between actors involved in the conflict is high, incited by the regime’s strategy that wants to take advantage of separations in confessional communities: Idlib, Hama and Homs are only some of areas where Assad’s forces are struggling to regain power. Syrian Kurds have recently returned to support Assad’s regime with a patronage in return for political loyalty, after a first stage of neutrality. Meanwhile, claims for the constitution of a Kurdish state resound. Alawi support to Assad is now reinforced in particular on the coast, on the base of a particular treaty of division of French origin. Roughly a year ago war seemed to be at tipping point: it is evident since December that the alliance between Moscow and Assad may fall, probably because no one can win the Syrian civil war and a transitional government is now the only way forward. Assad has tried to have a double strategy in order to prevent the start of transition, with a material disintegration of infrastructure or of the concrete political capacity to construct rapidly a post-Assad order.

b. Defining a fragile actor: Syria between Failed State and Assad’s leadership

Macro-political phenomena include both change of regime and State transformation. These processes influence each other, even if in an asymmetrical way. According to Linz and Stepan, different countries are affected by crisis of non-democratic regime, in particular with the relationship of the behavior of political community. Elkins and Sides speak about problems of spatiality, in reference also with territorial borders. The so-called Arab Awakening provoked changes and mutations not only in the regional contest, but also for the international system. It is the case crises in weak States meddle not only with regime’s stability, but constitute also a serious challenge to the security and the stability of international order. Leaders and their influence collapsed in the Middle East and in the Maghreb, where populations ceased to give support to an enduring dictatorship: the figure of Bashar al-Assad, the young president who cultivated a populist and anti-Western image, during the last year tottered different times, causing instability in the region. Syria could not be included in the “third wave of democratization” between 1974 and 1990 that was followed by further incremental democratic enlargement, like in 2000. A range of terms emerged to convey the opacity and fragility of these new pluralistic polities and are utilized, as “restricted”, “delegative”, “low intensity”, or “semi democracies”. Policy-making is still dominated by elites and accountability is not verified in every single part of society, in a contest where political parties are weak, passive or fractious, and the rule of law embedded to only a limited extent. The nexus between illiberal democracies and economic constraints
is evident in the case of a state deprived of newly enfranchised electorates of effective
democratic citizenship. “While the number of democracies had increased, the overall level
of political and civil liberties actually declined. There was as much contraction as
enlargement of the international community of democracies”\textsuperscript{1}. Against this background
the advanced industrialized democracies committed themselves to promoting democracy in
the developing world. European governments had in some cases sought to encourage
processes of democratization prior to the 1990s, the strategic imperatives of the Cold War
had ensured that such efforts were less than systematic and pursued with vigor only in the
limited number of cases where political change was itself seen as likely to be beneficial to
the struggle against communism.

“The Arab Democratic Spring or Arab Uprisings or Arab Awakening is a momentous
event that surprised both scholars and policy makers. For over a decade the paradigm of
authoritarian resilience had dominated studies of the Arab World, almost entirely replacing
the democratization paradigm that had been prominent throughout the 1980s and 1990s”\textsuperscript{2}. The authoritarian resilience, in case of Syria, deals strongly with the nature of Islamist
parties and movements, arguing that its potency and perceived antidemocratic stances
allowed authoritarian regimes to find favor with secular sectors within their domestic and
international community.

Starting from Weber thinking, the definition of the State as an actor of international
panorama occupies a predominant role in the most important debates, for example, in the
Realist school of IR, which has always underlined its persistent centrality. Change of
regime and process of democratization have shifted the attention on the state-stability and
the transformation of the government with the challenge of crisis. State building could
constitute a problem for democratization: a preliminary question is defined by the
explanation and the measurement of the weakness of the State. The OECD could give one
definition about the Principle for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and
Situations, speaking about State’s capacity to reduce poverty, to develop human rights and
to protect security. The Fund for Peace uses indicators, such as defense, rule of law, social
services, security and so on and so forth. Politics and policy enter in this close examination.
The absence of reforms in Syria, the presence of a minority that ruled on a majority, could
be considered the origin of a lesser stabilization of the state – system inside. Considering
dimension, cause and consequences of State weakness, Syria has the power dimension
limited in domestic sovereignty, with fragmentation in army, state-structure, and
administration, a fragile rule of law and conflict in the inter-institutional system. Conflict
across the center and periphery consequently clash, with portion of territory controlled by
rebels (multiple sovereignty). Civil war and opposed nationalism are the direct results of
this process. Syria is a clear example of a weak and fragile State: it experienced
parliamentary government since 1949, but then a new authoritarian state was enabled to
take control. It survived since the end of the Cold War era, when the international system
seemed to change, and renewed interest for history emerged. Syria is just a Republic, but

\textsuperscript{1} R. Youngs, “The EU and Democracy Promotion in the Mediterranean: A New or Disingenuous
\textsuperscript{2} F. G. Gause III, “Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring,” \textit{Foreign Affairs}, Vol. 90, No.4,
July/August 2011, pp.81-90.

(2) M. C. Radaelli, “Europeanization: Solution or Problem?” European Integration Online Papers (EIOP), Vol.8, No.16, 2004.

III. European and Turkish Response

Europeanization has been defined, as Radaelli has affirmed, as a concept of “process of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ways of doing things and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of the EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourses, identities, political structures and public policies”. The process is focused on EU institutions on national politics, but it is also hugely related with enlargement of European values in member states. In this acception, the EU’s democracy promotion commitment started in November 1991, with a Development Council resolution, and then was incorporated into the mainstream foreign policy. The ENP was then conceived and launched in 2004 in this view with the aim of dealing with neighboring countries and with the post–enlargement context, in order to bring democratic change in regions like the Middle East and North Africa. The EU enhanced cooperation and the positive conditionality through the incentives for “reinforcement by reward” with the ENP, thanks to a “more for more” approach: the ENP Action Plans and Progress Reports are in this sense linked to the positive conditionality. This approach could be clarified throughout the European normative bases and discernible interests, explained by a key object of the
1991 Maastricht Treaty and by article 21 of the Lisbon Treaty that states that “the Union’s action on the international scene be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms”. In the past two decades, Brussels has tried to devise the right mix of policy instruments in its various relations with the countries of MENA. Together with the democratic promotion, the EU envisaged security cooperation in Arab countries through the Barcelona Declaration in order to establish a common area of peace and stability. The US also tried to develop a fruitful partnership with a long-standing effort, but, as Kagan stated, “Arab societies would be more receptive to a ‘Venusian’ Europe than to a ‘Martian’ USA”. Although this evaluation implies a European strategy and vision in neighboring countries, the Southern Mediterranean governments have never internalized the EU initiatives in reality. Actors like Syria, Egypt and Lebanon have evaluated the EU proposals according to their own benefits. If Morocco was more successful than other neighbors in applying democratic reforms, the Syrian case was characterized by a deep international isolation since the mid-2008. Bashar al-Assad, in fact, tried to go out from this seclusion joining diplomatic talks with other regional leaders at the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean (UMF) in July. This latter was an attempt of former France’s President Nicolas Sarkozy, who has managed to bring together a group of countries containing EU members as well as Mediterranean partners: it was useful to launch a number of practical programs to boost cooperation and prosperity in the region. The UMF was established to search peace and unity: it is essentially a descendant of the Barcelona process, launched in 1995. A number of uncontroversial practical problems were included in the program: proposal to upgrade port facilities and new sea routes; the development of costal motorways; plans to improve maritime security; a strategy to tackle pollution in the Mediterranean; civil protection against man–made and natural disaster; a disposition to use North Africa’s plentiful sunshine to generate solar power to meet the EU’s energy needs; and initiatives in the areas of higher education and business development. The agreement could be advantageous both for the EU and non-member states, also to improve regional security. During the summit in Paris in July 2008, 43 heads of states or government tried to launch the UMF, with 16 leaders of non–EU states of the Maghreb, Middle East and West Balkans. Some antagonist neighbors came out from isolation: only Colonel Muammar Gadhafi refused to attend. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was present in the same room with former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, breaking one of the Middle Eastern “iron

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2 The EU improved democracy assistance in Morocco throughout external cooperation under MEDA in 2000 with a large-scale project, supporting the modernization of the judiciary system with an investment of 27.7 million of euro. In addition, smaller projects have picked up national initiatives such as the national human rights plan (2 million of euro in 2005) and the IER (8 million of euro in 2008), or addressed to civil society (3 million of euro in 2005). V. Van Hüllen, “Europeanization through Cooperation? EU democratic promotion in Morocco and Tunisia,” West European Politics, Vol. 35, No. 1, January 2012, pp.117-134.
3 UMF, in Sarkozy’s idea, promised to transform the Mediterranean landscape into an area of cooperation, prosperity, peace and democracy. It has a bilateral and realist approach instead of a regionalist, ambitious and idealist understanding of ENP.
4 R. Balfour, “The Transformation of the Union for Mediterranean,” Mediterranean Politics, Vol.14,
democracy promotion policies in the region. However, the Arab Awakening can be seen as synonymous with failure of US and EU
establishing and running an ever-growing number of camps has fast approached $1 billion.

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Turkey and its President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on his side, has faced the situation
asking several times military intervention against Bashar al-Assad, especially at the
beginning of the crisis in Syria. But fleeing an escalating civil war, Turkey’s generous
“open door policy” came under pressure. The cost of receiving Syrian refugees and
establishing and running an ever-growing number of camps has fast approached $1 billion.


R. H. Santini, O. Hassan, “Transatlantic Democracy Promotion and the Arab Spring”.

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Turkey’s open door policy is composed of several steps. First, in October 2011, Turkey extended ‘temporary protection’ to Syrian refugees. “This policy is based on the EU’s directive from July 2001 and extends temporary protection to refugees arriving under mass influx circumstances. It stands in stark contrast to Turkey’s actions during the March 1991 refugee crisis. At that time, Turkey was rebuked by the international community for insisting on the speedy repatriation of the nearly half a million refugees that arrived at its borders. The extension, then, of ‘temporary protection’ to Syrian refugees by the Turkish government is a new and welcome development”.  

Secondly, Turkey has applied the principle of “non-refoulement” as one of the main pillars of international refugee law and an indispensable aspect of protection. It means that refugees have to be registered and in this way controlled. “The open door policy also allows Syrians with passports to enter Turkey freely and treats those Syrians who may have entered Turkey without papers in a similar fashion. Since the beginning of the crisis, close to 124,000 refugees are reported to have returned to Syria – all on a voluntary basis“.  

Thirdly, the Turkish government wants to provide the best possible living conditions and humanitarian assistance for the refugees. Together with the Turkish Red Crescent, the Turkish Disaster Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) has been actively involved in setting up and running the refugee camps. AFAD also oversees the provision of education and health services and supervises day-to-day management of the camps. AFAD is also currently working on a project that provides these same services to refugees outside the camps. However, ensuring these services is placing an ever growing financial burden on its resources.

IV. Club Med: Encouraging Peace and Development in an Uncertain Scenario

Considering the unhealthy domestic situation in Syria and the uprisings first in the Mediterranean space and later in Syria itself, it is clear that the fact that even if the EU had managed the Europeanization process more effectively, events would turn out differently. This statement does not exclude EU responsibility in the unfortunate and tumultuous process in the Middle East and in Syria, particularly, although the level of analysis linked to the international actors’ role has to be integrated in order to obtain an objective and effective framework of the situation.

Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity (PfDSP) was the EU’s first reaction to the Arab uprising, which “provides the first attempt to formulate a broad framework for the EU’s response to the events of historic proportions. PfDSP specifically claims that the novelty in this new strategic framework consists, firstly, in having learned the errors of its past ways; secondly, in responding to the demands of the uprisings, particularly the demand for democracy which characterized the uprisings; and thirdly, in providing a

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2 Ibid.
highly innovative shift in the EU’s DA policy framework”. Democracy, development and delivery are the three central themes in EU DA policies, in relation with the construction of the idea of democracy, economic growth and the effectiveness of EU policies. PfDSP refers to the ENP, EIDHR (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights), UMF, including EEAS (European External Action Service). Since COM (2001) 252, the European Commission as key stepping stone in shaping EU DA about the EU’s role in promoting human rights and democratization in third countries, universality and indivisibility of human rights, together with the promotion of pluralistic democracy and effective guarantees for the rule of law, are among the EU’s essential objectives. “Economic and social rights, therefore, are argued not to be part of the EU’s democracy – promotion flagship framework program because they are already covered under development assistance”. What is more important in this dialogue is a positive and constructive partnership with governments, based on support and encouragement rather than conventional negative conditionality. In different cases, democracy, which could be evaluated from demand-side and supply-side, is strictly linked with social and democratic articulation of civil and human rights, but also with state building and the role of socioeconomic justice. The acknowledgement that the unequal distribution of wealth was one of the causes of the uprisings and analysis of socioeconomic aspects for development in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries from EU are fundamental, together with a technical phase for the application and the intensification of reforms with a focus on market access and liberalization. Moreover, the threat of struggle for religion requires the intervention of the EU in order to propagate democracy. PSEM (Pays du Sud et de l’Est méditerranéen) has been another possibility for Europe to empower the South and the East Mediterranean countries with investments and infrastructures. The enfranchisement of local territories goes through the decentralization, as we can consider it from PSEM. Decentralization is however connected with regionalism, Islamism and communitarianism, in particular in the Syrian case. A cultural revolution is totally linked with the local acknowledgment and appropriation of social society.

Discussing the reaction of the EU to the Arab Uprisings, the first point is strictly linked to political conditionality, whose misuse is one of the important failures particularly of the ENP and the UFM. Even if conditionality must be used positively, instead of cutting aid, the EU could not implement it effectively before the Arab revolution. Moreover, it is clear that the EU could not oppose the “Arab Spring” quickly: the Syrian situation, cause of the involvement of several international actors and the intricate domestic situation, is different from the other countries affected by the revolts. The necessary appointments have not been made: the EU Commission and High Commissioner determined the declaration on PfDSP with the Southern Mediterranean too late to respond to the new Middle Eastern challenges. On the other hand, it is quite impossible, from the EU’s point of view, to

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3. V. Knoops, “Euro-Mediterranean Relations and the Arab Spring,” in EU Center, Background Brief, No.
apply the same unitary approach against all the Arab uprisings: firstly because every state constitutes a single case, with different variables, regimes and threats; secondly for the concerns and hesitations from EU member states. Furthermore the EU is still incapable for implementing a common foreign policy and an adequate relation with civil society and non-governmental organizations: it is another cause of the presence of several Arab societies, and because the response is not throughout the applications of European standards but in the support of their own dynamics. The international situation complicates the already intricate picture: firstly, the EU has used double standards in Libya and Syria, while the US or the EU could not eliminate the Chinese and Russian veto about military intervention in Syria. Moreover, the Russian and Iranian interests in the Middle East could not be eluded namely in the resolution of the Syrian crisis. In this framework, the “Arab Spring” proved that EU policies in the Mediterranean space have not been successful, particularly to manage the dynamics of the region. However, they could be evaluated as a turning point for the EU itself to adapt its strategic vision to regain a space of representation in a neighboring and fundamental landscape.

Conclusion

“Political history can be interpreted as a long journey marked by battles for the equal right to participate in the decision – making process of political life, that is, for political enfranchisement”. The “Arab Spring” has radically transformed the region, while the crisis in Syria persists: probably, there is no possibility to shift the EU’s democracy promotion policies. Brussels is suffering from a lack of policy innovation, albeit to different degrees. What is needed is a new policy paradigm, “but this is not easy to devise because democratic openings in the region exacerbate the conflicts of interest that lie at the heart of their engagement with the region”. Fragmentation in Middle East and Syria is sure a difficulty for the diffusion of the neoliberal and participatory democracy. After the second awakening, now the third is the Arab Awakening that “is in the scales of history. It has in it both peril and promise, the possibility of prison but also the possibility of freedom”. The distinction between inside and outside refers to a constructing identity, foreign policy is the major practice, which helps the constitution of the self in the face of the other, through drawing boundaries or accentuating them. Post-modernism points to Europe’s difference and argues that there is a new European order based on openness and mutual interference. For Europe, the so-called “Arab Spring” has to become a source of both opportunities and challenges for regionalism from a geopolitical,

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6, October 2011.
1 For instance, the Foreign Minister Michelle Alliot-Marie was criticized for her relations with the old Tunisian regime; it was the same for Italian relationships with Colonel Gaddafi.
4 R. H. Santini, O. Hassan, “Transatlantic Democracy Promotion and the Arab Spring”.
operational and legal point of view. In the post-Arab awakening environment, with rising political uncertainty in transitioning countries and an economic and financial crisis throughout Europe, few people expected the EU to rise and shine, even if it remains the first trading partner of most MENA countries. In sum, the EU, together with the Europeanization process, has failed to bring democratic transition in Middle Eastern countries. After military intervention in Libya, Europe could fight authoritarian power structures with mediation efforts aimed to bring stabilization in Syria. In this perspective, negotiations and peace process in Syria could be a new scenario for Europe, useful to extend European Security Strategy and to construct and develop new incisive foreign policies. Equally, the latter must be coordinated with the other international actors involved in the resolution of the crisis, like the United States, Turkey, the Gulf States and the Arab League.

Turkish Islamic Movement after Conservatives in Power

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Abstract: The Attempted Coup on July 15, 2016 was a result of the struggle within the Turkish Islamic movement. Turkish Islamic movement mobilizes in areas of both party politics and civil society. In the area of party politics, the Turkish Islamic movement is led by Islamic parties, like the Justice and Development Party (AKP); while, in the area of civil society, it was led by Fethullah Gülen and the Gülen Movement. This article focuses on the process of collaboration and subsequent confrontation between the AKP and Gülen Movement (GM). Analyzing the dynamics behind each groups' actions, how Islamic intellectuals strengthened their dominance through AKP and GM's tactical alliance, and the groups' struggle for leadership of the Turkish Islamic movement, this article conceives that the collaboration between AKP and GM was based on their common interests to weaken Turkish secular elites; while the latter was caused by their divergence in strategies for propelling the Turkish Islamic movement, including different ideological construction, outcome expectations, and methods employed to accomplish their goals.

Key Words: Attempted Coup; Turkish Islamic Movement; Justice and Development Party; Gülen Movement; Turkish Politics

Introduction Since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the Turkish Republic was established as a secular regime. Nonetheless, numerous Islamic movements in the newborn secular republic were so invigorating and inspiring, they led to confrontation...