

The Impact of the Arab Spring on Turkish Foreign Trade, Opportunities and Threats

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December 17, 2010 marks the beginning of a period known as the Arab Spring throughout which undemocratic regimes lacking economic liberty has been overturned. This revolutionary period initiated first in Tunisia with rebellions and spread through Egypt in February 17, 2011. Having influenced from this period, Libya also overturned its dictators. Another country where this period called the Arab Spring has been experienced is Syria.

This study aims at scrutinizing the effects of the Arab Spring on Turkish Foreign Trade. The factors paving the way for the development of the Arab Spring and its expansion to other African and Middle Eastern countries is evaluated in a chronological order. In this study, the scope of the evaluation regarding the impact of the Arab Spring on Turkish Foreign Trade is limited with Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Libya and Syria where this period has been felt deeply. The impact of the crisis on other African and Middle Eastern countries remains outside the scope of this study. The impact of the Arab Spring on Turkish Foreign Trade is evaluated by referring to the import/export values of the above mentioned countries both before and after the crisis and having completed the assessment of the situation we tried to evaluate the risks and opportunities in the long run. Furthermore, in studying Turkey's market variations in its export activities, import and export values among the Middle Eastern and North African Countries known as MENA have been taken as a reference. The impact of the Arab Spring within the scope of the MENA Countries is

evaluated in comparison with the five particular countries subject to this study.

In the first part the conditions and factors preparing the development of the Arab Spring has been evaluated and in the following parts the import and export values realized between Turkey and the other five countries namely Tunisia, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Morocco have been reviewed. In the next part, the impact of the Arab Spring on the Middle Eastern and North African Countries (MENA) is studied. In the last part of the study an overall evaluation of the impact of the Arab Spring on our foreign trade has been carried out by taking the period between 2010 and 2012 into consideration and in this respect the bilateral trade activities between Turkey and Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Syria and Libya have been reviewed on a periodical basis throughout which the impact of the crisis was deeply felt, a trend towards amelioration was experienced and normal conditions was sustained.

In the conclusion the impact and the results of the Arab Spring on Turkish Foreign Trade have been evaluated in a period when Turkey developed a zero problem policy in particular with the neighboring countries and the question whether this political crisis impose an opportunity or threat for Turkey in the short and medium run is discussed.

Keywords: The Arab Spring, Foreign Trade, Political and Economic Crisis