



Democracy, Development & Security in the EU's Mediterranean Policy: Paradoxes, Contradictions, and Failures

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The European Union aimed to build a circle of friends in its Southern Neighborhood but ended up surrounded by a 'ring of fire'. What went wrong for the EU's Neighborhood Policy? By combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Survey Research we can retrieve attitudes and values underpinning political preferences of ordinary citizens and European policymakers, helping us challenge received wisdom in several areas. The 'Arab Spring' were not 'youth revolutions' but received broad support. Protest was caused not by inequality or repression: rather, corruption was their most significant driver. Corruption was hallmark of an exploitative system which pushed through economic policies increasing inequality and which required repression to prevent dissent from spilling over into revolution. Conversely, MENA populations demand socially just democracy. Together, these factors explain why apparently strong and stable states became (and remain) brittle, unstable 'sinkholes of insecurity'. By contrast, Europe's 'supplies' liberal democracy and development strategies which deepen inequalities and facilitate repression: this mismatch explains the Union's policy failures, poor regional reputation, and the poor prospect for significant changes in the near future.

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