

MIGRATION AS A GAME CHANGER?

The influence of migration on the EU-Egyptian
bilateral relationship between 2011-2019

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1. Introduction

In 2015, the European Union (EU) saw itself confronted with a large influx of migrants. This was largely the result of the civil war in Syria and part of the migration movements caused by the 2011 Arab uprisings.¹ Often using little boats barely able to reach the shores of Italy and Greece, the images of migrants arriving in Europe instilled both empathy and fear among European citizens and politicians.² The concerns about continuing unrest in the Middle East and rapid population growth in Sub-Saharan Africa have contributed to migration becoming one of the top priorities for the EU.³

Therefore, Europe's Southern neighbours in the Middle East and North Africa are important actors in the EU's efforts to manage migration. States on the Southern Mediterranean coast are both transit and origin countries for many migrants trying to reach the EU.⁴ The importance of these countries to the EU is reflected by a number of new agreements, partnerships and financial arrangements. Egypt is one of these countries. Interestingly, it has received less attention from academics than migration cooperation with other countries in the region, such as Turkey and Libya. As pointed out by Christian Achraimer, literature on the bilateral relationship between the EU and Egypt in recent years in general is scarce.⁵ The research that does exist, suggests the relationship has gone through significant changes after the outbreak of the revolution in 2011.⁶

¹ Peter Seeberg, "The Arab uprisings and the EU's migration policies—The cases of Egypt, Libya, and Syria," *Democracy and security* 9.1-2 (2013): 157-58.

² Daniel Debomy and Alain Tripier, "European Public Opinion and the EU Following the Peak of the Migration Crisis," Notre Europe Jacques Delors Institute, Policy Paper, 2017: 16-20.

³ Anna Triandafyllidou and Maria Ilies, "EU irregular migration policies," in Anna Triandafyllidou, ed., *Irregular Migration in Europe. Myths and Realities* (Ashgate: Farnham and Burlington, 2010): 23-24.

⁴ Roderick Pace, "Migration in the Mediterranean: Origins and Characteristics," *Dossier, IEMED, Mediterranean Yearbook* 2016 (2016): pp. 91, 94.

⁵ Christian Achraimer, "EU-Egypt Rapprochement Post-2013: A Play in Five Acts," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 24, no. 4 (2019): 492.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 510-11.

Since the foundation of the Egyptian Republic in 1953, its relationship with Europe has known many ups and downs. As one of the founders of the non-aligned movement Egypt has for a long time tried to avoid tying its fate to one specific actor or alliance.⁷ The presidency of Anwar al-Sadat, starting in 1970, was an important turning point. Aside from a reorientation towards the United States, this was also the beginning of a closer relationship with Europe. The EU became Egypt's number one trading partner and in general the most influential foreign economic actor in the country.⁸ Egypt remained focused on the economic relationship throughout Hosni Mubarak's rule, while the EU saw in Egypt an important partner in other areas such as anti-terrorism policies and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is not surprising then, that one of the big drivers for the first association agreement between the EU and Egypt in 2001 was European concern over security in the Middle East.⁹

Following the 2011 revolution in Egypt, the relationship cooled down and Egypt looked elsewhere for support. Directly after the Arab uprisings, the EU initially took a hard-line stance that was in line with its intention to assess authoritarian regimes in a more critical manner.¹⁰ However, this changed in the years after 2013. Earlier research suggests that this has resulted in a pragmatic working relationship in which the balance of power has shifted in Egypt's favour.¹¹ This happened in the same period as the EU's increased focus on managing migration, in which Egypt is an important partner. Therefore, this thesis will focus on if and how these developments are connected by asking the question: how has migration influenced the EU-Egyptian relationship between the Revolution in 2011 and 2019?

⁷ Steven Cook, *The struggle for Egypt: from Nasser to Tahrir square* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 65-66.

⁸ Mokhtar Metwally. "Impact of EU FDI on economic growth in Middle Eastern Countries," *European Business Review* 16, no. 4 (2004), 383.

⁹ Michelle Pace, "Paradoxes and contradictions in EU democracy promotion in the Mediterranean: the limits of EU normative power," *Democratization* 16, no. 1 (2009): 41.

¹⁰ Assem Dandashly, "The EU response to regime change in the wake of the Arab revolt: differential implementation," *Journal of European Integration* 37, no. 1 (2015): 48-50.

¹¹ Achrainer, "EU-Egypt Rapprochement," 492.

The emphasis of this study is on the EU-Egyptian relationship under the president Abdel Fattah El Sisi. It focuses on the period after the military coup of 3 July 2013 that ultimately led to his presidency. The period between the 2011 Revolution and the coup will be included if it is deemed relevant for developments in the period after the coup.

1.1 State of the field

Several bodies of academic work offer insights that direct the analysis of this study. Earlier studies on EU-Egyptian bilateral relations help in painting a picture of the general context and the history of migration cooperation. International relations research on relations between the EU and neighbouring third countries in the context of migration offer interesting insights for comparison with the Egyptian situation.

The field of migration studies provides useful observations about the way in which migration cooperation influences other areas of cooperation. Specifically, the work on three different ‘migration nexuses’ informs the analysis of this thesis, as will be further explained below.

1.1.1 International relations

Given the contemporary focus of this study, specific literature on EU-Egypt relations in the same time frame is still limited. The aforementioned study by Achraimer forms an exception and is a good account of EU-Egypt relations between 2013 and 2017. His chronological account provides a useful background on the broad relationship, that this thesis will build on. Think tank and non-governmental organizations’ (NGOs) reports offer complementary insights. These usually focus on specific parts of the EU-Egyptian relationship and are used

for background information on issues such as the human rights situation in Egypt. A detailed account of these studies and reports is included in the following chapters.

Much of the literature on the relationship between the EU and its Southern neighbours focuses on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This is the overarching foreign policy framework that was designed in the early 2000s to govern and promote the relationship between the EU and its neighbours to the east and south. Dandashly proposes that the main EU interests in the ENP with its Southern neighbours were security and stability at its borders, whereby migration, and especially fighting illegal migration, has been of growing importance to the EU in this regard.¹²

As migration has become a pivotal topic to the EU in recent years, academic interest in migration cooperation between the EU and third countries has grown too. A study on the 2016 EU-Turkey deal on migration by Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani is particularly relevant. The article describes how Turkey manages to leverage its power as a gatekeeper against (illegal) migration to extract both financial support and concessions regarding democracy and human rights from the EU.¹³ Although Egyptian circumstances and interests differ from Turkey's, the importance of including aspects such as democracy and governance in addition to more tangible aspects in the analysis remains valid.

Another key insight that needs to be taken into account is the fact that in some of its bilateral relationships with Southern neighbours, the migration crisis has put the EU in a weaker position. As the Union appeared to be divided and without a plan to stop migration, its dependency on its neighbours increased. This is evident in the case of Turkey, where the pressure to stop illegal migration was greatest. It also applies to other countries, as a

¹² Dandashly, "EU response to regime change," 39.

¹³ Asli Okyay and Jonathan Zaragoza-Cristiani, "The Leverage of the Gatekeeper: Power and Interdependence in the Migration Nexus between the EU and Turkey," *The International Spectator* 51, no. 4 (2016): 56.

case-study about the EU-Moroccan mobility partnership indicates.¹⁴ Another case study focusing on Senegal and Ghana found that as a consequence of its wish to curtail migration, the EU “has given new strategic importance to certain African countries, [and] this new strategic importance has favoured unprecedented forms of cooperation”.¹⁵ These, and similar case studies, will be used for comparison with the EU-Egyptian relationship. Specifically, it will be assessed to what extent Egypt has followed Turkey’s strategy to bolster its position in the negotiations with the EU.

1.1.2 Migration studies

The analysis of how the broad relationship between the EU and Egypt has been affected by migration builds on the literature on ‘issue linkage’ in foreign policy. This term describes the practice of connecting multiple foreign policy areas together to reach a certain goal: “the simultaneous discussion of two or more issues for joint settlement”.¹⁶ Scholars have identified multiple reasons for tying policy areas together in treaties, among which path dependency and increasing bargaining power are most common.¹⁷

In the field of migration studies, specific issue linkages are defined as ‘nexuses’. These describe the mutual influences between migration and other phenomena such as education, security and trade. When political actors believe that these phenomena are connected, they will try to reach policy goals in one area, by efforts in another area. The migration-development nexus, fostering economic development in countries of origin to take

¹⁴ Fanny Tittel-Mosser, "Reversed Conditionality in EU External Migration Policy: The Case of Morocco," *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 14, no. 4 (2018): 359.

¹⁵ Tine Van Criekinge, "The EU-Africa migration partnership: A case study of the EU’s migration dialogue with Senegal and Ghana," *Migration Working Group, EUI, Florence* 24 (2010), 2-3.

¹⁶ Paul Poast, "Can issue linkage improve treaty credibility? Buffer state alliances as a “hard case”," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57, no. 5 (2013): 740.

¹⁷ Daniel Wunderlich, "Differentiation and policy convergence against long odds: Lessons from implementing EU migration policy in Morocco," *Mediterranean Politics* 15, no. 2 (2010): 249.

away poverty as a push factor for migration, is perhaps one of the most influential nexuses in contemporary migration policies. These nexuses provide useful clues for identifying which areas of the EU-Egyptian relationship may have been affected by migration cooperation.

Three nexuses are of particular interest to this thesis: migration-development, migration-security and migration-democracy.

Gaining momentum since the mid-1990s, the migration-development nexus presumes migration positively influences economic development in countries of origin. Policy makers and academics have therefore argued to link these two policy areas together and use migration as an instrument to stimulate development.¹⁸ It is also believed migration can be reduced by economic development in the country of origin.¹⁹ This issue linkage can be observed in the EU's efforts to reduce migration by addressing poverty in countries of origin as one of its root causes.²⁰

The desire to stem migration to the EU can be traced back for a large part to the securitization of the migration debate. According to an influential study by Huysmans, "the political construction of migration increasingly referred to the destabilizing effects of migration on domestic integration" in the EU migration debate.²¹ Especially in the context of a politically unstable Middle East, the EU's response to migration is also partially guided by concerns about importing extremism and terrorism, and results in a wish to restrict it as much as possible.²² This security-development nexus also works the other way around: instability

¹⁸ Alan Gamlen, "The new migration and development optimism: a review of the 2009 Human Development Report," *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations* 16, no. 3 (2010): 416.

¹⁹ Michael Clemens, "Does development reduce migration?," In *International Handbook on migration and Economic development*, ed. Robert Lucas (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014), 152-55.

²⁰ Martin Geiger and Antoine Pécoud, "Migration, development and the 'migration and development nexus'," *Population, Space and Place* 19, no. 4 (2013): 370.

²¹ Jef Huysmans, "The European Union and the securitization of migration," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38, no. 5 (2000): 751.

²² Sedef Eylemer and Sühâl Şemşit, "Migration-Security nexus in the Euro-Mediterranean relations," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 12, no.3 (2007): 56.

and conflict in countries of origin is seen as another root cause of migration.

The migration-democracy nexus, finally, presumes that a lack of democracy and good governance is another root cause for migration.²³ This assumed connection has also been traced in EU migration policies concerning its Southern neighbours,²⁴ and will therefore be included in this study.

In conclusion, earlier academic research provides useful insights for researching how the EU-Egypt relationship has changed because of migration. This literature will be used for painting a picture of the broader context of the bilateral relationship, to draw comparisons with how migration has shaped bilateral relationships with other countries, and to explain which other foreign policy areas are affected in which way.

1.2 Structure of research

The structure of this thesis is designed along the lines of the insights gained from the exploration of the field. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the field of migration itself. A broad overview of migration and migration cooperation between the EU and Egypt is provided. In line with studies about the broader relationship, it places the turn-around in the relationship that leads to a significant reduction of migration in 2016.

Chapter 3 focuses on what will be called the ‘normative costs’ the EU has paid for better migration cooperation with Egypt. The securitization of the EU migration debate and the changing interpretation of the migration-democracy nexus are used to explain how the EU created more room for cooperation with Egypt by the end of 2015.

²³ Luisa Faustini-Torres, "Another nexus? Exploring narratives on the linkage between EU external migration policies and the democratization of the southern Mediterranean neighbourhood," *Comparative Migration Studies* 8, no. 1 (2020): 8-9.

²⁴ Faustini-Torres, "Another nexus?," 13-14.

Chapter 4 addresses changes in the economic relationship between the EU and Egypt. It explains how Egypt has used the narrative of the migration-development nexus to its advantage, and which financial incentives the EU could offer in return for Egypt's restriction of migration.

In the conclusion, an assessment of the influence of migration on the overall relationship between the EU and Egypt will be provided. A comparison with earlier studies about the influence of migration on the relationship between the EU and other third countries will be made to put the findings into a broader context. As in the preceding chapters, special attention will be paid to similarities between Egypt's approach and Turkey's gatekeeper strategy. The conclusion will also cover how this thesis contributes to existing knowledge and which areas should be further researched.

1.3 Methodology, sources and limitations

This study is a qualitative case study and adopts process tracing as a method. This is “the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analysed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator and includes an analysis of different sources”.²⁵ The fact that process tracing has been designed to test causal claims makes it particularly suitable for this study that focuses on the causal links between different areas of the EU-Egyptian relationship.²⁶

To trace the EU-Egyptian relationship between 2011 and 2019, EU policy documents and official agreements with Egypt (such as the ENP and Migration Partnerships) form the basis of the analysis. Public speeches and interviews by EU (member states') and Egyptian officials and politicians are used to establish a connection between migration and changes in

²⁵ David Collier, "Understanding process tracing," *Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 4 (2011): 823.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

other aspects of EU-Egypt relations. For a better picture on the effects of migration policies on the ground, reports by international organizations, NGOs and think tanks are included in the research. Secondary literature is used for additional background and theoretical grounding.

For important definitions in the field of migration, this study adopts the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Key Migration Terms.²⁷ Migrant is the umbrella term for “a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons”. A refugee is a more specific term and refers to “a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”. A distinction is also made between illegal or irregular migration (“movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination”) and legal or regular migration (“migration that occurs in compliance with the laws of the country of origin, transit and destination”).

There are several limitations to this research. The most important limitation is the lack of command of Arabic of the researcher. This means it is not possible to divide equal attention to Egyptian perspectives as European ones. This is partly mitigated by using English-language news sources from Egypt.

A second limitation is the fact that the subject of the study is not a completed historic event. The debate around migration is still developing. Also, the implementation of some policies is not completed yet and the effects they have may still have to materialize. This means the study will likely not result in a conclusive answer to the research question, but

²⁷ IOM, *Key Migration Terms*, Accessed 20 April 2020, <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>.

rather identify tendencies, areas of interest and possible effects of the migration policies that should be monitored over the coming years.

The study aims to make a contribution to various fields of interest. Firstly, it adds to the limited academic work on recent EU-Egyptian relations. This can also be seen as a case study in how the EU cooperates with authoritarian regimes. Secondly, the study makes a contribution to migration studies. By tracing this specific case, it provides insight in how the different migration nexuses are used in political negotiations between countries. Finally, as migration is likely to remain an important aspect of the EU's relationship with third countries, it is important to understand what the consequences of these policies are. The most important aim of this thesis is to make a contribution to the general understanding of this subject.

2. Migration Cooperation

To be able to consider how migration has influenced the broader relationship between Egypt and the EU, this chapter will first assess the migration relationship itself. It provides an overview of Egypt's migration profile. The second section focuses on developments the migration relationship. Lastly, it includes an analysis of the impact of the migration relationship on EU-Egyptian migration.

It is important to note here that reliable migration data in general is scarce. Many figures are estimates or subject to (political) interests of the actors reporting them. Researches have pointed out that this is an especially prevalent problem in the case of Egypt.²⁸ Therefore, figures are used here as indications, and to illustrate developments or political interests, and should not be regarded as exact reflections of actual migration patterns.

2.1 Egypt and migration

2.1.1 Egypt as a country of origin

Migration has been an important fact of life in the recent history of Egypt. Under president Nasser, emigration was restricted by law. As a result of the economic liberalizations during Anwar al-Sadat's tenure in the 1970s, Egyptians started to migrate to oil-producing countries in the region. They did so in large numbers, growing to an estimated 2.25 million in the late 1980s.²⁹ Later, when the Gulf States had started attracting Asian migrant workers, employment opportunities for Egyptians were somewhat reduced again.³⁰

²⁸ Roman Howaida. *Transit Migration in Egypt. CARIM Research Report, 2006/01* (Florence: European University Institute, 2006), 5.

²⁹ Ayman Zohry, "Egyptian irregular migration to Europe," *Migration Letters* 4, no. 1 (2007): 56.

³⁰ Françoise De Bel-Air. *Migration Profile: Egypt* (Florence: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2016). http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/39224/MPC_PB_2016_01.pdf, 1.

Although not comparable in numbers, there is also a long history of Egyptian migration to Europe. In general, these migrants tend to be more highly educated and skilled than the Egyptians working in Arab countries.³¹ At the beginning of the 21st century, Egypt estimated roughly 326.000 Egyptians were legally residing in Europe. It is likely this number has increased throughout the first decade of the 21st century.³²

Emigration of Egyptians has always been influenced by political developments and economic circumstances in the receiving countries, such as the 1973 war in the Middle East and the 2008 financial crisis in Europe.³³ What is constant, however, is the fact that a relatively large part of the population of Egypt lives and works abroad. In 2011, reportedly 10.000.000 (or more than 10% of all the population) Egyptians lived outside the country, according to a government estimate.³⁴ The remittances sent home by those who work abroad are an important contribution to Egypt's economy, as will be further explored in Chapter 4.

Aside from taking legal routes, Egyptians have also migrated illegally to Europe. The first attempts at irregular migration via the Mediterranean Sea have been registered in the 1990s. This coincided with the EU Schengen agreement and Maastricht Treaty, which restricted legal migration from outside the Union considerably.³⁵ As the 2008 financial crisis made labour migration even more selective, irregular migration from Egypt to Europe increased.³⁶

Unsurprisingly, the 2011 Egyptian revolution and the subsequent political unrest created new push factors to emigrate. A survey by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) among young Egyptians from 2011 confirms this image. The main push

³¹ Zohry, "Egyptian irregular migration," 58.

³² Ayman Zohry, *Migration and development in Egypt*, Paper Prepared for Project on Migration as a Potential and Risk (Institute for Migration and Cultural Studies, Osnabrück University, 2007), 10.

³³ De Bel-Air, *Migration Profile: Egypt*, 1-2.

³⁴ Zoe Sullivan, "Egyptians abroad demand right to vote," *Deutsche Welle*, 2 November 2011. <https://www.dw.com/en/egyptians-abroad-demand-right-to-vote/a-15505333>.

³⁵ Zohry, "Egyptian irregular migration," 60.

³⁶ De Bel-Air, *Migration Profile: Egypt*, 6.

factors were lack of employment opportunities, combined with concerns about security and constitutional reform. Of those who wanted to leave, 70% thought it would be difficult to migrate legally.³⁷ The expulsion of 300.000 Egyptians from Saudi Arabia and the return of Egyptians from Libya around the same time also contributed to a growing pressure of Egyptians looking for opportunities elsewhere.³⁸ Europe was the second most popular desired destination for Egyptians with emigration intentions, after other Arab countries.³⁹

It remains difficult to determine what the effect of these developments was in terms of the exact number of Egyptians looking to migrate to the EU. However, it can be concluded in general terms that the worsening situation in Egypt and the region resulted in new push factors for emigration. In its 2012 Annual Risk Analysis, EU border agency Frontex describes the situation as follows: “Larger flows are more likely to develop on the Central Mediterranean route than on the other two routes, because of its proximity to Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, where political instability and high unemployment rate among young people is pushing people away from their countries and where there is evidence for well-organised facilitation networks”.⁴⁰

2.1.2 Egypt as a destination and transit country

Aside from a country of origin, Egypt is also an important destination and transit country for migrants. Historically, the country has mostly attracted refugees fleeing from conflicts in the

³⁷ IOM, *Egypt after January 25: Survey of Youth Migration Intentions* (Cairo: IOM, 2011), pp. 9, 17, http://www.migration4development.org/sites/default/files/iom_2011_egypt_after_january_25_survey_of_youth_migration_intentions.pdf.

³⁸ De Bel-Air, *Migration Profile: Egypt*, 5.

³⁹ Mona Amer and Philippe Fargues, “Labour Market Outcomes and Egypt’s Migration Potential,” EUI/RSCAS Working Papers, MPC Series 55 (2014), 21, <http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/17794>.

⁴⁰ Frontex, *Annual Risk Analysis 2012* (Warsaw: Frontex, 2012): 40.

Arab region as well as the Horn of Africa.⁴¹ Economic migration to Egypt has been relatively insignificant in comparison.⁴²

Egypt's history as a destination for refugees has attracted many NGOs, international organizations and big resettlement programmes. At the beginning of the 21st century the UNHCR office in Cairo was the largest in the world in terms of status determination for refugees, making Egypt an attractive destination for refugees.⁴³ This applies to both Arab migrants as well as those from Sub-Saharan Africa (mainly Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia).⁴⁴ In 2006, the estimates of refugees residing either legally or illegally in Egypt ranged from 500.000 to 3 million.⁴⁵

The Arab uprisings have changed the migrant population in Egypt considerably. Especially the inflow of Syrians fleeing the civil war has had a profound effect on Egypt's migration profile. According to UNHCR, Syrians made up more than half of the 225.000 refugees and asylum seekers officially registered in Egypt in 2014.⁴⁶ Egyptian government statistics put this number much higher.⁴⁷ How many more refugees from other countries entered and resided in Egypt after the 2011 uprisings is difficult to determine. The political unrest caused significant cross-border movement that could not be effectively controlled or monitored. For example, UNHCR estimated that the violence in Libya resulted in 475.000 people entering Egypt in 2011, but lost sight of their whereabouts afterwards.⁴⁸

There are clear indications most of these newly arrived refugees intended to travel further, often with the EU as the intended destination. The lack of prospects for them in

⁴¹ Howaida, *Transit Migration in Egypt*, 4.

⁴² De Bel-Air, *Migration Profile: Egypt*, 2.

⁴³ Howaida, *Transit Migration in Egypt*, 4-5.

⁴⁴ De Bel-Air, *Migration Profile: Egypt*, 4.

⁴⁵ Howaida, *Transit Migration in Egypt*, 8.

⁴⁶ UNHCR, *2015 Year-End Report – Egypt*, December 2016, 4, <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/pdfsummaries/GR2015-Egypt-eng.pdf>.

⁴⁷ De Bel-Air, *Migration Profile: Egypt*, 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

Egypt is seen as an important push factor. Increasingly strict laws and harsh enforcement have also contributed to refugees seeking to leave Egypt again.⁴⁹ There are many reports that indicate refugees from other countries were among those trying to leave Egypt by boat, or travel further to reach Europe via different routes (such as Libya and Turkey).⁵⁰

In conclusion, although it is unlikely Egypt harboured as many migrants with the intention to travel onwards to Europe as Turkey did in 2015, there were certainly enough indicators to make migration-averse European administrators nervous after the revolution. Already in 2011, Mediterranean EU members states had pressed to address migration as a consequence of the Arab uprisings.⁵¹ The next section considers how this was reflected in the actual EU-Egyptian migration relationship.

2.2 EU-Egypt migration relationship

In negotiating the EU-Turkey deal, Turkey successfully deployed two strategies to extract concessions from Europe. It stressed its position as a gatekeeper against a flow of Syrian refugees, and criticized the EU's harsh treatment of migrants.⁵² In tracing the EU-Egypt migration negotiations after 2014, some of the same dynamics can be observed.

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Egypt: Syria Refugees Detained, Coerced to Return*, 10 November 2013, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/11/10/egypt-syria-refugees-detained-coerced-return>.

⁵⁰ For instance: Maggie Fick, "Egyptian welcome mat pulled out from under Syrian refugees," *Reuters*, 12 September 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-egypt-refugees/egyptian-welcome-mat-pulled-out-from-under-syrian-refugees-idUSBRE98B00E20130912>;

Tom Rollins, *Border Control and Shifting Routes: Syrian Refugees Moving Through Egypt*, The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 13 November 2015, <https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/border-control-and-shifting-routes-syrian-refugees-moving-through-egypt/>.

⁵¹ Leigh Phillips, "Italy and Malta want special summits on Africa crisis," *EU Observer*, 14 February 2011, <https://euobserver.com/institutional/31803>.

⁵² Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, "Leverage of the Gatekeeper," pp. 55, 63.

2.2.1 2011-2013: Revolution and El Sisi's rise to power

As indicated in the Introduction, the EU's relations with its Eastern and Southern neighbours, including Egypt, is governed by the ENP. This instrument is used for closer cooperation and sometimes a precursor to EU membership. Under this policy, the EU-Egyptian Association Agreement came into force in 2004. This Agreement facilitates integration on a broad range of topics, including political dialogue, trade and Egyptian economic and social development. Migration, both legal and illegal, is also mentioned as an area of cooperation.⁵³ This broad Agreement is operationalized by Action Plans. At the time of the 2011 Revolution in Egypt, the 2007 Action Plan applied. The articles on migration in this Plan were mostly non-committal and talked of “exchange of experience”, “take steps towards” and “promote cooperation”.⁵⁴

In the absence of concrete agreements and projects, migration cooperation between EU and Egypt was difficult in the years after the toppling of president Hosni Mubarak. Directly following the 2011 Revolution, migration was not yet the urgent topic for the EU it became after 2014. In general, the Union did try to involve its neighbours more in managing and restricting migration through Mobility Partnerships. By offering legal migration options, the EU successfully managed to get some of its Eastern neighbours to commit to more cooperation against irregular migration.⁵⁵ With Egypt, the EU did not manage to conclude a similar deal.

⁵³ European Commission, *Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Arab Republic of Egypt, of the other part*, 2004, pp. 5, 47, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0b2b0d71-57ea-4ee0-bc55-99c536bd37d8/language-en>.

⁵⁴ European Commission, *European Neighbourhood Policy: Eu-Egypt Action Plan*, 2007, 29-30, https://library.euneighbours.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/egypt_enp_ap_final_en.pdf.

⁵⁵ European Commission, *Eastern Partnership*, Accessed on 20 April 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/international-affairs/eastern-partnership_en.

Although Egypt was not the primary country of concern in this context, Frontex did worry about the country in its 2012 and 2013 risk analyses on illegal migration.⁵⁶ This fit in a broader growing European unease about migration patterns from the Arab world and Sub-Saharan Africa. Cecilia Malström, European Commissioner for Home Affairs at the time, expressed her concern for the situation of refugees in Egypt.⁵⁷ Given the EU's goal of managing and restricting migration, she expressed her frustration with the Egyptian authorities: “[f]or over a year now I’ve been trying to get the Egyptians interested in a Mobility Partnership. [...] From Egypt’s side, it has so far been turned down. We’ll see what happens after the presidential elections in June.”⁵⁸

Meanwhile, the pressure on European politicians to address migration was rising in 2013. Following a tragic incident in which 387 refugees drowned off the coast of Lampedusa in October 2013, Italy had started a rescue mission in the Mediterranean Sea. This, in turn, led to a sharp increase in refugees risking their lives to reach Europe by boat.⁵⁹ As the EU intended to respond with a continuation of its policy of border externalisation (i.e. stopping migrants in third countries, before they reached the EU), cooperation with its neighbours such as Egypt was pivotal.

The lack of cooperation between the EU and Egypt in these years should be regarded in the broader context of the Arab Spring, the EU's reaction to it, and developments in Egypt itself. Following popular revolutions in the Arab world, the EU had adopted a revision to the ENP in May 2011. Mirroring the hope for democratic reforms in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Syria in the early days of the Arab Spring, the ENP made European cooperation

⁵⁶ Frontex, *Risk Analysis 2012*, p. 15.

⁵⁷ Cecilia Malström, *Situation in the Sinai Peninsula*, 17 April 2012.

https://ec.europa.eu/archives/commission_2010-2014/blogs/malmstrom/page/10/index.html.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Europe's African Refugee Crisis. Is the Boat Really Full?,” *Der Spiegel*, 15 April 2014,

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/european-refugee-crisis-worsens-in-mediterranean-a-964304.html>.

and support conditional on democratization. EU support would depend on “progress on political reforms and building deep democracy”.⁶⁰

Egypt, in the meantime, went through tumultuous political developments. After the Revolution, Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi was elected president. In July 2013, he was deposed by the military after mass protests calling for his resignation. During this time, from the Revolution in 2011 to the coming to power of former defence minister Abdel Fattah El Sisi, the formal dialogue between Egypt and the EU had been suspended. No new progress on migration was made in these years. El Sisi had been predominantly concerned with gaining and consolidating power. In this context, his government was not interested to work with an EU critical of the non-democratic way that ended the presidency of Morsi. Rather than striving for a deeper partnership, foreign minister Nabil Fahmy announced it would critically review all existing cooperation.⁶¹

Although not in the context of cooperation with the EU, Egypt did take one important step that would be significant for curbing irregular migration during this time. In March 2014, just before the election of El Sisi, prime minister Ibrahim Mahlab founded the National Committee for Combatting and Preventing Illegal Migration. This ultimately led to Egypt’s first comprehensive migration bill that outlawed people trafficking.⁶² Although the law has attracted international critique for criminalizing victims,⁶³ it did signal to the EU that there was potential to work with Egypt on irregular migration.

⁶⁰ European Commission, *A New Response to a Changing Neighbourhood. Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, COM(2011) 303, 25 May 2015, 3, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf.

⁶¹ Ian Black, “Egypt condemns European Union threats to halt aid as death toll rises,” *The Guardian*. 19 August 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/18/egypt-eu-aid-death-toll>.

⁶² Arab Republic of Egypt, *Law No. 82 for 2016 Issuing the Law On Combating Illegal Migration & Smuggling of Migrants*, 7 November 2016, https://sherloc.unodc.org/res/cld/document/law-no--82-for-2016-issuing-the-law-on-combating-illegal-migration-and-smuggling-of-migrants_html/Law_No._82-2016_Issuing_the_Law_on_combating_illegal_migration_smuggling_of_migrants_EN.pdf.

⁶³ Muhammad al-Kashef and Tom Rolins, “Egypt’s anti-smuggling bill: New criminals, old victims,” *Mada Masr*, 19 October 2016, <https://madamasr.com/en/2016/10/19/feature/politics/egypts-anti-smuggling-bill-new-criminals-old-victims/>.

2.2.2 2014-2015: Beginning of the El Sisi presidency until the 2015 EU migrant crisis

El Sisi's election in June 2014 was a first turning point in the migration relationship with the EU. The first year of his presidency is characterized by cautious reconciliation. Although without many concrete results for migration, this period did create an opening for future negotiations. Shortly after his election, El Sisi visited two European capitals in a bid to "restore Egypt's standing".⁶⁴ In the same year, the EU-Egyptian political relationship was also officially resumed by the reopening of the formal dialogue on the Association Agreement.⁶⁵

This created new opportunities to enhance migration cooperation. The new European approach towards Egypt was agreed upon in an extraordinary meeting of the European Council on 23 April 2015, in which it was concluded that "the EU is more than ever ready and willing to strengthen ties with its Southern neighbours - Egypt in particular".⁶⁶ There was an immediate increase in high-profile meetings of EU officials to Egypt. In May 2015 Dimitris Avramopoulos, European Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs, visited Cairo, followed by a visit of EU Council President Donald Tusk in September of the same year. While migration had been just one of the topics between the two actors before, it was now a priority. It also marked a change in the EU's relationship with Egypt, in which it was now the asking party, as evidenced by Tusk's remarks after meeting El Sisi: "[f]irst and foremost, we discussed the current migration and refugee crisis affecting Europe, Egypt and

⁶⁴ State Information Service, *Sisi Discusses in Italy Partnership with EU*, 25 November 2014, <http://sis.gov.eg/Story/83984?lang=en-us>.

⁶⁵ European Commission, *Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Egypt: Progress in 2014 and Recommendations for Actions*, SWD (2015) 65 final, 25 March 2015. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015SC0065&from=EN>.

⁶⁶ European Council, *Statement by Commissioner Avramopoulos at the end of his visit to Egypt*, 5 May 2015, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_15_4923.

the whole region. I feel it is important to hear the views of our partners as we face this challenge together”.⁶⁷

The Egyptian stance in this new dynamic closely resembles Turkey’s strategy of critiquing the EU on its treatment of migrants. Egypt was ready to cooperate closer on irregular migration with the EU. However, it was not willing to commit to a Turkey-type deal in which it would admit and harbour intercepted irregular migrants. According to Egypt, the EU-Turkey deal was in “conflict with the fundamentals of related international laws”.⁶⁸

The claim that the EU-Turkey deal could not be repeated in Egypt on the grounds of international law allowed Egypt to argue for a deal less focused on repressing irregular migration alone. Instead, “Egypt believes the solution to the problem of illegal immigration is to open paths to legal migration, as well as achieving fair and inclusive economic development”.⁶⁹ How this reasoning was fully in line with Egypt’s economic interests and priorities at the time will be further explored in the Chapter 4.

Like Turkey, Egypt also regularly reminded the EU of what could happen if it would give up its role as a gatekeeper. The Egyptian government kept pressure on the EU by continuously stressing the number of refugees it was housing. In the absence of reliable figures on the number of refugees in Egypt, El Sisi and his ministers often repeated an estimate of 5 million.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ European Council, *Press remarks by President Donald Tusk following the meeting with President Al-Sisi, President of Egypt*, 19 September 2015, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/09/19/tusk-visit-cairo/>.

⁶⁸ Taha Sakr, “Egypt expresses concerns over EU-Turkey deal on refugees,” *Daily News Egypt*, 23 March 2016, <https://cdn1.dailynewsegypt.com/2016/03/23/egypt-expresses-concerns-eu-turkey-deal-refugees/>.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ For instance: State Information Service, *Sisi hails ties between Egypt, Greece*, 24 April 2015, <https://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/92235/Sisi-hails-ties-between-Egypt%2c-Greece?lang=en-us>.

2.2.3 2016-2019: Closer cooperation after the 2015 EU migrant crisis

In 2016, the EU increasingly worried about the refugee situation in Egypt, although this was not caused by Egypt's likely inflated numbers alone. In a 2016 report, Frontex indicates the risk of Egypt becoming of "growing importance [...] as departure place", both for migrants from the Horn of Africa as well as Egyptians themselves.⁷¹ This was not just a problem for the EU. The fact that Egyptians were escaping their own country also reflected badly on the country's leadership's abilities to provide for its own people.

As of 2016, Egypt started addressing irregular migration much more seriously. A new law on illegal migration and a 10-year action plan served to tackle human trafficking and restrict illegal departures as much as possible. Egypt worked together with IOM on this initiative, which was also an important migration partner for the EU.⁷² Although there was no comprehensive agreement on migration comparable with the EU-Turkey deal, 2016 also saw increased EU-Egyptian migration cooperation through a number of different initiatives. These will be analysed in later chapters. El Sisi himself indicated Egypt was ready to "bolster cooperation with European states to secure maritime borders".⁷³ Naturally, this was well received by EU leaders who were relieved to see increased measures against irregular migration.⁷⁴

The renewed cooperation became most concrete in 2017. In March 2017, the EU announced it was starting a formal dialogue on migration with Egypt with the goal of

⁷¹ Frontex, *Frontex Risk Analysis Network – Quarterly 2* (Warsaw: Frontex 2016): 7.

⁷² IOM, *Egypt Launches New National Strategy on Combating Illegal Migration*, 18 October 2016, <https://www.iom.int/news/egypt-launches-new-national-strategy-combating-illegal-migration>.

⁷³ "Egypt is hosting refugees with no outside help: Sisi," *Al Ahrām*, 22 November 2016, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/0/250561/Egypt/0/Egypt-is-hosting-refugees-with-no-outside-help-Sis.aspx>.

⁷⁴ "EU's FRONTEX head praises Egypt's role in halting illegal immigration," *Egypt Today*, 27 June 2018. <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/52920/EU%E2%80%99s-FRONTEX-head-praises-Egypt%E2%80%99s-role-in-halting-illegal-immigration>

embedding the topic in all existing frameworks of cooperation.⁷⁵ As reported by NGOs, in the time leading up to the actual start of the dialogue, Egypt very publicly increased its efforts to stop illegal migration. In communicating about the arrests of illegal migrants, Egyptian newspapers specifically connected them to the cooperation with Europe.⁷⁶

Aside from showing its goodwill, Egypt did maintain a tough stance towards the EU and insisted on its own terms for the cooperation. Early in 2017 it refused the EU proposal to create reception camps for migrants in Egypt. In the same negotiations, El Sisi reiterated the country was currently hosting 5 million migrants.⁷⁷

This assertive Egyptian attitude fits in a broader development in the EU-Egyptian relationship. For the EU, quick results had become more important than the specific methods to achieve these. In June 2017, new Partnership Priorities were signed by the Union and Egypt. In line with the 2015 revision of the ENP, the EU had turned away almost completely from conditionality. The new Priorities were meant to be pragmatic and based on “co-ownership”.⁷⁸ On migration, the document is not specific. Most emphasis is placed on the EU’s support for Egypt’s ability to combat irregular migration, including 60 million euro to support its border management.⁷⁹ On readmission of irregular migrants, the agreements were non-committal.⁸⁰ In this regard, the agreement remained very far off from the EU-Turkey deal, in which return of migrants was the heart. As indicated above, Egypt had been arguing

⁷⁵ European Commission, *Commission reports on progress under the migration partnership framework and increased action along the Central Mediterranean Route*, 2 March 2017, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-17-369_en.htm.

⁷⁶ Al-Kashef and Martin, *EU-Egypt migration cooperation*, 18.

⁷⁷ “FM Shoukry confirms Egypt’s rejection of idea of refugee camps for migrants,” *Al Ahrām*, 6 March 2017. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/0/259392/Egypt/0/FM-Shoukry-confirms-Egypt-rejection-of-idea-of-re.aspx>.

⁷⁸ Association between the EU and Egypt, *EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities 2017–2020*, 16 June 2017, 9, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/23942/eu-egypt.pdf>.

⁷⁹ European Commission, *Enhancing the Response to Migration Challenges in Egypt (ERMCE)*, 23 May 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/north-africa/egypt/enhancing-response-migration-challenges-egypt-ermce_en.

⁸⁰ Association between the EU and Egypt, *EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities*, 8.

against this aspect of the EU-Turkey deal, while the EU had at first insisted on repeating the concept with Egypt.

In December of the same year, the first official bilateral Migration Dialogue was conducted. These talks facilitated a more detailed discussion of migration cooperation. The first meeting focused on many aspects Egypt had been stressing all along, including tackling the root causes of migration by economic development, the positive sides of migration and how Egyptians would be able to travel to the EU legally.⁸¹ In line with the new Partnership Priorities, the EU emphasized “common interest and mutual benefit for the EU and Egypt to work more closely together on migration”.⁸² In March 2018, the EU announced Frontex would help support Egypt in border management.⁸³

In 2018 and 2019, the migration relationship was stable and marked by operationalizing the previous agreements. There were no major new agreements or hurdles to overcome. The second Migration Dialogue was held in Cairo in July 2019. The topics discussed and language used to describe the meeting were very similar to the first Dialogue and still focused on mutual benefits.⁸⁴

2.3 Conclusion: results of the new cooperation

From tracing the negotiating process, it can be concluded that Egypt has deployed a gatekeeper strategy and, like Turkey, criticized the EU’s migration policies. By stressing how

⁸¹ EU Delegation to Egypt, *1st Session of the EU-Egypt Migration Dialogue*, 16 December 2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/egypt/37530/1st-session-eu-egypt-migration-dialogue_en.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ European Commission, *Progress report on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration*, COM (2018) 250 final, 14 March 2018, 15, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/com_2018_250_f1_communication_from_commission_to_inst_en_v10_p1_969_116.pdf.

⁸⁴ European Commission, *Second meeting of the Migration Dialogue between the European Union and Egypt*, 11 July 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/egypt/65317/second-meeting-migration-dialogue-between-european-union-and-egypt_en.

many migrants it was hosting, and how precarious their situation was, Egypt put pressure on the EU to let go of its narrow focus on the security aspect of migration. This is reflected in the emphasis on tackling illegal migration through addressing the root causes. Egypt also managed to refuse certain specific proposals of the EU around readmission and the creation of camps.

The EU, however, was not left empty-handed. Although many of its proposals on how migration should be managed were rejected by Egypt, its main goal of reducing the number of illegal migrants was reached. Where in 2016 Frontex was worried about Egypt becoming a hotspot for illegal migration, it found that in 2018 “Egypt [...] did not see any departures of migrants to Europe on the sea route”.⁸⁵ In a visit to Cairo, Frontex’s executive director Fabrice Leggeri explicitly praised Egypt for its effective policy of combatting illegal migration and its regional role.⁸⁶ How satisfied the EU was with the cooperation with Egypt is also evident from the fact it now sees it as a blueprint for migration relations with other countries.⁸⁷

In short, the EU increasingly focused on short term results in reducing migration. As long as Egypt could deliver those results, it was in a position to do so largely on its own terms. The next chapters will assess how this dynamic has influenced other aspects of the EU-Egypt relationship.

⁸⁵ Frontex, *Risk Analysis for 2019* (Frontex: Warsaw Poland 2019): 8.

⁸⁶ Egypt Today, “EU’s FRONTEX head praises Egypt’s role.”

⁸⁷ European Council, *Informal meeting of heads of state or government, 19-20 September 2018*, 20 September 2018. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2018/09/19-20/>.

3. Normative costs

Chapter 2 showed how enhanced migration cooperation between EU and Egypt significantly reduced irregular migration. This had also been the case in the EU-Turkey deal. Aside from financial compensation for Turkish assistance, the EU paid a price in a less tangible way. As Ian Manners argued in 2002, the EU presents itself as a normative power: by propagating principles on peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law and human rights, it tries to set an example in its foreign policy. In the most literal sense of the word, this gives the EU the power to define what is normal.⁸⁸ The questionable compliance of the EU-Turkey deal with international law put a serious dent in this image as a normative actor. Refraining from speaking out against Turkish deficiencies after the deal was another normative concession on the part of the EU.⁸⁹

Drawing on this analysis of the EU-Turkey deal, this chapter analyses which normative costs the EU has paid for its migration cooperation with Egypt. It takes into account two different aspects: the legality of the migration cooperation itself and the EU stance regarding Egypt's internal political landscape.

3.1 Migration

At the same time the migration cooperation between the EU and Egypt improved, several NGOs have voiced their concern about Egypt's migration and policies and practices.⁹⁰ These

⁸⁸ Ian Manners, "Normative power Europe: a contradiction in terms?," *Journal of common market studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 240.

⁸⁹ Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, "Leverage of the Gatekeeper," 63-64.

⁹⁰ For instance: Global Detention Project, *Immigration Detention in Egypt: Military Tribunals, Human Rights Abuses, Abysmal Conditions, and EU Partner*, September 2018, <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Immigration-Detention-in-Egypt-September-2018.pdf>; Al-Kashef and Martin, *EU-Egypt migration cooperation*.

relate to the country's adherence to international law, its treatment of migrants inside the country and how irregular exits are prevented.

3.1.1 Legal framework

Egypt is party to most of the important international legal frameworks governing the rights of migrants. It signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. However, as indicated by the EU itself in a leaked 'non-paper'⁹¹, the country ratified these "with a series of reservations".⁹² As an example, as Egypt has excluded Article 20 of the 1951 Refugee Convention from ratification, refugees cannot rely on subsidized food. As a consequence, they need to provide for their own sustenance.⁹³

These shortcomings in the legal framework governing Egypt's migration policies and procedures lead to a number of issues. Firstly, Egypt has no measures in place to protect stateless people. Stateless people are defined as persons who are "not considered as a national[s] by any State under the operation of its law".⁹⁴ In addition to people fitting this legal description, there are people who are de facto stateless: "[p]ersons outside the country of their nationality who are unable or, for valid reasons, are unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country".⁹⁵ UNHCR in Egypt recognizes that the lack of specific legal protection beyond the articles of the Geneva Convention make stateless people a particularly

⁹¹ A 'non-paper' is a paper that is prepared for (internal) discussion and therefore does not carry any official weight. They do, however, provide insight in relatively unfiltered analyses and policy options being considered.

⁹² European External Action Service, *Options on developing cooperation with Egypt in migration matters*, December 2016, 2, <https://www.statewatch.org/news/2016/dec/eu-com-eeas-non-paper-egypt-migration-cooperation.pdf>.

⁹³ Kelly McBride and Lindsey Kingston, "Legal invisibility and the revolution: statelessness in Egypt," *Human Rights Review* 15, no. 2 (2014): 168-69.

⁹⁴ UNHCR, *A responsibility to protect: UNHCR and statelessness in Egypt*, January 2013, 2, <https://www.unhcr.org/research/working/510938469/responsibility-protect-unhcr-statelessness-egypt-eirwen-jane-pierrot.html>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

defenceless group and leaves them “vulnerable to deportation and detention”.⁹⁶ NGOs have voiced serious concerns over whether the basic needs and human rights of this growing group of people in Egypt can be met.⁹⁷

The EU recognizes this and also points out other shortcomings in Egypt’s domestic legal context: “[t]he new 2014 Constitution acknowledges the right of political asylum, but a domestic asylum legislation and system remains to be developed”.⁹⁸ Of particular concern is the fact that Egypt’s military is allowed to arrest non-citizens for migration reasons and the absence of a maximum length of administrative detention for migration reasons.⁹⁹

3.1.2 Treatment of migrants and refugees in practice

The legal issues mentioned above were not mere theoretical shortcomings. In 2013, UNHCR already pointed out that the Syrian refugee population was subjected to “an increasingly hostile atmosphere” in Egypt.¹⁰⁰ The EU was also concerned about the actual “protection of the concerned migrant and refugee populations [...] in Egypt”.¹⁰¹ Detention was one of the main issues. Egyptian laws granted the government ample opportunity to detain migrants and refugees. NGOs have reported, for instance, how a 2010 law against human trafficking was also used against the victims of this crime, contrary to international law.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ UNHCR, *A responsibility to protect*, 1.

⁹⁷ Norwegian Refugee Council, *Understanding statelessness in the Syria refugee context*, November 2016, 21, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/report_43.pdf.

⁹⁸ European External Action Service, *Cooperation with Egypt in migration*, 2.

⁹⁹ Global Detention Project, *Immigration Detention in Egypt*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ UNHCR, *UNHCR concerned at arbitrary detention of Syrian refugees in Egypt*, 26 July 2013, <https://www.unhcr.org/51f27733540.html>.

¹⁰¹ European External Action Service, *Cooperation with Egypt in migration*, 1.

¹⁰² Al-Kashef and Martin, *EU-Egypt migration cooperation*, 11; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The criminalisation of irregular migration*, 2018, 1, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/GlobalCompactMigration/CriminalisationIrregularImmigration.pdf>.

Egypt's actual application of migration detention was widespread, leading to many reports about arbitrary detention of refugees. There are clear indications of a significant increase in migrant and refugee detention between 2011 and 2019. In 2013, Human Rights Watch reported a little over 2.000 refugee detentions.¹⁰³ In 2017, the Egyptian government itself put that figure at over 12.000.¹⁰⁴ This is in line with the UNHCR's observation that arrests of people trying to exit Egypt irregularly had significantly increased in 2016.¹⁰⁵ Aside from the numbers itself, serious concerns have been raised over the treatment of migrants in detention.¹⁰⁶

Alongside these questions about the legality and conditions of detentions, there are reports of obvious violence and human rights abuses against migrants and refugees. As Commissioner Malström herself indicated, “[t]here are several cases where the military has fired on the refugees”.¹⁰⁷ In multiple cases, Syrians have been sent back to Damascus and Latakia immediately upon arrival in Cairo, or deported at a later time.¹⁰⁸ Returning refugees to unsafe areas such as Syria is a violation of the 1951 Refugee Convention that Egypt is party to.

As is clear from the 2016 EU non-paper, the Union was well-aware of the situation in Egypt and its failure to comply with international law.¹⁰⁹ This, however, did not stop migration cooperation with Egypt. As indicated in Chapter 2, the EU and Egypt agreed to work more closely together, especially after 2015. In practice, this meant that deportations to Egypt from Italy and Germany steadily increased (both in absolute terms and as a percentage

¹⁰³ Human Rights Watch. *Egypt: Syria Refugees Detained*.

¹⁰⁴ Al-Kashef and Martin, *EU-Egypt migration cooperation*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ UNHCR, *Migrant and refugee boat tragedy and irregular departures from Egypt*, 23 September 2016, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2016/9/57e4ee964/migrant-refugee-boat-tragedy-irregular-departures-egypt.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Global Detention Project, *Immigration Detention in Egypt*, 5.

¹⁰⁷ Malström. *Situation in the Sinai Peninsula*.

¹⁰⁸ UNHCR, *UNHCR concerned at arbitrary detention; De Bel-Air, Migration Profile: Egypt*, 6.

¹⁰⁹ European External Action Service, *Cooperation with Egypt in migration*, 5.

of the total number of asylum claims) and Frontex started operating return flights to Egypt from 2017.¹¹⁰

The EU also actively supported the (security) agencies that were responsible for the mistreatment of migrants and refugees. During 2013-2017, EU weapons exports to Egypt increased sharply. At the same time, there were news reports of Egypt using some of these weapons for deadly force against migrants.¹¹¹ In 2017, a project funded by the EU and Italy at the Cairo police academy was announced to “policemen in securing borders, managing migration affairs, and combating trafficking”.¹¹²

As in the case of the EU-Turkey deal, this shows the EU’s difficulty in maintaining its image as a normative actor, while at the same time stemming migration. In practical terms, the EU has opted for a pragmatic rather than principled approach in which Egypt’s shortcomings in adhering to the norms the EU propagates have not hindered migration cooperation ‘on the ground’.

3.2 Egyptian domestic politics

The EU’s normative concessions on migration are part of a broader development in two ways. Other case studies into migration cooperation between the EU and its Southern neighbours over the last ten years indicate a shifting power balance. Whereas before the EU was able to dictate the conditions of cooperation, countries in the Middle East and North Africa are increasingly vocal about their own demands.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Al-Kashef and Martin, *EU-Egypt migration cooperation*, 20-21.

¹¹¹ Kareem Fahim and Merna Thomas, “15 Sudanese Migrants Killed at Egypt-Israel Border, Officials Say,” *New York Times*, 15 November 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/16/world/middleeast/egypt-israel-border-sudan-refugees-shot.html>.

¹¹² “Italy to establish Training Center at Egyptian police academy,” *Egypt Today*, 21 September 2017, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/23961/Italy-to-establish-Training-Center-at-Egyptian-police-academy>.

¹¹³ For example, refer to: Turkey: Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, “Leverage of the Gatekeeper”; Morocco: Tittel-Mosser, “Reversed Conditionality in EU External Migration”;

In doing so, they have been able to leverage migration cooperation for concessions in other domains of the relationship with the EU. This opportunity arose as a result of another, longer development: the securitization of migration policy in the EU. This section analyses how these developments together have changed the EU-Egypt relationship concerning Egypt's internal politics.

3.2.1 Securitization of migration

The securitization of migration policy has been extensively researched. Different authors explain how, over time, migration in Europe was increasingly framed as a danger to European society. As Huysmans describes it, "EU policies support, often indirectly, expressions of welfare chauvinism and the idea of cultural homogeneity as a stabilizing factor. In the contemporary domestic and European political context, these policies facilitate the creation of migration as a destabilizing or dangerous challenge to west European societies".¹¹⁴ A large 2005 survey among EU citizens found that migration was indeed perceived to be one of the two biggest security threats by 15% of the population.¹¹⁵

Whether or not this framing of migration as a security issue is accurate is subject to debate among policymakers and scholars,¹¹⁶ and beyond the scope of this thesis. The important fact to note here is that framing migration as a security problem has triggered a security policy response from the EU in which migration was connected to other security issues: "the issue was no longer, on the one hand, terrorism, drugs, crime, and on the other,

Libya: Luca Raineri and Alessandro Rossi, "The security-migration-development Nexus in the Sahel: A reality check," Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2017.

¹¹⁴ Huysmans, "The European Union and the securitization of migration," 753.

¹¹⁵ European Commission, *Eurobarometer 64: Public Opinion in the European Union. First results*, December 2005, 7-8, https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_first_en.pdf.

¹¹⁶ For instance: Huysmans, "The European Union and the securitization of migration," 751-52; Ayse Ceyhan and Anastassia Tsoukala, "The securitization of migration in western societies: Ambivalent discourses and policies," *Alternatives* 27, no. 1 (2002): 23-24.

rights of asylum and clandestine immigration, but they came to be treated together”.¹¹⁷ This is exactly what happened in the 1985 Schengen Agreement: not only did it abolish internal borders in the EU, it also connected migration to issues of crime and terrorism. Subsequent EU migration policies and practices have also been influenced by this migration-security nexus.¹¹⁸ After the 9/11 attacks, the perceived Islamic threat became intertwined with the migration-security nexus. In the public perception, this made it seem even more important to control migration patterns from Islamic countries such as Egypt.¹¹⁹

Another important aspect of this migration-security nexus is the fact that the invocation of ‘security’ places the issue of migration outside the scope of normal politics. As argued by Buzan, Waever and Wilde, “[t]he special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them. [...] by saying “security,” a state representative declares an emergency condition, thus claiming a right to use whatever means are necessary to block a threatening development”.¹²⁰

3.2.2 Democracy, good governance and human rights

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the EU’s first response to the Arab Spring was one of enthusiasm. The 2011 ENP revision was the official translation of these sentiments into policy. With the revision, the EU wanted to “rise to the historical challenges in our neighbourhood” and help “build and consolidate healthy democracies”.¹²¹ The first priority of the new approach therefore was to “provide greater support to partners engaged in building

¹¹⁷ Didier Bigo, “The European Internal Security Field: Stakes and Rivalries in a Newly Developing Area of Police Intervention,” in *Policing across National Boundaries*, eds. Malcolm Anderson and Monica den Boer (London: Pinter, 1994), 164.

¹¹⁸ Huysmans, “The European Union and the securitization of migration,” 756.

¹¹⁹ Eylemer and Şemşit, “Migration-Security nexus in the Euro-Mediterranean relations,” 57.

¹²⁰ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998): 21.

¹²¹ European Commission, *A New Response*, 1.

deep democracy – the kind that lasts because the right to vote is accompanied by rights to exercise free speech, form competing political parties, receive impartial justice from independent judges, security from accountable police and army forces, access to a competent and non-corrupt civil service — and other civil and human rights that many Europeans take for granted, such as the freedom of thought, conscience and religion”.¹²²

In the period between the 2011 revolution and the coming to power of El Sisi in 2014, the situation in Egypt far from conformed to this idealized image. In the first phase after the revolution, the EU tried to actively encourage the democratic process by offering to monitor the parliamentary and presidential elections and encourage the development of civil society with different programmes.¹²³ This was a first attempt at the ENP’s ‘more for more’ approach to support: “[i]t will depend on progress in building and consolidating democracy and respect for the rule of law. The more and the faster a country progresses in its internal reforms, the more support it will get from the EU”.¹²⁴

This approach was also shaped by the EU’s thinking about migration at the time. While focused on security and managing migration, policy thinking was based on a long term focus on addressing the root causes: “[i]ll-functioning democratic structures, weak institutions, the absence of the rule of law and bad governance are all major push factors for forced migration”.¹²⁵ This migration-democracy nexus - the idea that democracy and good governance, and manageable migration would go hand in hand - was reflected in the 2011 ENP.¹²⁶

¹²² European Commission, *A New Response*, 2.

¹²³ European Commission, *The EU's response to the 'Arab Spring'*, 16 December 2011, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_11_918.

¹²⁴ European Commission, *A New Response*, 3.

¹²⁵ European Commission, *Integrating migration issues in the European Union's relations with Third Countries*, COM(2002) 703 final, 22, 3 December 2012, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52002DC0703&from=EN>.

¹²⁶ European Commission, *A New Response*, 11.

So, although there was a certain apprehensiveness about working with a Muslim Brotherhood president following the Revolution, the European Commission overall seemed hopeful about cooperation with Egypt. On a visit to Egypt in September 2012, High Representative Catherine Ashton emphasized the EU wanted to “bring the EU and the new democratic Egypt as close together as possible through cooperation in all sectors”.¹²⁷

Given the EU’s insistence on supporting democratic processes in Egypt, its reaction to the 2013 toppling of president Morsi by the army seems surprising. In a statement shortly after the coup, Ashton insisted that “[i]t is of utmost importance that Egypt returns rapidly to a legitimate government and democratic structures responding to the democratic and socioeconomic aspirations of the Egyptian people”, but shied away from calling the toppling a coup.¹²⁸ As Achraimer pointed out, the EU’s response was one of great concern, but fell short of a true condemnation of the events.¹²⁹

Even though the EU acted with restraint, Egyptian officials reacted sharply to any critique from Europe and other Western countries. Foreign minister Nabil Fahmy commented Egypt would “not accept any foreign interference”.¹³⁰ This did not stop the EU from voicing its concern about the developments in Egypt. However, the Union did not succeed in translating it into concrete measures such as an arms embargo.¹³¹

The election of El Sisi – although through a flawed election process – seems to have somewhat relieved the EU of this dilemma. It congratulated the newly elected president and

¹²⁷ European Union, *Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with Egyptian President Morsi*, 13 September 2012, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/132424.pdf.

¹²⁸ European Union, *Declaration by the High Representative Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the European Union, on the situation in Egypt*, 14 July 2013, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/138072.pdf.

¹²⁹ Achraimer, “EU-Egypt Rapprochement,” 494.

¹³⁰ “Egypt FM rebuffs international pressure, says to 'review' foreign aid,” *Anadolou Agency*, 18 July 2013, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/egypt-fm-rebuffs-international-pressure-says-to-review-foreign-aid/224870>

¹³¹ Achraimer, “EU-Egypt Rapprochement,” 494.

announced it was willing to “work closely together with the new authorities.”¹³² This did not mean all concerns over the lack of democracy and good governance had been set aside completely. By stressing the need for “[b]uilding a deep and sustainable democracy”, the EU referred to the conditionality of cooperation as laid down in the 2011 ENP.¹³³ In some instances, the EU openly expressed its apprehension of the repressive nature of the El Sisi regime. This was usually met with strong condemnations from Egyptian officials, who reiterated the Egyptian government would not be told how to govern.¹³⁴

This strained relationship between the EU and Egypt continued into the beginning of 2015. As already became clear from the migration cooperation process, even though the formal dialogue was resumed and some high-level EU officials visited the country, no new big cooperation initiatives had been agreed upon.

This changed in the face of the historic migration patterns of 2015. The peak of the Mediterranean migration crisis had been reached in the summer of that year, making irregular migration a topic that took prominence over other concerns. This also led to another assessment of the Arab Spring. Whereas the initial reaction was one of cautious optimism about democracy, the EU now increasingly focused on the destabilizing effects of the uprisings. Promotion of democracy was seen by the EU as both a way to stop irregular migration in the long term, but also as a source of political instability that could cause large irregular migration patterns in the short term. This ambivalence is reflected in the consultation paper on the new ENP and High Representative Mogherini’s comment that

¹³² European Union, *Declaration on behalf of the European Union on the presidential elections in Egypt*, 5 June 2014, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/28105/143096.pdf>.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ “EU envoy in Egypt, discusses human rights conditions with Justice Minister,” *Egypt Independent*, 21 October 2014, <https://www.egyptindependent.com/eu-envoy-egypt-discusses-human-rights-conditions-justice-minister/>.

“[r]ecent developments in the region have increased the challenges we all face: from economic pressures to irregular migration and security threats”.¹³⁵

As this statement shows, irregular migration itself was not the only reason for the EU to be worried about an unstable Middle East. Security, and terrorism in particular, had also risen on the political agenda. 2015 had seen multiple terror attacks in Europe. Especially France was hit hard, with the January attack on Charlie Hebdo and the November attacks on Paris. Both were perpetrated by jihadist groups and involved terrorists that had previously fought in the Middle East.¹³⁶ The increased terror trend had started in 2013, and would continue into 2016 and 2017 with attacks in Brussels and Manchester. European politicians as well as citizens were worried about this development. A large opinion poll found that in 2016 immigration remained the number one concern of European respondents, “while terrorism-related concerns rose sharply, fuelled by a series of attacks in several European countries”.¹³⁷

These fears interlocked with migration in two ways. First of all, there was a fear that among the refugees from the Middle East (potential) terrorists would travel to Europe. Secondly, the EU also pointed out that instability was the root cause of two different unwanted phenomena: irregular migration and terrorism in the EU: “[t]hese events have served to increase the challenges faced by both the EU and its partners, aggravating economic and social pressures, irregular migration and refugee flows, security threats and leading to diverging aspirations”.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ European Commission, *Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy. Joint Consultation Paper*, 4 March 2015, 6, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/neighbourhood/consultation/consultation.pdf>

¹³⁶ Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2016*, July 2016, 22, https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/europol_tesat_2016.pdf.

¹³⁷ Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2016*, July 2016, 22, https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/europol_tesat_2016.pdf.

¹³⁸ Debomy and Alain Tripier, “European Public Opinion,” 16.

¹³⁸ European Commission, *Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy. Joint Consultation Paper*, 2.

Together, the 2015 migration crisis and terror attacks in Europe caused a further securitization of migration in the cooperation with its neighbours. They did not change the main narrative about migration, which had already been securitized. They did, however, change the relevance of the topic from important to urgent and concrete. This, in turn, led to a reevaluation of priorities in the relationship with Southern neighbours, in which a pragmatic focus on short term results in stability, security and stemming irregular migration took precedence over conditionality.

The November 2015 review of the ENP is the concrete outcome of this reorientation of the Union's neighbourhood priorities. It mentions that there was a need for a revision of the ENP because "the EU's own interdependence with its neighbours has been placed in sharp focus. Growing numbers of refugees are arriving at the European Union's borders" and that "[t]here have been acts of terror affecting the EU and the neighbourhood".¹³⁹ Therefore, "the new ENP will take stabilisation as its main political priority".¹⁴⁰

The EU also recognizes that if it wanted to protect itself better against security and migration consequences in the Middle East, it would have to work more closely together with the countries in the region. As it was now in an asking position, the Union had to take the grievances about conditionality in the 2011 ENP seriously: "current practice and policy has been regarded by other partners as too prescriptive, and as not sufficiently reflecting their respective aspirations. Differentiation and greater mutual ownership will be the hallmark of the new ENP, recognising that not all partners aspire to EU rules and standards, and reflecting the wishes of each country concerning the nature and focus of its partnership with the EU".¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ European Commission, *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, JOIN(2015) 50 final, 18 November 2015, 2, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 2-3.

This new focus on short-term stability over democratization and good governance can clearly be observed in the post-2015 EU-Egypt relationship. While the European Parliament from time to time remained critical of the Egyptian government, the EU resumed for the first time since 2011 the meetings of the subcommittee on political matters. When the European Parliament demanded more cooperation from the Egyptian regime in the case of the murder of Italian PhD student Giulio Regeni, the Egyptians held the new ENP against the EU by reminding Europe it would do better to focus on the “strategic Egyptian-European relations and support Egypt’s efforts in the fight against terrorism”.¹⁴²

The European Commission also showed its renewed appreciation for the cooperation with Egypt. Although the human rights situation in Egypt deteriorated, official visits to and from Egypt increased.¹⁴³ Many of these visits concerned the migration cooperation with Egypt, which have been mentioned in Chapter 2, and economic cooperation between the two actors, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. It is worth noting already that the language used by EU officials during these visits was much more positive than before and focused on “improving the future prospects of the population”.¹⁴⁴ Although the European Union did not completely ignore the human rights situation in Egypt, it did so in a much more subdued way. When Egypt introduced a law that restricted the possibilities for NGOs to operate in the country even further, the EU only urged the Egyptian government to “apply the new law in a way that does not intimidate, restrict or criminalize peaceful human rights civil society organizations and their members”.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² “Egypt rejects european parliament calls for Halawa release,” *Egypt Independent*, 18 December 2015, <https://www.egyptindependent.com/egypt-rejects-european-parliament-calls-halawa-release/>.

¹⁴³ Human Rights Watch, *Torture and security in al-Sisi’s Egypt*, 2017, 1-2, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/egypt0917_web.pdf.

¹⁴⁴ European Commission, *The EU and Egypt to foster sustainable economic development in the country*, 20 December 2016, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_16_4481.

¹⁴⁵ European External Action Service, *Statement on the new NGO law in Egypt*, 31 May 2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/israel/27183/statement-new-ngo-law-egypt_en.

The new Partnership Priorities for 2017-2020 sealed the new relationship between the EU and Egypt. The document mirrors the priorities of the 2015 ENP revision and aims at the promotion of “joint interests and to guarantee long-term stability on both sides of the Mediterranean”.¹⁴⁶ Statements made by both parties around the signing ceremony reveal the changes in the relationship since 2015. The EU showed to be happy with this institutionalization of the new cooperation, while Egypt took the opportunity to criticize its partner for its “passive position in addressing the danger of terrorism and radicalism”.¹⁴⁷

3.3 Conclusion

When considering which normative price the EU has paid for its migration cooperation with Egypt, it is evident there are similarities with the EU-Turkey deal. In the case of Egypt, there are also serious questions about compliance with international migration law. These do not stem so much from the content of the cooperation itself, but rather from shortcomings on the Egyptian side. The EU has chosen to continue and deepen the migration cooperation, even though it proved to be aware of the harsh treatment of migrants and refugees in Egypt.

Secondly, in the process of convincing Egypt to increase its efforts to stop irregular migration, the EU has sacrificed the conditions on democracy, human rights and good governance it previously connected to cooperation. Concerns about migration were part of a larger reorientation and sense of urgency about creating stability in Egypt and the wider Middle East. The securitized nature of the migration in the EU made concerns over terrorism and security become part of the migration debate. This also changed the EU’s assessment of democracy promotion. Although this idea was not abandoned completely, short-term stability

¹⁴⁶ Association between the EU and Egypt. *EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities 2017–2020*, 1.

¹⁴⁷ “Egypt, EU ratify partnership priorities for 2017-2020,” *Al Ahrām*, 25 July 2017, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/274208/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt,-EU-ratify-partnership-priorities-for-.aspx>

promotion became the dominant policy in the relationship with Egypt. This resulted in a relationship in which the Egyptian regime became steadily more repressive, while the EU refrained from expressing critique about the democratic and human rights deficiencies.

4. Economy and development

The previous chapters have analysed the EU-Egyptian migration cooperation and which normative costs the EU paid to facilitate it. As became clear in the EU-Turkey deal of 2016, migration cooperation can also have significant spill-over effects in economic cooperation. The most concrete form it took in the case of Turkey was the European support of 3 billion euro for Turkish readmission of illegal migrants.¹⁴⁸ Such a direct financial transaction in return for migration cooperation has not occurred between the EU and Egypt. Nonetheless, other economic areas have been affected by the migration relationship. This is the focus of this chapter. It first considers the EU debate on the relationship between development and migration, and provides an overview of Egypt's interests in economic development. Based on these insights, it then assesses the direct and indirect effects of migration cooperation between the EU and Egypt on economy and development.

4.1 Migration and development in the EU

There is an abundance of research about the relationship between migration and development.¹⁴⁹ Historically, the two phenomena have been interpreted as interrelated. A multitude of connections and correlations have been proposed, together labelled as the migration-development nexus. These interpretations of migration are based on the idea that “the flows of money, knowledge and universal ideas – called remittances – can have a positive effect on what is called development in the countries of emigration.”¹⁵⁰ The

¹⁴⁸ Okyay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, “Leverage of the Gatekeeper,” 56.

¹⁴⁹ For an overview of historic and current debates, refer to: Geiger and Pécoud. "Migration, development and the 'migration and development nexus'";

Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, "Revisiting the migration–development nexus: From social networks and remittances to markets for migration control." *International migration* 50, no. 3 (2012): 61-76.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Faist, "Migrants as transnational development agents: an inquiry into the newest round of the migration–development nexus," *Population, space and place* 14, no. 1 (2008), 21.

receiving country also benefits from the inflow of labour forces and knowledge. Much of the migration-development nexus debate therefore focuses on how active migration policies can maximize these benefits for both sending and receiving countries.¹⁵¹

Another relevant question in this context is whether improved economic conditions – as the result of legal migration or other sources of development – help in stemming migration. This is heavily debated among scholars.¹⁵² The latest insights suggest an increase in GDP in the least developed countries often leads to a rise in emigration. It is thought economic development will only reduce migration in countries with a GDP- per capita PPP of over \$9.000 USD.¹⁵³ With a GDP per capita PPP of \$11.700 in 2015, Egypt fits this picture.¹⁵⁴

Although the EU's response to migration since the 1990s had been mostly influenced by a security frame, it was not immune to insights from this migration-development nexus. Its migration-development policies are mostly based on the traditional view that if economic development in a country cannot keep up with demographic growth, this creates a push factor to migrate to a more developed country.¹⁵⁵ As the EU is, in general, more developed than its neighbourhood, this is a significant insight for reducing migration. In the late 1990s, a High Level Working Group was tasked with exploring how development aid could be utilized to address migration.¹⁵⁶ This way, the EU worked towards “enhancing the coherence of the

¹⁵¹ Sandra Lavenex and Rahel Kunz, "The migration–development nexus in EU external relations," *European Integration* 30, no. 3 (2008): 440.

¹⁵² Faist, "Migrants as transnational development agents," 22.

¹⁵³ Clemens, "Does development reduce migration?," 152-155.

¹⁵⁴ World Bank, *International Comparison Program database. GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$)*, Accessed on 19 April 2020, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?end=2017&locations=EG&most_recent_value_desc=true&start=2014.

¹⁵⁵ Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, Nicholas Van Hear and Poul Engber-Pedersen, *The Migration-Development Nexus* (Geneva: IOM, 2003): 13.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

external dimension of the EU's immigration policy with development policy".¹⁵⁷ The outcome of this process was that development projects often were reframed to address migration. In migration partnerships with third countries, the EU started offering support in creating jobs in countries of origin.¹⁵⁸

These investments served a double purpose: they addressed underdevelopment as a root cause for migration and made agreements more attractive to third countries.¹⁵⁹ This last point is relevant too, as the European Commission had concluded in 2002 that "there is little that can be offered in return" to third countries for migration cooperation.¹⁶⁰ In this spirit, the EU started making migration an integral part of broad association and cooperation agreements with third countries during the early 2000s. As these agreements focused for a large part on economic cooperation, migration and economic development became intertwined in EU policies and practices.¹⁶¹

These developments would also have an impact on the relationship with Egypt and other Southern neighbours. In a 2017 speech on migration, High Representative Federica Mogherini commented: "[w]e all know that there is no easy way to stop the suffering and manage better the phenomenon. We know very well that the real solution implies first of all the economic development of Africa".¹⁶² The most concrete manifestation of this view was the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). In the agreement regulating the fund, it was decided

¹⁵⁷ European Commission, *Migration and Development: Some Concrete Orientations*, COM (2005) 390 final, September 2005, 11, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0390:FIN:EN:PDF>.

¹⁵⁸ European Commission, *On circular migration and mobility partnerships between the European Union and third countries*, COM(2007) 248 final, May 2007, 4-6, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0248:FIN:EN:PDF>.

¹⁵⁹ Lavenex and Kunz, "Migration–development nexus in EU external relations," 452.

¹⁶⁰ European Commission, *Green Paper on a community return policy on illegal residents*, COM(2002) 175 final, April 2002, 23, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52002DC0175&from=EN>.

¹⁶¹ Lavenex and Kunz, "Migration–development nexus in EU external relations," 445.

¹⁶² European External Action Service, *Opening remarks by the HRVP Federica Mogherini at the debate on managing migration along the Central Mediterranean route*, 1 February 2017, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/19755/Opening%20remarks%20by%20the%20HRVP%20Federica%20Mogherini%20at%20the%20debate%20on%20manag-ing%20migration%20along%20the%20Central%20Mediterranean%20route.4.

that the EU would “support all aspects of stability and contribute to better migration management as well as addressing the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration”.¹⁶³ The EUTF pools together money from different EU financial instruments and donations from EU member states and other donors, totalling almost 5 billion euro in 2020.¹⁶⁴

4.2 Egypt’s economy and development

For Egypt, there was a lot to gain from an increased focus on economy and development. The country had already been struggling economically before the 2011 revolution and after it, key economic indicators looked dire.

4.2.1 The state of Egypt’s economy before and after the 2011 Revolution

Before the 2011 Arab Spring, Egypt’s economy had been growing at a moderate but steady pace. However, economic growth was outpaced by rapid demographic developments that led to a “youth bulge” of young, ambitious people entering the labour market.¹⁶⁵ This situation was worsened by the 2008 European recession, which decreased demand in Egypt’s most important export destinations.¹⁶⁶

With such a fragile economic situation as a point of departure, the political turmoil following the 2011 Revolution left the Egyptian economy in crisis. In a 2017 document, the

¹⁶³ European Commission, *Agreement establishing the European Union Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa and its internal rules*, November 2015, 6, https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/original_constitutive_agreement_en_with_signatures.pdf.

¹⁶⁴ European Commission, *EUTF State of Play and Financial resources*, Accessed on 21 April 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/trust-fund-financials_en.

¹⁶⁵ Dan LaGraffe. "The youth bulge in Egypt: An intersection of demographics, security, and the Arab Spring." *Journal of Strategic Security* 5, no. 2 (2012): 66.

¹⁶⁶ Uri Dadush, Maria Demertzis and Guntram Wolff, *Europe’s role in North Africa: development, investment and migration*, 2017, 4-6, <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/173106/1/PC-10-2017.pdf>.

EU draws a grim picture of the situation: “nearly half of the Egyptian population is either poor or at risk of slipping into poverty. Poverty rose from about 17% in 2000 to 27.8% in 2015, with a further quarter of the population clustered just above the poverty line. Official unemployment figures went from 9.6% in 2010 to about 13% in 2015, with 70% of unemployed aged 18-29”.¹⁶⁷ This figure does not even take into account the fact that actual unemployment is assumed to be significantly higher than the official figure. By 2020, 600.000 new jobs would have to be created every year just to provide for young people entering the labour market.¹⁶⁸ Combined with dwindling opportunities for Egyptians to work in other Arab states, as indicated in Chapter 2, this resulted in scenarios where 2.7 million Egyptians would be inclined to look for work in other regions – including Europe.¹⁶⁹

4.2.2 El Sisi’s economic development efforts

In the period directly following the toppling of Morsi, the generals who took over power – and later installed El Sisi as president – focused on power consolidation. This entailed a harsh backlash against the Muslim Brotherhood and other perceived security threats. At the same time, they had to address the economic situation too. The economic hardship endured by the population was seen as a serious risk to the political stability of the government. Moreover, economic development was important to keep the support of the military, a major economic player in Egypt.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ European Commission, *Single Support Framework for European Union support to Egypt for the period 2017-2020*, C(2017) 7175 final, October 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/single-support-framework-2017-2020-decision_and_annex_egypt.pdf, p.5.

¹⁶⁸ Stephan Roll, “Egypt: Migration Policy and Power Consolidation”, in *Profiteers of migration? Authoritarian states in Africa and European migration management*, eds. Anne Koch, Annette Weber and Isabelle Werenfels (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2018), 58.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Achrainer, “EU-Egypt Rapprochement,” 494.

In addressing the most immediate financial and economic issues, the transition government relied on Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. These countries had an antagonistic relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood and were happy to support the generals that removed them from power in Egypt. They expressed their gratitude with a \$12 billion grant. When Western powers like the EU and US threatened to withdraw or suspend aid packages following the military power-grab, these Arab countries stepped in again.¹⁷¹ However, the financial situation was so dire the substantive financial injection from the Gulf and Saudi Arabia was needed “just to get through the next 12 months”.¹⁷²

When El Sisi ascended the presidency, it was clear more had to be done to stimulate the economy and create jobs. As Western powers had been critical of the conditions of his rise to power, his government first looked eastwards. In 2014, the Egyptian government signed a ‘comprehensive strategic partnership’ with China that integrated the country in China’s Belt and Road Initiative. For China, the Suez Canal was of strategic importance to build its New Silk Road. Egypt hoped to benefit from China’s investment in infrastructure and other parts of its economy.¹⁷³ China’s reputation for pragmatic partnerships, without conditions on democracy or human rights, made it an attractive partner compared to Western countries.¹⁷⁴

Despite these initially promising steps, Egypt’s economy did not recover in 2015. Financial support from the Gulf was reduced and big words about cooperation with China had not been complemented by big actual investments.¹⁷⁵ At the same time, the regime had

¹⁷¹ “Egypt to ‘review’ foreign aid, rely on Gulf assistance: Officials,” *Al Ahrām*, 19 August 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsWorldCup/2018/79466.aspx>.

¹⁷² Atlantic Council, *What Will the Gulf’s \$12 Billion Buy in Egypt?*, 11 July 2013 <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/what-will-the-gulfs-12-billion-buy-in-egypt/>.

¹⁷³ Mordechai Chaziza, “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: a new stage in China-Egypt Relations,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 20, no. 3 (2016): 41.

¹⁷⁴ “China inks \$55bn Middle East deals,” *The National*, 21 January 2016, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/china-inks-55bn-middle-east-deals-1.195430>.

¹⁷⁵ Achraimer, “EU-Egypt Rapprochement,” 502.

consolidated its position against the most imminent security threats and now started addressing the economy more seriously. It had been working on an ambitious development strategy called Vision 2030, that was meant to put Egypt “among the top 30 countries in terms of the size of the economy, markets’ competitiveness, human development, quality of life and anti-corruption”.¹⁷⁶

4.3 EU-Egyptian economic and development cooperation

In the light of these developments, the interests of the EU and Egypt became more aligned in 2015. For Egypt, it was clear it needed to address economic development. After exploring other options without much result, turning to the EU was a logical next step. While trade with Russia and China had increased, the EU remained Egypt’s biggest trading partner by far in terms of imports, exports, and foreign direct investment.¹⁷⁷ Around the same time, the EU was in the process of reevaluating its position on conditionality (as indicated in Chapter 2), resulting in the revision of the ENP by the end of 2015. This created more room for the EU to provide Egypt with economic incentives for cooperation on migration and stability.

In this process, both sides often explicitly commented on the relationship between migration and economic development. In his 2014 election campaign, El Sisi already named remittances from Egyptians living abroad one of the pillars for Egypt’s economic revival.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Cabinet of Ministers, *Egypt Vision 2030*, September 2016, 10, http://mcit.gov.eg/Upcont/Documents/Reports%20and%20Documents_492016000_English_Booklet_2030_compressed_4_9_16.pdf.

¹⁷⁷ Central Bank of Egypt, *Economic Review Vol.56 No.1, 2015/2016*, 2016, pp. 75, 78. https://www.cbe.org.eg/_layouts/download.aspx?SourceUrl=%2Fen%2FEconomicResearch%2FPublications%2FEconomicReviewDL%2FEconomic%20Review%20Volumes%20Vol.%2056%20No%201%2C%202015-2016.pdf; European Commission, *Egypt. Trade Picture*, Accessed on 19 April 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/egypt/>; European Commission, *Trade in goods with Egypt*, April 2020, pp. 2-4, 8. https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/isdb_results/factsheets/country/details_egypt_en.pdf.

¹⁷⁸ Stephan Kalin, “Sisi’s economic vision for Egypt: back to the future,” *Reuters*, 22 May 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-sisi-economy/sisis-economic-vision-for-egypt-back-to-the-future-idUSBREA4L0KL20140522>.

Indeed, a 2003 World Bank report ranked Egypt among the top 5 recipients of remittances worldwide.¹⁷⁹ Figures by the Central Bank of Egypt show how remittances contributed to over 5% of GDP in 2005.¹⁸⁰ In 2015, this percentage had declined to a mere 1.5% as a result of less Egyptians working abroad.¹⁸¹ Therefore, there was a clear potential benefit for more opportunities for Egyptians to work in the EU.

In response to an incident where young Egyptians had drowned in an attempt to reach Europe, El Sisi also recognized the importance of creating opportunities for young people to keep them from leaving the country. Addressing these young people, he assured them: “Why are you leaving your country? Are there no job opportunities? No, there are”.¹⁸²

In this context, EU diplomats hoped financial support from the EUTF would help to smoothen migration cooperation with Egypt. However, Egyptian officials proved not to be interested in projects where Europe and Egypt would work together in migration management. Rather, the country was keen to receive financial support for its own border security and development aid to help economic development. Continuously, Egypt kept insisting for the EU to drop its focus on security¹⁸³ and “the need to strengthen the links between migration and development”.¹⁸⁴

In a 2016 document, the EU itself concluded that “there are also clear expectations that the EU should provide more substantial financial support to Egyptian efforts taking into

¹⁷⁹ World Bank, *Global Development Finance 2003* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2003): 159.

¹⁸⁰ Central Bank of Egypt, *Economic Review Vol.47 No.2, 2006/2007, 2007*, 84, https://www.cbe.org.eg/_layouts/download.aspx?SourceUrl=%2Fen%2FEconomicResearch%2FPublications%2FEconomicReviewDL%2FEconomic%20Review%20Volumes%20Vol.47%20No.%204%2C%202006-2007.pdf.

¹⁸¹ Central Bank of Egypt, *Economic Review 2015/2016*, 66.

¹⁸² “No justification or excuse for such death, Sisi tells young Egyptians after boat disaster,” *Al Ahram*, 26 September 2016, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/244683/Egypt/Politics-/No-justification-or-excuse-for-such-death,-Sisi-te.aspx>.

¹⁸³ State Information Service, *FM: EU has to contribute to achieving sustainable development in Africa*, 21 April 2015, <https://sis.gov.eg/Story/97668/FM-EU-has-to-contribute-to-achieving-sustainable-development-in-Africa?lang=en-us>.

¹⁸⁴ State Information Service, *Egyptian participation in the African - European Summit on Migration*, 16 November 2015, <https://sis.gov.eg/Story/97669/Egyptian-participation-in-the-African---European-Summit-on-Migration?lang=en-us>.

consideration the important challenges the country is facing and the EU's own interests in this field.”¹⁸⁵ Mirroring El Sisi’s earlier instance on the importance of remittances, they also reported that “[r]equests for increased legal migration opportunities towards Europe have regularly been raised”.¹⁸⁶

In this light, the Egyptian claims about harbouring 5 million refugees¹⁸⁷ can also be interpreted from a financial point of view. The EU had awarded Turkey 3 billion euro to support the 2 million Syrian refugees in Turkey, and make sure they would not travel to Europe.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, aside from using the number of 5 million refugees as a threat, it also served to argue for a higher financial contribution from the EU. Indeed, the EU describes how El Sisi emphasized this figure in talks about European support with European Commission president Donald Tusk.¹⁸⁹

4.3.1 IMF loan

Despite the fact that the EU had created more room for cooperation with Egypt, and Egypt itself was increasingly focusing on its economy, there were no concrete results in the economic relationship in 2015. This changed in August 2016, when Egypt had effectively closed its sea border for irregular migration.¹⁹⁰ As indicated in previous chapters, this resulted in very few to no illegal arrivals from Egypt to Europe in ensuing years.

The timing of this change in Egypt’s efforts to stop illegal migration follows the timeline of the negotiations on a substantial International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan

¹⁸⁵ European External Action Service, *Options on developing cooperation*, 4.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ “Egypt hosting 5 mln refugees despite economic challenges: Sisi at G20,” *Al Ahram*, 5 September 2016, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/242459/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-hosting-mln-refugees-despite-economic-chall.aspx>.

¹⁸⁸ Okay and Zaragoza-Crisitiani, “Leverage of the Gatekeeper,” pp. 53, 56.

¹⁸⁹ European External Action Service, *Options on developing cooperation*, 4.

¹⁹⁰ Roll, “Egypt: Migration Policy and Power Consolidation,” 64.

package. These talks culminated in a July 2016 IMF visit to Egypt to discuss the terms of the deal.¹⁹¹ The 12 billion USD deal was announced in August 2016 and officially signed in November of the same year.¹⁹²

European countries have had a big role in securing the deal for Egypt. They are represented in the Fund's board that decided on the granting of the loan, and the EU member states could be instrumental in providing part of the external funding that was required for the IMF deal.¹⁹³ In the months between the announcement of the deal – when Egypt had already closed its sea border for illegal migration – and the official signing, European Parliament president Martin Schulz made clear how directly connected the IMF deal and migration cooperation actually were. He publicly called for EU countries to withhold their approval of the deal, if there would be no comprehensive migration cooperation with Egypt.¹⁹⁴

As became clear in the analysis in the previous chapters, 2016 proved to be a turning point in EU-Egyptian migration cooperation. Frontex concluded in the years afterwards that irregular arrivals from Egypt had completely stopped.¹⁹⁵ The EU had also been able to prove to Egypt what it could offer in return: it had voted in favour of the IMF loan and Germany, France and the UK had made the additional financial contributions the IMF had called for as a condition for the substantial loan.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ "What will the IMF loan mean for Egypt?," *Egypt Today*, 26 September 2016, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/10/3170/What-Will-The-IMF-Loan-Mean-For-Egypt>.

¹⁹² IMF, *IMF Executive Board Approves US\$12 billion Extended Arrangement Under the Extended Fund Facility for Egypt*, 11 November 2016, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/11/11/PR16501-Egypt-Executive-Board-Approves-12-billion-Extended-Arrangement>.

¹⁹³ IMF, *IMF Executive Directors and Voting Power*, Accessed 21 April 2020, <https://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/memdir/eds.aspx>.

¹⁹⁴ "EU parliament chief says Egypt IMF loan should be tied to migrant deal," *Middle East Eye*, 23 September 2016, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/eu-parliament-chief-says-egypt-imf-loan-should-be-tied-migrant-deal>.

¹⁹⁵ Frontex, *Risk Analysis for 2019*, 8.

¹⁹⁶ IMF, *IMF Country Report no 17/17. Arab Republic of Egypt: Request for Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility*, January 2017, 17, <https://www.imf.org/~media/Files/Publications/CR/2017/cr1717.ashx>.

Naturally, migration cooperation was not the only interest the EU had in improving its relationship with Egypt by approving the IMF loan. El Sisi also stressed the country's importance in providing regional stability, particularly in Libya and with regard to terrorism.¹⁹⁷ In the context of the EU's focus on security and stability, this will likely have played an important role in the closer ties with Egypt as well.

4.3.2 EU development projects in Egypt

Although only indirectly influenced by the EU, the IMF deal was the most important manifestation of economic cooperation with Egypt in recent years. However, the deal was not without its complications. The IMF loan came with strict conditions on subsidy reforms and spending cuts for the Egyptian government. The insistence on fiscal responsibility is meant to balance the government's finances.¹⁹⁸

These conditions, however, would not automatically do much to improve living conditions for Egyptians in the short term. Both Egyptian economists and former politicians¹⁹⁹ and the EU worried that "measures such as further cuts in energy subsidies, or an additional VAT increment, coupled with sustained inflation, are expected to further impact on the situation of the vulnerable".²⁰⁰ This, in turn, would be detrimental to the EU's goal of fostering development to reduce poverty as a push-factor for migration.

The EU tries to offset these potential effects of the IMF deal by contributing to economic development in Egypt through a multitude of funds and programmes. To support the 2017 Partnership Priorities, the EU has adopted a Single Support Framework in 2017. This coordinates its spending in support programmes in Egypt, with a total worth of

¹⁹⁷ European External Action Service, *Options on developing cooperation*, 4.

¹⁹⁸ IMF, *IMF Executive Board Approves US\$12 billion Extended Arrangement*.

¹⁹⁹ *Egypt Today*, "What will the IMF loan mean for Egypt?"

²⁰⁰ European Commission, *Single Support Framework*, 5.

approximately 1.5 billion euro until 2020.²⁰¹ This is a significant increase compared to the 320 million euro bilateral funding in the period 2014-2016.²⁰²

Although a comprehensive analysis of all projects under this Framework is beyond the scope of this research, it is remarkable that many of the development efforts are linked to migration. For instance, the EU emphasizes the importance of addressing climate change in Egypt by stating that it could “contribute to internal and international migration”.²⁰³ Under the EUTF Egypt agreed in May 2017 to cooperate with the EU on a 60-million-euro programme that addresses both immediate migration management, as well as root causes.²⁰⁴ Further, according to Egypt’s EU ambassador Khaled el Baqali, the EU targets its job creation projects in areas that have a high rate of irregular departures from Egypt.²⁰⁵

The EU also uses other instruments for development cooperation with Egypt. The most important of those is the European Investment Bank (EIB). In 2019, the bank had invested 9 billion euro in the Egyptian economy.²⁰⁶ Many of the EIB’s projects in Egypt are aimed at job creation for young people, thereby addressing one of the root causes of migration. The EIB’s Economic Resilience Initiative, for instance, targets countries in Europe’s neighbourhood, including Egypt and “creates jobs and economic growth in the region [...]. It also may help migration flows”.²⁰⁷ Egypt receives over 200 million euro from this specific fund alone.²⁰⁸

²⁰¹ European Commission, *Single Support Framework*, 6.

²⁰² European Commission, *European Neighbourhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations. Egypt*, Accessed on 21 April 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/egypt_en.

²⁰³ European Commission, *Single Support Framework*, p. 5.

²⁰⁴ European Commission, *Enhancing the Response to Migration Challenges in Egypt*.

²⁰⁵ “First round of Egyptian-European Dialogue on migration kicks off in Cairo,” *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 17 December 2017, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1115571/first-round-egyptian-european-dialogue-migration-kicks-cairo>.

²⁰⁶ “European Investment Bank’s investments in Egypt reach €9 billion,” *Egypt Independent*, 13 November 2019, <https://egyptindependent.com/european-investment-banks-investments-reaches-euro-9-billion-for-egypt-vice-president/>.

²⁰⁷ EIB, *The EIB’s Economic Resilience Initiative*, Accessed on 21 April 2020, <https://www.eib.org/en/about/initiatives/resilience-initiative/index.htm>.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

The European Bank for Recovery and Development (EBRD) also invests almost 4 billion euro in projects in Egypt.²⁰⁹ Although it does not mention migration explicitly in its strategy, the EBRD shares the concern over Egypt's economy to absorb the rapid population growth. It therefore supports Egypt with investments in "sustainable economic growth and job creation".²¹⁰

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, there can be little doubt that migration, development and economy have been closely connected in the recent EU-Egyptian relationship. Between 2014 and 2019, the interests of the EU and El Sisi's government became more aligned. The EU believes it can address migration on the longer term by fostering development, and El Sisi realized the need to provide for jobs and basic needs of his growing population if his government is to stay in power.

When Egypt was in a dire financial situation in 2016 and had to turn to the West for support, migration had risen on the EU's agenda and became an important item in the negotiations. For Egypt, it proved to be an area where it could show its goodwill with quick results. Whereas the broader goal of providing stability can remain indirect and intangible, stopping illegal migration from its shores was relatively easy to achieve and measurable. This did not only result in a much-needed IMF loan, but also in an increase in development aid from the EU.

²⁰⁹ EBRD, *Egypt Data*, Accessed on 21 April 2020, <https://www.ebrd.com/egypt-data.html>.

²¹⁰ EBRD, *Strategy for Egypt*, February 2018, 22, <https://www.ebrd.com/what-we-do/strategies-and-policies/egypt-strategy.pdf>.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the question how migration has shaped the broader relationship between the EU and Egypt between the 2011 Revolution and 2019. It found that migration has indeed profoundly affected other aspects of the relationship, in ways that are similar to the dynamics found in other EU migration cooperation case studies. In line with the migration nexuses that are described in the literature of migration studies, the issue linkage was found to be two-directional: developments outside the migration realm help to explain why and when migration cooperation improved after 2015. Lastly, the study nuances the picture from other case studies that the power relations between the EU and its Southern neighbours has completely reversed.

As became clear from Chapter 2 and 3, the EU's interests in migration cooperation were dominated by security concerns. Whereas the EU's initial intention after the 2011 Revolution was to support democratic transition in Egypt, the 2015 terror attacks and migration crisis on European soil brought stability and security back as uncontended priorities. Driven by a desire for quick results, this reduced the EU's bargaining power vis-à-vis Egypt. This effect has been observed earlier in the case of Morocco²¹¹ and Turkey²¹².

In this context, Egypt continuously stressed its role as a gatekeeper against irregular migration. Here, another parallel can be drawn with the Turkish case study.²¹³ What makes the Egyptian case unique, however, is the fact that Egypt mirrored the EU's integration of migration in a wider frame about stability and security. El Sisi's government reminded the EU of Egypt's role in preventing instability that was perceived to be at the root of both terrorism and irregular migration in the region. This led to a profound change in the EU's

²¹¹ Tittel-Mosser, "Reversed Conditionality in EU External Migration Policy", 359.

²¹² Okay and Zaragoza-Cristiani, "The Leverage of the Gatekeeper," 56.

²¹³ Ibid.

approach of El Sisi's authoritarian government. Since Egypt started cooperating on migration, the EU grew silent about Egypt's democratic deficiencies. Instead, it praised El Sisi for "protecting the country from many disturbances, which in turn helped save the entire Middle East region, thus preserving the security of the Mediterranean and Europe".²¹⁴ As shown in Chapter 3, migration was of particular importance here, as it allowed Egypt to show quick results.

Whereas Egypt extracted these concessions from the EU concerning its internal politics, the economic relationship shows the EU also still held power over Egypt. By connecting the issue of migration to financial support in the form of an IMF loan, the EU managed to get Egypt to stop irregular migration from its sea border in 2016. Other financial cooperation the EU offered Egypt fits the EU's long-term goal of reducing migration by addressing poverty as a root cause. Especially the granting of the IMF loan was a turning point in the relationship. In the years afterwards, a pragmatic relationship developed in migration and other fields.

Compared to the other aforementioned case studies, the EU-Egyptian relationship seems more balanced. As was the case with the EU-Turkey deal, the EU has certainly paid a heavy price for cooperating with Egypt on migration. Europe has not found a way of combining normative conditionality with Egypt's cooperation in security and migration matters. In weighing these two competing interests, it has chosen for stability. In terms of migration, this has not been without results, as irregular arrivals have effectively been stopped. The harsh practices of the Egyptian state to achieve this goal, combined with Europe's active cooperation, have done damage to the EU's image as a normative actor. The same can be said about the relative silence from the EU about the internal politics of El Sisi's government.

²¹⁴ *Asharq Al-Awsat*, "First round of Egyptian-European Dialogue."

At the same time, however, Egypt remains economically dependent on Europe. The country has had only limited success in diversifying its economic relationships and needed external financial assistance to provide for its ever-growing population. In this sense, migration has been important in showing that Egypt needs the EU as much as the EU needs Egypt. As neither migration from Africa nor Egypt's economic challenges are likely to become lesser priorities soon, the EU and Egypt seem destined to continue their pragmatic working relationship.

As it has become clear migration has changed the EU-Egyptian relationship, the question emerges if this is a 'game changer' or rather 'back to normal'. If migration is interpreted to be part of a larger concern about stability, the post-2015 situation looks similar to the pre-2011 relationship. In 2009, Pace already pointed out the limits to the EU's democracy promotion in working with Egypt. He argues that while Mubarak was focused on Europe's economic potential, the EU's interest were Egypt's stabilizing role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and radicalism in the Middle East.²¹⁵ In the case of Egypt, the post-Revolution European conditionality should be interpreted as an exception to the rule. It would be interesting for future research to see if this is also the case in the EU's (migration) relationship with other countries, and what this means for the EU's ideal image as normative actor.

²¹⁵ Pace, "Paradoxes and contradictions in EU democracy promotion," 41.

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