

# CONSEQUENCES OF THE SECURITIZATION OF EU'S APPROACH TOWARDS THE MEDITERRANEAN FOR SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

**CHLOE TEEVAN**

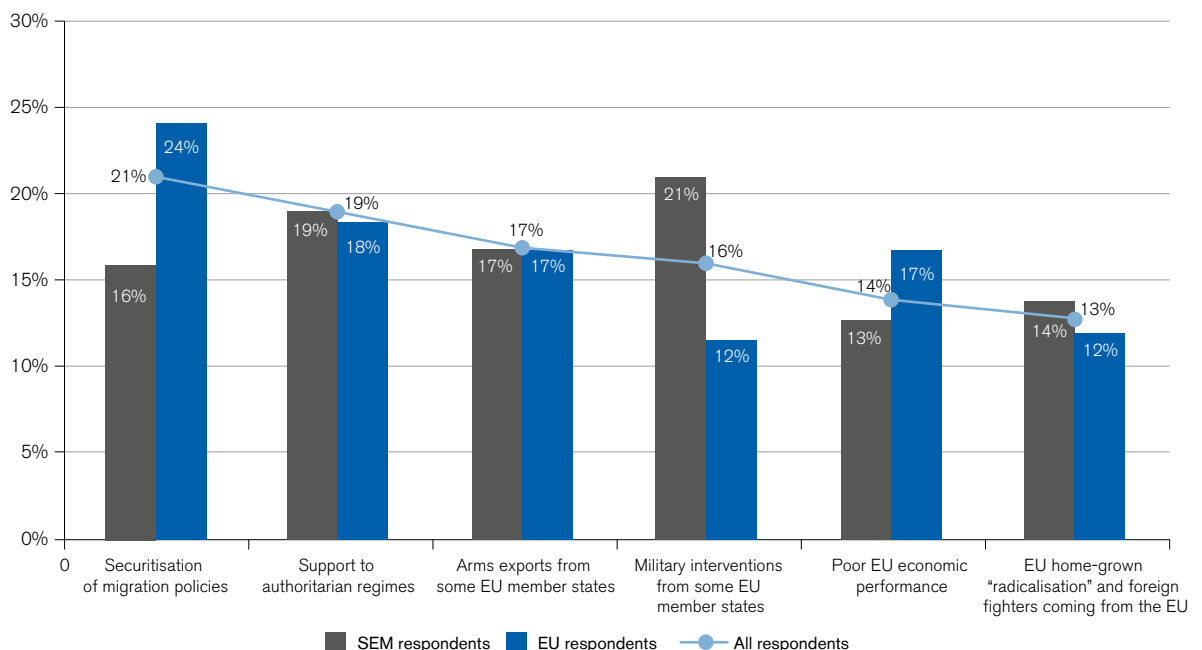
Programme Coordinator – MENA. European Council on Foreign Relations

**Survey results show that securitisation of migration policies and support to authoritarian regimes are the factors likely to have the most negative effect on the stability of the SEM countries.**

The EuroMed Survey shows that a majority of experts surveyed believe that the securitisation of European migration policies is the factor likely to have the most negative effect on the stability of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries (see Graph 1), while support to authoritarian regimes is a close second, and arms exports to these countries comes third. Yet, the strategy for dealing with migration through the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean that has been emerging lately clearly involves a further securitisation of migration and deeper support to authoritarian regimes.

**Graph 1: From the following options that relate either to the situation of the EU or to its policies, which ones are likely to have the most negative effect on the stability of SEM countries?**

(respondents were asked to choose 2 options out of 6)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 9th Euromed Survey

This strategy was outlined in Juncker's State of the Union speech when he announced the deployment of a 10,000 strong border security force, and later in proposals to begin talks with Egypt about deepening cooperation on migration that Donald Tusk and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz advanced at Salzburg on 20 September 2018 (*State of the Union*, 2018. *A strengthened and fully equipped*, 2018. *Salzburg Summit*, 2018). The communiqué from Salzburg also suggested that cooperation with Egypt will pave the way for a model of cooperation that is likely to be rolled out to other willing countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, with the proposed EU-Arab League Summit next Spring likely to provide an opportunity for the EU to roll out this model more widely. The proposed regional disembarkation arrangements that European policymakers put forward during the Summit (Migration: Regional Disembarkation Arrangements, 2018) are unlikely to be accepted by the Southern neighbourhood countries, but this proposal is likely to resurface repeatedly.

Exactly what form this cooperation will take remains unclear, but what is emerging is the distinct possibility that the EU will funnel larger quantities of development funding to those countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean that agree to prevent migrants from departing North Africa. This was already informally the system in place for cooperation with countries like Egypt and Morocco, but the example of the Turkey-EU migration deal, combined with the economic and social difficulties faced by numerous countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean has clearly made others aware of the greater economic and political pay-offs that might be achieved.

The EU and member states should be careful how they proceed if they wish to strengthen the economies and societies of the region. The short-term migration gains that might be achieved by strengthening authoritarian governments in the region through enhanced cooperation and funding will most likely be outweighed by deepening political and economic instability if more is not done to develop inclusive political and economic structures. Clear conditions around transparency and inclusion should be included in any further European assistance to the region.

The increased importance of migration as a driving force in EU foreign policy priorities is very clear in the speeches and statements of Juncker and Tusk, but it is also clearly visible in the headings of the Commission's proposed 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework. The proposed allocation for the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) is €89.2 billion, which includes a clear focus on migration as a priority area.

This includes a horizontal spending target of 10% to tackle the root causes of migration and create channels for legal migration, a "flexibility cushion" worth €10.2 billion allowing the EU to respond to "emerging challenges and priorities," and a rapid-response pillar, which includes the example of reacting to refugee situations created by conflict situations (*EU Budget for the Future*, 2018). These policy tools are of course likely to be used almost exclusively in sub-Saharan Africa and the Southern neighbourhood.

It is also clear that numerous member states have begun to allocate larger proportions of ODA to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, and to the Sahel region, which is viewed through a similar security-migration prism as its Northern neighbours. Member states with important aid budgets, including Germany, the UK and the Netherlands, are increasing their aid to these regions due to migration concerns.

This is particularly clear in the case of Germany, where the budget of the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, which accounts for around 30% of German ODA, increased from €6.5 billion in 2015 to €8.5 billion in 2017, and German development policy has been very clearly framed in terms of a strategy of "fighting the root causes of displacement" (Germany Donor Profile, 2018).

**The communiqué from Salzburg also suggested that cooperation with Egypt will pave the way for a model of cooperation that is likely to be rolled out to other willing countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.**

**The EU and member states should be careful how they proceed if they wish to strengthen the economies of the region, and not to further undermine the stability of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean.**

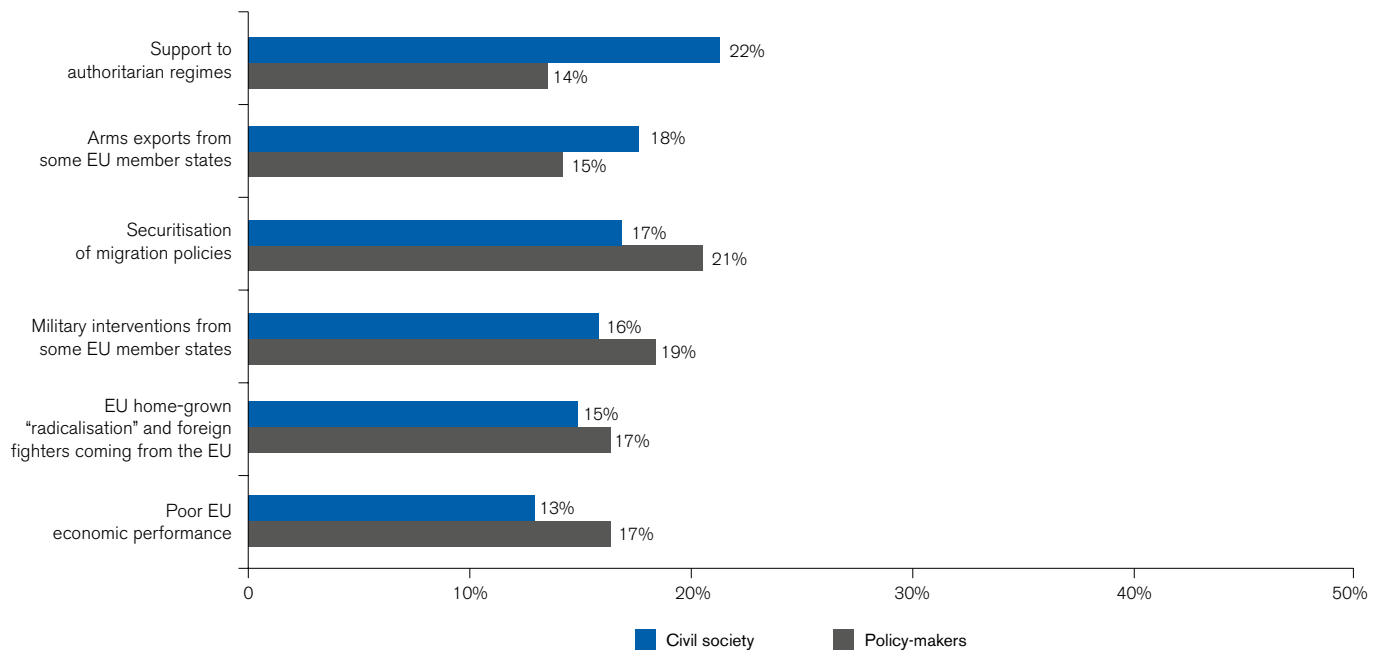
**Numerous EU member states have begun to allocate larger proportions of ODA to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, and to the Sahel region.**

North Africa also stands to benefit from the increase in international investment to Africa that is being encouraged to create jobs and stem migration, such as EU Commission President Juncker’s proposals regarding the Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs in his State of the Union, and the German “Marshall Plan with Africa” initiative (*Strengthening the EU’s partnership with Africa, 2018. Africa and Europe – A new partnership, 2017*). North African countries may gain from the new focus on investment in Africa, particularly given the self-positioning by certain states such as Morocco as the gateway to Africa. Merkel’s recent visit to Algeria, which clearly sat within the wider German strategy of investment as a means of stemming migration, raised hopes and even expectations of German investment there, but it is unclear what Germany promised in return for cooperation on accepting returns of failed Algerian asylum seekers (Mesbah, 2018. Mehenni, 2018).

**Increased cooperation on migration in exchange of funds directly delivered to governments can potentially weaken civil society actors.**

Not only is EU and member state aid to the region likely to increase, but its composition is also likely to change and to be increasingly concentrated with regime actors. Even if the EU does not agree to large grants of funds on a par with what Turkey received, it is likely that countries such as Egypt or Morocco will only accept increased cooperation on migration if the EU delivers significantly more funds directly into the hands of their respective governments. This will potentially further weaken civil society actors and alternative elites within these countries. It is no surprise that surveyed representatives of civil society identified the “support to authoritarian” as particularly harmful for the stability of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region (see Graph 2). If further development funds are to be allocated to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, methods should be devised to ensure continued inclusion of a diverse range of local actors in development planning and delivery.

**Graph 2: From the following options that relate either to the situation of the EU or to its policies, which ones are likely to have the most negative effect on the stability of SEM countries?**  
(respondents were asked to choose 2 options out of 6)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 9th Euromed Survey

Egypt and Morocco each face very specific economic and social constraints at home. EU funds funnelled directly into the national budgets of these countries may allow governments to postpone hard decisions or to fund expensive development projects.

As market confidence in emerging markets falls, the Egyptian regime is facing increased difficulties accessing international loans, and thus EU funds could prove a vital source of short-term financing that might potentially be accessed without resorting to further painful reform measures in the near-term (Mohamed, 2018). However, while international confidence in Egypt has thus far prevented contagion of Turkey's debt crisis, Egypt's very swift accumulation of international debt (more than twice as high as Turkey's), very low levels of gross fixed capital investment, and rising dollar interest rates have raised concerns about Egypt's debt burden (Diab, 2018. Springborg, 2018).

Egypt needs much more deep-seated reforms than those macroeconomic reforms adopted to date as part of the IMF Extended Loan Facility, which fail to tackle underlying distortions that ultimately undermine sustainable growth and job creation (Teevan, 2018. Roll, 2018). Coupled with growing worries about Egypt's international debt burden, this could lead to a highly worrying economic situation. The Egyptian government has already shown a resistance to any form of conditionality, as noted by many EU and member state officials in recent months, but if the EU funnels greater aid to Egypt without tackling underlying economic distortions, this aid is likely to further distort and destabilize an already unstable situation.<sup>1</sup>

If EU policy-makers are determined to enter a deeper partnership with Egypt, they should push Egypt to adopt deeper economic reforms that would make the economy more transparent and competitive and divert spending away from wasteful projects such as the new national capital towards more productive forms of investment.

In recent weeks, Morocco has already stepped up its cooperation with the EU on migration as migration flows through that country began to increase. Spain is increasingly advocating for greater support and solidarity with the Kingdom at the EU level (Abellán & de Miguel, 2018). This comes against the backdrop of on-going social and economic unrest since the beginning of the HIRAK in October 2016. Following this year's boycott on key products, and protests following the condemnation of key HIRAK leaders, King Mohammed VI announced a vast array of new reforms in his Crown Festival speech at Al Hoceima on Sunday 29 July (*A Al Hoceima, Mohammed VI prononce*, 29 July 2018). These reforms, which include schooling, medical cover, local administration, job creation and more, will be costly. Additional European funds could play an important role in paying for some of these initiatives. (see Fakir "What Moroccans Expect from the European Union" p. 62).

However, following the failure of many previous promises of reform, questions remain about how effective this new programme of reforms is likely to be. Of concern has been the failure of the Moroccan government to address key questions of exclusion and inequality. The King's speeches have indicated a willingness to listen to the people on the national development question, but it remains to be seen how these consultations feed into the policy process. While local leadership of the development agenda is certainly key, European policymakers should be careful not to further empower a small elite by funnelling more money into government coffers without clear conditions around inclusion of youth and civil society in the design and implementation of the development agenda.

The securitization of the Mediterranean is already resulting in increased development aid being directed to the governments of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, and this tendency is likely to continue. However, given the deep socio-economic problems faced by some countries in the region, it is doubtful whether these funds will be enough to prevent further economic difficulties from emerging. Further, European funding is likely to be focused on the governments of the region that have thus far often shown themselves unable or unwilling to tackle the deep economic problems that their countries face.

**If EU policymakers are determined to enter a deeper partnership with Egypt, they should push Egypt to adopt deeper economic reforms.**

**Reforms in Morocco: following the failure of many previous promises of reform, questions remain about how effective this new programme of reforms is likely to be.**

1. Interviews in Cairo, April 2018, Brussels and EU capitals, May-June 2018.

**The EU and member states should not direct further development aid to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean without clear conditions around how such aid will be used.**

The EU and member states should not direct further development aid to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean without clear conditions around how such aid will be used. Otherwise, the combination of support to existing elites and failing economic models may maintain a modicum of stability in the short-term, but by further constraining and disempowering youth in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, such policies can only lead to longer-term instability.

---

**Chloe Teevan** (@ChloeTvan) is MENA Programme Coordinator at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), where her work focuses on EU-North Africa relations. She holds a MA in Arab Studies from Georgetown University and previously spent 2 years living and working in Cairo.

## Bibliography

**A AL HOCEIMA**, Mohammed VI prononce un discours du Trône axé sur le social. (2018, 29 July). *Le Desk*. <https://ledesk.ma/2018/07/29/le-discours-du-trone-prononce-par-le-roi-al-hoceima-texte-integral/>

**ABELLÁN, L. & DE MIGUEL, B.** (2018, 8 October). España pide a Bruselas que dé más fondos a Marruecos para la migración. *El País*. [https://elpais.com/politica/2018/10/07/actualidad/1538937107\\_168009.html](https://elpais.com/politica/2018/10/07/actualidad/1538937107_168009.html)

**DIAB, O.** (2018, 24 April). The Risks of Egypt's Mounting External Debt. Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. <https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/the-risks-of-egypts-mounting-external-debt/>.

**MEHENNI, M.** (2018, 17 September). Merkel à Alger : une visite de prestige, sans plus ? *TSA*. <https://www.tsa-algerie.com/merkel-a-alger-une-visite-de-prestige-sans-plus/>

**MESBAH, S.** (2018, 19 September). Après la visite d'Angela Merkel : L'Algérie veut plus d'investissements allemands. *El Watan*. <https://www.elwatan.com/edition/actualite/apres-la-visite-dangela-merkel-lalgerie-veut-plus-dinvestissements-allemands-19-09-2018>

**MOHAMED, H.** (2018, 18 September). Egypt cancels T-bonds bills for 3rd time in 2018. *Egypt Today*. <http://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/57748/Egypt-cancels-T-bonds-bills-for-3rd-time-in-2018>

**ROLL, S.** (2018, July). "Flash-in-the-Pan" Development in Egypt? German Institute for International and Security Affairs. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/flash-in-the-pan-development-in-egypt/>

**SPRINGBORG, R.** (2018, 3 September). Egypt: The debt crisis that no one is talking about. *The New Arab*. <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2018/9/3/egypt-the-debt-crisis-no-one-is-talking-about>

**TEEVAN, C.** (2018, 20 August). Is Sisi hindering Egypt's economic progress? *Middle East Eye*. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/can-sisi-fix-egypts-deteriorating-economy-121579727>