



RAFFAELLA A. DEL SARTO

BORDERLANDS

Europe and the
Mediterranean Middle East

OXFORD

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Preface and Acknowledgements

As is the case with most books, this volume has a rather long history. I first started thinking about the importance of borders and core–periphery relations in Europe’s interaction with the neighbouring states in the Middle East and North Africa in 2009–2010. Back then, two of my then-colleagues at St Antony’s College at Oxford University, Dimitar Bechev and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, invited me to contribute to a volume on *Mediterranean Frontiers* they were editing. The result was a book chapter, ‘Borderlands: The Middle East and North Africa as Europe’s Southern Buffer Zone’, in which I first proposed to study the ties that bind the European Union and its single member states to their so-called southern neighbours by considering the latter as Europe’s southern borderlands. A research grant I subsequently obtained from the European Research Council (ERC) gave me the opportunity to do exactly that: to undertake an in-depth and systematic exploration of different aspects and dimensions of the relationship between Europe and the neighbouring states in the Middle East and North Africa from the perspective of expanding borders and orders within quasi-imperial relations. The research project, which ran from October 2011 to March 2017, involved a dozen research associates and research assistants, forged extremely fruitful collaborations with different communities of scholars, and produced various publications on very specific aspects of the relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East from a borderlands perspective.

This book partly wraps up the overall results of the research project, but it also delves into aspects that the project left unexplored. It also reflects my ever-evolving thinking on the multifaceted relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East, which takes issue with the concepts of ‘normative power Europe’ and ‘Fortress Europe’ alike.

First of all, I am extremely grateful to the ERC for funding the research project ‘BORDERLANDS: Boundaries, Governance, and Power in the European Union’s Relations with North Africa and the Middle East’ (Grant Agreement Number 263277), as well as for their support throughout the project. My thanks also goes to the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute, which hosted the BORDERLANDS project from 2011 to 2017. They provided both a wonderful working

environment and an extremely professional project administration (special thanks to Ingo Linsenmann, Elena Cau, and Mia Saugman).

I cannot possibly thank by name all the great colleagues who have cooperated with the BORDERLANDS project in one way or another and who have continued to engage in stimulating debates on different types of empires and their borderlands, core–periphery relations, the multifaceted nature of borders, and relations between the Middle East and Europe more generally ever since. The list would simply be too long, so this is a big ‘thank you’ to all of you. I would like to take the opportunity to thank once more the whole ‘borderlandini’ research team, and in particular Jean-Pierre Cassarino, Johanne Kübler, Mohamed Limam, Asli Okyay, Ylenia Rocchini, Simone Tholens, and Jonathan Zaragoza Cristiani. Your input and enthusiasm was essential. I very much enjoyed working with you and I appreciate our ongoing conversations.

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As always, a final word of thanks goes to my family and friends for all their emotional—and partly logistical—support (*grazie*, Tiziana!).

Raffaella A. Del Sarto

Florence,
4 August 2020

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Figure 1.1. Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East

1

Introduction

In recent years, images of migrants and refugees risking their lives to reach Europe from the Middle East and Africa have filled the pages and screens of European media. Migration has turned into a highly politicized matter in Europe, galvanized by xenophobic movements and right-wing parties alike. Increasingly restrictive policies towards migrants and refugees, adopted by numerous European countries, have become the norm. As the Mediterranean Sea turned into a maritime cemetery, with over 20,000 migrants and refugees classified as either dead or missing on their journey across the sea between 2014 and 2020 (IOM 2020), and Europe closed its borders to people escaping war, repression, and misery, the idea of ‘Fortress Europe’ seemed to be confirmed.¹

Yet Europe’s increasingly restrictive border policies towards its ‘southern neighbourhood’ reflect just one dimension of the complex relationship between Europe—defined here as the European Union and its member states—and the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Not only do these states in the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa share an extensive history with Europe, with many of them still maintaining broad although often ambivalent cultural ties with their former colonial rulers. They also engage in significant cooperation with the Europeans across a range of policy areas, including trade, energy, security, migration, and border controls. For Europe, the countries of the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa, and ranging from Morocco in the west to Turkey in the east (see figure 1.1) and abbreviated here as MENA,² are of vital importance due to their geographical proximity, abundance of natural resources and role as export markets for European goods and services. Given that MENA states take part in a variety of programs and activities conducted by the European Union (EU), Europe and these MENA states are thus deeply interconnected.

¹ These figures represent conservative estimates.

² The term ‘MENA’ is used in different ways in the literature. In this book, the term will refer solely to the group of states situated on the southern and south-eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, Europe’s ‘southern periphery’. It is used as an abbreviation for the terms ‘the Mediterranean Middle East’ or ‘the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa’.

The reality of this wide-ranging and often less visible cooperation across different issue-areas challenges the notion of Europe and the Middle East as two entirely distinct regions separated by the Mediterranean Sea. While the concept of ‘Fortress Europe’ may apply to the circulation of unwanted migrants, the broader context of Europe-Middle East relations clearly defies this notion. How, then, are we to understand relations between Europe and the states in the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa, Europe’s ‘southern neighbours’? What are we to make of Europe’s official claim that its policies towards that region aim to promote stability, prosperity, and peace—claims that the academic literature has been all too ready to take at face value? And does the idea that Europe’s power and influence in the region are negligible—particularly when compared to the United States, until recently the main external player in the Middle East—hold any substance?

By investigating the relations between Europe and the so-called southern Mediterranean through the concept of borderlands, this book proposes a fundamentally different reading of these relations. Here, borderlands are defined as areas in close geographic proximity to a border. Very often, these areas are characterized by multiple and disaggregated borders with different degrees of permeability. These borders are differentiated according to different kinds of issues, types of goods, and categories of people. As a result, borderlands often become hybrid zones of crossover from one political, socio-economic, and legal order to another. As discussed in more detail later, European policies towards these MENA states rely on processes by which Europe seeks to extend many of its rules and practices to the countries in the southern neighbourhood, thereby transforming them into Europe’s borderlands. They connect the European core with the periphery through various border regimes, shared rules and practices, and the selective outsourcing of some EU border control duties. This *modus operandi* amounts to a geopolitical strategy, perhaps best encapsulated in the EU’s ‘European Neighbourhood Policy’ (ENP), a policy framework that was adopted in 2003–2004 (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005; Bialasiewicz et al. 2009; Browning and Joenniemi 2008).³

Exploring Europe–MENA region relations through this conceptual lens sheds light on the rationale and modalities of European policies towards the region while avoiding the ideological tendencies of the literature on the EU’s allegedly normative power. By looking closely at the ways in which Europe

³ The ENP covers ten states in the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Syria, and Tunisia, in addition to six eastern ‘neighbours’ of the EU (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine).

seeks to impose—in a highly selective way—its rules on the neighbourhood with the aim of engineering economic and political change, it is possible to conceptualize Europe as a form of empire with fuzzy borders. Despite the EU's historically normative rhetoric stressing the promotion of democracy and human rights, it is security concerns and economic interests that drive European policies towards the MENA region. To advance these interests, the stability of the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa—Europe's southern periphery—is crucial.⁴ Attempts to export selectively the European order beyond the border is a cost-efficient way of pursuing these seemingly imperial interests. It is worth noting that, despite the period of upheavals witnessed in the Middle East region since December 2010, this mode of European policy towards the region has remained largely unchanged during the last two to three decades.

Europe's attempts to transfer its rules and practices to the southern periphery go hand in hand with the construction of a 'neighbourhood', an area which is *not* Europe but which remains closer and more connected than the areas beyond it. But how successful have these policies been? And how have they affected these MENA countries? Europe's southern neighbourhood is hardly more prosperous, stable, or peaceful today by comparison to 1995, the year in which the European Union launched the 'Euro-Mediterranean Partnership' (EMP) with the declared objective of promoting prosperity, stability, and peace in the southern Mediterranean. Of course, other factors, such as the ill-conceived policies of MENA governments themselves or the influence of other (and perhaps more powerful) external actors, may be responsible for this outcome. However, as the EU has remained the largest trading partner of most states in the region in addition to providing financial and technical assistance in support of prescribed reform processes, European policies can hardly be irrelevant to the region. As this study will show, Europe's policies have resulted in the asymmetrical and selective integration of MENA states into the EU's Internal Market without a reciprocal offer enabling these states to participate in European decision-making processes. In this context, it is important to ask whether the process, supported by Europe, of neoliberal restructuring in the MENA region has had the desired effect—particularly in the absence of democratic reforms. Alternatively, is it possible to assume that European policies, in combination with the specific policy choices of MENA governments,

⁴ Designating MENA states as Europe's southern periphery makes sense within the borderlands perspective, which is sensitive to unequal power relations; it obviously does not mean that these states are 'peripheries' in absolute terms.

have actually contributed to the growing socio-economic inequalities and societal polarization that have marked the region in recent decades? Has Europe been partly responsible for strengthening authoritarian regimes in its southern borderlands—unless, or until, they are overthrown by popular revolts? The co-optation of MENA governments in Europe’s management of or persistent attempts to manage migration, counterterrorism, and border controls is equally deserving of our attention. Given that most MENA states have remained under or reverted to authoritarian rule, their involvement in the management of European borders raises important questions about the possible unintended (but not totally unforeseeable) consequences that have strengthened authoritarian rule. Important issues of legality and accountability are thus also at stake.

And what of the MENA states themselves? How have they responded to European preferences and policies? How much space for manoeuvre do they have? Given that most states in the Mediterranean Middle East are dependent on European trade and aid, a structural power asymmetry largely characterizes the relationship between Europe and these MENA states. Thus, in theory, unequal power relations enable European preferences to be imposed on the governments and societies of the Middle East. But has this been the case in practice? As exemplified by Europe’s reliance on countries in its periphery to stem the influx of refugees in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, Europe is dependent on and vulnerable to the actions and policies of MENA governments in some issue areas. Implying a weakened bargaining position for the EU and its member states, the leverage of MENA states over the Europeans is a direct result of their co-optation in the management of these borderlands. Thirdly, then, this book highlights the response of MENA governments to European policies in the context of what are complex patterns of interdependence within a broader framework of structural dependence. The study shows that power is not unidirectional, with issue linkage remaining an important aspect of relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East. In this context, the book also accounts for the agency of MENA states—an additional dimension that the specialized literature tends to overlook (exceptions to this rule include Joffé 2008; Del Sarto 2010; Cassarino 2014; El Qadim 2014; Nicolaïdis 2015; Karadağ 2019; Del Sarto and Tholens 2020).

Finally, studies of the nature of the EU and its external relations generally assume that European foreign policies are a *sui generis* phenomenon that cannot be compared to the external relations of independent states, thus refraining from discussions of broader phenomena in an increasingly globalized world. In the context of globalization, however, the emergence of increasingly interdependent border regions in other geographical areas may be crucial

to understanding European policies of boundaries expansion and the resulting nature of the borderlands. This study will thus conclude by briefly reflecting on whether the development of Europe–Middle East relations mirrors wider global dynamics and trends such as globalization and the neoliberal consensus that continues to define Western development prescriptions.

Focus and Time Span

The book considers relations between Europe—which includes the European Union and single EU member states—and the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa (designated here by the term ‘MENA’), which can be defined as Europe’s southern periphery (see figure 1.1). The latter comprises the countries of the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya), Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. And while Jordan is not a Mediterranean country, it is nevertheless included in the EU’s vision of its immediate ‘southern neighbourhood’ while it is also deeply interconnected with Europe. For this reason, Jordan will occasionally be considered in our analysis as well. Except for Libya, all of these countries participated in the EU’s Euro–Mediterranean Partnership initiative that started in 1995.⁵ Most of these states subsequently took part in the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy, with Turkey turning into an ‘EU candidate country’ after the opening of EU accession negotiations in 2005. Not all of these states will be discussed in detail, however. In particular, Libya and Syria—two countries whose relations with Europe are far less formalized by comparison with other MENA states,⁶ and which have also been mired in civil wars since 2011—will only be considered as part of the broader context. Nonetheless, pre-civil war Libya will be used as an example in the examination of migration control. The book thus deals with countries that are marked by very different socio-economic and political traits as well as by diverging forms of relations with the EU and single European states, often former colonial powers. While considering these variations, the study focuses

⁵ When the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was launched in 1995, it included the then-15 member states of the European Union, two ‘Mediterranean’ non-EU members at the time (Cyprus and Malta), and ten members from the ‘southern Mediterranean’ (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and the Palestinian Authority).

⁶ Syria negotiated with the EU an Association Agreement that never entered into force; in 2011, against the backdrop of the crackdown on demonstrators by the Syrian regime, Brussels suspended the previous cooperation agreement of 1977. As for Libya, the country never signed any trade agreement with the EU or its predecessor. Both Syrian and Libya have been receiving humanitarian aid from the Europeans since 2011, with the EU also financing a number of projects in support of institution-building and civil society in Libya since the fall of the Qaddafi regime in that same year.

on the overarching *modus operandi* of European policies towards all these countries. Particular attention will be paid to the two most important types of relation: trade and economic policies as well as the issue of migration, security, and border controls. In considering the European interests that underpin these policies, the book discusses the impact of European policies on these countries along with the response of these states to European prescriptions and preferences.

The time span under consideration comprises two decades of Euro–MENA relations, from 1995 to 2015. The year 1995 marked the launch of a major European policy initiative, the Euro–Mediterranean Partnership (EMP)—also called Barcelona Process—towards the so-called southern Mediterranean. The EMP saw the gradual conclusion of a series of bilateral agreements whose primary aim was the liberalization of trade in industrial goods between the EU and most MENA states. This policy also gave rise to the gradual intensification and institutionalization of relations between Europe and its southern periphery.⁷ Second, the EU’s launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2003–2004, covering the EU’s southern and eastern ‘neighbourhoods’, embodies most clearly the European approach of seeking to export rules and practices to adjacent regions in a wide range of policy fields in exchange for access to the EU’s Internal Market. Turkey continued to participate in some projects funded under the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy even after it became a candidate country for EU membership in 2005. Throughout this period, single European member states continued to cooperate bilaterally with MENA countries on border control, migration, counterterrorism, and energy, with France, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Italy being the principal actors here. The end point of this study is 2015, that is, two decades after the start of the EMP/Barcelona Process. Prompted by the refugee crisis that resulted from the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Libya—in 2015 alone, over one million refugees and migrants entered EU territory irregularly, with the great majority crossing the Mediterranean Sea—the EU reformulated its policies towards its southern (and eastern) neighbourhood in November of that year.⁸ The end point of the study also allows us to consider the development of Europe–Middle

⁷ Data and interactive maps visualizing the growing cooperation and interconnectedness of Europe and the MENA region since 1995 have been compiled in the framework of the BORDERLANDS research project and are available at <http://borderlands-project.eu/DataMaps/Index.aspx>; see also Del Sarto 2017a.

⁸ The migration crisis was not the only development ‘in the neighbourhood’ that prompted the EU to rethink its policy framework. Other events included Russia’s military intervention in Syria, the terrorist attacks in Tunisia, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, and France, and Russia’s annexation of the Crimea in 2014, to name but a few.

East relations a few years after the 2011 Arab uprisings and the resulting resilience or restoration of authoritarian rule in most of the region's Arab states. As for Turkey, by 2015 the EU accession negotiations had already slowed down because of Ankara's clampdown on mass demonstrations (the Gezi Park protests) in 2013; they would enter a stalemate and subsequently be suspended by Brussels after President Erdoğan's authoritarian crackdown that followed the attempted Turkish coup d'état of 2016.

In addition to the rich academic literature and secondary sources, this book draws from extensive fieldwork conducted within the framework of a research project, directed by the author, on Europe's relations with the Middle East and North Africa. Funded by the European Research Council (ERC), the project, 'BORDERLANDS: Boundaries, Governance, and Power in the European Union's Relations with North Africa and the Middle East' ran from October 2011 to March 2017.⁹ Employing twelve researchers and research associates during the course of the project and collaborating with dozens of other academics, the research mainly focused on Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, and Turkey. The numerous interviews conducted throughout the course of the project with government officials and representatives of civil society in MENA states as well as in Brussels and other European capitals were conducted on condition of anonymity. For this reason, there will be no formal references to the interviews and informal discussions. For obvious reasons, fieldwork in the MENA region became a difficult if not impossible undertaking in some countries following the Arab uprisings and the instability and civil wars that ensued in some states. When possible, examples are provided for some of these countries post-2011.

Organization of the Book

As briefly outlined earlier, the present volume examines relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa through a borderlands perspective. This approach highlights the extension of European rules and practices to Europe's southern periphery and shows how interconnected the two regions have become as a result. The approach is anchored in the conceptualization of the European Union and its member states as an empire of sorts. The first chapter, then, presents the conceptual and theoretical

⁹ For more information on the BORDERLANDS project, see <<https://www.eui.eu/Departments-AndCentres/RobertSchumanCentre/Research/ArchivesMigration/Borderlands>>.

framework of the book. It delves into the meaning and implications of adopting a borderlands approach to the study of Europe–Middle East relations. The chapter also underscores the usefulness of this conceptual framework in the context of various flaws and gaps in the existing literature.

The historical context for contemporary relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East is provided in the second chapter. The chapter demonstrates that European policies towards its southern periphery developed from the imperial policies of single European states during colonial times into the quasi-imperial policy of the common European bloc. In other words, when the history of European–Middle East relations is considered alongside the beginnings and subsequent development of European integration, the imperial foreign policies of the former colonial powers *vis-à-vis* the Middle East may be seen to have undergone a conspicuous process of ‘Europeanization’.

The third chapter focuses on the concrete *modus operandi* of European policies towards the MENA region in the time span under consideration, that is, from 1995 to 2015. The chapter highlights the modalities of Europe’s attempts to export large parts of the European order beyond its borders, which has entailed the co-optation of political and economic elites in the MENA states in addition to the selective ‘outsourcing’ of EU border controls to its southern periphery. While the chapter focuses principally on trade policies and cooperation on migration, security, and border controls, it also provides other examples from a wide range of policy fields. Based on empirical evidence, the chapter shows that the interests and rationale of European policies towards its southern periphery have remained largely unchanged in these two decades, including before and after the Arab uprisings.

The fourth chapter assesses the impact of European policies on the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa and the restructuring of the socio-economic and political order in MENA states that European policies have actively promoted. These processes must obviously be considered in the broader context of Western policies towards the region at large, including those adopted by international financial institutions and other Western countries such as the United States. Again, the focus here is on trade and economic relations in the broad sense, as well as migration, security, and border management. The chapter indicates that, when combined with specific choices made by MENA governments, European policies have contributed to rising socio-economic inequalities, the emergence of dual economic systems, crony capitalism, and the strengthening of the largely authoritarian regimes in the MENA region (in the event that they have not been overthrown).

Questions of interdependence and the power relations that underpin the dynamics of Europe–Middle East relations are discussed in the fifth chapter. Highlighting the growing interconnectedness between the two regions in a broader framework of structural dependency, the chapter also sheds light on the strategies and policies adopted by MENA states vis-à-vis the Europeans. Highlighting the agency of the MENA states, the chapter provides empirical evidence of the bargaining power single countries have acquired in their relations with Europe, with a particular emphasis on migration, security cooperation, and border controls. These findings are then placed in the broader context of the major debates on dependency, power, and interdependence in the International Relations literature, demonstrating that power is not unidirectional and that issue-linkage is important.

The conclusion synthesizes the empirical and theoretical findings presented in the book. It discusses the study's findings on the interaction between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East in relations to the academic literature and briefly reflects on their comparability with other regions in the world. The book concludes by raising the question of the future prospects of Europe–Middle East relations, particularly considering the European Union's diminishing power of attraction and the increasingly influential position of other players in the region.

In sum, based on empirical evidence from two main policy fields, this study proposes a profound rethink of the complex relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East. While advancing an unconventional approach to the study of these relations, it revisits the motivation underlying European policies towards the southern periphery, the modalities and impact of these policies, and the response and bargaining power of MENA states vis-à-vis Europe. This perspective on EU–MENA relations problematizes the allegedly normative aspect of the EU's export of its rules and practices to the southern periphery, focusing instead on unequal power relations. It also underscores the not-so-benevolent European policies towards its southern periphery and the complex patterns of interdependence that underpin relations between the two regions. The study of these ties is related to broader debates on power and interdependence in the discipline of International Relations, highlighting the centrality of the concept of borderlands for studying relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East.

Conceptualizing Relations Between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East

An examination of the historical relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East reveals a complicated, if not to say ambiguous picture. To capture the nature of these ties, we commence by examining a few basic features. To begin with, the Middle East has a significant legacy of European colonialism, which has included periods of brutal occupation, exploitation, and violence. Napoleon attempted to conquer Egypt from 1798 to 1801; in turn, France's occupation of Algeria lasted for more than a century, from 1830 to 1962, ending only after an extremely bloody war of independence. Similarly, Britain's economic and geostrategic interests in controlling the Suez Canal were the main drivers of its divisive and at times deceitful policies in Egypt and in the Levant from the middle of the nineteenth century until the mid-1950s. Additional cases in point are the infamous Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, which partitioned the Middle East into spheres of influence between Britain and France, Italy's brutal war of subjugation against the Libyan population during colonial rule (1911–1934), and Spain's colonial control of some parts of northern Morocco and the Western Sahara. While never a colonial power in the region, Germany contributed to the complexities of the Middle East, with the rise of the Nazi regime in the 1930s and 1940s considerably augmenting the number of Jewish immigrants to the then-British Mandate of Palestine. Subsequently, the imperial powers controlled the process of state formation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) during the interwar years, with European influence over that area continuing until well after the end of the Second World War. It is thus no exaggeration to suggest that the European powers substantially shaped and partially defined the political and socio-economic development of the modern Middle East and North Africa by laying the foundations of politics and typically unequal trade relations.

The history of European colonialism and interference still lingers on in contemporary relations between Europe and the Middle East. For instance, Europe's colonial past is the reason for the presence of large immigrant

communities and their descendants from the Middle East in some European countries (usually those of the former colonial rulers), with relations between former colonies and rulers often remaining strong but ambiguous. Moreover, populations in the Middle East, including political and economic elites, have generally remained suspicious of European intentions precisely because of this colonial legacy.

Geographical proximity is an obvious second feature shaping relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East (Hollis 2013). Turkey shares a land border with Greece and Bulgaria, while land borders also separate Spain from Morocco at the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. In turn, the Strait of Gibraltar separating Spain from Morocco is only 14 kilometres wide at its narrowest point. The Italian island of Lampedusa is closer to the Tunisian coast than to Sicily, and a flight between Madrid and Algiers only lasts approximately an hour and a half—by comparison it takes almost three hours to reach Berlin from the Spanish capital. This close geographic proximity has facilitated trade relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East, with Europe remaining the most important trading partner of most MENA states. Similarly, a network of pipelines connect the MENA region to Europe, securing the flow of oil and natural gas from the Middle East and North Africa to the European continent.

Yet such short distances also define Europe's interests vis-à-vis its southern neighbourhood. Wary of any European interference reminiscent of the colonial past, most MENA states expect fair terms of trade and support for economic development from their large and generally much wealthier European neighbours in the north. For the Europeans, such close geographical proximity is the main reason for their concern with stability in the 'southern neighbourhood'. The spectre of regional conflicts and terrorism spilling over to Europe, the trafficking of arms and drugs, possible disruptions to the flow of oil and gas from the Middle East to Europe, environmental hazards affecting the Mediterranean Sea, and undocumented (and unwanted) large migration flows from the southern Mediterranean shores to Europe have been preoccupying European policymakers for decades. Thus the Middle East represents not only a strategically and economically vital region for Europe but also a source of great concern.

The aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings and atrocious civil wars in Libya and Syria, two countries in Europe's immediate neighbourhood, saw a considerable increase in the number of refugees and undocumented migrants attempting to reach Europe. This development became a major concern in European capitals. With the exception of Germany and Sweden, which have

taken in millions of refugees in recent years, Europe's response to the growing numbers of refugees and unwanted migrants has been restrictive, prompted by—and fuelling—the rise of right-wing populist and xenophobic movements across the continent. Given these political forces' discursive obsession with closing borders in order to protect 'the nation', a regression into simplistic black-and-white conceptions of territory, the nation, and its borders has become apparent in Europe.

A third aspect of Europe–Middle East relations that warrants attention is the uneasy coexistence of the image (and reality) of 'Fortress Europe' as far as unwanted people are concerned, and the deep and multilayered cooperation between Europe and its southern periphery. For example, trade relations between both sides are extensive. A customs union links Turkey to the European Union while bilateral so-called free trade agreements covering industrial goods are in place between most MENA states and the EU. The term 'free trade' needs to be put in quotation marks, since, as Joseph Stiglitz (2018: 20) has pointedly noted, free trade agreements are not strictly speaking about free trade. If they were, the agreements would be 'short, a few pages—each country giving up its tariffs, its nontariff barriers to trade, and its subsidies' (Stiglitz 2018: 20). Rather, free trade agreements manage trade relations, usually in favour of special business interests in advanced economies. It is perhaps unsurprising then, that EU–MENA trade relations have been strongly in Europe's favour: the European Union is the main destination of exports from MENA states, with the overall trade balance in industrial goods and services to the benefit of the Europeans (natural resources excluded).

Yet Europe's relations with the Middle East and North Africa go far beyond the exchange of goods and services. MENA states that have signed trade agreements with the EU receive technical and financial assistance from the Europeans to reform their economies, and, to some extent, their public sectors. These states participate in numerous European legal frameworks and activities, with the Europeans supporting various educational, vocational training, judicial reform, and civil society programmes in these countries. Last but not least, many MENA governments cooperate with the European Union and with single European states on border control and counterterrorism, as well as in barring unwanted migration. EU border controls have thus been 'outsourced' and 'externalized' (Lavenex and Uçarer 2003; Bialasiewicz 2012). In concomitance with the reality of 'Fortress Europe', MENA states have thus become part of select European rules and practices, with a high degree of interconnectedness defining relations between the two regions. To complicate this picture

even further, relations at the EU level with the ‘southern neighbourhood’ exist alongside a web of bilateral ties between single European states and the different countries in the MENA region. As will be discussed later, this complex state of affairs shines a light on the boundaries that define common rules and practices across Europe and the Middle East.

A final feature of Europe–Middle East relations is the ambiguity of European policies towards its southern periphery. External observers of the European Union, including those less familiar with the realities of Europe–Middle East relations, may be tempted to claim that Europe’s influence in the Middle East is negligible. Indeed, the European Union is not a state, it does not have a unified army under its command, and it does not play a major role in security matters; rather, Europe’s typical response to events in the Middle East is a cacophony of public statements issued by European capitals. According to this line of argument then, Europe hardly matters for the politics and international relations of the Middle East—unlike, say, the United States. Such assessments stand in contrast to the somewhat self-congratulatory concept of ‘normative power Europe’ (Manners 2002; 2006; Birchfield 2013) and the notion of ‘Europeanization’ that has dominated the discourse both in Brussels and in the European studies academic literature at large. According to these two concepts, the EU exports its norms and values, such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, to third countries through its soft power, a process of socialization that induces these countries to gradually accept European norms.

European policies towards the Middle East and North Africa certainly differ from those exhibited by the United States, or for that matter, China. But Europe’s influence in the region is neither insignificant nor devoid of crude interests and the assertion of material power. As will be discussed in greater detail later, European policies towards its southern neighbours do involve an attempt to export rules and governance patterns beyond Europe’s borders (for example Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2009). However, not only do these rules differ from the norms of democracy and human rights, they are also effectively subordinated to harder logics such as the concern for stability in the ‘periphery’ and economic interests—the ‘normative power Europe’ discourse notwithstanding.

In light of these complexities and ambiguities then, how can we conceptualize relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East, Europe’s ‘southern neighbourhood’? As elaborated in what follows, a borderlands approach best captures the basic patterns and development of these relations. This approach highlights how European rules and practices are expanded to

the southern periphery and how interconnected the two regions become as a result. A borderlands approach, therefore, throws into sharp relief the various functions that borders play while conceptualizing the European Union and its member states as an empire of sorts. Before delving into the meaning of a borderlands approach and the implications of adopting it for the study of Europe–Middle East relations, let us first clarify the notions of borders and borderlands.

Borders and Borderlands

Attesting to the changing nature of borders in an increasingly globalized world, the social science literature has paid ever-increasing attention to border studies in recent years.¹ In the last two decades scholarly research on borders, once a sub-discipline of political science and International Relations, has expanded into an interdisciplinary field, integrating insights from political geography, sociology, anthropology, psychology, and law, as well as literature and media studies.² As a result, a variety of analytical frameworks and a variegated terminology persist, along with differences in defining core notions such as a *border*, a *boundary*, a *frontier*, or a *barrier* (Anderson 1996; Newman and Paasi 1998; Newman 2003; 2006b; Brunet-Jailly 2005; Cassarino 2006; Brambilla 2015). While different academic disciplines have continued to employ diverse conceptualizations and epistemologies of borders, in addition to innovative concepts such as ‘borderescapes’³ and ‘borderwork’,⁴ most scholars agree that borders are not merely fixed physical lines demarcating territory. Rather, as Étienne Balibar (2002: 1) famously noted, borders are everywhere. The meaning of borders is historically contingent, and since borders are social and political constructs, their nature and meaning may also change over time. Perhaps the best way to understand the nature of

¹ Some sections of this chapter expand on Del Sarto 2010 and Del Sarto 2016.

² The academic literature on borders reflects global developments over the last decades: during much of the 1990s, the literature focused on the gradual disappearance of borders, including in the context of the EU. The focus of attention shifted to the growing closure of (external) borders in the post-9/11 era. For an excellent overview of the literature, see Newman 2006a.

³ Borderescapes are an epistemological, ontological, and methodological reconceptualization of borders in an era of globalization and transnationalism. According to Chiara Brambilla (2015: 19), the concept expresses the ‘border as a space that is not static but fluid and shifting; established and at the same time continuously traversed by a number of bodies, discourses, practices, and relationships that highlight endless definitions and shifts in definition between inside and outside, citizens and foreigners, hosts and guests across state, regional, racial, and other symbolic boundaries’.

⁴ Borderwork is defined as the efforts of ordinary people leading to the construction, dismantling, or shifting of borders (Rumford 2012: 897; also Rumford 2008).

borders is to think about them as institutions that govern inclusion and exclusion through the establishment and maintenance of different modalities of transboundary movement. Through processes of bordering, debordering, and ‘othering’, borders create categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Specific policies, institutional practices, narratives, and discourses as well as daily interactions typically contribute to the construction, maintenance, deconstruction, and shifting of specific borders. Thus, borders are not merely ‘lines in the sand’ that belong to a state at its outer edge, but rather complex political, social, and discursive constructs that fulfil a number of scopes and functions (see also van Houtum 2005; Rumford 2012; Brambilla et al. 2015; Laine 2016).

When we turn to politics and International Relations, these insights stand in clear contrast to the ideal–typical model of borders, commonly traced to the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 that ended the Thirty Years’ War in Europe. Marking the beginning of the era of the nation state, the treaties of Westphalia stipulated the principles of the recognition of state sovereignty and non-interference. Borders ‘became central to the nationalist agenda and the development of nation states’, as Emanuel Brunet-Jailly (2005: 653) has put it. Fulfilling a triple function, they simultaneously demarcated the territory of the state, circumscribed the limits of government authority, and defined the ‘nation’. The holy trinity of *Staatsgebiet*, *Staatsvolk*, and *Staatsgewalt*,⁵ prominent in the writing and teachings of the German legal philosopher and jurist Georg Jellinek (1929) as well as in the work of Max Weber (1980: 822), perhaps best encapsulates the critical function that a unified conception of borders played in the definition of the modern nation state.⁶

Yet these ideas of the state, of sovereignty, and borders, prominent in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, never fully corresponded to reality, not even during the Westphalian period of international order (Kratochwil 1986; Brown 2002: 212 ff.; Hurrell 2003: 41 ff.; Stirk 2005). Considering the pace of globalization and technological developments, such concepts have become ever less salient. Stephen Krasner (1999) famously described the Westphalian idea of sovereignty as ‘organized hypocrisy’; others defined it as a myth (Osiander 2001). However, the principle of territoriality was and arguably still is important for our understanding of politics. For one, it expresses a one-dimensional perspective on the spatial organization of politics, a defining feature of modernity in international relations (Ruggie 1993: 159).

⁵ State territory, people or nation (of the state), and state authority.

⁶ Weber famously defined the state as a community of people who successfully claims a monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory, stressing that territory is an essential feature of the state (Weber 1980: 822).

In fact, the process of the territorialization of space served as a precondition for the emergence of politics in the modern sense. In that period, ideas of transnational politics and transnational networks were clearly absent from the political lexicon, as well as from any conception of politics. Second, the concept of territoriality defined the idea of nations as bounded communities. This conception has been shown to be even more of a fiction (Anderson 1991); 'pure' nation states are in fact extremely rare in the real world.⁷

Although largely fictional, sovereignty and the underlying notion of the triple function of borders remain key ordering principles in international law and international politics to this day. This is reflected in the UN Charter, which enshrines the right of the self-determination of peoples, the equal sovereignty of all members, and the need to respect their territorial integrity. These structuring principles of international politics coexist in an uneasy way with the reality of the 'multidimensional function of boundaries' (Newman 2003: 139). Equally, the scholarship in politics and International Relations nowadays pays far greater attention to the bordering practices of states, that is, activities which states engage in to 'constitute, sustain or modify borders between states' (Parker and Adler-Nissen 2012: 776). And while distinctions between 'in' and 'out' continue to inform the study of political science and International Relations, the spread of supranational and transnational patterns of governance, trade, and globalization, along with technological innovations, have considerably transformed the *nature* of state borders. As a result, borders perform tasks that were once previously entwined but no longer necessarily remain so. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between borders that may be *territorial*, i.e. confining territory and hence regulating (or restricting) the movement of people and goods, and *functional* or *legal* borders. The latter circumscribe the validity and application of laws, rules, and other types of normative frameworks, including with respect to the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force. Borders also circumscribe communities and identities which may or may not coincide with other types of boundaries. To complicate matters even further, there are also different types of territorial borders. In this context, Rainer Bauböck (2015) has distinguished between stable and permeable borders, which he terms 'membranes', stable and impermeable borders, or 'walls', and impermeable and unstable borders ('barricades'). Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that different types of borders usually apply to

⁷ This holds true everywhere, but particularly in the Middle East and in Africa, where nations and states do often not coincide. Moreover, various concepts of community and nationhood may coexist in Arab states, such as pan-Arabism and territorially based identities (Lewis 1998; Hinnebusch 2009).

diverse categories of peoples and goods. This is true, for instance, of business people versus unwanted migrants, to ‘legally’ traded produce versus ‘illegally’ trafficked goods, and so on. Territorial borders may also not be physically located where one would expect them to be, with border and passport controls in airport terminals being the best example.

The disaggregated nature of borders as well as their multiplicity and ubiquity evidently challenge any clear-cut distinctions into black and white patterns; social reality is never that simple. What does this imply for areas that are close to a border or to various overlapping borders? Particularly when territorial borders are permeable and/or shifting, and when different types of borders coexist and partially overlap within a given space, areas in closest geographic proximity to a border turn into hybrid spaces. These areas become zones of transition from one polity to another, an area of crossover from one geographical unit, functional regime, and ‘community of practice’ (Adler 2008) to another (Newman 2003; Balibar 2009).

A number of structuring factors determine the main features of borders in a given area, and hence the nature of the borderlands. Market forces and trade flows are two such factors, as is the way in which the borderland is governed. Porous borders are often associated with the existence of a sound cross-border governance system involving multiple actors. In these cases, different levels of government and private organizations operating in adjacent political units cooperate in implementing policies that span both sides of the border. This type of multilevel regime involving regions, municipalities, and private agencies is in place, for instance, in the triangular border area where Switzerland shares its borders with France and Germany. In this so-called *Dreiländereck* (‘three-state corner’), such cooperation facilitates the circulation of tourists, but also the movement of numerous commuters crossing the border and that of the inhabitants of the border area more generally. The common airport ‘Europort Basel Mulhouse Freiburg’, easily accessible from the three countries, is perhaps the most visible expression of this state of affairs. Additional factors that may shape the type of interaction in the borderlands, and hence the nature of the border, are a sense of belonging, a common language, or similar socio-economic traits of cross-border communities (Brunet-Jailly 2005). The ‘smuggling’ activities of Bedouin tribes in the borderland of Egypt and Libya are a good example here (Hüsken 2017). Deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of the tribal society and tolerated by state authorities to varying degrees at different points in time, the economic practice of smuggling defines the permeability of the border and produces a specific translocal type of order in the borderland.

So how do these insights on borders and borderlands contribute to our understanding of Europe/the European Union and its relations to the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa, its immediate southern periphery? What does it say about the borders these two regions share?

Europe's Borders

A focus on borders is important if we are to understand the nature and functioning of the European Community (EC)⁸ and its successor, the European Union (EU). There is no doubt that the European integration process created a political entity that flagrantly defies the Westphalian model of statehood, along with the inherent 'classical' triple function of borders on which it rests. Instead, a complex mosaic of overlapping functional areas and disaggregated border regimes came to characterize the European space, as best illustrated by the EU's Internal Market, the Schengen area, and the Eurozone.

With a sole initial focus on economics and trade, the European integration process established a territorially and functionally defined area of supra-national sovereignty within which European Community law applied—a legally binding body of legislation superior to national law. Theoretically, this space now comprises the territory of all members of the EC and its successor, the EU. The completion of the Internal Market—back then called the European Single Market or Common Market—with a common external customs regime at the end of 1992 abolished the classic border controls on the movement of goods, services, and capital among EU members. The Internal Market also gave every EU citizen the right to reside and work in any other member state. EU nationals even gained the ability to submit lawsuits against private and public enterprises in any EU member state in the event of discrimination on the basis of nationality as regards employment, remuneration, and other aspects of work. While the territorial borders for the movement of goods moved to the EU's external frontiers, the introduction of the free movement of EU citizens and workers saw the emergence of altogether different types of borders. As one of the 'four freedoms' inherent in the

⁸ Strictly speaking, the predecessor of the European Union established in 1992 was the 'European Communities', which in turn resulted from the merger of the European Economic Community (EEC) and two other communities in 1965. For the sake of simplicity and following a common use in the literature, the term 'European Community' or EC will be used when referring to the precursor of the EU.

Internal Market,⁹ the free movement of people is now governed by the area that legally coincides with the borders of the EU's Internal Market. But it was the originally intergovernmental Schengen Agreement, signed in 1985 between initially five EC member states that abolished border controls for individuals and established a zone for passport-free travel with a single external border.¹⁰ As membership of the Schengen Agreement continued to grow, formally passing into EU law in 1997,¹¹ it prompted stronger cooperation across visa and immigration policy among the signatories. New member states joining the EU after 1997 did not, however, automatically obtain the right to the free movement of people following their accession; rather, interim agreements signed with individual member states regulated the rights of these citizens to work and reside in the territory of the 'old' EU members (European Commission 2006a). Schengen therefore established both territorial and functional borders for the circulation of people, which only partly coincided with those that defined the free movement of goods.¹² At the same time, European Community law gradually expanded to include other issue areas, including justice and home affairs, social policy, and monetary policy. Marking the realization of the EC's long-held goal to create an economic and monetary union, the euro came into existence as a common currency in 1999, albeit only virtually in the initial phase. Euro banknotes and coins began circulating in twelve of the then-fifteen EU member states in January 2002. As of March 2020, nineteen EU countries had adopted the euro, with the European Central Bank, created in June 1998, appointed to administer monetary policy within the Eurozone.

The functional and territorial border regimes created by the process of European integration thus often have different configurations and territorial coverage. Subject to binding supranational legislation as they are, all EU member states are part of the Internal Market, but did not unanimously adopt the euro as their currency nor join the Schengen area. As long as it was a member state, for instance, the UK opted out of both.¹³ Conversely, a

⁹ The Treaty of Rome of 1957 defined the free movement of goods, persons, services, and capital as the foundations of the European Economic Community.

¹⁰ The original intergovernmental agreement was signed between Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands in a small town in Luxembourg called Schengen.

¹¹ The Schengen Agreement became part of EU law with the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty.

¹² There are also a number of technical barriers to the free movement of people within the EU's Internal Market, such as taxation, social policy, health insurance, and the recognition of professional certificates and qualifications, to mention a few.

¹³ As of January 2021, nineteen of the currently twenty-seven member states have adopted the euro as their currency. Denmark and the UK (as long as it was an EU member) decided to opt out; Sweden did not join but may do so at a later stage. The remaining six countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania), mainly states that acceded to the EU in 2004, 2007, and

number of European states that are not members of the European Union—Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland—participate in the Internal Market and are members of the Schengen area.¹⁴

A further challenge to the concept of borders as inherent in the Westphalian model of the state lies in the multiple, overlapping, and hybrid identity boundaries that bisect Europe. Reflecting efforts to create an overarching European identity that had accompanied the integration process since its inception, the 1992 Maastricht Treaty formally introduced the notion of EU citizenship. But the notion of European identity has remained persistently vague. With the numerous rounds of the bloc's enlargement from originally six to twenty-eight, and currently twenty-seven member states after the departure of the UK in January 2020, the definition of who belongs to the 'European club' has also changed over time. The changing geography of the European bloc has recurrently fuelled debates on the 'borders of Europe' (see for example Smith 1996; Anderson and Bort 2001; Zielonka 2001a; 2001b). The question of what Europe is, where it starts and where it ends, is indeed difficult to answer. Suffice it to note that many citizens in the Balkans, for instance, or of European non-EU members such as Norway or Liechtenstein, are more likely to define themselves as Europeans than most British nationals, for whom 'Europe' primarily refers to the 'continent' on the other side of the English Channel. In fact, multiple and overlapping identity boundaries at the supranational, national, regional, and sub-regional level characterize the EU, its member states, and the wider European continent. These boundaries are certainly not congruent with the web of territorial and functional borders that define the EU and its members.

Thus the variable border geometry that has defined membership of the EU, the Schengen area, the Internal Market, and the Eurozone clearly implies a distinct range of different territorial and functional boundaries (which may also coincide). These borders not only vary in their permeability, stability, and visibility, but also continue to exist alongside internal borders between EU members that delineate distinct political and legal orders as well as national

2013, may join once they meet the necessary conditions. The Schengen area comprises twenty-six countries: all twenty-seven EU member states except for Ireland, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Cyprus, and four states that are not EU members (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein). The UK was never part of the Schengen area. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, some border controls among members of the Schengen area have been reintroduced as an exceptional and temporary measure.

¹⁴ Moreover, four non-EU members have a formal agreement with the bloc to use the euro as their currency (Monaco, San Marino, Andorra, and Vatican City), with Serbia and Montenegro unilaterally adopting the euro as their main currency.

identities (Zielonka 2006: 145). In the absence of border controls for goods and people, however, these ‘national’ borders are no longer territorial in the strict sense. Concurrently, as nation states continue to coexist alongside transnational European governance systems (Ruggie 1993: 172; Rumford 2012) and manifold identities, the European integration process has created multiple perspectives on politics. This development is a clear departure from the one-dimensional and territorially confined conception of politics that defined the modern nation state.

The external borders of the European Union—and of the European space more broadly—are not simply differentiated by their range and permeability, and thus by how ‘fuzzy’ they are (Christiansen et al. 2000; Hassner 2001). They are also constantly shifting. The removal of (most) borders between (most) member states to enable the circulation of goods, services, capital, and people prompted the strengthening of the outer borders of the EU as regards the entry of illegal goods and unwanted people. Frontex,¹⁵ the EU’s external border agency created in 2004–2005, has been instrumental in ‘fortifying’ the EU against the backdrop of repeated terrorist attacks in Europe as well as in the context of rising numbers of migrants and refugees seeking to enter the EU in recent years. Despite the positive image of itself that Frontex has sought to promote (Frontex 2019a),¹⁶ the agency’s operations were initially characterized by an absence of democratic oversight and accountability. While these have improved slightly in recent years—accompanied by an ever-growing budget, staff body, and political power (Perkowski 2018: 460)—the agency’s operations continue to raise a host of legal, political, and ethical questions (see for example Rijpma and Cremona 2007; Baldaccini 2010). Moreover, Frontex has raised the question of where the EU’s external borders actually lie. As the agency assists EU members at its external borders with ‘joint operations’ and ‘rapid border interventions’, including rescue missions in the Mediterranean Sea and patrols off the coast of Africa, the ‘Frontex border’ has become a ‘new sort of flexible border, deployed whenever and wherever it is needed’ (Rumford 2012: 891). In Bauböck’s term, the EU’s external border vis-à-vis

¹⁵ Frontex is the abbreviation of *Frontières extérieures* (‘external borders’), the common name of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

¹⁶ According to the Frontex website, the agency ‘promotes, coordinates, and develops European border management in line with the EU fundamental rights charter’. Its tasks are to ‘help identify migratory patterns as well as trends in cross-border criminal activities’, ‘[analyse] data related to the situation at and beyond EU’s external borders’; and ‘[monitor] the situation at the borders’. The website states that ‘Frontex coordinates and organises joint operations and rapid border interventions to assist Member States at the external borders, including in humanitarian emergencies and rescue at sea’ (Frontex 2019a).

unwanted people and ‘illegal’ goods has turned into a barricade—impermeable but shifting (Bauböck 2015). This border may also be conceived of as a ‘security border’, as Balibar (2009: 202) put it. In parallel, the governments of MENA states often cooperate with Europe, including with Frontex, on border controls, in return receiving European border surveillance technology, training programmes for their border police, and other benefits. What is more, joint border patrols involving the border police of MENA states and European coast guards or military police off the coasts of North Africa and the Middle East occur frequently (Rijpma and Vermeulen 2015; Rijpma 2016). As a result, Europe’s southern external borders have multiplied and moved closer to the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, a number of countries in Eastern Europe and around the southern Mediterranean are linked to the European Union through different types of institutional and trade relations, and these states vary in their status vis-à-vis Europe. These include EU candidate country status for prospective members, such as Turkey, Serbia, and Montenegro; states in Eastern Europe that are members of the EU’s ‘Eastern Partnership’; ‘privileged partners’ such as Tunisia; and states that have obtained ‘advanced status’ in their dealings with the EU such as Morocco and Jordan. When considered alongside the fact that Europe consists of different cores and peripheries itself, ‘broader Europe’ may thus be depicted as a system of concentric regions (Hassner 2001). But this also means that the ‘the further away [states] are located with respect to the “centre” of the historical “nucleus,” the more difficult it becomes to control the borderlines’ (Balibar 2009: 199).

In this sense, then, the European Union bears a strong resemblance to history’s empires. Rather than having fixed and clearly demarcated borders, these empires had hybrid and flexible boundaries (such as the Roman *limes*). These boundaries created peripheral zones serving as buffer zones for the imperial centre. As discussed later, additional features of the EU further reinforce the image of the European Union and its member states as an empire of sorts that, as a result, engages with its southern neighbours in an ‘imperial’ manner.

The European Empire and Its Borderlands

Scholars and observers have been trying to define the nature of the European Community and its successor, the European Union, for decades. Equally, the question of how to think about the role that the European bloc plays in world

politics has gained increasing attention in recent decades. Focusing on the European integration process itself, functionalist and neofunctionalist approaches, fashionable in the 1960s and 1970s, posited that ever-deeper integration would be the result of a functional ‘spill-over effect’ from economic to political integration (Haas 1948; Mitrany 1965). Other scholars, in the intergovernmentalist tradition, emphasized the role of state interests and bargaining among the member states in the European integration process (Moravcsik 1993; Moravcsik and Nicolaidis 1999). In the first decades of the EC’s existence, the distinct rounds of enlargement to include new member states were usually treated as part of the European integration process, and thus as an internal matter, not as a question of foreign policy.

Other observers and scholars, however, sought to capture the distinct role that the European bloc played in world politics, starting with François Duchêne’s notion of ‘civilian power’ of the 1970s. Somewhat reformulating this idea, Ian Manners’ concept of ‘Normative Power Europe’ (Manners 2002) became particularly influential in the European studies literature, resulting in an enormous number of studies that examined the EU’s normative ‘actorness’.¹⁷ For Manners (2002: 239), the EU exerts its normative power by diffusing a set of principles on the world stage to which the member states adhere. These overarching norms include peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, as well as a number of minor norms, such as social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance. In this way, according to Manners, Europe sets an example in world politics. The EU’s support for the International Criminal Court and the abolition of the death penalty serve as prototypical examples here (Manners 2002; 2006; Lucarelli and Manners 2006).

The idea of norm diffusion, central to this body of scholarship, has given rise to a large body of literature on ‘Europeanization’ and European ‘external governance’. First tested in the context of the enlargement of the European polity, studies conducted in this spirit have focused on the transfer of European norms and rules ‘beyond the EU’s borders’, specifically to candidate countries for EU accession and new member states (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; Schimmelfennig 2005; Börzel and Risse 2012). Zooming in on specific policy sectors, governance approaches have also looked at the process by which the EU has transferred its rules to the ‘neighbours’ in the east and in the south of the European Union (Lavenex 2004; 2014; Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2009).

¹⁷ For obvious reasons, the plethora of studies conducted in this tradition cannot all be cited here.

The 'normative power' literature has certainly evolved since Manner wrote his seminal article, over time becoming more sophisticated and perhaps less naïve. For instance, studies have examined the ways in which the EU constructs its norms and identity while accounting for power and interests, shedding light on the EU's strategic use of norms (Diez 2005; 2013; Youngs 2004). However, the scholarship on the European Union's international role has often reaffirmed the validity of the 'normative power Europe' idea, based on the assumption that the EU is predisposed to act in a normative way *because of its particular history and normative construction* (Whitman 2011; Birchfield 2013; Nicolaidis and Whitman 2013).

There is much to be said about why these approaches, including their underlying assumptions, have remained problematic. To begin with, the concepts of 'normative power Europe' and 'Europeanization' have remained Eurocentric and highly ideologically tainted, with the scholarship itself actually contributing to the construction of the EU's allegedly normative identity, as Münevver Cebeci (2012; 2018) pointed out. Second, and relatedly, this type of study pays scarce attention to and often ignores crude European interests and unequal power relations. Governance approaches, for instance, have often espoused a rather technical and legalistic perspective on the adoption of EU rules in third countries. While the merit of these studies rests in their evaluation of whether specific aspects of EU conditionality have produced institutional change in third countries (Freyburg et al. 2009), the external governance literature has remained somewhat apolitical, usually disregarding the wider picture. Moreover, this body of research rarely takes into consideration the *actual implementation* of European norms and rules once a third country has formally adopted them. Third, particularly vis-à-vis the states in North Africa and the Middle East, the history of European colonialism in that region and persistent power asymmetries render the EU's supposedly altruistic norm transfers problematic, to say the least. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, European policies and preferences have plainly contradicted the concept of normative power. For instance, European policies towards third countries have been traditionally marked by a lack of resolve in promoting democratic reforms. Instead, the EU and its members have a long history of pampering dictators and cooperating with countries that clearly exhibit autocratic leanings, thereby ignoring persistent human rights violations in the name of security and economic benefits (Youngs 2001; Bosse 2012). Europe's focus on security and the prevention of unwanted migration from the south, at the expense of human rights, also militates against the EU's claim to export democracy (Cassarino 2005; 2018; Joffé 2008; Cassarino and Del Sarto

2018). Furthermore, the EU's traditionally protectionist trade policies on agriculture, particularly problematic vis-à-vis developing countries (Tovias 2006; Kourtelis 2015), and the prioritization of energy security over reforms are far from 'normative' in the sense of the 'normative power Europe' concept. Last but not least, the EU and its members have displayed a noteworthy inability to resolve conflicts in the 'neighbourhood' (Nuriyev 2007; Tocci 2008; Whitman and Wolff 2010; Gordon and Pardo 2015). These observations may confirm the argument that the EU is a realist power in pursuit of its own interests, though possibly disguised in normative clothing, as Adrian Hyde-Price (2006) and Peter Seeberg (2009) claimed over a decade ago.

Particularly with an eye on Europe's fuzzy borders and the EU's attempts to export its rules beyond its borders, thinking of the EU as an empire of sorts is far more helpful here. It captures the nature—and the modus operandi—of the EU and its member states, as well as their policies towards neighbouring countries.

Advanced by a growing number of scholars dealing with the European Union, this proposition is not entirely new (Smith 1996; Beck and Grande 2004; 2011; Cassese 2006; Chandler 2006; Zielonka 2006; 2008; 2013; Colomer 2011; Gravier 2009; 2011; 2015; Marks 2012; Behr and Stivachtis 2015). The majority of these studies, however, have focused on the internal workings of the European Union or on its policies of enlargement to include new member states. Fewer are those studies of Europe's relations with neighbouring countries that have not, or only a qualified, prospect of membership through this conceptual lens (for an exception see Sepos 2013). Specifically focusing on Europe's relations with and policies towards the Middle East and North Africa, the author of this work proposes—perhaps somewhat provocatively—that the European Union and its member states may be thought of as a *normative empire* (Del Sarto 2016). The main proposition here is that by imagining the EU as an empire, we may conceive of the EU's export of its rules and practices to neighbouring states as the modus operandi of an empire in pursuit of its own interests. At the same time, this specific way of engaging third countries serves the construction of a 'normative' identity. So what characterizes empires and why does the European Union qualify as such?

Although history has produced very different types of empires, a number of distinct features mark this type of polity. Throughout history, empires have consisted of territorially vast and composite polities that comprise a core (or several cores) and a periphery (or several peripheries). Empires are territorially unstable: they often rise and expand, but they may also shrink and decline. Their borders are not fixed or stable, but exhibit hybrid spaces or borderlands

at the outer fringes of the empire (Doyle 1986; Tilly 1997; Motyl 2001; Münkler 2007). Empires have always sought to stabilize their peripheries and to draw economic advantages from them. They have done so by exporting the imperial order to adjacent regions and by cultivating elites there, a classic aspect of imperial relations (Galtung 1971; Motyl 2001: 12–13). In other words, by combining direct and indirect rule, empires traditionally subordinate formerly independent polities or communities by relying on already established local political structures in this endeavour. With asymmetry and division of labour marking relations between the imperial centre and the periphery, core elites channel the flows of resources from the core to the periphery and back. Interestingly, while empires traditionally exercised some military or economic control in their imperial domains, they tolerated a considerable amount of autonomy in return for compliance, tribute, and military collaboration with the core (Tilly 1997: 3). In other words, ‘accommodation is the engine of empire’, as Gary Marks (2012: 5) has concisely put it (see also Gravier 2020). An additional key feature of empires is that they usually see themselves as a civilizing power; hence they tend to promote a civilizing mission (Motyl 2001: 4).

Most of these characteristics apply to the European Union and its member states. First, the EU spans a vast territory comprising different and unequal constitutive elements; it has a core—or several cores—and peripheries. With a territory stretching from Portugal in the west to the Baltic republics and Cyprus in the east, and from Finland in the north to Greece, Malta, and Cyprus in the south, the EU comprises more than 4.4 million square kilometres and over 446 million people currently living in twenty-seven states. Additionally, the EU includes islands and territories that are part of EU member states but are situated outside mainland Europe, including in the North Atlantic, the Caribbean, South America, and the Indian Ocean.¹⁸ As noted earlier, supranational laws coexist and partly overlap with distinct national legislation across this vast area. While Brussels is the core of the decision-making process in the European Union, Berlin and Frankfurt (the seat of the European Central Bank), are centres of political and economic power as well, together with Paris, Rome, Warsaw, London pre-Brexit, and

¹⁸ Nine territories form the so-called outermost regions of the European Union. Some EU laws are derogated there because of the geographical distance. These regions include the Azores, the Canary Islands, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Madeira, Martinique, Mayotte, La Réunion, and Saint Martin. In addition to this, there are twenty-two overseas countries and territories that are associated with the EU, or were before the UK's exit (mainly former British, Dutch, and French colonies overseas), and fifteen special cases where the partial validity of EU law is regulated in specific protocols.

other national capitals. Within the EU, there are also a number of peripheries and semi-peripheries, that is, countries or regions which do not have the same political sway or economic power as the ‘cores’. Concentric representations of power relations that are usually associated with the notion of empire thus define the EU and its member states.

Second, repeated rounds of enlargement to include new member states since its inception have contributed to the enduring territorial instability of the EC/EU. Until January 2020, this territory had been in a process of uninterrupted growth, expanding from the original six member states to include twenty-eight members. The United Kingdom’s convulsive decision to leave the European bloc has entailed a shrinking of EU territory, but still bears evidence of the bloc’s territorial instability. As Johan Galtung (1973: 18) noted more than four decades ago, phases of deepening integration among existing member states following the EC’s creation have always been followed by phases of expansion to include new members, but without deepening integration. Territorial expansion to integrate an additional number of members is thus an intrinsic feature of the European Union and its predecessor, notwithstanding the exception of Brexit.

Third, the conceptualization of the EU as an empire is reinforced by the strongly normative political discourse that the EU maintains. Although the image that the EU seeks to project on the internal stage is a constructed narrative of how many Europeans would like the EU to be (Nicolaidis and Howse 2002), this discourse is still reminiscent of the civilizing missions of past empires (Gravier 2011: 418; Zielonka 2013). Europe’s normative rhetoric derives from what the EU perceives to be its specific *raison d’être*: namely, fostering economic interdependence to prevent the recurrence of war. This perspective also explains why Europe prescribes neoliberal development models to third states, a model that is attached to a European concept of modernity. In turn, the transfer of rules and practices, anchored in Europe’s own success story of peace and prosperity in the post-war period, contributes to the EU’s self-perception as ‘normative power’.

Fourth, and most importantly for our purpose, the EU has been expanding its variable border geometry with overlapping but not necessarily congruent functional and territorial borders to its peripheries. The unbundled, multiple, and partly invisible external borders that are diverse in permeability are thus moved farther away from Europe. European policies *vis-à-vis* its southern (and eastern) periphery can thus be read as an attempt to integrate these areas in a highly selective, gradual, and differentiated manner into the European order, with the aim of stabilizing Europe’s borderlands. This process also

entails a further ‘untangling’ of the various political and legal functions fulfilled by borders. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), launched in 2003–2004, most evidently embodies the *modus operandi* of European policy towards the bloc’s ‘near abroad’. By offering a ‘stake’ in the EU’s Internal Market, the ENP invited states in the EU’s eastern and southern peripheries to negotiate comprehensive forms of cooperation. Yet access to the EU’s Internal Market has been conditional upon the countries in question ‘approximating’ their rules and standards to those of the European Union, that is, making them compatible with EU law (for example European Commission 2012a: 5). Connecting the periphery to the core in crucial areas such as trade, energy, and infrastructure, these policies blur out the EU’s external borders and create a buffer zone around Europe (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005; Comelli et al. 2007; Del Sarto 2010).

Finally, and related to the previous point, Europe has relied on local political structures and elites in the borderlands in its attempts to export the European order beyond the border. The EU’s co-optation of political and economic elites of MENA countries into European rules and practices while excluding them from decision-making processes has been a key feature of these policies. As will be discussed later in greater detail, Europe has cultivated political, administrative, and economic elites in peripheral states that share the interests of their European counterparts, a vital component in the machinery of empire. Given that the EU and its members—together with international financial institutions and other major players in world politics—have promoted the neoliberal model of economic development, these co-opted elites act as ‘transmission belts’ of the European (and global) neoliberal order (Cox 1996; Gill 2003). Concurrently, the cooperation of many MENA governments in the European management of borders, security, and migration has entailed their participation in Europe’s violent process of control and suppression targeting refugees and unwanted migrants at the EU’s outer border, a process that has been termed ‘border wars’ (Mezzadra 2004; Balibar 2009).

In this context, it is important to note that Europe’s empire-like behaviour towards its borderlands is multilayered and involves different actors. As trade relations remain the prerogative of the European Commission, Brussels is undoubtedly the main engine of the EU’s economic policies towards the ‘near abroad’. However, EU member states have also played a significant role insofar as they have sought to influence the priorities and modalities of EU policies in accordance with their own specific interests and bilateral relations with individual peripheral countries. Single European states have also concluded

individual agreements with third countries on a variety of issues such as migration control, counterterrorism, and energy. The web of formal and informal bilateral agreements between European states and third countries located at the EU's periphery thus adds to the differentiation of relations between Europe and its borderlands.

The core–periphery patterns underpinning European policies towards its near abroad are not a new phenomenon, as the next chapter explains. However, the European Union started adopting a particularly conspicuous ‘imperial geopolitical vision’ (Browning and Joenniemi 2008: 521) after it absorbed ten new member states in 2004, a vision that is clearly reflected in the Neighbourhood Policy (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005). This is certainly no coincidence: the massive expansion of EU territory and the integration of ten countries previously situated at the periphery prompted a change in the way the EU perceived itself and its place in the world. Pointing to the expanded territory and the massively increased number of people living within the EU, official documents from this period constantly underline the new role and responsibilities of the enlarged European Union, including the provision of security and welfare to its citizens (European Commission 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; 2005). As stability in the wider neighbourhood was considered essential to achieve this aim, a pronounced imperial logic came to shape the EU's policies towards the new and old peripheries. In fact, the European Neighbourhood Policy gave rise to a reconfiguration of spatiality in the EU's bordering practices, often described as a neocolonial mechanism by which the European core constructs, orders, and subjugates its periphery (Zaiotti 2007; Jones and Clark 2008; Bialasiewicz et al. 2009; van Houtum and Boedeltje 2011; Bialasiewicz 2012).

Of course, the empire analogy has its limits. Unlike empires throughout history, the EU does not have an army; it does not invade bordering regions or states. EU expansion to include new members, as well as selective rule transfer and differentiated integration of the countries bordering the European bloc, all occur by agreement. Moreover, the EU displays some peculiar features of our times, including multilevel governance and an even higher mobility of capital and labour than was the case in previous empires. Its internal workings and decision-making process also differ from traditional empires, with the constitutive units, the member states, acting more autonomously than the empire analogy allows for. However, in spite of these differences, and as Jan Zielonka (2013: 36) has put it, the EU has all the features of empires and it does what all historical empires have always done.

Europe and Its Southern Borderlands: Rules, Practices, and the Logic of Empire

What is the underlying logic that guides European policies towards Europe's southern periphery and what role do norms and rules play? And how can we think about the impact of European policies on the states in its southern vicinity? As the EU has been trying to spread its rules and governance patterns beyond its borders (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2009), it has indeed been acting in a 'normative' way—at least in a certain sense. However, the rules that the EU has sought to export to neighbouring countries have usually not been tantamount to the norms postulated by the 'normative power Europe' concept. As anyone familiar with EU trade agreements with MENA states and their subsequent implementation can attest, the normative content of European policies consists primarily of a plethora of administrative and trade-related rules and standards, procedures, and practices. These include a broad but rather unexciting collection of food safety certificates, veterinary standards, testing procedures for pharmaceuticals, financial control mechanisms, governance rules, and border control practices, to name but a few. We are thus referring to *rules and practices*, with European policies aiming at the regulatory convergence of third states with the EU's Internal Market.

In this context, a focus on practices helps greatly to articulate the reality of Europe's policy towards and relations with neighbouring states. Defined as repeated and performative processes that embody, express, and reify specific background knowledge on the material world (Adler and Pouliot 2011: 6–7), practices are the summary of the way *things are actually done*. They consist of the performance of specific actions, which express a meaning on which the parties have agreed beforehand. European policies clearly aim at spreading the *EU way of doing things* to neighbouring states, at least as far as economics, borders, and migration are concerned. Perhaps unsurprisingly, notwithstanding the customary EU rhetoric about 'partnership' and 'co-ownership', third states must 'converge' with European rules and practices (and not the other way around). In this vein, the European Commission praises third states for their efforts 'to move towards EU transport standards' (European Commission 2013a: 13) or to 'integrate' into the European Research Area (European Commission 2013b: 15).

Hence, European policies towards the neighbourhood—Europe's periphery—do not have the primary aim of spreading democracy, liberty, and human rights. Were this to be the case, Europe would have shown far

greater resolve in pressuring third states to respect such norms. Rather, the main objective of the export of rules and practices is to ensure stability in the neighbourhood, security (Europe's), and the creation of a favourable business environment. Of course, European attempts to promote economic best practice and the rule of law in neighbouring states are not bad ideas in principle; indeed, they may be of mutual benefit. But we must be careful not to conflate the spread of best practice in the economic and public sectors with the promotion of democracy or democratic governance tout court, as some studies seem to imply (Lavenex and Schimmelfennig 2011).

At this point, we may raise the question of why Europe acts in the ways that it does towards its neighbourhood. The simple answer to this question is that *Europe does what it does because it is what it is*. Indeed, rethinking the EU and its member states as a (normative) empire allows us to consider the EU's modus operandi and its policies towards neighbouring countries as the logical consequence of the nature of the European Union itself. In other words, Europe seeks to export selected rules and practices beyond the border because it is an empire of sorts and because this is how empires behave in the pursuit of their interests. For the EU and its member states, rule transfer to neighbouring countries is a cost-efficient way of pursuing these interests, namely stability in the borderlands, security, and economic benefits. Furthermore, exporting the European way of doing things actually contributes to the reproduction of Europe's self-understanding as a normative and quasi-benevolent actor in world politics. Thus, transferring rules and practices to the borderlands is a means to an end; it is a utility-maximizing strategy wrapped in a norm-based discourse.

The specificities of European policies vis-à-vis the states at Europe's borders have obviously had an impact on the latter, even if this impact does not usually make it into media headlines. Yet, as discussed further later on, MENA states have been integrated into very specific aspects of the EU's Internal Market in an asymmetrical and selective manner and have adopted a specific economic model as a result. Based on liberalization and privatization, this development has only benefited a few people in the MENA region, however. Combined with the specific policy choices of MENA governments, European policies may thus have contributed to rising socio-economic inequalities and societal polarization. And as European policies have relied on the elites in the Mediterranean Middle East, these policies may have played a part in strengthening the authoritarian regimes in Europe's borderlands (unless or until they are overthrown by popular revolts). This has become ever more the case as MENA governments have received extensive funding and sophisticated

technology from Europe in return for their cooperation in counterterrorism activities and border controls, as elaborated more fully later on. A borderlands perspective on Europe–Middle East relations, in which we rethink Europe as a sort of empire, helps us understand this ambiguous outcome of European policies.

Interests, Power, and Interdependence

A final theoretical consideration related to a borderlands perspective on Europe–Middle East relations revolves around the issues of interests, power, and interdependence. As argued elsewhere (Del Sarto 2016), a borderlands perspective shows that international actors may pursue their interests by adopting utility-maximizing strategies, which are, however, compatible with rule-based behaviour and rhetoric. As Zielonka (2006) has stressed, power and coercion are often based on rules and norms, with interest-based motivations never being far from the surface. Within European policy towards its near abroad, it is clear that interests and norm-based behaviour interlock and reinforce one other.

A depiction of Europe's relations with the Mediterranean Middle East as interactions between a normative empire and its borderlands thus allows us to move beyond the almost endless discussions in International Relations scholarship on whether interests or norms (and identities) are predominant in defining world politics. Although perhaps less vigorous today, the debate is still relevant between 'rationalists', who maintain that predefined and 'objective' interests define state behaviour, and constructivists, who highlight the role of norms and identities in defining these interests (Fearon and Wendt 2002; Jackson and Nexon 2013: 555 ff.).¹⁹ The conceptualization advanced here sustains the argument that, contrary to what is commonly claimed, it is possible to bridge the divide between rationalists and constructivists, as proposed by a few scholars (Hynek and Teti 2010; Bennett 2013: 463). In this sense, the borderlands perspective espouses a synthesis of rationalism and constructivism, thus adopting what could be termed a 'realist–constructivist' approach.

A second set of questions that a borderlands perspective on Europe–Middle East relations allows us to raise has to do with power relations and interdependence. The selective integration of the MENA region into the European

¹⁹ This debate has produced an extensive body of research, not all of which can be cited here.

order—the result of the empire’s *modus operandi*—has undoubtedly brought about a growing interdependence between Europe and its southern borderlands. Yet perhaps surprisingly, the literature on Europe–Middle East relations does not usually pay much attention to the existence of asymmetrical power relations between Europe and its southern periphery and the implications of this asymmetry. In general, studies of Europe–MENA relations typically refrain from engaging with broader theoretical considerations of power and interdependence in International Relations, questions which are nonetheless central to the theory and practice of world affairs (see for example Keohane 2002; Barnett and Duvall 2005; Lukes 2005; Millennium 2005; Keohane and Nye 2011; Baldwin 2016).

But what can be said about the type of power relations between the two regions? Most MENA states are dependent on European trade and aid. Given that these countries lack any significant economic integration among themselves, and since they usually do not cooperate in their relations with Europe, they face the materially far more powerful European Union alone. The hub-and-spoke pattern created by European policies, emblematic of imperial core-periphery relations, thus translates into a clear power asymmetry between Europe and the MENA region at large that works in Europe’s favour. This is even more the case in light of two additional key features of core-periphery relations that mark the interaction between Europe and its ‘near abroad’: the specialization around different types of products—industrial production versus resources and agriculture—and a clear division of labour. Thus, theoretically, Europe should be able to impose its preferences on the governments and societies of the Middle East. However, in the context of complex interdependence (Keohane and Nye 2011), power relations between Europe and its borderlands are far more ambiguous. In fact, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate, some MENA states have considerable leverage over the Europeans on specific issue areas such as migration—leverage that, in recent years, has even increased. Europe’s weaker bargaining position is thus a direct outcome of the growing interlinkages between the two sides, together with Europe’s co-optation of MENA governments in the management of the borderlands. In other words, while the growing interdependence between the two sides differs across different issue areas, being asymmetrically less dependent than the respective other side is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for exercising influence over weaker partners. Thus, analysing relations between Europe and MENA through a borderlands lens allows us to qualify the idea of unidirectional power relations and necessarily asymmetrical power distribution in north–south relations. Certainly, the notion of EU

power per se needs to be qualified, given the EU's limited ability to influence events in the neighbourhood at large. However, a borderlands approach points to the need to distinguish between the EU's structural power in shaping preferences and expectations on a multilateral basis and the existence of asymmetric power relations that vary from one policy area to another.

Finally, while a borderlands approach to Europe–Middle East relations necessarily focuses on the structurally more powerful European side as a starting point, it allows for a critical perspective on what happens in the borderlands. The main reason is that borderland areas are hybrid by definition, marked by a renegotiated and often locally adapted imperial order at the fringes (Gravier 2020). Imperial accommodation with its borderlands is 'continuous implicit negotiation, not a done deal' (Marks 2012: 6). Rethinking Europe as a (normative) empire thus allows us to shed light on these often tacitly negotiated outcomes of EU rule transfer, including the grey areas in which EU rules and practices are rejected or modified by MENA states (often with European acquiescence). Hence, while a borderlands approach to the study of Europe–Middle East relations may seem somewhat Eurocentric at first glance, in reality it allows us to assign agency to MENA states, thus departing from a Eurocentric logic in which neighbouring states always receive passively whatever Europe proposes and does. Although an increasing number of studies are paying attention to this dimension (for example Joffé 2008; Del Sarto 2010; Cassarino 2010; 2014; Bahçecik 2014; El Qadim 2014; Nicolaïdis 2015; Tholens 2017a; Karadağ 2019; Del Sarto and Tholens 2020), the actions and reactions of MENA states have been ignored far too often and for far too long in the European studies literature.

* * *

To sum up, a focus on borders and borderlands is of crucial importance if we are to understand the complexities of Europe's relations with the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa. Such a focus captures the multiplicity and overlap of very different types of functional and legal borders within Europe itself, together with the 'fuzziness' and growing dislocation of its external borders. Equally, it prompts us to think of Europe's relations with the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa as the interaction between a normative empire and its southern borderlands. From this perspective, Europe's 'normative' action of transferring its rules, practices, and disaggregated borders southwards is a cost-efficient means to stabilize the periphery and draw economic benefits from it. The logic of empire is reinforced by Europe's traditionally normative discourse that is reminiscent of its civilizing

mission, and which serves the construction of a normative identity for the EU. Second, a focus on Europe's borders and the type of interaction with its periphery sheds light on European interests and structurally unequal power relations, two crucial aspects that EU studies generally tend to gloss over. And while a borderlands perspective lends itself to investigate the impact of European policies on the southern 'neighbourhood' from a core-periphery perspective, it also allows us to focus on the agency of MENA states in their interdependent relationship with Europe through this lens, including the role played by co-opted political and economic elites in these states.

The next chapter will consider the historical background and the development of Europe's relations with the Mediterranean Middle East, tracing Europe's quasi-imperial approach to its borderlands to the beginning of the European integration process.

3

From European Colonial Enterprise to 'Normative Empire Europe'

As we have seen, Europe has had a long history of addressing its southern neighbours as a sort of subservient hinterland. But at what point and under which conditions did its policies develop into those of a 'normative empire', whose aim is to export large parts of the European order beyond its borders and link the periphery to the core under unequal power relations? The imperial origins of the European bloc may be traced back to the beginning of the European integration process in the 1950s, when an imperial logic began to be gradually transferred from the original policies of the constituent states to the external relations of the common European enterprise. This chapter will not only show that the attitude of the European Community (EC)¹ and later on the European Union (EU) vis-à-vis its neighbours has taken on an increasingly imperial bent in recent decades, it will also demonstrate how a distinct 'process of Europeanization' has taken shape within the same imperial foreign policy behaviour.

The Colonial Past: Europe and its Southern Borderlands

The concept of borderlands is a useful tool in excavating Europe's past and present relations with North Africa and the Mediterranean Middle East (MENA). We may begin our survey with a brief reminder of Europe's colonial appetite, the consequences of this appetite for the Middle East, and its relevance for the beginning of the European integration process. As noted in the previous chapter, the European powers played an instrumental role in the political formation of many states in the Middle East and North Africa, in many cases defining their international borders. But colonial rule was also

¹ For the sake of simplicity, the term 'European Community' (or EC), will be used when referring to the predecessor of the European Union.

responsible for the export of European ideas and practices, such as nationalism, to the region. Concurrently, it led to the expansion of European trade and financial control in local economies—most often to the benefit of Europe. Moreover, European rule over the MENA region unleashed local processes of profound socio-economic restructuring. As European colonial rule exploited the labour force and natural resources of the MENA region, forging imperial trade relations in the process, millions of Europeans moved to settle in the colonies. Indeed, by the late 1930s, as Albert Hourani (2002: 323) notes, the cities of Algiers and Oran had European majorities. Europeans also constituted half the population of Tunis and nearly half of Casablanca's. The Cyrenaica, the eastern part of Libya, was home to 110,000 Italians. At the other end of the Mediterranean, immigrants from predominantly European countries had settled in Palestine from the late nineteenth century onwards, laying the foundations for what would later become the State of Israel in the British Mandate of Palestine.

After the end of the First World War, many colonies were transformed into 'mandates', a new form of colonial state granted to the victorious powers under the auspices of the League of Nations. The process of state-building in the Middle East and North Africa occurred under strictly imperial control (Rogan 2013). At the outbreak of the Second World War, the Mediterranean and the Middle East would become a theatre of battle. From June 1940 on, as Italy joined the war on the side of Nazi Germany, the European Axis powers and their opponents waged battles against one another in the Middle East and North Africa, whether over land or along the coast. Fighting took place over an extended region, including in French-controlled North Africa, Libya, and Egypt. A number of shorter campaigns took place in Syria and Iraq, with the Allies ultimately invading Vichy France-controlled North Africa in November 1942. The Middle East and North Africa also provided soldiers who fought on both sides of the war, a fact that is often forgotten in the chronicles of European history. This is particularly true of the Maghreb, where Moroccan, Algerian, and Tunisian soldiers participated in the European war efforts against the Vichy regime, while Charles de Gaulle's 'Free France' refused to grant independence to the French colonies once the war ended (Guazzone 2016: 41). Thus, by considering the entirety of European policies and interventions in the Middle East and North Africa throughout this period in history, it is clear that Europe viewed this area as its own backyard.

Imperial Beginnings: European Integration and the Borderlands

In the minds of many European citizens, policymakers, and experts of European politics, the beginning of the European integration process in the 1950s did not simply transcend the disastrous era of nationalism and two world wars on the European continent, it also marked a break with Europe's colonial past. However, this compelling narrative, termed Europe's 'virgin birth' by Kalypso Nicolaïdis (2015: 283), omits an important—and for enthusiasts of European integration, perhaps rather inconvenient—detail: from the outset the process of European integration had accommodated colonial designs on Africa and the Middle East (Hansen 2002). At the outset of the European project formally initiated in 1951 and until well after the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 that established the European (Economic) Community,² three of the six founding members were still colonial powers. With overseas 'possessions' in Africa, France and Belgium would remain colonial powers until the 1960s, and the Netherlands would govern colonies in the Caribbean well after that. Control of the Suez Canal was important enough to France (and Britain) to start a war against Egypt in 1956. Furthermore, Algeria remained an integral part of France when the founding members signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Contrary to conventional cartography of the area formed by the six founding members of the European Community, therefore, the bulk of EC territory did not lie in Europe, but on the African continent until Algeria obtained independence in 1962. Indeed, Algeria's territory at the time stood at more than double the combined metropolitan areas of the 'Inner Six'.³

Significantly, the objective of incorporating Africa and parts of the Middle East into Europe in territorial and economic terms was the cornerstone of the 'Eurafrica' project, an intellectual and political endeavour that was influential in Europe from the 1920s until the late 1950s (Hansen and Jonsson 2014a).

² In 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community was created and with the Treaty of Rome of 1957 the same six founding members—Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg—would establish the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). In 1965 the three communities merged into the European Communities (EC)—often referred to as the European Community (EC).

³ The territory of Algeria extends over 2,381,741 km². The combined territory of the six EC founding members—France (with a metropolitan area of 543,940 km²), Italy (301,340 km²), West Germany (248,577 km²), the Netherlands (41,543 km²), Belgium (30,688 km²), and Luxembourg (2,586 km²)—totalled 1,168,676 km², less than half of Algeria's territory.

During this period, many European elites considered the exploitation of the resources of the African continent to be essential for Europe's own survival and for ensuring its place in history. Although largely forgotten today, the 'Eurafrica' project formed an integral building block in the European integration enterprise. The European integration process, in other words, served to revive the colonial project (Hansen and Jonsson, 2014b).

The beginning of European integration was thus intrinsically linked to the desire of the founding members to 'manage collectively a colonial world that was escaping its Member States individually and above all the African continent—sharing sovereignty to share colonies', as Nora Fisher Onar and Kalypso Nicolaidis (2013: 293) have put it. In the negotiations leading up to the signing of the 1957 Treaty of Rome, France was adamant that the preferential treatment of its colonies and overseas territories be incorporated in the nascent European Community. In the same year, Brussels issued a joint declaration of intent to contribute to the social and economic development of Morocco and Tunisia, two countries that had gained independence from French colonial rule in the previous year (Grilli 1993: 183). A similar declaration of intent addressed Libya, the former Italian colony. Overall, Rome's contribution to the emerging common European policies towards the former colonies consisted mainly in seeking to block agreements so as to defend Italian citrus fruit producers (Bicchi 2007: 61). By contrast, France's colonial history of vertically organizing agricultural markets in North Africa to the advantage of the centre played an important role in the negotiations among the six founding members on the bloc's emerging agricultural policy that would ultimately influence the outcome (Davis 2017; Fernández-Molina 2018).

The logic behind France's insistence on the preferential treatment of its former colonies and overseas territories was that the common European project was to share the burden—mainly in the form of aid—of French colonial possessions while Paris would enjoy the economic benefits. Moreover, it would ensure continued European influence overseas. From the outset, this reasoning influenced Brussels' trade policies towards North Africa and the Middle East. To a lesser extent, it also played a role in determining the European bloc's strategy towards states in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (in EU jargon, the so-called ACP countries), countries to which Brussels granted substantive trade preferences (Grilli 1993). European (colonial) control beyond the European continent, and more specifically in the south, was thus an integral part of the DNA of the European integration project from the outset, with many external borders of the European

Community lying *outside* the European continent in the early years of the founding of Europe. From this initial point, common European policies towards the southern neighbours would further develop their imperial character. These would include European attempts to link the periphery to the core and to export those parts of the European order that were beneficial for Europe's economic and security interests.

The 'Europeanization' of (Post)colonial Policies

The European Community, and subsequently the European Union, began developing a so-called Mediterranean policy towards neighbouring countries in the south from the early 1970s onwards (Tovias 1977; Grilli 1993; Lister 1997; Del Sarto 2006: ch 3; Bicchi 2007). It is important to remember that at that time the 'Mediterranean countries' to be addressed by EC policies also included Greece, Spain, and (while not strictly a Mediterranean country) Portugal. These states would only join the European bloc in the 1980s. Interestingly, the course of action adopted by the European bloc can be read as a gradual process by which the colonial and postcolonial policies of single member states vis-à-vis their southern neighbours became a common European project, or 'Europeanized'. At this point, it is worth discussing the ways in which the imperial traits of these policies took shape and strengthened over time, and the conditions that shaped this process.

During much of the first decade of the EC's existence, Europe's imperial desires remained confined to the positions and preferences of the individual founding members, then the sole drivers of the European integration process (the European Commission and the European Court of Justice would claim only a role for themselves over time). In this early period of European integration, the member states sought to define the direction of what was then an embryonic EC trade policy through the use of a common external customs tariff. As a consequence, the bloc's external relations were subordinated to the preferences of individual member states. In particular, Paris was interested in keeping its former colonies linked to France, thereby ensuring the continuation of French influence. At the same time, the EC's common trade policies also aimed at protecting the European bloc's heavily subsidized agricultural market from competition from non-EC members. Introduced in 1962 following the experience of serious food shortages during and immediately after the Second World War, the EC's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) gradually created an internal and heavily subsidized market for

agriculture, with preferences given to EC member states.⁴ Against the backdrop of decolonization in North Africa—Algeria had gained independence from France in the same year as the introduction of the CAP—the initial agreements underpinning the bloc’s agricultural policy witnessed a shift towards the ‘Europeanization’ of former colonial ties vis-à-vis a ‘the Mediterranean’. In the words of Muriam Haleh Davis (2017: 75), the ‘Mediterranean emerged as a framework where formerly imperial links were reshaped into a different kind of European hinterland’, with European policies witnessing an ‘eventual shift from colonial preferences to a European “Mediterranean” policy’.

However, in the context of evolving Cold War dynamics, European concerns with stability in ‘the Mediterranean’ became increasingly important. As a consequence of these partly contradictory principles underwriting the EC’s relations with its southern near abroad, the European bloc entered into limited association agreements with Tunisia and Morocco, two countries that had remained heavily dependent on trade with their former colonial power, France. Israel and Lebanon entered into non-preferential trade relations with the European bloc. Concurrently, Brussels offered Greece and Turkey, two countries then constituting NATO’s ‘southern flank’, the prospect of full EC membership at an unspecified future date. These two countries signed unlimited association agreements with the EC in 1961 and 1963 respectively. With European countries in dire need of cheap labour, the accords signed with Athens and Ankara also included the free mobility of workers, if only for a limited period of time.⁵ In the context of the Cold War then, stabilizing these two countries and linking them to the European core formed a key objective of EC policies. The ‘pyramid of trade preferences’ that emerged in the 1970s thus saw Greece and Turkey at the top, followed by Morocco and Tunisia, with Cyprus, Malta, Spain, Israel, Egypt, and Lebanon at the bottom (Tovias 1977; Pomfret 1986; Grilli 1993: 182).⁶ Naturally, these trade concessions were not of enormous relevance for the ‘Mediterranean countries’ themselves, given that most of these states depended heavily on agricultural exports, upon which the

⁴ The Common Agricultural Policy can also be explained in terms of a deal between Germany and France: German industrial products gained access to the French market while in return Germany committed itself to financially support the French agricultural sector.

⁵ From the early 1960s until the end of the 1970s, five of the six EC founding members (with the sole exception of Italy) grew increasingly dependent on migrant labour, with Germany, France, and the Netherlands drawing the bulk of their migrant labour force from the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa by the late 1970s (Yannopoulos 1976: 116–122). In that period, labour migration was considered a purely economic issue and not a potential security one, as would be the case in subsequent decades.

⁶ While the four countries at the top of the pyramid obtained unlimited market access for industrial goods, the remaining six were only granted some tariff reductions on industrial goods of between 50 and 70 per cent (Pomfret 1986).

EC continued to impose high tariffs and import quotas. Furthermore, trade in industrial goods had to follow European rules of origin, implying, for instance, a preferential treatment of goods produced using raw materials originating in EC territory (Bicchi 2007: 58; Shlaim 1976: 90). Altogether, an uneasy mix of the economic interests and security concerns of the EC's six founding members defined the initial period of the bloc's so-called Mediterranean policy, with echoes of colonialism resounding in its relations with the southern borderlands.

A second feature marking the 'Europeanization' process of the postcolonial (but essentially still colonial) policies of single member states was the European polity's conspicuous concern with the stability of the southern periphery. As the author has argued elsewhere, European security concerns, coupled with attempts to maintain European influence in the area and to protect the economic interests of the EC member states, would drive the major policy initiatives of the EC and its successor, the European Union (Del Sarto 2006: 55–61). This is certainly true of the European bloc's first attempts to formulate a coherent policy towards 'the Mediterranean' of the early 1970s, termed, with remarkable self-confidence, the 'Global Mediterranean Policy'. European security concerns were also a major driving force behind the 1995 launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), also known as the Barcelona Process, to date the most important and comprehensive European policy initiative towards the 'southern Mediterranean'.

Security concerns would gain in importance throughout the decades indeed, with a number of events in the Middle East seriously preoccupying European decision makers. These included the Arab-Israeli wars in the late 1960s and 1970s, OPEC's use of the oil weapon after the October/Yom Kippur war of 1973, the growing incidence of Arab-Palestinian terrorism affecting Europe,⁷ coups and civil wars in the region, and the 1991 Islamist electoral victory in Algeria raising the spectre of Islamist terrorism on European soil. Accordingly, Brussels would not cease to stress the importance of stability and prosperity in 'the Mediterranean', viewed as essential for the security of the European bloc itself (for example European Council 1973; European Commission 1990).

Third, from the outset, the Europeans considered the economic development of the southern periphery as the key to achieving stability in the region.

⁷ From 1968 onwards, the number of violent incidents on EC territory linked to the Arab-Israeli conflict increased sharply. Attacks included the 1968 hijacking of an Israeli airline El Al passenger plane from Rome; the hijacking of aircraft by a Palestinian faction during the 1970 'Black September' war between Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in which European and US citizens were held hostage; and the terrorist attack on the Israeli team during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, perpetrated by a Palestinian organization.

Here, as before, an imperial logic prevailed and would grow steadily stronger. From the outset, the economic development of ‘the south’ was never a matter of pure altruism: the members of the European bloc were poised to benefit from improved economic conditions in North Africa and the Middle East, chiefly through better access to markets for their own manufactured goods. In addition to trade concessions, the EC would over time also grant financial and technical aid to these states, in addition to initiating cooperation in other areas (Lister 1997: 84 ff.). But while the financial aid granted to the MENA states continued to prove meagre by comparison to the aid Europe granted other regions—a fact repeatedly and critically highlighted by the European Commission and the European Parliament themselves (Schumacher 2005: 98)—the southern neighbours continued to be excluded from fair trade in those agricultural products that were covered by the Common Agricultural Policy. In that period, import restrictions also continued to apply to textile and clothing, sectors in which particularly Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt had a significant comparative advantage vis-à-vis European manufacturers (Grilli 1993: 198).

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), or Barcelona Process, also embraced the objective of contributing to the economic development of ‘the south’. However, it would adopt a different approach to achieve this goal. Launched with much fanfare in 1995, this policy initiative proposed a far more comprehensive kind of free trade agreement covering industrial goods. In addition, it aimed at the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade *area*, thus seeking to boost the volume of south–south trade that had remained (and continues to be) relatively restricted. Modelled after the three-basket structure of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) during the Cold War, a further innovation of the Barcelona Process was the creation of permanent structures for political dialogue and cultural cooperation on a regional basis. More importantly, however, Europe had by this point effected a shift to a neoliberal model of development. Until then, the Europeans had shown some flexibility in granting preferential access to their markets for a limited range of industrial and agricultural products from the borderlands, thus allowing developing countries in the southern periphery to protect some of their industries on the basis of their lower level of economic development (Salamé 1998: 35). The Barcelona Process put an end to this practice, with the new ‘free trade agreements’⁸ on offer stipulating the gradual dismantling of all

⁸ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Stiglitz (2018: 20) has highlighted that free trade agreements are not actually about free trade, but about specific conditions for which trade is liberalized in specific areas and for specific products (but not others).

tariffs on industrial goods. Equally, economic restructuring and reforms in MENA states, largely in accordance with the neoliberal Washington Consensus,⁹ became a requirement of the EU's engagement with its southern neighbours. This also meant that the southern periphery would now have to agree to and implement a set of rules and practices pertaining to economic governance prescribed by the Europeans that aimed at liberalization, the privatization of state-owned industries, and a gradual withdrawal of the state from socio-economic affairs.¹⁰

While it is thus possible to detect a (post)colonial logic informing European policy towards its southern borderlands from the early days of the European integration process onwards, different regional and international conditions influenced relations between the European core and its southern periphery. Equally, events in the Middle East and North Africa would come to determine the feasibility of different European policy initiatives over the decades. This is unsurprising, of course, given that European policies are not implemented in a political vacuum. As much as the Cold War had induced the EC to treat preferentially NATO members Greece and Turkey, the period of détente in the confrontation between the superpowers in the 1970s prompted Brussels to search for a more systematic and comprehensive way of engaging the southern periphery.¹¹ But this was also the period in which many states in the Middle East and North Africa—chiefly, the Arab republics—had continued to assertively uphold economic policies aimed at ending their dependence on the former colonial powers and 'the West' in general, promoting in its stead a self-reliant and state-driven model of economic development and modernization. This developmental strategy included the nationalization of private assets, resources, and companies (often owned by former colonial powers), as well as state-led import substitution policies that stood in stark contrast to the export-led economic development model promoted by the EC.

⁹ The Washington Consensus consists of a set of prescriptions for economic reforms promoted in the late 1980s by Washington-based institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the US Department of Treasury, believed to be necessary for the recovery of developing countries from economic and financial crises. These prescriptions include fiscal discipline, the reduction of state subsidies, tax reform, competitive exchange rates, market-determined interest rates, the liberalization of trade and foreign direct investments, the privatization of state enterprises, legal security for property rights, and deregulation, that is, the abolition of regulations that hinder market entry or restrict competition.

¹⁰ However, as Diana Hunt (1999) explains, a notable difference between the Barcelona Process and the neoliberal underpinnings of the Washington Consensus was the exclusion of the agricultural sector from free trade. A further inconsistency regards the bilateral nature of the trade agreements concluded between the EU and single MENA states.

¹¹ The looming Tokyo round of international trade negotiations conducted under the auspices of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the predecessor of the World Trade Organization, WTO) in the 1970s was an additional factor shaping EC policies, given that most preferential trade agreements signed with Mediterranean states hitherto were not compatible with GATT rules.

Equally important, the Middle East was hardly a quiet or a peaceful region in the late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. A series of military coups, two major Arab–Israeli wars, persistent rivalries among Arab states, the 1974 Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus, the Lebanese civil war starting in 1975, and a massive military build-up marked regional developments in that period. The United States had also increased its involvement in the Middle East from the late 1960s onwards, as had the Soviet Union, prompting the Europeans to initially adopt a low profile. But with the arrival of Henry Kissinger in the US State Department in 1973 during Richard Nixon’s presidency, friction between Washington and Brussels on Middle East policies began to emerge. While US policies shifted towards a privileged partnership with Israel (Quandt 2005), unfolding events in the Middle East had a far greater impact on the Europeans than on the US. For instance, the dramatic rise of the price of oil following the 1973 Arab–Israeli war affected Europe on a massive scale, prompting oil rationing and the introduction of ‘car-free Sundays’ in several European countries. The oil shock reminded Europe of its pathological dependence on fossil fuel-derived energy imports from its Middle Eastern periphery—in Italy, for instance, oil from Arab countries amounted to 87 per cent of its total energy consumption at that time; for France this figure was 65 per cent (Bicchi 2007: 77). Neither did the aforementioned Arab–Palestinian terrorist attacks perpetrated in Europe nor the Soviet Union’s naval presence in the Mediterranean against the backdrop of the Cold War provide much reassurance to the Europeans. European policies towards the Middle East and North Africa thus attempted to navigate a diverse range of interests and constraints, including the desire to avoid antagonizing the Arab states. However, Europe’s ambitions to tie the countries in the region to the European bloc and increase its influence there—while also trying to prevent any major political and economic fallout from unfolding events in the region—remained the chief concern underpinning European policies.

The 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the general economic decline of most countries in the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa, the consequence of economic and financial mismanagement and the lack of modernization by MENA economies. The economic downturn was further spurred by declining oil prices on the world market, which would also affect the non-petroleum-producing states in the region (White 2001; Toviass 1996; 1997).¹² Continued population growth in many countries in the region and soaring

¹² Declining oil prices affected the non-oil-producing countries because oil-rich countries reduced their cash transfers to the former. The remittances of immigrants and expatriates living in oil-rich states to their poorer, non-oil-producing countries of origin decreased as well.

unemployment rates, especially among young people, increased the prospect of immigration to Europe. Structural adjustment programmes prescribed by the International Monetary Fund in this period, including measures such as the reduction of subsidies on basic foodstuffs and petrol in return for much-needed loans, led to popular protests in many states in the Middle East and North Africa, dubbed ‘bread riots’ (Sadiki 2000; Cammett et al. 2015: 273–318). These developments prompted policymakers in Brussels and other European capitals to rethink their engagement with the southern periphery. Equally, in the mid-1990s, dramatically altered global and regional conditions coupled with the dire economic situation in most MENA states played a major role in the EU’s decision to launch a new policy towards the region. The Cold War had ended, leading to a general and, in retrospect, decidedly naïve post-Cold War euphoria (Fukuyama 1989). In 1991 an international military coalition had forced Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait, a country Iraq had just invaded, and a peace process between Israel and the Palestinians had started in 1993. It was a period of high hope and regional designs—at least, as far as the Middle East was concerned.¹³ It was in this context that the European Union launched the EMP. With its declared aim of wanting to create a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area, and by establishing a regular dialogue on political and cultural matters on a regional basis, the Barcelona Process ostensibly adopted a region-building approach (Adler et al. 2006; Del Sarto 2006).

European security considerations and neocolonial ambitions, however, were never far from the surface. From the 1970s onwards, the EC’s attempts to develop a comprehensive Mediterranean policy went hand in hand with European ambitions to create a sphere of political influence by granting limited economic benefits to MENA countries (Pomfret 1968: 102). This would not change considerably following the end of the Cold War, with Europe continuing to remain concerned with the political developments in its southern periphery. Factors and events shaping the EU’s Euro-Mediterranean policy initiative included the victory of the Islamist party FIS (Front National du Salut) in the surprisingly free Algerian elections of December 1991, the outbreak of the civil war in that country after the Algerian army aborted the second round of elections, and Islamist terrorist activities on European soil. A general fear of unwanted immigration to Europe from an impoverished and inherently unstable region were equally important.

¹³ Among other events, in the 1990s the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the atrocious Balkan wars that followed clearly shattered these hopes and ideas on a global scale.

It is no coincidence that a number of southern European member states, led by France, had started a security dialogue with Maghreb countries as soon as the Cold War had ended.¹⁴ And for all the European talk of partnership, the EU demanded a series of economically and politically very costly structural reforms from the MENA states that had decided to sign up to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership initiative. In particular, these reforms entailed the loss of customs duty revenue, which accounted for a significant share of the total revenues of most developing countries in Europe's southern periphery (Hoekman 1999: 90). Equally, Europe's declared ambition of wanting to turn the 'Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity' (Barcelona Declaration 1995) stood in notable contrast to the terms of the trade agreements. Trade in agriculture, a key potential gain for MENA countries, continued to be largely excluded from free trade provisions, in spite of European commitments to liberalize trade in this sector as well (Hunt 1999; Schumacher 2004; Hoekman 2005; Tovias 2006).¹⁵

The changes occurring within the European bloc itself, however, were at least as important in influencing European policies towards its periphery as regional and international developments. As the bloc continued to expand, the incorporation of new members over the decades substantially affected European policies, with Britain opposing France's clientelist commercial ties with its former colonies in the Middle East and North Africa. The subsequent expansion of the EC to include countries that had hitherto been part of the Mediterranean periphery—Greece, Spain, and Portugal—was even more significant. In economic terms, the incorporation of Greece into the EC in 1981, and of Spain and Portugal in 1986, was at the clear expense of the states located at the southern shores of the Mediterranean. As the 'southern enlargement' increased the EC's self-sufficiency of typically Mediterranean agricultural products such as olive oil, citrus fruits, and fresh vegetables, Brussels reduced the import quotas of these products from the states in the Maghreb and Mashreq (Tovias 1988; Grilli 1993: 197–204). But it was the European Union's 'big bang' enlargement of 2004 that was to have the most significant impact on relations with the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa,

¹⁴ The so-called 5+5 dialogue launched in the early 1990s included France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Malta, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, and Mauritania.

¹⁵ With the EMP, the EU committed to gradually liberalize trade in agriculture, but during the first decade of the EMP, little was achieved in this area: in general, the EU extended existing preferential arrangements on a limited basis through the expansion of tariff quotas (Hoekman 2005: 5).

bringing to the fore a conspicuously imperial dimension in EU policies towards its southern periphery.

The Crystallization of European Imperial Ambitions

There is no doubt that by the early 2000s events in the Middle East—most notably, the collapse of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process and the eruption of violence with the second Palestinian Intifada—had altered political conditions to the extent that the EU’s attempt to develop a regional approach towards the area were rendered unworkable. By then, it had indeed become impossible to hold any regional meetings, let alone implement projects, in which both Israel and most Arab states would participate. While relations between the EU and Israel deteriorated considerably in this period due to repeated European criticism of Israeli human rights violations in the Palestinian Territories during the Intifada (Del Sarto 2019: 318), Turkey continued to be disinterested in the EMP, aiming instead at EU membership. Moreover, the EMP had had a negligible economic impact on the states in North Africa and the Mediterranean Middle East, with trade growth in the non-oil sector being lower in the post-1995 period than in the first half of the 1990s (Hoekman 2005: 12–13). For the Europeans, then, it seemed reasonable to look for an alternative means of engaging the states in the southern periphery.

However, it was an internal development—the EU enlargement of 2004—that precipitated a new European approach towards the MENA region. The accession of ten new members not only altered the geographical expanse of the European Union, massively increasing the EU’s territory and population. It was also to effect a drastic shift in Europe’s political posture and foreign policy behaviour. In anticipation of the imminent EU expansion that also absorbed two countries hitherto belonging to the ‘southern Mediterranean’ group of states, Cyprus and Malta, the EU developed the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2003–2004. This policy, originally intended to regulate relations with the new ‘neighbours’ in Eastern Europe that would find themselves at the European Union’s external borders after the 2004 enlargement, soon came to cover the EU’s ‘old’ neighbours in the south as well. Although the trade agreements previously signed in the framework of the Barcelona Process have remained the legal basis of EU-MENA relations, the ENP is to this day the European Union’s principal policy framework towards the wider neighbourhood. Offering a ‘stake’ in the EU’s Internal Market to the states in the

eastern and southern peripheries in exchange for reforms, the ENP espouses a bilateral and strictly differentiated kind of strategy. With regard to the southern periphery, the Neighbourhood Policy thus embodies a clear shift from Europe's regional 'Mediterranean policy' to the development of a bilateral set of relations with single MENA states, with the aim of linking these states to the EU through an advanced type of cooperation (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005). The states that have signed up to this policy may select the type of relations and the areas of cooperation they wish to develop with the EU. Whatever their preferences may be, however, the integration of these states into specific sectors of existing and evolving EU systems and laws requires them to adopt rules that are compatible with those prevailing in the EU in the relevant field of cooperation (for example European Commission 2012a: 5).

This new category of policy clearly reflected the changes in the ways in which Europe came to see itself and its place in the world following the 'big bang' enlargement of 2004. Pointing to the massively enlarged territory and the increased number of citizens living within the EU, official documents from this period constantly underline the new role and responsibilities of the enlarged European Union (European Commission 2004a; 2004b)—as if the EU was now *entitled* to play a greater role in world politics. A reformulated EU security strategy from the period defined Europe's foreign policy *interests* for the first time (Solana 2003), with ENP documents subsequently stressing the importance—for the EU—of having a zone of stability, security, and increasing prosperity on its borders (European Commission 2005). Europe did not conceal that its policies towards its near abroad were 'geared at providing security and welfare to EU citizens' (European Commission 2004c: 3). It has been observed that the EU had already adopted a core-periphery attitude towards the states that became members in 2004, particularly towards those situated in Eastern Europe (Zielonka 2001a; 2006). Consequently, an even more pronounced imperial vision came to shape the EU's policies towards the new and old neighbours in the southern and eastern periphery as well, with the ENP embodying Europe's buffering logic and neocolonial practices vis-à-vis the borderlands (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2004; Zaiotti 2007; Browning and Joenniemi 2008; Jones and Clark 2008; Bialasiewicz et al. 2009; van Houtum and Boedeltje 2011; Bialasiewicz 2012).

Certainly, the trade agreements signed between the EU and MENA states in the context of the Barcelona Process had already contained the EU's attempts to impose European norms on the southern 'partners', even if implicitly. In this vein, the underlying idea of these agreements, and of the EMP as

overarching framework, has been one of policy convergence—that is, MENA states agreeing to European rules and practices. But while a region-building logic initially still marked the EU’s political discourse, the ENP goes several steps further on the issue of ‘convergence’: the participation and integration of MENA states into selected aspects of the EU’s economic and legal systems is now contingent on these states playing by EU rules. At the same time, the principle of differentiation entails the establishment of a set of varied bilateral relations between the EU and MENA states, and thus of a hub-and-spoke system through which these states are linked to Europe. Hence, with implications for states that have no prospect of EU membership or, as in the case of Turkey, a qualified prospect, the process of exporting the European order beyond the border involves the connection of the periphery to the core in crucial areas such as trade, energy, and infrastructure. Furthermore, it involves the co-optation of MENA governments in the management of borders, security, and migration. Importantly, this process also entails the ‘untangling’ of the various political and legal functions fulfilled by borders.

* * *

In sum, the colonial past plays a significant role in Europe’s more recent relations with the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa. With colonialism being ‘silently inscribed in the genes of the European integration project since its origins’ (Pace and Roccu 2020: 2), European policies developed from the imperial policies of single European states during colonial times into the quasi-imperial policy of the common European bloc. The ENP marked the crystallization of Europe’s imperial logic vis-à-vis its southern (and eastern) borderlands, a development that is intrinsically linked to the remarkably altered nature and self-perception of the European Union and its member states after 2004. From that period onwards, the EU has been conspicuously relating to its southern periphery as a ‘normative empire’, promoting the adoption of European rules and practices by MENA states, and cementing conspicuous core-periphery patterns of interaction, a process that ultimately serves European economic and security interests.

The ways in which this process works in practice is the topic of the next chapter.

4

Exporting the European Order Beyond the Border

As we have seen, Europe has treated its southern neighbourhood as a subaltern hinterland for many years. However, in the two decades since the launch of the Barcelona Process in 1995, there has been an intensification of European efforts to integrate the states of the Mediterranean Middle East into selected parts of the European order, thereby expanding Europe's disaggregated borders further southwards. Of these, trade has certainly been the most important field of Europe–MENA relations. This is unsurprising given that the European Union has remained the largest commercial partner of all the states in the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa. However, these trade relations go well beyond the exchange of goods; they involve legal and institutional matters as well. Furthermore, trade has not been the sole area of cooperation that has witnessed Europe's attempts to impose its preferences on MENA states. European policies aiming at the 'Europeanisation beyond Europe' (Schimmelfennig 2012a) have also addressed border controls, security cooperation, migration management, energy, and multiple other sectors. Repeated attempts to make third countries adopt European rules and practices and to take on the management of the borderlands are central to Europe's efforts in disseminating 'the European way of doing things', usually to the advantage of the EU and its member states.

As this chapter will illustrate, the plethora of rules and practices which the EU seeks to export to neighbouring states ranges from financial control mechanisms and food safety procedures to border control practices, to name but a few. These have taken place alongside Europe's attempts to shift the border for unwanted people southwards and to co-opt MENA governments in the control of migratory flows to Europe. While our investigation will focus on trade relations on the one hand and border controls, security, and migration on the other, the chapter will start with a brief discussion of the general picture of recent EU–MENA relations.

The General Picture: a Differentiated Hub-and-Spoke Set of Relations

The trade accords signed by most states of the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa with the EU in the second half of the 1990s and the early 2000s remain the legal basis of Europe's relations with its southern periphery. Negotiated either shortly before or in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) launched in 1995, Tunisia and Israel signed a 'Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement' in 1995, followed by Morocco and Jordan in 1996 and 1997, respectively.¹ Equally, in 1997, the European Union concluded an interim trade agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), on behalf of the Palestinian Authority (PA), covering the Palestinian Territories that fall under the PA's limited self-rule within the broader area still occupied by Israel. 'Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements' have also been in place with Egypt since 2001 and with Algeria and Lebanon since 2002. The objective of these comprehensive and extremely detailed documents—erroneously called 'free trade agreements'²—is to gradually liberalize trade in industrial goods between the EU and the respective MENA state through the dismantling or reduction of external tariffs, typically over a maximum period of twelve years. Additional provisions of these agreements relate to the liberalization of trade in services, the movement of capital, competition rules, intellectual property rights, and public procurement.

The EU's Euro-Mediterranean trade agreements with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, the Palestinian Territories/PLO, Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon all entered into force between the late 1990s and the mid-2000s, usually between one and five years after they were signed.³ Within this period, or subsequently, the EU and MENA states also concluded a large number of additional protocols, covering, for instance, the exchange of specific goods or provisions to liberalize trade in agriculture and services (Del Sarto 2017a). Within the framework of these agreements, Europe has provided funding for a

¹ EU negotiations on free trade agreements with Morocco, Tunisia, and Israel had started years earlier and were already close to conclusion when the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was launched.

² As mentioned above, free trade agreements are not actually about free trade, but about the typically very selective liberalization of trade, usually to the benefit of special corporate interests in advanced economies.

³ The interim free trade agreement with the PLO entered into force in 1997. The agreement with Tunisia has been in force since 1998. The EU–Moroccan and EU–Israeli free trade agreements both came into force in 2000. Egypt's free trade agreement entered into force in 2004; the EU–Algerian agreement in 2005, and the EU's trade agreement with Lebanon in 2006 (Del Sarto 2017a). Some MENA states renegotiated the date by which they had to fully remove external tariffs on EU imports: in the case of Algeria, for example, this date was postponed to 2020.

large number of programmes and projects in MENA states, such as support for small- and medium-sized enterprises, competition policies, judicial reform, the fight against corruption, education, and many more. European monies also support the activities of civil society groups in many MENA states.

Two Arab states in Europe's southern periphery, Syria and Libya, do not have this type of contractual relationship with the EU. Syria negotiated for years on an Association Agreement, which both sides eventually signed in 2009, but the agreement never entered into force; a previous cooperation agreement, signed in 1977, continued to govern trade relations between the two sides, until Brussels suspended it in 2011. And Libya, under the rule of Muammar al-Qaddafi, was not interested in institutionalizing trade relations with Europe at all.

With regard to all other MENA states that had signed an Association Agreement, the EU's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership policy failed in one of its original objectives, that is, the creation of a *free trade area* between Europe and the MENA region, originally envisaged to be completed by 2010. For this to have taken place successfully, the MENA states would have had to have liberalized trade among themselves. This failure can be partly attributed to the relative disinterest of MENA governments in concluding interregional trade agreements, mainly because of the similar structure of their economies (and thus a lack of complementarity in the exchange of goods) or because of persistent rivalries and conflicts among them. The rather timid attempts that a number of MENA states made in this respect, most notably within the framework of the so-called Agadir free trade agreement, signed between Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia in 2004 and in force since 2007, were hailed as an important step in Brussels. Named after the Moroccan city of Agadir, where the process to facilitate economic integration among Arab states started in 2001, the overall results of this process have nonetheless fallen far short of original expectations. Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories joined this intra-MENA trade agreement only in 2016, following several years of inactivity by the original signatories.

However, the Europeans are also to blame for the failure to establish a proper liberalized trade area. In spite of repeated declarations supporting the growth of south-south trade, for many years the Europeans did not heed the demands of MENA states to allow for the diagonal cumulation of origin rules—a measure that is known to increase intraregional trade and improve the competitiveness of industrial products (Tovias 1997).⁴ While some

⁴ Rules of origin are the technical criteria which determine whether a specific product qualifies for duty-free or other preferential access under a given trade agreement. Cumulation of origin means that a

progress was made in 2005, a proper regional convention on the pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin was only adopted in 2011.⁵ For one reason or another, therefore, the EMP de facto created a hub-and-spoke system of trade relations, with the EU at its core.

Once it was launched in 2003–2004, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) would reinforce this tailor-made set of relations that Europe had created, and not entirely innocently at that. Encompassing states situated at the EU's eastern and southern borders, the ENP explicitly aimed to establish a bilateral and differentiated set of relations with these states.⁶ As has already been shown, this policy framework set out to deepen relations with the states in the immediate vicinity of the EU following its latest round of enlargement, up to the integration of these states into (aspects of) the EU's Internal Market. In addition to the interests of each side, the economic and institutional capacity of the participating states were important considerations here as well. Most MENA signatories of a trade agreement with the EU agreed to bilaterally negotiate and sign a so-called ENP Action, a document that defined the areas in which both sides wished to strengthen cooperation. Covering a wide array of topics beyond trade—such as political dialogue on good governance, the rule of law, and human rights, as well as migration and security—these documents are not legally binding. Rather, they represent a road map, a statement of intent setting the priorities for the development of bilateral relations as well as for the economic and political reforms that MENA states declared to undertake in the short and medium term. As noted elsewhere, the wording of these documents is usually rather vague, allowing for quite different interpretations of what both sides actually agreed on (Del Sarto 2007; Del Sarto and Schumacher 2011). At the same time, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership changed its name to 'The Union for the Mediterranean: Barcelona Process' in 2008 and added a number of non-EU members.⁷ To

product originating in one country can be processed or added to a product of a second country and still be considered an 'originating product' of that second country for the purpose of a particular trade agreement. A diagonal cumulation of origin rules allows for the cumulation between two or more countries. EU-MENA Association Agreements originally allowed for the bilateral cumulation of origin rules only.

⁵ For the purpose of preferential treatment, the pan-Euro-Mediterranean cumulation of origin system allows for diagonal cumulation between the EU, EFTA States, Turkey, the Western Balkans, the Faroe Islands, and any countries that signed the Barcelona Declaration of 1995. The Regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin (PEM Convention) was adopted in 2011 (Council of the European Union 2010).

⁶ Originally, the ENP encompassed nine states in the Mediterranean Middle East (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Syria, and Tunisia) and six countries located to the east of the EU: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

⁷ The Union for the Mediterranean also includes Mauritania, Turkey, and Western Balkan countries. Croatia was an additional participant until it became a full EU member in July 2013.

this day, the Barcelona Process continues to provide the regional framework for relations between the EU and its southern periphery.

While many of the ENP Action Plans concluded in the mid- or late 2000s have been updated or replaced by 'Partnership Priorities' documents in recent years, the differentiation in the EU's trade and institutional relations with its southern neighbours has been proceeding further. For instance, the EU granted Morocco an 'advanced status' (*status avancé*) in 2008, 'reflecting the ambition to strengthen EU–Morocco cooperation and to further support economic and political reforms' (European Parliament 2019). Jordan obtained 'advanced status' in 2010. Following the 2011 revolution, Tunisia was awarded a 'privileged partnership', which also reflected increased European assistance in support of Tunisia's democratic transition. Indeed, between 2011 and 2017, European aid to Tunisia amounted to €1.6 billion in grants and €800 million in macro-financial assistance; for the period 2017–2020, the EU allocated between €500 and €600 million to assist Tunisia in strengthening the rule of law, stimulating sustainable economic growth, and improving social cohesion (European Commission 2019a).

Further examples of the differentiated set of relations are the participation of Morocco, Israel, and Jordan in the EU's Open Sky arrangement that has liberalized aviation between the signatories, thus also allowing low-cost airlines to enter the market. Similarly, Israel has been fully associated with the EU's framework programme for research and development since 1996, and Tunisia became the first Arab MENA country to gain associate member status in this important programme in 2016. While these countries contribute to the EU's research funds, they can apply for research funding on equal terms as research institutes in EU member states. The net balance of research funding is usually in favour of the associated countries while, at the same time, scientific exchanges and academic cooperation with Europe become institutionalized. Furthermore, some MENA states, but not all of them, have entered negotiations concerning the liberalization of trade in agriculture and services, while a number of MENA states have participated in the EU's cross-border programmes, which aim to facilitate cooperation across border regions. Under these programmes, the EU provides funding for the economic and social development in border areas and for tackling common challenges in the realm of the environment, public health, or security. Last but not least, and as will be discussed more fully later, cooperation on undocumented migration, euphemistically termed 'Mobility Partnerships', or attempts to conclude such agreements, have characterized the EU's relationship with Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon. Libya, which was integrated into the ENP after the end

of Qaddafi's rule in 2011, has also been a favourite target of Europe as the bloc attempts to address the control of unwanted migration to Europe.

When the European Union revised its policy towards 'the south' in the wake of the Arab uprisings (European Commission 2011a; 2011b), it proposed a new type of trade agreement with the states in its southern periphery, the so-called Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs). These agreements had first been negotiated and concluded with Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, countries in the EU's eastern periphery that have the prospect of joining the EU, at least in the long run.⁸ As many observers have noted, the EU's revision of its policies towards the south in the wake of the Arab uprisings was much more rhetorical than substantial (Cassarino and Tocci 2011; Teti 2012; Teti et al. 2012; Bicchi 2014; Del Sarto 2016). As regards trade relations specifically, the DCFTAs was the logical continuation of the EU's *modus operandi*. These agreements thus promised even deeper integration of the respective state in the EU's Internal Market, but the conclusion of such agreements has been conditional on third states' approximation of their laws, standards, and regulations with EU law. Approximation means here that, unlike EU members, third states are not obliged to adopt the EU's rules and legislation to the letter. There is some room for interpretation and space of manoeuvre. However, these states are nevertheless compelled to modify their national legislation in a way that it is compatible with EU rules and standards.

In the complexity of their trade and institutional relationships with the EU, Israel and Turkey stand out among the original signatories of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Israel developed a relatively advanced set of economic and institutional relations with the EU, due to its fully functioning market economy and democratic structures. While Israel—a member of the OECD—is not eligible for European development aid, among all the MENA states it was in the best position to take advantage of the EU's new offer of 'a stake' in the EU's Internal Market under the ENP (Del Sarto 2007; Pardo 2008). Of the southern participants in the ENP, Israel has also dismantled more external tariffs in its trading with Europe than any other country in the MENA region. As discussed elsewhere, bilateral trade relations have constantly improved, and a large number of additional trade-related agreements have been signed over the last decades (Del Sarto 2014; 2019).

Turkey's trade and institutional relations with the EU are even more convoluted. The association between Turkey and the EC established by the

⁸ The DCFTA agreement with Armenia did not enter into force, however, because under Russian pressure Armenia decided to join the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

1963 Ankara Agreement, which entered into force in 1964, was complemented by the creation of a customs union with a common external tariff. In force since 1995, this customs union covers all industrial goods, but does not address trade in services, public procurement, or trade in agricultural products (the exception being processed agricultural products). While the Ankara Agreement acknowledged the country's eligibility for full membership in the European bloc at some future date, Turkey officially applied for membership in 1987, with Brussels formally accepting Ankara's request only more than a decade later, in 1999. Accession negotiations formally started in October 2005. Aimed at fully integrating Turkey into the EU's Internal Market, which would require Turkey to adopt the European Union's entire body of law, the *acquis communautaire*, these negotiations covered all thirty-five chapters of the *acquis*.⁹ Inter alia, these chapters include the establishment of the free movement of all goods, services, and capital; the right of establishment for companies; intellectual property rights; financial services; competition policy; and taxation. As with all candidate countries for EU membership, Turkey also received extensive European funding and training to adapt a considerable portion of its national legislation to EU law.¹⁰ However, accession negotiations proceeded slowly and stalled repeatedly, one of the reasons being Ankara's refusal to apply an additional trade protocol to Cyprus. The Turkish government's crackdown on demonstrators in Ankara's Taksim Square and other locations throughout the country in 2013 (the Gezi Park protests) and Europe's criticism of Turkish police brutality put an additional strain on the negotiation process. The EU–Turkey refugee deal, whose conclusion in early 2016 saw the EU promise accelerated accession negotiations and visa-free travel for Turkish citizens in return for Ankara halting the flow of predominantly Syrian refugees into Europe, did not bring these negotiations back to life. Pointing to Turkey's illiberal turn in recent years and serious human rights violations (European Commission 2019b), the EU eventually suspended accession talks in June 2018. Discussions on the upgrading of the customs union, which was seen as an interim step on the way to Turkey's full EU membership, were also brought to a halt.

In this context, it is noteworthy that, in 2015, against the backdrop of the civil wars, terrorism and chaos on its doorstep, and confronted with the influx of a large number of refugees from the Middle East that peaked in 2015, the

⁹ The *acquis communautaire* consists of 130,000 pages of legal documents grouped into thirty-five chapters.

¹⁰ The total allocation for the year 2018 amounted to €387 million (European Commission 2019b: 106).

European Union decided—once again—to ‘review’ the ENP (European Commission 2015a). The rhetoric of wanting to transform the southern (and eastern) neighbouring countries into liberal democracies was, perhaps unsurprisingly, dropped along the way, with the revised ENP now focusing narrowly on security and stability in the periphery (Furness et al. 2019). Reflecting the pragmatic and far less ideologically tainted thinking behind the EU’s strategy for foreign and security policy of 2016, termed ‘principled pragmatism’¹¹ (European External Action Service 2016), the new *leitmotif* of the revised ENP was to focus, more explicitly than ever, on core European interests, exactly as a borderlands approach to Europe–Middle East relations would have it.

To summarize, the countries in the Mediterranean Middle East are linked in a patchwork-like set of relations to the European Union, most of them within a common framework, but along bilateral and differentiated terms nonetheless. The Barcelona Process and the ENP have remained Europe’s policy frameworks vis-à-vis the periphery for the implementation of an expanding system of cooperation and integration, which ‘moves at different speeds and with different dynamics in different policy areas’ (Lavenex 2008: 939; see also Barbé and Herranz-Surrallés 2012). What EU policies towards the countries in this ‘artificially constructed neighbourhood space’ (Schumacher and Bouris 2017: 12) have in common, however, is a concerted effort by Europe to expand different types of its functional borders to the peripheries and to impose European rules and practices on neighbouring states, as will now be discussed in greater detail.

Trade Regimes and the EU Internal Market

In its trade relations with the ‘southern neighbourhood’, Europe has always tried to impose its preferences and to advance its interests—a feature that is obviously not a prerogative of the Europeans on the international stage. The Barcelona Process and the ENP are clear examples of this strategy. In addition

¹¹ According to Nathalie Tocci (2016: 6), who was responsible for the drafting of the document, ‘[p]rincipled pragmatism seeks to move the debate away from false dichotomies and well-known hypocrisies: be it the sterile debate on “interests versus values”, or on “interventionism versus retrenchment”. The point it tries to make is that we should observe the world (and ourselves) as it is, not as we would like to see it. We must be more modest at times in what we believe we can achieve and what we cannot. But modesty should not translate into closure or passivity. We must engage the world and do so responsibly, but without the illusion that we can unilaterally bring peace, security, democracy or prosperity to the world.’

to stipulating the reduction and eventual dismantling of all external tariff- and non-tariff barriers on industrial goods, to this day the EU trade agreements signed with MENA states impose import quotas and tariff barriers on agricultural products entering Europe. In return, so to speak, the EU offers some financial and technical aid in support of the far-reaching economic reforms that MENA states are supposed to undertake.

Europe's trade policy towards its borderlands is in line with the neoliberal model of development promoted by international financial institutions and the United States. These policies are deeply embedded in the Washington Consensus of the late 1980s and early 1990s, with its three pillars of macro-economic stabilization, structural adjustment, and liberalization/privatization. The EU's trade policy deviates from the Washington Consensus model in three respects, however. First, it excludes agriculture from full trade liberalization (with the US adopting a similar policy in practice). Second, instead of full market deregulation that is typical of mainstream neoliberalism, Europe tends to support the reregulation (and not the deregulation) of markets, according to an ordoliberal tradition (Roccu 2018a).¹² A third inconsistency regards the strictly bilateral nature of EU trade policy (Hunt 1999).

Certainly, the proposed reforms were intended to modernize the often sluggish and usually highly indebted economies of most Arab states in Europe's southern periphery, and to facilitate their integration into an increasingly globalized international system. But whereas most Arab MENA governments shared this general objective, they liked the prescribed European (and Western) path towards this target far less. For one, and as noted earlier, the elimination of tariffs on imports from Europe involved high economic costs for most of these states, given that import duties accounted for an important share of the total income of their economies (Hoekman 1999: 90; Schumacher 2004: 12).¹³ At the same time, it was expected that competition with European industrial goods, as well as with the EU's heavily subsidized and protected agricultural products, would put many local companies out of business, resulting in rising unemployment. Moreover, expenditure reductions in the generally bloated and unproductive public sectors in Arab MENA states and

¹² Ordoliberalism is a German variant of neoliberalism that espouses the concept of social market economy (*soziale Marktwirtschaft*). To maximize the potential of the free market, the ordoliberal tradition emphasizes the important role of the state in regulating markets by creating a proper legal environment for the economy and ensuring fair competition, keeping inflation and unemployment low while guaranteeing safe working conditions, social welfare and functioning public services.

¹³ In the mid-1990s, customs duties accounted for between 13 and 31 per cent of total revenues for Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. In the case of Lebanon, customs duties accounted for almost 57 per cent of its tax revenues (Schumacher 2004: 12).

expansions in the tax base to compensate for the loss of tax revenues would have significant political consequences that continue to manifest today. After all, such measures directly infringe upon the clientelist power base on which many authoritarian Arab regimes consistently relied. This type of reform also upset the long-standing social contract that had been in place between the ruling elites and their societies. Following the reverse logic of the slogan ‘no taxation without representation’, the authoritarian bargain stipulated that the state should provide subsidized basic products and services, together with employment in the public sector for a large segment of society, in exchange for citizens’ political acquiescence. The substantial risks and costs related to the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean trade agreement certainly explain why, in the first decade of the Barcelona Process, most MENA states (with the exception of Turkey, Israel, and Lebanon) dragged their feet when it came to dismantling tariffs on European imports (Galal and Reiffers 2010: 11–12). As was to be expected, Arab governments and societies would soon accuse the Europeans of having opened a new phase of neocolonial exploitation (Kienle 1998: 19). These accusations did not, however, prevent the EU and its members continuing with their efforts to selectively export their trade and business model southwards. Importantly, the Europeans took it as a given fact that their trade policies would also alter the socio-economic set-up in the borderlands.

Socio-Economic Engineering in the Borderlands—to Europe’s Benefit

While Arab governments have often used the accusation of European (or Western) neocolonialism as a welcome excuse to postpone meaningful political reforms, it is undeniable that the trade agreements concluded with the EU sought to transform MENA economies according to remarkably unilateral European economic preferences. MENA states would not benefit equally from the opening up to high-value manufactured imports from Europe compared to the latter, at least not in the short and medium term. In particular, the exclusion of agricultural products from the liberalized trade regime strongly undermined the potential benefits for MENA states, serving the interests of European producers instead. Moreover, the delay with which the EU agreed to the pan-Euro-Mediterranean cumulation of origin rules further points to Europe’s attempts to export its order on a not-so-equal basis.

The European Neighbourhood Policy provides an even stronger illustration of Europe’s attempts to engineer socio-economic change in its borderlands in

the interest of the European core. As a pale imitation of the logic and instruments of the EU's enlargement policy—but without any membership perspective for MENA states (Turkey excluded)—the prospects of deeper economic integration with the European trading block presuppose that these states must change their domestic legislation so as to make it compatible with EU law (European Commission 2012a: 5). 'Regulatory convergence' with the EU and 'approximation' are key words in this process, whereby Europe sets the standards, and MENA states are supposed to follow. This logic applies to all aspects of the EU's Internal Market.

The Europeans never concealed the fact that socio-economic engineering in the borderlands was a key element in their trade policies, even if only implicitly. For instance, with regard to the Common European Aviation Area, Brussels wants third states to 'move towards EU transport standards' (European Commission 2013a: 13); third states should also be 'integrated' into the European Research Area (European Commission 2013b: 15). Tellingly, in French, the primary language of the documents in the EU's relations with North African countries, the structural reform process is called *mise à niveau*, that is, 'bringing up to level'. In practice, the lion's share of European funds in support of this 'approximation' process—an amount of monies that the literature unanimously considers to be insufficient—is allocated for teaching public administration officials in third states how to implement the trade agreements signed with the EU. Government officials in third states are thus trained in the domestic implementation of European rules by 'raising their capacities adopting the best practices used in the European Union' (SAAP 2014). Revealingly, the main instruments and training activities for this purpose, in particular the 'Twinning' and TAIEX training activities,¹⁴ were developed to prepare eastern and central European states for EU membership, in support of the adoption of legislation that is compatible with the EU's *acquis*. Both training modules were made available to the EU's southern

¹⁴ Twinning and TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange) involve long-term or short-term training to public administration officials at different institutional levels in third states. Twinning consists of sending at least one resident advisor and a number of shorter missions from the public administration of one EU member state to the beneficiary for a duration of at least twelve months. TAIEX involves short-term assistance, for instance in the form of seminars for government officials of third states. It also serves as a source of information on legislative convergence issues (European Commission 2013c). An additional programme is SIGMA (Support for the Improvement of Government and Management), which was originally developed in the early 1990s to support the transition in former Soviet Union republics and made available to states covered by the ENP in 2008. Directed at high-level government officials, SIGMA provides short-term to medium-term training in different practices of financial control and good governance. It is a principally EU-funded joint initiative with the OECD (European Commission 2013c).

(and eastern) neighbours with the adoption of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003–2004.

As the glossy and self-congratulatory (but in terms of content, rather meagre) annual reports on the Twinning and TAIEX activities of the European Commission indicate, such training activities cover a wide spectrum of issues, including the Internal Market, agriculture and food safety, justice and home affairs, transport, telecommunications, and the environment. In the section covering the Internal Market alone, for instance, these training activities cover, *inter alia*, the economy and trade, financial services, budget and audit activities, public administration reform, statistics, social policies, and employment. To give some figures on these training activities in MENA states, between 2004 and 2012, the EU financed 156 Twinning projects in twelve MENA states with a total budget of €160 million (HTSPE 2012: VI). Between 2004 and mid-2013, the operational budget for Twinning projects conducted in Morocco was €30 million, for Tunisia €36 million, and for Egypt €31 million (del Mar Roca Requena 2013). According to calculations based on the European Commission's annual activities report, in 2013 the EU funded and implemented a total of sixty Twinning projects in MENA states, around fifty-five in 2014, and thirty-three in 2015. Between 2004 and 2015, around 300 such projects took place, although this figure probably double-counts projects that stretched over two or more years.¹⁵ Moreover, between 2006 and 2011, over 1200 TAIEX training activities were implemented in MENA states; in 2011 alone, these activities accounted for a total of €3 million (European Commission 2012b: 33).

What is more, Brussels pays or contributes to the salaries of dozens of government officials in MENA states who are in charge of coordinating the EU's training activities. These officials usually form a separate unit within the respective ministry of international cooperation or foreign affairs. For instance, in mid-2013 the unit in Tunisia consisted of sixteen EU-sponsored

¹⁵ It is nearly impossible to obtain precise figures on these projects. Since 2013, the European Commission's annual reports on its TAIEX and Twinning activities have taken the form of glossy online publications that indicate the number of topics, new projects, and total participants. While these reports contain various 'success stories', they do not contain exact funding figures, nor do they include a breakdown of training activities per country. Repeated requests for information from the European Commission went unheeded. Revealingly, an EU-funded TAIEX evaluation report of 2015 (which only focused on EU candidate countries) concluded that while aggregated data existed as budgetary allocations per year for the target countries, 'there are no data available about the actual expenditures per country per year for the period under consideration according to the various types of supported TAIEX activities'. The report concluded that it is therefore 'not possible to provide findings about the cost-effectiveness based on the budget allocation/actual spending per year' (AETS 2015: 22).

staff, the Moroccan support unit included thirteen EU-financed individuals, and the one in Egypt counted eighteen officials (del Mar Roca Requena 2013). While perhaps of limited economic consequence per se, these figures are a clear indication of the EU's *modus operandi* in its efforts to expand its rules and functional borders. In this process, the Europeans have also nurtured the emergence and strengthening of EU-friendly economic and bureaucratic elites in the periphery. It is interesting to note here that most new projects in French-speaking countries in the 'southern neighbourhood' are usually awarded to France, entailing that French experts are regularly deployed to train mainly North African officials on how to implement EU rules.

As a concrete example of this process of 'technocratic engineering' (Kourtelis 2015: 190), the EU tried to promote a far-reaching reform package for the Egyptian banking system prior to the Arab uprisings. The prescribed reforms entailed the abolition of capital controls and the transformation of Egypt's financial system into a risk-based regulatory regime, that is, a banking system that operates according to the assessment of the amount of risk held by individual banks. Reforms also aimed at ensuring the independence of the Egyptian Central Bank. While the adoption of international banking standards in Egypt was the main objective, EU-funded training activities conspicuously promoted *European* rules and practices to achieve this aim. Incidentally, these reforms also served to facilitate the circulation of European capital (Roccu 2015; 2018a; 2018b). Similarly, EU-supported reforms to liberalize the Egyptian telecommunications sector sought to advance European regulations while facilitating investment—thereby also entrenching the strong position of European telecom operators in Egypt such as the French Orange and the UK-based Vodafone (Roccu 2015; 2018a; 2018b). EU-financed restructuring attempts, according to the neoliberal model of development and with the help of Twining and TAIEX training seminars, also targeted the Egyptian energy sector (İşleyen 2015).

Additional examples of Europe's ongoing attempts to expand the borders of its economic order southwards include EU-funded reforms in the agricultural sectors of Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt. Inter alia, training programmes for local administrative bodies in the agricultural sector in these countries have promoted European sanitary and phytosanitary standards, which are more demanding than WTO requirements. While higher food standards are certainly beneficial for consumers in general, the adoption and implementation of these standards are very costly for small-scale farmers (Kourtelis 2015; 2018). Yet once local agricultural companies implement these rules in MENA states, European companies benefit from improved market access (Roccu 2018a).

In Morocco, the EU's push for regulatory convergence also targeted environmental management policy (Freyburg 2011) as well as public sector reform and decentralization (Bergh 2016). Carried out in cooperation with the World Bank, these public reform and regionalization programmes have had 'some influence on the reform of the organic budget law and the budgeting guidelines and practices more generally as well as tax reform' (Bergh 2016: 14). The EU also sought—rather unsuccessfully—to promote European rules and practices for efficient water management in Jordan (Freyburg et al. 2011). It tried to advance EU telecommunications regulations in Morocco, although it was equally unsuccessful here too, with Rabat eventually adopting a Latin American model instead (Wavre and Freyburg 2020). Europe's cooperation with Algeria followed the same strategy. Here, it has been noted that EU-promoted labour market reforms entailed the standardization of skills and aimed at increasing the 'competitiveness and attractiveness of southern countries and, to a lesser extent, bolster the adaptability of southern workers to the European market' (Serres 2016: 12).

The principle of EU rule expansion also marked the agreements on civil aviation concluded with Israel, Morocco, and Jordan mentioned previously, and, interestingly, the energy sector. In this strategically significant sector for Europe, the EU has been trying to connect the southern periphery to the core according to EU rules from the early 2000s onwards. These efforts intensified in the wake of the 2006 Gazprom crisis, in which Russia reduced its gas supply to Europe via Ukraine. With the stated objective of promoting 'a real and reliable convergence of South Mediterranean partners' energy policies with EU policy' (European Commission 2011a: 10), mainly to secure Europe's energy supply, EU policies clearly envisaged rule convergence and the introduction of market principles in the energy sector (see also European Commission 2011c). Efforts to 'engage' the states in Europe's southern neighbourhood in creating an integrated (but differentiated) energy market according to EU rules has, however, been met with a lukewarm response by key actors in the MENA region, particularly Algeria, as well as by private companies (Darbouche 2011; Tholens 2014; 2017a).

Europe's attempts to selectively integrate the southern periphery into its Internal Market has thus primarily served the aim of expanding EU influence, connecting the periphery's elites to the core, and creating an EU-friendly business environment. As the EU pushes for the diffusion of European regulations in its borderlands—with some stakeholders arguing that local regulators would ideally simply 'copy-paste' EU rules (Roccu 2018b: 48)—European economic interests are key. Although a number of economic and

regulatory reforms are undoubtedly beneficial to MENA states, these aim to create a business environment resembling the one in which European companies operate at home, for the benefit of the latter. The numerous EU-funded programmes on the rule of law and administrative efficiency in MENA states may be seen in this business-specific context as well, particularly since Europe's resolve in confronting repressive governments in the region in cases of human rights violations has been limited, to put it mildly.

What is more, Europe's *modus operandi* in the realm of trade has not changed considerably following a major development that occurred in Europe's borderlands, that is, the Arab uprisings that began in 2011.

EU Policies After the Arab Uprisings: DCFTAs and More of the Same

What was Europe's response to the millions of Arab citizens who took to the streets in 2011, demanding *khubz, huriyya, karama insaniyya* ('bread, freedom, dignity') and calling for the downfall of the regimes? Suggesting that MENA states accelerate their socio-economic restructuring processes ever more rapidly (European Commission 2011a: 2), Brussels proposed Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) as the way ahead. Without changing the basic modalities of EU engagement with its borderlands (Del Sarto 2016; Roccu 2018b), this latest generation of EU trade agreements on offer go much further in the EU's attempts to integrate neighbouring countries into its Internal Market. Besides the full elimination of tariffs in the trade of industrial goods, this new type of trade agreement aims to reduce or wholly remove all non-tariff barriers to trade, liberalize investment regimes, and harmonize or mutually recognize various trade- and investment-related rules, standards, and certificates. In this vein, the envisaged 'regulatory convergence' is meant to cover competition policy, public procurement, investment protection, and sanitary and phytosanitary certificates. As these agreements also cover trade in agriculture and services, the European Commission (2006b) posited that the economic benefits for third states would be much larger than had previously been the case. European policies would also create incentives for reform in neighbouring states, according to the Commission (European Commission (2006b)). After 2011, Brussels proposed to open negotiations on DCFTAs with the original four signatories of the Agadir agreement—Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan.

The explicit condition of DCFTAs, namely that third states approximate their trade-related legislation with the *acquis*, is significant for our purposes. Such approximation is quite a demanding process for most of the low-income and administratively weak Arab states in the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa. What is more, approximation also entails the consideration of EU case law. This would require MENA states to automatically apply any future changes in EU standards, for instance as regards food safety, without any further negotiation (Rudloff and Werenfels 2019). A particularly problematic aspect here is that the required EU certifications and standards are set by European industry, and not by independent regulatory bodies (Kourtelis 2015: 201). These standards are constantly evolving, often reflecting predictable protectionist reflexes of European producers vis-à-vis third states.

Moreover, the question remains whether MENA state regulatory convergence with EU standards is a necessary condition for expanded trade relations with the Europeans and for (sustainable) economic growth more generally. In fact, many states, such as the Asian economies, trade intensively with the EU without having adopted EU rules (Hoekman 2018: 376). More generally, adopting EU rules and standards may actually represent an impediment to states that have a diversified set of trading partners. The adoption of *international* standards and practices may be more beneficial here. An additional consideration is that some sectors and industries in third states are poised to lose from the adoption of EU standards and regulations as the costs of domestic production increase. More generally, empirical research in development economics has demonstrated that key conditions for trade liberalization leading to higher economic growth include improved economic governance and efficient transport, financial, and communications services and infrastructure (Hoekman 2018: 376). These structures and services, however, remain extremely weak in most Arab states, with most MENA states having very serious economic problems to face in the first place (Springborg 2020).

It is equally important to underscore that Brussels insists on negotiating these trade deals on an exclusively bilateral basis. Hence, even if DCFTAs may in theory be instrumental to deeper economic integration between Europe and MENA states, Europe's attitude not only deprives MENA states (for example the members of the Agadir Process) of their bargaining power as a group, it is also contrary to Europe's professed goal of promoting interregional trade (Liargovas 2013: 20). At any event, while some scholars see the DCFTA as the cementation of colonial-style patterns of production via iniquitous trade and aid arrangements (Langan and Price 2020), it is to be expected that the

outcome of the negotiations will ‘be biased in favor of European big business’ (Liargovas 2013: 21).

It is thus not particularly surprising that the reaction of most MENA governments to the proposed DCFTA negotiations was far from enthusiastic. Egypt showed no interest from the outset. Jordan was initially willing to negotiate but politely backtracked soon after. Negotiations with Morocco on a DCFTA started in 2013, but the Moroccan government suspended them soon afterwards because it first wanted to assess the potential impacts on its economy. Rabat subsequently put all relations with the EU on hold, following the December 2015 ruling by the European Court of Justice that declared an agricultural trade agreement between the two sides invalid because it included the Western Sahara in its territorial scope.¹⁶ Relations resumed in early 2019. However, the DCFTA option continued to be of little appeal to Rabat because of limited expected benefits. Particularly in the context of growing commercial ties with the African continent and Morocco’s relatively diversified trade relations, the Moroccan government would prefer to negotiate a new trade deal with the Europeans based on the EU’s Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+).¹⁷

Tunisia, on the other hand, has been negotiating a new trade deal with the EU since 2016, and the preliminary text of the agreement, as proposed by the EU, was published at the end of 2019. Tunisia, however, is also the only ‘Arab Spring’ country to have succeeded in initiating a democratic transition after its 2011 Yasmine Revolution. An extremely active civil society played an important role in this process, and it continues to influence Tunisian politics to this day. Domestic opposition to the DCFTA has been strong.

It is important to note here that sector-specific mutual recognition of tests and certificates for industrial goods represent an alternative to third states’ acceptance of the EU’s body of legislation (Rudloff and Werenfels 2019). So-called Agreements on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial products (ACAAs) allow industrial goods from third states to enter the EU’s Internal Market without any further testing, thus removing most non-tariff

¹⁶ The EU has adopted an incoherent position on the Western Sahara issue: it has not recognized the POLISARIO Front (the Saharawi independence movement) nor the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, but neither does it recognize Morocco’s claims to the disputed territory.

¹⁷ The GSP+ is meant for vulnerable low and lower-middle income countries that implement twenty-seven international conventions related to human rights, labour rights, protection of the environment, and good governance. Under this system, the EU slashes import duties to zero per cent from products coming into the EU market. It is intended to be a special incentive for sustainable development and good governance. As of January 2020, Armenia, Bolivia, Cape Verde, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka are GSP+ beneficiaries.

barriers to trade. Israel, for instance, signed an ACAA on pharmaceutical products with the EU in 2010.¹⁸ While easier to implement for most MENA states and economically more beneficial for them (Hoekman 2018), these ACAAs, however, still rely on third states aligning their standards with those of the EU, albeit on a limited basis within specific sectors.

Exporting EU Rules and Practices to MENA Outliers: Turkey and Israel

While all these considerations apply to most MENA states, Turkey and Israel are clear outliers here, as noted earlier. Both states are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), their tariff liberalization is far more advanced by comparison to most Arab countries in the southern Mediterranean (Ghoneim et al. 2012: 32), and their trade relations with the EU are far more comprehensive and developed. With an annual trade in goods volume of around €153.4 billion in 2018, Turkey used to be the EU's fifth-largest trading partner (after Brexit the UK is the EU's fifth-largest trading partner). For Turkey, the EU remains its largest commercial partner, and over 70 per cent of foreign direct investment in this country originates in the EU (European Commission 2019b: 105). Israel, whose main trading partner is also the EU, is perhaps less important for the Europeans in quantitative terms—with an annual trade volume of around €35 billion in goods, Israel ranked twenty-eighth among the EU's trading partners in 2018 (European Commission, DG Trade 2019a). However, Israel represents a valuable commercial partner for the Europeans considering the cooperation on cutting-edge research and development, as well as on security.

This does not mean, however, that Europe has not tried to impose its trade preferences and regulations on these countries as well—quite the opposite. Turkey is the prime example here: The customs union that binds Turkey and the EU is, unsurprisingly, modelled according to EU rules, with Turkey applying the EU's common external tariff for the products covered. Recent discussions on the modernization of the customs unions anticipated additional regulatory convergence by Turkey towards the EU's *acquis* in several essential areas, notably with regard to industrial standards. More importantly, the (currently suspended) accession negotiations for full membership aimed at Ankara's eventual implementation of the entire *acquis communautaire*, as is the case for all new EU members. And indeed, since accession negotiations

¹⁸ The agreement entered into force in January 2013.

started in 2005, and until recently, Turkey had begun a broad reform process with the objective of adopting EU legislation. During this time, the Europeans had been providing extensive financial and technical assistance to the country's reform process. Although Brussels had cut European funding by almost €800 million in 2018, it still provided Turkey with almost €400 million in financial assistance.¹⁹ These funds supported multiannual Twinning and other cooperation programmes on, *inter alia*, education, environment, employment and social policies, competitiveness, innovation, transport, and rural development (European Commission 2019b: 106). In fact, while it participates in a large number of programmes that are accessible only by EU members, Turkey is already part of the European order in certain areas. These include programmes on academic mobility, such as Erasmus and Erasmus+, the EU's research and development programme, and EU activities on the competitiveness of small- and medium-sized enterprises, employment, and innovation. Turkey also participates in the European Environmental Agency, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, and the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism. Through these forms of cooperation and technical assistance programmes, the Europeans have also been trying to transform the practices of key actors in that country, including, for instance, the Turkish police (Bahçecik 2014). Of course, were it to be a full member of the European bloc, Turkey would enjoy the same rights and have an equal voice in the decision-making process in Brussels, as with all EU members. The question remains, however, as to whether the EU member states were ever fully convinced of accepting Turkey into their ranks; that the Europeans have dragged their feet for the last thirty years would appear to indicate otherwise. What is clear is that ever since Ankara applied for membership in 1987 and was deemed as 'eligible' a decade later, Europe's *modus operandi vis-à-vis* Turkey has aimed to include it within the expanded borders of its economic order.

Finally, due to the advanced nature of its economy, Israel enjoys 'special status' in its relations with the EU, as Brussels affirmed in its 1994 Essen Declaration (Council of the European Union 1994: 28). Since the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy, economic relations between the two sides have continued to improve—despite rather troubled political ties (Pardo and Peters 2010; 2012). As discussed elsewhere (Del Sarto 2007; 2014; 2015), Israel cooperates with the Europeans on an extremely wide range of issues, ranging

¹⁹ The EU budget allocated for these measures for the 2018–2020 period was cut by around €760 million, due to Turkey's backsliding on reforms and low absorption capacity of EU funds.

from taxation to money laundering, statistics, and the environment, and both sides have signed a number of significant agreements in the last fifteen years. These cover trade liberalization in agriculture, fishery, and services, and the 'Open Sky' liberalization of civil aviation mentioned earlier. Israel has also been cooperating with Galileo, the European navigation programme, since 2004; it joined the EU's Competitiveness and Innovation Programme relating to small- and medium-sized enterprises in 2007; and became a member of the EU academic programmes that enable student and staff mobility and the establishment of joint graduate programmes. Israel's participation in European research and development programmes, which it joined in 1996, has been ongoing. Furthermore, the country became part of the EU's Copernicus project, which develops satellites for monitoring the environment and borders, and there were discussions regarding the country joining the Single European Sky Research initiative, responsible for developing an air transportation management system. Perhaps even more important is the earlier-mentioned EU-Israeli ACAA governing pharmaceutical products, which entered into force in 2013. According to this agreement, both sides now mutually recognize one another's pharmaceutical standards and testing, which, nevertheless, is premised on Israel aligning its standards with those of the EU.

Hence, without offering Israel any EU member state privileges or perspective to join the club, Europe has been increasingly exporting its economic rules and practices to Israel. This process, for which Brussels provides financial support, involves the approximation of Israeli norms and standards to those of the EU in a growing number of fields. In the words of the European Commission (2019d: 141): '[i]n a wide range of areas (including transport, environment, energy, statistics, agriculture and telecomm) EU regulatory practice (norms, standards and procedures) has been shared with the Israeli authorities, thus helping specific policy formulation and implementation'. While undoubtedly burdensome, Israel has benefited economically from this process, since European or third-country companies have been increasingly able to take advantage of the EU's Internal Market by locating themselves in Israel. This is particularly significant in areas where Israel has a comparative advantage, such as high tech, biotech, phytosanitary products, or food processing (Tovias and Magen 2005: 421; Tovias 2007). Reflecting on Israel's exceptional status in its relations with the Union, former EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana stressed that 'there is no country outside the European continent that has this type of relationship that Israel has with the European Union' (quoted in Ahren 2009). In the case of Israel, then, and in strictly

business-related terms, the EU's export of its economic order beyond the border has been rather successful.

Migration, Security, and Border Controls

An additional policy field in which Europe has constantly been trying to shape the southern periphery according to its rules and preferences is migration and border controls. These issues have undoubtedly gained in importance in Europe's relations with its southern periphery in recent years, not least since the Syrian refugee crisis that peaked in 2015–2016, with hundreds of thousands of refugees trying to enter EU territory. At the time of writing (March 2020), and in the shadow of the Coronavirus outbreak, migration was once again on Europe's agenda. The reason was a decision by Turkey to open its land borders to Greece, allowing Syrian refugees to cross into EU territory after a Turkish and Russian offensive in the Syrian province of Idlib. Shocking images of Greek border police firing tear gas and rubber bullets at refugees fleeing the embattled Syrian province and migrants from other countries have become a sad reality at Europe's borders (Stevis-Gridneff 2020).

Equally, the strengthening of jihadi groups in the Middle East against the background of the disintegration of Libya and Syria, the temporary rise of the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS or Daesh), and a dramatically rising number of terrorist attacks in the Middle East and Europe only added urgency to the European concern with security and borders. In 2015 alone, the long list of terrorist violence included attacks in Tunisia's Bardo Museum, Sousse, and Tunis; in the Turkish cities of Diyarbakır, Suruç, and Ankara; in the Egyptian cities of Al-Arish and on a Russian passenger plane leaving from the Sinai; in Beirut; as well as in Nice, Paris, and Copenhagen.

Before elaborating on the specific ways in which Europe has expanded its external borders while seeking to export a European migration and security 'order' to its southern periphery, we will now briefly consider the development of Europe's migration and security policy.

Securitizing Migration and the 'Europeanization' of Border Control Policies

Migration, security, and border controls have been at the top of the European policymaking agenda for several decades, since at least the end of the Cold

War in 1989. Shortly thereafter, the Algerian civil war, prompted by the cancellation of the second round of the country's parliamentary elections in 1991, raised the spectre of growing migratory pressures and Islamist terrorism spilling over into Europe. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the 1995 Barcelona Declaration establishing the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership included the European objective of cooperating with its 'Mediterranean partners' on the management of the EU's external borders, regarding migration, drug trafficking, organized crime, and terrorism (Barcelona Declaration 1995). Within the EU, the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty introduced the objective of coordinating policies on migration among member states, reaffirmed and developed in greater detail at subsequent meetings of the European Council (such as in Tampere and The Hague, both in 1999). The European Commission initiated a number of programmes to address border controls, the fight against irregular migration, and human trafficking involving third states in this period. Specific cooperation on these topics with MENA states was embedded in the Barcelona Process.

The events of 9/11 and major terrorist attacks in London and Madrid, in 2004 and 2005 respectively, further reinforced the resolve of European policymakers to cooperate with the governments in North Africa and the Middle East on security, border controls, and counterterrorism (for example European Commission 2003a). On the issue of migration, which is actually not correlated to terrorism, the European Commission had started to negotiate so-called readmission agreements pertaining to irregular migrants with Morocco, Algeria, and Turkey in the early 2000s. While European countries had already been attempting to prevent the migration of unskilled and undocumented persons for some time—unlike in the 1950s and 1960s, they no longer needed cheap labour for their economic reconstruction and growth—the issue of migration became securitized as a result. In the EU's order of priorities, concern with democratization and human rights—if they had ever been truly relevant—were quietly deprioritized; stability and security patently trumped any lofty ideal of supporting political reforms in the borderlands (Joffé 2007).

With the adoption of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003–2004, migration and border controls became a centrepiece of the EU's policy towards its periphery. In the context of the European bloc's eastern enlargement in 2004, Brussels deemed it necessary that new and old neighbouring states took on a greater responsibility in improving the control of their borders, prevent unwanted migration to the EU, and assist in the removal of irregular migrants who had entered EU territory. Collaboration on counterterrorism and security more broadly was considered as equally important. As a result, all ENP Action

Plans concluded with the states in the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa have contained provisions on migration, transnational crime, and border management, along with sections on police cooperation and collaboration in justice and home affairs. Europe undoubtedly adopted the principle of conditionality in these matters, making the granting of ‘a stake’ in the EU’s Internal Market dependent on the willingness of ‘partner countries’ to cooperate. In this vein, Brussels openly stated that ‘co-operative countries’ would be rewarded with a ‘more generous visa policy [...] or increased quotas for migrant workers, closer economic cooperation, trade expansion, additional development assistance, better market access or WTO compatible tariff preferences’ (European Commission 2003b: 14).

The Europeans’ ‘global’ approach to migration and mobility, developed at the end of 2005, focused its attention on the issue of legal migration as well as the interlinkage of migration and economic development in third states (Council of the European Union 2005a). In the same month, however, Europe also formulated a counterterrorism strategy (Council of the European Union 2005b), which defined cooperation with third countries, including those in the Middle East, as essential. Certainly, the development of Europe’s migration policies is embedded in a wider shift at the global level to address migratory questions in a comprehensive manner. The International Agenda for Migration Management (IAMM) of 2000 reflects this international—but still Western-dominated—consensus on migration governance, which gradually turned into the normative framework of many international and regional initiatives on migration. Mechanisms for strengthening the centrality of countries of origin and transit in controlling the mobility of their nationals and foreigners have been a central element here (Cassarino and Del Sarto 2018). The emerging international consensus also gave way to the collaboration between international organizations and institutions working with the Europeans in advancing migration-related projects and in establishing regular consultation processes with third states. Altogether, in the general post-9/11 climate and with growing migratory pressures, a restrictive approach to migration came to prevail in European policies towards its periphery. The Arab upheavals starting in 2011 and the ensuing flows of refugees and undocumented migrants from the Middle East to Europe reinforced this approach even further. Despite a normative rhetoric stressing the importance of human rights and international law, European policies clearly gravitated around the issues of security, migration, and border management (Carrera et al. 2012; Teti et al. 2012; Dandashly 2015; Del Sarto 2016; Fakhoury 2016; Geddes and Hadj-Abdou 2017).

As mentioned earlier, the EU's pragmatist Global Strategy for foreign and security policies of 2016 bears witness to Europe's set of priorities. EU budget allocations reflect the ever-growing importance the Europeans have been assigning to migration, borders, security, and related matters: in 2015, these issues received around half of the available funding within the European Neighbourhood Policy—in Europe's south and east (European Commission 2016: 9). Morocco, one of Europe's favourite countries in the cooperation on border security and migration control in the MENA region, reportedly received close to €215 million from the EU to finance different border security projects between 2001 and 2019 (Statewatch 2019).

As will be discussed in the following sections, Europe's policy on migration, security, and border controls vis-à-vis its southern periphery has been marked by a process of externalizing and outsourcing EU border controls, the conclusion of rather problematic agreements, the transfer of specific borders and bordering practices to the borderlands, and, more generally, burden-shifting. These are the different aspects of European attempts to shift its borders southwards and to keep Europe 'safe', as will be elucidated next.

Moving and Multiplying Europe's External Borders

Much has been written in recent years on the externalization and outsourcing of Europe's border controls (for example Lavenex and Uçarer 2003; Boswell 2003; Bigo and Guild 2005; Geddes 2005; Lutterbeck 2006; Rijpma and Cremona 2007; Bialasiewicz 2012). This development describes Europe's strategy of transferring the physical control of people outside EU territory and thus closer to and even into the territory of its 'neighbours'. This process has also entailed the deployment of police officers from EU member states or private security contractors outside national territory and the partial delegation of border controls duties to government officials of peripheral states.

In Europe's southern periphery, a good example of this process is the regular joint patrols of European coastguards with the border police of MENA states off the coasts of the Mediterranean (Rijpma and Vermeulen 2015; Rijpma 2016). Perhaps the presence of Italian personnel from the *Guardia di Finanza* (Italy's military finance police corps)²⁰ on the patrol boats of the Libyan coastguard receives some public attention in the event of

²⁰ Mainly responsible for detecting smuggling and financial fraud, the *Guardia di Finanza* is a military police under the control of the Italian finance ministry.

major incidents. This was the case, for instance, when a Libyan coastguard vessel—one of the six vessels it had received as a donation from Italy—opened fire on an Italian fishing boat in international waters in 2010 (Corriere della Sera 2010). However, these joint Italian–Libyan patrols have become the norm. Police officers from European member states such as France have also reportedly been involved in border controls at North African sea and airport terminals. Specialized French immigration liaison officers, for example, have been deployed in Morocco, where they are responsible for coordinating the activities, procedures, and police departments of both countries with regard to migration control and readmissions (El Qadim 2014). Not only have EU-funded projects led by France and Spain supported the creation of border infrastructure in Morocco since 2001, these projects have also facilitated joint Moroccan patrols with the coastguards of EU member states. Yet another example here is Rabat’s participation from 2006 to 2008 in the Seahorse Project, an EU-funded initiative implemented by the Spanish military police, the *Guardia Civil*.²¹ Seahorse has created a network for exchanging information on irregular migrants that now serves as one of the foundations of the European Border Surveillance System (Eurosur). Established in 2013, this system provides surveillance of the EU’s external borders and the so-called pre-frontier area. It has also established an information-exchange network that enables the near real-time sharing of border-related data (Rijpma and Vermeulen 2015; Statewatch 2019).

There are many other examples of this externalization process, all of which have resulted in the relocation and multiplication of the EU’s external borders. As Europe’s internal and external security have become increasingly interlinked (Bigo 2006), this development demonstrates most visibly the disassociation of physical boundaries from functional regimes in Europe’s fluid borderlands that is so typical of imperial practices. It also points to the reconfiguration of the relationship between territory and sovereignty (Casas-Cortes et al. 2013).

Furthermore, as Europe’s external and shifting borders with MENA states are fortified for specific people and goods, the relationship between Europe, its periphery, and ‘the periphery of the periphery’ is rearticulated. Repeated rounds of EC/EU enlargement have demonstrated, for instance, that the economic integration of new members has produced patterns of exclusion

²¹ Besides Morocco, other participants in the Seahorse project include Mauritania, Senegal, Cape Verde, Mali, Guinea Bissau, and the Republic of Guinea.

vis-à-vis the new peripheries, which often witnessed economic decline as a result. Very similar patterns also mark the movement of people across Europe's neighbours and 'the neighbours of the neighbours'. At Europe's urging, many MENA states have hardened the external borders they share with their respective hinterland. Brussels has been particularly adamant in trying to convince North African states—major 'sending countries'—to strengthen their border controls in order to limit migration from sub-Saharan Africa (Cassarino 2006). From the mid-2000s onwards, however, the EU opened its hitherto internal cross-border cooperation programmes to its near abroad, MENA states included, with the aim of fostering greater cooperation and integration *within the border regions* in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy. This process most clearly conveys Europe's construction of a buffer zone around itself, as observed previously (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005; Del Sarto 2010). As Europe 'fades out' at its external borders, Europe's buffer zone is, however, increasingly separated from the area that lies beyond it, with important material and diplomatic costs for these 'buffering states' (see also Zardo and Cavatorta 2016: 4).

Finally, there is Frontex, the EU border agency, which plays a significant role in Europe's 'policing at a distance' (Bigo 2006: 399). Not only does Frontex act as a hub for the European Border Surveillance System Eurosur, it assists EU member states at the EU's external borders through its operations and rapid border interventions. As noted in the first chapter of this book, Frontex has turned into the European bloc's moving but impermeable border for unwanted people and illicit goods (Rumford 2012: 891). Comprised of contingents and assets from different EU member states, the various Frontex operations off Morocco's Atlantic coast and in the Mediterranean and Aegean seas usually occur in response to requests for assistance by individual EU states. The longest-lasting Frontex naval mission is Operation Hera, requested by the Spanish government to assist with the blocking of unwanted migration along the maritime route from West Africa to the Spanish Canary Islands. Starting in 2006, the mission has repeatedly been adjusted and prolonged to this day. Other examples include Operation Poseidon, which started in 2006 at the request of Greece to assist in the surveillance of the country's sea and land borders with Turkey; Operation Hermes in the Mediterranean Sea, requested by Italy in 2011; and Operation Triton, which operated between 2014 and 2015. The latter replaced an Italian search-and-rescue operation in the Mediterranean, *Mare Nostrum*, launched after more than 350 people had drowned off the coast of Lampedusa in October 2013 when their boat capsized. Unlike the Italian mission, which

was larger but also very costly, Operation Triton did not have the specific goal to engage in search and rescue.²²

It is important to note that Frontex operations often involve third states as well, including MENA countries. The bases of their cooperation with Frontex, however, are usually the bilateral agreements they have signed with single European states, such as Spain and France in the case of Morocco. While these accords are rarely available to the public, Frontex officials usually claim that they are not in possession of these bilateral agreements either.

Against the backdrop of the growing number of migrants and refugees drowning on their journey to Europe in recent years, humanitarian emergencies and rescues at sea have helped to boost the image, legitimacy, and self-perception of the Frontex border agency (Perkowski 2018). According to the assessments of the border agency, the sea, especially along the Mediterranean routes, 'will remain the most active path for illegal crossing of the EU external borders, but also one of the most dangerous for migrant smuggling requiring humanitarian assistance efforts' (Frontex 2018: 8–9). However, problems of transparency, accountability, and democratic oversight remain. Indeed, the professed duty of saving migrants' lives tends to hide from public scrutiny the precise modalities in which Frontex controls Europe's mobile border, including the interception and return of migrants and potential asylum seekers, in violation of international law (Omonira-Oyekanmi 2012; Wriedt and Reinhardt 2017). Yet while the entanglement of the logics of securitization and humanitarianism provides a script for the production of knowledge about and governance of 'irregular' populations (Little and Vaughan-Williams 2017), the humanitarian narrative has also helped Frontex to steadily expand its role, powers, and resources (Rijpma and Cremona 2007; Baldaccini 2010; Campesi 2014; Rijpma and Vermeulen 2015; Tazzioli 2016; Rijpma 2017).

It is worth noting that the European arms industry, which had been pushing for the expansion of Frontex for years, has been a major beneficiary of this development. Major European security companies succeeded in obtaining large contracts on border security with the EU and single European states, for instance by providing helicopters, radars, border patrol vessels, and biometric identification equipment (Akkerman 2020) to guard

²² Italy's *Mare Nostrum* naval operation lasted for a year and is thought to have saved thousands of lives. However, in view of the high costs, estimated at almost €10 million a month, Italy ended the operation, asking the EU for assistance (see for example Campesi 2014). In June 2015, Triton was replaced by an EU naval force mission, EUNAVFOR Operation Sophia, headquartered in Rome, and with the contribution of twenty-six EU member states.

Europe's borders.²³ Yet, Frontex's cooperation with third states implies the partial delegation of legal and human rights responsibilities to these states, with little if any attention paid to either monitoring or enforcement. Considering the dubious, if not appalling, human rights record of many states with which Frontex cooperates, this aspect is particularly problematic (see also Del Sarto and Steindler 2015).

Shady Agreements and Arrangements

The contractual, or better pseudo-contractual, dimension of the EU's border externalization process has witnessed the multiplication of formal and informal cooperation agreements on migration and border controls, signed between single EU member states and MENA countries on a bilateral basis (Cassarino 2007; 2020).²⁴ In the framework of these agreements, the country in question commits itself to blocking undocumented migration from their territory to Europe, including through the patrolling of maritime borders, and to 'readmitting' undocumented migrants that are expelled from Europe. The accords often include different arrangements on police and other forms of security cooperation (see also Bialasiewicz 2012; Casas-Cortes et al. 2013). Usually embedded in broader arrangements or memoranda of understanding and often hidden from the public eye, readmission agreements also cover nationals from other countries who have entered EU territory through the point of exit of the relevant state that has agreed to cooperate with Europe. In the case of North African countries, this particularly concerns nationals from sub-Saharan Africa. With France, Greece, Italy, and Spain being the main drivers of these informal arrangements, cooperation on migration is usually rewarded with financial aid, the transfer of equipment and technology, and political concessions of various kinds (Cassarino 2007; 2010).

Under Qaddafi's rule, Libya served as a prime example of these shadowy European deals on migration and border control. As is widely known, Tripoli received extensive European financial and technical support, mainly from Italy, as a reward for preventing migrants and refugees from reaching Europe (Paoletti and Pastore 2010; Paoletti 2011). In December 2000, Rome and Tripoli signed a cooperation agreement on combating terrorism,

²³ These include three of the largest European (and global) arms companies, namely, Airbus (a pan-European company), the Italian Leonardo, and the French Thales.

²⁴ For an inventory of bilateral agreements on migration and readmission see Cassarino's database at <http://www.jeanpierrecassarino.com/datasets/ra>

organized crime, drugs, and illegal migration, an agreement that the Italian government was rather reluctant to publicize. It precipitated cooperation on the deportation of irregular migrants and refugees who had entered Italian territory, most notably the island of Lampedusa, back to Libya by airlift (UNHCR 2005). The fact that Libya under Qaddafi never signed the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees is particularly troubling in this context. However, this did not prevent the European Union from sending a technical mission to the country to explore cooperation on undocumented migration and border controls in 2004, an initiative the Libyan authorities were very interested in (European Commission 2004d). The ‘Friendship Treaty’ concluded in 2008 by Silvio Berlusconi’s government with the erstwhile Libyan strongman included a comprehensive reparations package for Italy’s colonial past, but it also allowed for the intensification of joint patrols along the Libyan coast.²⁵ It also facilitated Italy’s return to Libya of hundreds of migrants and refugees rescued at sea or on its shores. Given that it prevented refugees from lodging asylum applications and violated the principle of *non-refoulement*, this unlawful practice was (and still is) regularly condemned by human rights organizations (UNHCR 2010; also Baldaccini 2010: 253; Maccanico 2020).²⁶ Notwithstanding these concerns, high-ranking EU officials agreed on future cooperation on asylum and migration with their Libyan counterparts in October 2010 (Paoletti and Pastore 2010: 23). During Qaddafi’s rule, media reports on the ill-treatment of mainly sub-Saharan African migrants and refugees in detention centres in the Libyan middle of nowhere, financed by the EU and the Italian government, circulated frequently in the media (see for example Brothers 2007; also Paoletti 2011). The unlawful detention of refugees and migrants in squalid and overcrowded detention centres, many without access to food and basic healthcare and often subject to mistreatment, rape, and torture, has continued in Libya since the fall of Qaddafi. According to the European Commission, which has defined the situation in Libya as requiring particular attention, between four and five thousand refugees and migrants were held in Libyan detention centres in 2016, ‘with the fragility of the state creating obvious doubts about their basic protection and respect of their rights’ (European Commission 2016: 15).

²⁵ The ‘Friendship Treaty’ of August 2008 committed Italy to pay US \$5 billion over the next twenty years to compensate Libya for Italy’s colonial damages. Part of this money was supposed to be used to finance major infrastructure projects in Libya with the involvement of Italian firms.

²⁶ In 2019, an Italian court found the Italian authorities guilty of the *refoulement* of fourteen Eritreans, who were among around eighty people rescued by an Italian warship and taken back to Libya in July 2019, thus denying them access to procedures to obtain international protection (Maccanico 2020).

In addition to Rome's dealings with Libya, the Italian authorities have also maintained formal and informal agreements on security and migration with Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey (Cassarino 2020). They signed an agreement on police cooperation with Egypt in 2000, followed by a 'proper' readmission agreement in 2008. Since then, both sides have been cooperating on the forced return of migrants and refugees intercepted on Egyptian territory (thanks also to charter flights from Egypt paid for by the Italian Ministry of the Interior). Part of this cooperation also involves the swift deportation of undocumented Egyptians entering Italian territory. In return, Cairo has benefited from donated coast patrol vessels, fingerprinting technology, off-road vehicles, and other equipment, together with various training activities for Egyptian government officials (Cuttitta 2017: 8). Despite a short moment of hesitation following the 2011 revolution and the subsequent election of Mohamed Morsi, and notwithstanding the murder of the Italian doctoral researcher Giulio Regeni in Cairo in January 2016, Italy's cooperation with the Egyptian authorities on borders, security, and migration control has been continuing, including under the repressive regime of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Other European member states, eager to follow Italy's example in Egypt, have cooperated with other MENA states on security, migration, and border control (Cuttitta 2017: 8). In particular, the issue of counterterrorism has remained the domain of single EU member states, with the amount of bilateral deals multiplying since the early 2000s (Wolff 2009). It is no secret that France, for example, has maintained cosy relations with the intelligence services and police forces of most of its former colonies in North Africa. Indeed, an impressive range of formal and informal agreements on police cooperation, security cooperation, and the readmission of unwanted migrants is in place between Paris and Rabat, Tunis, Algiers, and also Tripoli, with some of these dating back to the 1980s (Cassarino 2020). Following the 1991 intervention by the Algerian military, which aborted the democratic process in that country apparently won by the Islamists, France successfully lobbied the EU to increase its aid to the Algerian regime (Durac and Cavatorta 2009: 11). In a similar vein, Greece has maintained police cooperation and readmission agreements with Tunisia, Egypt, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, Turkey. Equally, Spain and Morocco have a long history of cooperating on counterterrorism and border controls. These joint efforts were further reinforced following the 2004 Madrid terrorist attacks, with both sides stating their clear approval of the cooperation (Ortega Dolz 2016). Involving the Spanish national police and the *Guardia Civil*, these have included joint maritime patrols, joint police teams based in cities such as Tangier, mixed investigation

teams, and the regular exchange of information. Madrid's close cooperation with Morocco has also included sending a liaison magistrate to Rabat involved in the prosecution of terrorism cases, together with joint counterterrorism operations carried out by Moroccan and Spanish police. Between 2013 and 2014 alone, six major joint operations took place that led to forty arrests across both countries (Reinares and García-Calvo 2015).

These formal and informal deals on borders, security, and migration have not been the sole prerogative of southern European countries, however. Germany, for instance, has concluded police cooperation and readmission agreements with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and even with Syria; the United Kingdom has maintained similar relations with Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Jordan, and Lebanon (Cassarino 2020).

The advent of the European Neighbourhood Policy witnessed the EU's attempts to standardize the migration, security, and border control policies of the single member states while simultaneously adding an EU dimension to the process. The ENP Action Plans signed with the majority of the states in the Mediterranean Middle East, for instance, entailed almost identical provisions on collaborations on migration control, police cooperation, and capacity building. Libya, which was not part of the ENP, also became the target of European efforts to foster migration and border control cooperation. In 2005, the EU started an ad hoc dialogue on migration issues with Tripoli (Paoletti and Pastore 2010). However, despite the EU's pronounced interest in forging closer counterterrorism cooperation with the MENA states, this has remained confined to bilateral agreements between single EU members and MENA governments.

Brussels has been more successful in its attempts to 'Europeanize' the policy of single member states on migration control. Beginning in 2005 as a follow-up to the EU's newly adopted 'global' approach to migration (European Commission 2005), the EU has proposed so-called Mobility Partnerships to MENA states, which, in addition to readmission, have covered visa facilitations and the opening of channels for temporary and circular legal migration. After the Arab uprisings and the ensuing refugee crisis, and as Europe became particularly concerned with migration and border controls (European Commission 2011d; 2011e), Brussels coaxed MENA governments into signing such Mobility Partnership agreements. In an uncertain period of transition, the EU started exerting considerable political and financial pressures on vulnerable states, as was the case with Morocco and Tunisia (Limam and Del Sarto 2015).

While the Mobility Partnership documents are not legally binding and cooperation on deportations is no longer a strict requirement (an affirmed

willingness to cooperate suffices), there are several problems with these documents. For one, the EU's promise of 'visa facilitation' does not necessarily mean that it will be easier for MENA nationals to obtain a visa to enter EU territory. Rather, it means that cumbersome *visa application procedures* will be facilitated. Similarly problematic is the fact that the Mobility Partnerships commit third states to cooperate with the EU *and all of its member states* on unwanted migration and border controls, whereas legal migration and the granting of long-term visas remain the exclusive sphere of EU member states. This implies that single EU members have to agree on these issues with third states in separate agreements—and they are usually not in a hurry to conclude such accords. What is more, visa applications to the EU's Schengen area have become not less, but more complicated and costly for MENA nationals in recent years (Limam and Del Sarto 2020). For instance, most EU Schengen countries have delegated visa application procedures from their consular authorities to private contractors in MENA states, thereby creating serious accountability issues. Since the Mobility Partnerships (which are about neither mobility nor partnership) clearly reflect the priorities of the EU and its members, MENA states have showed little enthusiasm to sign up to these agreements. Under enormous pressure from Europe, Morocco and Tunisia did eventually conclude a Mobility Partnership in 2013 and 2014 respectively, but both countries have been dragging their feet in reaching a formal agreement on the readmission of expelled migrants from Europe, measures that are highly unpopular in both countries. Jordan, for its part, also signed up to a Mobility Partnership in 2014.

Perhaps the most sensational and widely criticized deal on migrants and refugees was the 2016 EU agreement with Turkey, led by Germany. Although the signing of this agreement occurred after the time span under consideration in this book (1995–2015), it is worth mentioning since it epitomizes the predicament of EU policies on migration and border controls vis-à-vis its southern borderlands. As the number of Syrian refugees reaching Greece increased exponentially from the summer of 2015 onwards—with more than 300,000 people arriving in Greece from Turkey in less than three months during this period—and as the Europeans reacted with bewilderment and complete confusion to the unfolding events, Brussels discovered Turkey's role as Europe's potential gatekeeper. The number of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey under temporary protection had already risen to 1.5 million people at the end of 2014 (Okuy and Zaragoza Cristiani 2016: 53), and Ankara had signalled to the Europeans that it was no longer able or willing to host additional refugees without any help. In the EU–Turkey deal of March

2016, Brussels and Ankara agreed on the resettlement to EU member states of 72,000 Syrian refugees present on Turkish territory, in return for Turkey's readmission—that is, acceptance of Europe's expulsion—of irregular migrants crossing to the Greek islands from Turkish territory. Furthermore, Ankara received a total of €6 billion to host Syrian refugees from the EU, in addition to reopening the stalled EU accession negotiations and the promise to liberalize the visa regime for Turkish nationals travelling to the EU. As noted earlier, the accession negotiations resumed but were subsequently suspended, and the visa liberalization issue has not proceeded as Turkey had hoped for. As discussed later in greater detail, this deal clearly gave Turkey, which by 2019 was hosting 3.7 million Syrian refugees, the ability to blackmail Europe. Indeed, this is exactly what Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan proceeded to do in March 2020 with his decision to open the Turkey–EU border to Syrian refugees fleeing Idlib province.

As the number of refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war continued to grow, the EU has also provided funds and incentives to other MENA countries to host and integrate refugees—and to ensure that they stay put. Jordan, for instance, which has been hosting over 600,000 Syrian refugees, has received EU funding through the so-called Madad Fund, an EU regional trust fund in support of Syrian refugees and local communities created in 2014.²⁷ Economic incentives have accompanied the increased flow of money: to take just one example, Brussels has agreed to simplify the rules of origin for Jordanian exports in the hope that this measure would create jobs for both Jordanian citizens and Syrian refugees. The EU has also proposed a special export regime for manufactured goods produced in special industrial areas, provided the respective companies employ a minimum percentage of Syrian refugees (Trauner and Cassarino 2018).

Similar arrangements are in place in Lebanon, which in 2019 hosted approximately one million Syrian refugees within a total Lebanese population of around 5–6 million people. While the country is also a recipient of Madad funding, Brussels and Lebanon signed a 'refugee compact' in 2016 with the aim of easing the burden incurred by Lebanon in hosting the refugees and to generate employment for refugee and Lebanese communities alike (Fakhoury 2019).

Finally, Brussels gave a mandate to open negotiations between Frontex and a number of MENA states, reflecting the persistent interest in concluding

²⁷ By March 2020, this trust fund has mobilized €2.2 billion, including voluntary contributions from twenty-one EU member states, Turkey, and the United Kingdom (European Commission 2020a).

framework agreements between the European border agency and third states. Thus far, the only state in the Mediterranean Middle East to sign a ‘memorandum of understanding’ with Frontex has been Turkey, which did so in 2012. However, Frontex has been planning to sign working arrangements with a number of other MENA states, including Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. According to the EU’s regulations, these working agreements are geared towards operational cooperation, that is, joint patrolling operations and the return of undocumented migrants, border technologies transfer and training, and cooperation on research and development. While no formal cooperation agreements with Frontex have been signed thus far, Tunisian and Egyptian officials have been participating as observers in a rather obscure forum, the Africa–Frontex Intelligence Community, since early 2015. Set up in 2010, this regional network aims to provide a framework for intelligence sharing on border security and the improvement of operational capabilities between Frontex and African countries (Jones 2017; Frontex 2019b).²⁸

Given the ambiguity and legal uncertainty surrounding Frontex operations in general, this type of arrangement, together with all the formal and informal agreements on borders and migration control at the EU and bilateral level, encapsulates Europe’s attempts to externalize its border control practices and export them to the neighbourhood. While many agreements may contain the commitment to respect human rights and refugee law, Europe’s collaboration with states violating these rights by default raises very serious concerns.

Training on Security and Border Management Practices

The European training of border and police officials in MENA states represents a further crucial aspect in the process of turning the Mediterranean Middle East into an advanced EU checkpoint for the control of undocumented migration and refugee flows. This is equally true of the realm of counterterrorism and the fight against the smuggling of illicit goods. In other words, the EU’s remote policing, which dovetails with the shifting of European borders beyond the borderline (Balibar 2009), is intrinsically linked to Europe’s attempts to teach local authorities in its periphery how to follow its rules

²⁸ In 2015, this forum included Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo as full members, and officials from Tunisia, Chad, Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya as observers (Jones 2017). Algeria and Libya joined more recently (Frontex 2019b).

and practices—in a highly selective manner, of course. To complicate matters, EU-funded training on border management and security may fall under different expenditure areas and funding lines, such as police cooperation, security sector reform, cross-border programmes, and cooperation on migration, making it rather difficult to track these activities in detail.²⁹

Moreover, the bilateral dimension of this cooperation is of crucial importance here. Many of the border and security agreements mentioned earlier that have been signed in recent decades between single EU member states and MENA governments contain a training component. Capacity building and the transfer of know-how usually entail the use of technical equipment that Europe has been providing to MENA states, ranging from fingerprinting technology and surveillance devices to coastguard patrol vessels. For example, Italy has been training Libyan coastguards and other police personnel; Rome's generous donations of patrol boats to the Libyan coastguard have continued to this day (Nigro 2018). Spain has been providing training to Moroccan officials in these areas for a long time; French authorities train Tunisian and Moroccan border and other police forces, and so on (Cuttitta 2017; Ortega Dolz 2016; Statewatch 2019; European Commission 2012c).

In the context of growing European concern with counterterrorism and unwanted migration, the European Neighbourhood Policy added an EU layer to the efforts of individual member states to shape the police and security forces operating at the border according to their individual preferences. EU-funded projects on these topics, such as the EUROMED Police project and the 'flagship' EUROMED Migration programme, have their origins in this period. In this vein, the explicit objective of the EUROMED Migration project, which started in 2004 and is currently in its fourth phase, is to provide 'capacity-building, applying a new outcome-oriented approach which includes sub-regional activities, tailor-made national training programmes and a targeted technical assistance package for small-scale concrete actions' (European Commission 2018a). In practice, it is rather difficult to ascertain what these 'small-scale concrete actions' actually consist of. An equally

²⁹ For background, the section within the EU's multiannual financial framework covering expenditures for external relations between 2014 and 2020 (which amount to approximately 6 per cent of the EU's total budget) included sixteen different 'instruments'. These range from the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)—the European Neighbourhood Policy financial tool—to pre-accession assistance for EU candidate countries (such as Turkey), expenditures for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the European Fund for Sustainable Development, to name but a few (see for example European Commission 2018b: 3–4). The type and name of financial tools and the programmes funded by these tools have also changed over time.

important objective of the EUROMED Migration project is the establishment and strengthening of a 'North-South and South-South regional dialogue on migration, including on the root causes of migration' (European Commission 2018a). One is left wondering why the root causes of migration need year-long discussions. In any event, the EU-funded project, which is primarily implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), has witnessed the participation of most MENA states since it was launched, from Morocco to Israel and Syria, and has been funded with approximately €15 million in the period between 2004 and 2015 (see also GIZ et al. n.d.). The ICMPD has been carrying out a large number of additional EU-funded borders- and migration-related programmes. For instance, between 2011 and 2013 it implemented a project, cofunded by the Swiss government, to improve the capacity of the Algerian authorities to 'manage mixed migratory flows' and enhance the protection of migrants. The organization is also in charge of a project with the revealing acronym MIEUX ('MIgration EU eXpertise'), a project that since 2009 has aimed to strengthen the 'migration governance capacities' of governments in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. Within the framework of this project, EU and member state specialists transfer their expertise and 'best practices' to third states. Of the MENA states, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon have participated in these capacity-building and training activities (ICMPD 2016). For Libya, on the other hand, the EU allocated €3 million to strengthen Libyan capacities in the field of border controls in 2006 (Paoletti and Pastore 2010).

Europe's (selective) export of its rules and practices on borders and security more broadly is also carried out through other agencies, such as Frontex and EUROPOL, the EU's law enforcement agency. In fact, when the EU agencies, implementing organizations, and single EU member states are all taken into account, the sheer number of training activities conducted in this area becomes overwhelming. However, alongside the traditional secrecy surrounding any sort of security cooperation, the diffuse and ubiquitous nature of these activities makes it extremely difficult to obtain a clear picture. Evidently, however, Brussels is satisfied with the training activities that have been conducted on border management in third states. In this vein, the European Commission and the EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy recommended in 2015 that this mode of collaboration should be intensified. More specifically, they advocated that work on 'information exchange, administrative capacity and operational and technical cooperation' with the states on Europe's periphery should be increased, with a focus on 'training, research,

capacity-building projects and pilot projects [...], notably working through relevant EU Agencies, including FRONTEX and EUROPOL' (European Commission 2015a: 17).

With regard to selected states in the Mediterranean Middle East, Europe's attempts to mould border controls according to European rules and practices are more structured. For instance, the EU has sought to export its 'Integrated Border Management' system, which also deals with the movement of goods and customs checks, to Turkey and Lebanon (and more recently to Tunisia). The EU developed this system of border management, which entails the standardization of rules and practices governing border controls, in the context of the abolition of internal border checks within the Schengen area, the growing concern with transnational terrorism and irregular migration in the early 2000s, and the eastern enlargement of 2004. The objective of this border management system is to block the cross-border movement of unauthorized people and illicit goods while simultaneously facilitating the flow of goods and authorized people, thus boosting trade and the 'legal' movement of people. Borders should be 'open, but controlled and secure' (European Commission 2010: 14).

In the EU's attempts to export this model to third states, first tried in the Western Balkan region, there is a host of seemingly technical prescriptions governing how national borders should be managed, and by which agencies. For instance, border controls should occur through flexible managerial procedures; they should be based on data collection and regular risk analyses and operate in conjunction with the effective coordination of, and cooperation between, relevant ministries and border management agencies. Moreover, border management should be conducted by a specialized and professional body, preferably by civilian (as opposed to military) authorities (European Commission 2010: 41; also Okyay 2020).

With regard to Turkey, the EU had tried to export the underlying rules and practice of this border management model in the context of the pre-accession process, as was the case for all other EU membership candidate countries.³⁰ Extensive training on European practices and procedures was, of course, an important aspect of these attempts. This was particularly relevant when it came to the issue of controlling irregular migration through Turkey, an important transit country for migration to Europe. While controlling the

³⁰ In addition to the Western Balkans, the EU has been promoting its border management system to Central Asia and to the countries in its east, such as Moldova, Ukraine, and Russia (the latter kindly turned down the EU's offer to train its border agency personnel, though).

flow of undocumented migrants had not been Ankara's main priority, the European model of border management diverged from Turkey's concept and practice of border controls in several respects. Given its specific regional and geopolitical context, Turkey had retained a rather classical understanding of security threats, with the military taking the lead in controlling its borders (Okçay 2020). The aftermath of the Arab uprisings and the start of the civil war in Syria would considerably impact the EU's attempts to export its 'Integrated Border Management' system to Turkey, as discussed more fully in the next chapter .

In Lebanon, the EU's promotion of its Integrated Border Management model went hand in hand with the establishment of a new border data management system and training centre. Within this framework, the EU has also been training 'all Lebanese national security agencies' (European Commission 2017: 21) and organizing study visits to Europe, in addition to providing technical assistance and equipment to these agencies (European Commission 2017: 21). Certainly, the EU's training on border management in Lebanon is only one of the various security assistance programmes supported by a myriad of other external actors, including the US, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Qatar, Russia, and the United Kingdom. The intensity of this external involvement in Lebanon's security structure reflects a much broader geopolitical competition that has increased since the Arab uprisings, the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, and the emergence and temporary expansion of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. In any event, the EU's training programmes on lean procedures and practices for better interagency coordination, intra-agency cooperation, improved communication, and clear chains of commands, implemented by the ICMPD and beginning in 2013, conflicted somewhat with the fragmented, military-dominated, sectarian, and often chaotic reality of border management practices in Lebanon (Tholens 2017b). Even if it is possible to question the effectiveness of the EU's training programmes in both Turkey and Lebanon, it is important to note that the EU's efforts to export seemingly technocratic rules and procedures on border management to its southern periphery have far-ranging political implications. These rules and practices directly touch upon questions of governance and the domestic power configuration, which both derive from the involvement of specific agencies and groups in border control functions (Okçay 2020; Tholens 2017b).

Finally, in the case of the Palestinian Territories, the EU's training of security personnel has taken place in the context of the professed European objective to support security sector reform, state-building, and the two-state

solution to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Here, the Europeans have trained the civilian police of the Palestinian Authority, which exercises limited power across eighteen per cent of the West Bank, primarily in the major Palestinian cities. Established in January 2006, the police mission, named EUPOL COPPS,³¹ provides training to senior officials of the Palestinian Ministry of Interior and Palestinian civilian police officers ‘in accordance with the best European and international standards’ (European Union External Action—EUPOL COPPS, n.d.). While the United States has been in charge of training the various Palestinian security sector agencies, including the Presidential Guard, a ‘rule of law section’ was added in 2008 to the original European police training mission. EUPOL COPPS, which continues to this day and currently employs seventy-two staff from the EU member states, sets out to strengthen the civilian police within the Palestinian security architecture, advance procedures in respect of human rights and sensitive to questions of gender, and promote ‘effective and efficient frontline policing’ (European Union External Action—EUPOL COPPS, n.d.). The mission’s stated ultimate objective is to contribute to the safety and security of the Palestinian people, a goal that stands, however, in clear contrast to the actual state of affairs in the West Bank. While the Palestinian Authority has been cooperating with Israel on security and in jointly fighting Hamas for the benefit of the security of Israeli citizens (Klein 2010: 21 ff.), the EU’s training activities for Palestinian civil police have taken place within the rules and boundaries set by Israel’s protracted control over the West Bank (Khalil and Del Sarto 2015). Furthermore, EU training in the framework of EUPOL COPPS has sought to contribute to state-building where no Palestinian state exists—and where none is in sight (Bouris 2014; Del Sarto 2019).

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Our focus on trade relations and cooperation in the fields of migration, security, and border controls has shown that Europe’s engagement with its southern periphery is inseparable from concerted attempts by the bloc to shift southwards a variety of borders that are functional and, at times, territorial. Efforts to impose its order and preferences on neighbouring states are a central element of Europe’s *modus operandi*, which applies to all MENA states irrespective of the type of contractual relations that happen to be in place: it encompasses participants of the Barcelona Process and the ENP, non-participants, and pre-EU accession countries alike. In the realm of trade

³¹ The acronym stands for EU Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support.

relations, European policies have created a differentiated system of partial integration into the EU's Internal Market, and according to EU rules. The Europeans have provided extensive financial and technical assistance in support of the reform process they have prescribed. However, while primarily serving European economic interests, the EU's expansion of its economic order beyond the border has also aimed to restructure the borderlands and create a business-friendly environment for European companies there. In this process, Europe has relied on economic, political, and bureaucratic elites in the periphery, which it has nurtured through its policies. Another way to look at this process is to consider it as the rearticulation of the frontiers of capital accumulation through different forms of inclusion and exclusion from the EU's Internal Market. A combination of single states, large European companies, EU institutions, and MENA elites seem to drive this process (Smith 2015; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).

A similar picture emerges in the realm of migration and border controls. In the process of turning the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa into Europe's southern buffer zone, Europe has tried to co-opt the governments, security, and law enforcement agencies of MENA states. It has done so with the help of different incentives and rewards or by exerting political pressure. Alongside dubious agreements and arrangements, numerous training activities involving the EU and its agencies as well as single EU member states have created an opaque web of relations across Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East in these policy fields. Importantly, Europe's policies of externalizing its border controls with the objective of reducing unwanted migration and providing 'security' to its citizens have also entailed the delegation of the duty of international protection of refugees and migrants to a number of peripheral states with scandalous human rights records.

Europe's policies vis-à-vis the southern periphery, which translate into continuous and wide-ranging efforts to transfer the European model of governance, is clearly limited to the rules and practices that align with its agenda. The question of how these European 'channelled policy transfers' (Cassarino 2014) have affected the political and economic order in the states of the Mediterranean Middle East themselves is the focus of the next chapter.

Restructuring the Socio-Economic and Political Order in the Mediterranean Middle East

Having examined the ways in which Europe selectively exports its rules and practices to its southern borderlands, this chapter focuses on the impact of European policies on the political and socio-economic order of the states of the Mediterranean Middle East (MENA). The processes of restructuring experienced by the socio-economic and political fabrics of these states must be considered within the broader context of Western policies towards the region, including those adopted by international financial institutions and other countries such as the United States. Our investigation into the impact of European policies on MENA states will once again focus on the two most important dimensions of Europe–MENA relations, namely trade and economic relations on the one hand, and the universe of migration, security, and border controls on the other.

Trade, Internal Market, and Economic Relations

Gauging the socio-economic and political effects of Europe's trade policies on the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa in the twenty years following the launch of the 1995 Barcelona Process is not an easy undertaking. A few preliminary considerations are in order here. First, commercial relations between Europe and the Middle East did not begin with the Barcelona Process and its promise of 'shared prosperity'. Rather, they are characterized by a lengthy history of colonial exploitation and postcolonial manipulation, a point that this book has iterated several times. Colonial history and trade relations in the MENA region's post-independence period laid the foundations of distorted commercial ties, with MENA states importing high value-added manufactured goods and services from Europe while exporting raw materials, 'simple' labour-intensive or resource-based goods, and some

agricultural products to the European core. This is a pattern typical of imperial relations.

Second, what applies to the general picture of Europe–Middle East relations is still more accurate for European trade policies towards its periphery: after all, they have not taken place in a vacuum. The United States, the international financial institutions (principally, the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and the World Bank), European financial institutions, and others have maintained similar economic policies towards the region for several decades. Since the 1980s, the neoliberal model of development and its inherent prescriptions of liberalization, privatization, macroeconomic stabilization, and structural adjustment have become ubiquitous at a global level. Cooperation between the EU and multilateral institutions in funding a large number of socio-economic restructuring programmes in the region has reflected the hegemony of this model of economic development. It is therefore difficult to isolate the impact of European trade policies on the states of the Mediterranean Middle East. However, it is certainly possible to infer Europe’s contribution to specific outcomes, especially given that the EU is the region’s largest trading partner.

Third, the MENA states under consideration are a very heterogeneous group of countries. While the region remains fragmented, the level of intra-regional trade and political cooperation is notoriously low, despite the often-repeated mantra of Arab unity.¹ The Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa comprise small, medium, and large states in terms of their economies and populations, ranging from Lebanon, with fewer than six million citizens (excluding citizens living in the diaspora), Israel, with about nine million people, to Egypt, whose population reached 100 million in February 2020 (Walsh 2020). Turkey and Israel are advanced, diversified economies as well as OECD members, while the Arab states in the southern Mediterranean are categorized as developing countries: five are ranked in the lower-middle income bracket (Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories) and three others are in the higher-middle income bracket (Algeria, Lebanon, and Tunisia). Some states, such as Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Lebanon, are poor in natural resources but have vast labour forces; others, such as Algeria and Syria, are rich in both natural resources and labour. Libya, on the other hand, is rich in oil but, until the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, imported most of its labour (Cammett et al.

¹ In 2017, intra-regional trade among the states of the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa, Iraq, and the Gulf states accounted for a dismal 9 per cent of the total trade of these states, with the bulk being oil and related goods (Saidi and Prasad 2018: 14).

2015: 27). Some states or political entities rely extensively on oil-derived rents (such as Algeria and Libya), tolls (Egypt as regards the Suez Canal), or extensive foreign aid (as in the case of Israel, Egypt, and the Palestinian Territories). A number of economies, such as Turkey, Israel, and Tunisia, have developed a solid manufacturing basis or are moving in this direction, as is the case with Morocco, and some, such as Lebanon and Israel, have strong banking and service sectors. With the exceptions of Turkey, Lebanon, and Tunisia, all states in the region exhibit high population growth rates coupled with high fertility rates (Israel included). Relative poverty, large informal sectors, and low levels of education are additional features of many countries in the region—in Egypt, for instance, about one third of the adult population is illiterate. By contrast, Israel, Turkey, Tunisia, and Lebanon have high or relatively high levels of education. In addition to an extremely low female participation rate in the workforce,² high unemployment, particularly among young people, is a major problem across all the Arab states. In the entire MENA region (in this case also including Sudan, South Sudan, Iraq, Iran, and the Gulf countries), youth unemployment reaches an average of 30 per cent (Springborg 2020: 2). Diversity is also a feature of the region's political systems: some states are authoritarian presidential republics (Egypt, Algeria, and Syria), others autocratic monarchies (Morocco and Jordan), while still others have democratic—or reasonably democratic—systems, such as Tunisia post-2011, Israel, and Lebanon. Turkey used to be a parliamentary democracy with a strong autocratic tradition until it turned into an authoritarian system more recently.

Fourth, the relative institutional capacity, domestic political environment, and actions of MENA governments vis-à-vis prescribed economic and structural reforms also matter for our discussion (Saidi and Prasad 2018; Springborg 2020). Specific reforms may benefit particular developing countries at specific moments in time. However, the economic impacts of half-hearted or distorted structural reforms, let alone their political consequences, may range from irrelevant to downright counterproductive, particularly in the absence of functioning basic institutions. In other words, it matters whether it is a fairly democratic state with an advanced economy or a developing country with an authoritarian (and often corrupt) regime that is expected to implement far-reaching structural economic reforms. How these reforms are implemented matters a great deal as well. It is important to stress, however, that

² The entire MENA region (including the Gulf) has an average female labour force participation rate of 21 per cent—the lowest in the world (Abdellatif et al. 2019: 16).

economic reforms are never neutral or removed from politics. On the contrary, economic liberalization is generally conducted from above, particularly in authoritarian states, often allowing regimes to increase their control over state enterprises and private companies. Business elites and entrepreneurs often take part in this reform process because they or their firms stand to benefit from subsidies, tax breaks, business opportunities, and political favours (Cassarino 1999; Hibou and Hulsey 2006; Guazzone and Pioppi 2009a).

A final problem in assessing the effects of Europe's economic policy on its southern periphery lies in the peculiarities of the economic literature. While an overabundance of studies on different political aspects of Euro-Mediterranean relations exists, research into the concrete effects of trade relations and regulatory reforms is less common. What is more, most of the existing economic research, some of it commissioned or funded by Brussels, has evaluated the *potential trade effects* resulting from anticipated agreements or reforms. These studies usually employ different economic simulation models, such as computable general equilibrium or multimarket partial equilibrium models, in order to assess trade potentials, which may or may not actually materialize. Moreover, it has been noted that some studies base their findings on outdated data (Gasiorek and Mouley 2019), a problem that is also related to a general scarcity of quality data and statistics from the region. The fact that different authors and institutions use diverging definitions of the Middle East or MENA states in their studies—sometimes including Mauretania, Djibouti, Israel, Turkey, the Gulf States, Iran, Yemen, Sudan, and South Sudan, and sometimes not—complicates matters even further. Moreover, while *ex post* studies are rare, the literature tends to disregard alternative arrangements that MENA states could adopt instead of EU-prescribed agreements (Hoekman 2018: 375). Equally important, impact assessment studies sometimes ignore institutional factors, along with the wider socio-economic and political implications of economic reforms (Crescenzi and Petrakos 2016: 582).

To make matters worse, the discipline of economics has remained attached to neoliberal orthodoxy and the myth of trickle-down economics for far too long (Stiglitz 2018: 19; 2019). It has stubbornly continued to focus on GDP as the key macroeconomic indicator in measuring development while ignoring the distribution of wealth within countries, specific patterns of trade dependence, the degree of economic discontent among populations (Stiglitz et al. 2019), or gender-based inequalities for that matter. For all these reasons, the contribution of large parts of the economic literature on the impact of

European trade policies on the socio-economic and political order of MENA states has remained of limited value, albeit with some notable exceptions.³

Trade Relations: The General Picture

With these limitations in mind, let us first consider the general picture of trade relations between the EU and the MENA states covered by the EMP and the Neighbourhood Policy (plus EU candidate country Turkey), and their development between 1995 and 2015. A few points deserve attention. First, at the risk of being repetitive, is the fact that the EU remains the major trading partner of all the MENA states. For Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria in particular, the EU accounts for a majority of total trade in goods, that is, when imports and exports are combined (Eurostat 2020). Turkey, which is usually not included in the statistics of EU–MENA trade flows provided by Eurostat (the European Statistical Office of the EU), has the largest trade volume with the European bloc of all the states under consideration here. The total value of EU–Turkey trade amounted to around €145 billion in 2015. By comparison, the volume of goods traded by the other MENA states with the EU in 2015 ranges between a meagre €200 million for the Palestinian Territories and €37 billion for Algeria.⁴

Second, between 1995 and 2015, the total trade volume between Europe and its southern neighbourhood constantly increased. This was not initially the case, however. At first, the terms of trade for MENA states actually worsened (Joffé 1998), and in the first ten years following the launch of the EMP (1995–2005), there was no compelling evidence that the Association Agreements had had a significant positive impact on MENA economies. On the contrary, overall, non-oil growth was actually lower between 1995 and 2005 than it had been in the first half of the 1990s. An ever-growing labour force continued to exceed employment in the majority of MENA countries that had signed up to the EMP, leading to stagnant or rising levels of unemployment (Hoekman 2005: 12–13). In the same vein, EU–MENA trade volumes have not grown consistently in recent decades, and actually declined overall between 1995 and 2009. Commercial exchange began increasing

³ The FEMISE network of academic institutes across the Euro-Mediterranean area (www.femise.org) generally produces good (and accessible for non-economists) papers on pertinent economic topics in Euro–MENA relations.

⁴ Unless otherwise stated, all figures on trade volumes and trade flows reported here are from Eurostat and the European Commission's Directorate General for Trade (DG Trade).

between 2000 and 2005 (Galal and Reiffers 2010: 3–4), coinciding with the accelerated dismantlement of duties on European imports by MENA states.⁵ It should be noted here that the European bloc had begun eliminating most tariffs on imported industrial goods from MENA states much earlier, that is, from the late 1970s onwards, and completed this process when the bilateral trade agreements entered into force. The 2008–2009 financial crisis, which affected the increasingly globalized MENA economies as well, led to a temporary reduction in trade between the two sides, which eventually returned to comparable volumes some years later. Importantly, most MENA economies derived little benefit from the dismantling of tariffs in their trading with the European bloc. While non-tariff barriers to trade and logistics remained a problem, observers have remarked that there had not been a substantial increase in the aggregate productivity of these countries (Ghoneim et al. 2012: 32–33; Galal and Reiffers 2014: 20).

A third observation is that the basic patterns of commercial relations between Europe and its southern periphery have remained unchanged in the period under consideration—and actually to this day. Europe continues to export machinery, vehicles, chemicals, and sophisticated manufactured goods to the MENA region, while in return, it imports raw materials, mineral fuels and lubricants, foodstuffs, and tobacco, as well as simple manufactured goods, such as plastics and rubber products. Hydrocarbons from Algeria, Libya, and, to a lesser extent, Egypt and Syria and phosphates from Morocco figure prominently in EU–MENA commercial ties; in the case of Algeria, hydrocarbons account for over 95 per cent of the value of total Algerian exports to the EU (European Commission DG Trade 2019b). Equally noteworthy is the significant amount of food that MENA states import from Europe, mostly in the form of cereals and sugar. The EU’s significant agricultural goods trade surplus with the MENA states has been criticized by the European Parliament (2013), which called on Brussels’ decision makers to make ‘additional efforts’ in this sensitive area.

Further examination of these core–periphery trading patterns shows that, among the products that MENA states export to Europe, the labour-intensive textile and clothing sectors have become increasingly important. This is particularly true of Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Turkey. Once the EU had

⁵ MENA states had a transition period of twelve to fifteen years to dismantle their import duties on European imports after the entering into force of their trade agreement. Tunisia eliminated all import duties on European industrial products by 2008; Morocco did the same by 2012, and Lebanon by 2015. Egypt and Algeria, which had asked for delays, had not completed this process by 2019, and neither had the Palestinian Territories (European Commission 2019d: 123–167).

begun to reduce and eventually eliminate the tariffs it had historically applied to textiles and garments from the mid-1990s onwards, these states gradually began to increase their textile exports and record a trade surplus vis-à-vis the EU in the time span under consideration.⁶ Similarly revealing are the patterns of trade in services, a sector that has witnessed some liberalization in recent decades. In general, MENA states export low levels of services to the EU, which usually records large trade surpluses with the MENA states in areas such as telecommunications. The exceptions to this pattern are Turkey and Israel: in 2015, Turkey traded the value of €28.6 billion in services with the EU, with the European bloc recording a negative balance of €4 billion in this sector. As for Israel, the overall trade volume in services amounted to €12 billion in 2016, with the EU recording a trade surplus of (only) €2 billion. For both countries, and even more so for Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Lebanon, tourism has also figured prominently in the exchange of services with Europe. Tourism, however, is notoriously vulnerable to fluctuation, as the result of events including political instability or terrorist attacks. Altogether, then, a hyper-specialization in oil products, agriculture, and specific manufactured products, such as textiles and clothing, and a lack of diversification has defined the composition of the goods exported by MENA states to Europe. A lack of innovation in production and export processes has also continued to mark the economies of most Arab MENA states (Galal and Reiffers 2010: 72; Saidi and Prasad 2018).

Finally, with the exception of hydrocarbon-exporting Algeria (and pre-civil war Libya and Syria), all MENA states have recorded significant trade deficits with the EU in the time period under consideration.⁷ What is more, trade deficits vis-à-vis Europe have actually increased since the signing of the trade agreements within the EMP (European Commission 2019d: 123–167), and actually ever since, as shown in table 5.1. For trade in goods with the European Union, the accumulated trade deficit of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, the Palestinian Territories, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey amounted to around €25 billion in 2015, with the trade deficit of Turkey alone increasing from €5.8 billion in 2007 to €13.3 billion in 2015.⁸

⁶ The implications of the ending of the Multifibre Agreement in 1994, under which industrial countries had imposed quota restrictions on textile and clothing exports from developing countries, were mixed for the textile industry of MENA countries, as they would subsequently face a growing competition in this sector from labour-abundant countries in Asia.

⁷ Algeria recorded its first negative trade balance with the EU in 2015, as a result of the drop in international oil prices that had started in the second half of 2014.

⁸ According to calculations based on the data from Eurostat. The 2015 data for Libya was not available.

Table 5.1 EU trade with MENA countries, 2008, 2013, and 2018

In mio Euro

	Exports			Imports			Trade balance		
	2008	2013	2018	2008	2013	2018	2008	2013	2018
EU-28¹	1 309 130	1 736 412	1 957 845	1 585 410	1 686 869	1 980 760	-276 281	49 544	-22 915
Algeria	53 709	49 487	35 357	27 113	41 438	39 809	26 596	8 049	-4 452
Egypt	17 803	21 469	24 843	32 196	45 739	69 462	-14 393	-24 271	-44 619
Israel	41 925	50 278	52 462	44 546	54 198	64 874	-2 621	-3 920	-12 412
Jordan	5 709	5 966	5 503	12 223	16 639	14 420	-6 514	-10 672	-8 917
Lebanon²	1 673			6 835			-5 163		
Libya³	30 413	13 368	8 826	6 221	13 609	9 440	24 192	-241	-614
Morocco⁴	13 718	16 585	24 842	28 714	34 247	43 422	-14 996	-17 663	-18 580
Palestine⁵	384	678	977	2 382	3 888	5 528	-1 999	-3 210	-4 551
Tunisia	13 103	13 037	13 112	16 763	18 594	19 134	-3 661	-5 557	-6 023

¹ Extra-EU-28 trade (trade with non-member countries).² 2007 instead of 2008.³ 2014 instead of 2013. 2016 instead of 2018.⁴ 2018: break in series caused by the adoption of the general system of trade.⁵ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ext_It_intratrd)

Of course, trade deficits between two trading partners are not necessarily a problem: a trade deficit recorded with one trading partner may be counterbalanced by a trade surplus with another country (Stiglitz 2018: 24). But although the Mediterranean Middle East increased the volume of exported goods to both the EU and the rest of the world in the 2000s,⁹ MENA economies—with the exception of hydrocarbon-exporting countries—recorded a significant and growing overall deficit in their balance of trade, including towards the rest of the world (Galal and Reiffers 2011: 73; Galal and Reiffers 2014: 20). In order to reduce these deficits, MENA states are dependent on tourism and the remittance of migrants. Furthermore, the negative trade balances of most MENA countries entail that they remain highly dependent on external demand for their products, especially from their largest trading partner, the EU (see also Hanieh 2013: 42–43). For instance, the 2008–2009 economic crisis reduced the EU’s demand for goods from the economies in its southern periphery, thus contributing to a growing trade deficit in most MENA states (Galal and Reiffers 2011: 74). Overall, Morocco and Tunisia are most dependent on commercial ties with the EU: between 55 and 75 per cent of their exports are destined for the European bloc.

Certainly, the trade and reform regime promoted by the EU (and other external actors) vis-à-vis the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa promised to stimulate economic and institutional development through liberalized trade and financial support. These reforms were intended to increase economic growth, strengthen domestic institutions, and facilitate political reform in Europe’s southern periphery. But once MENA states had begun to record a growing exchange of goods with Europe, the EU stood to benefit from this development more than did the MENA states. As Tobias Schumacher (2004: 7) described this pattern of EU–MENA trade relations in 2004, the EU ‘once again found a way to use both the old cooperation agreements and the new trade regimes to its own advantage’. Yet, as will be discussed next, the EU’s attempts to export its economic order beyond the border would result in a number of far less positive results as well.

Crony Capitalism

From the early or mid-1980s onwards, most Arab MENA states began to adopt structural adjustment programmes according to a neoliberal

⁹ While including Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen in their definition of the MENA region, Saidi and Prasad (2018: 19–20) note that there has been a significant shift in the region’s trade patterns towards Asia over the past few decades.

development model, often in order to fulfil the conditions for urgently needed IMF loans. Egypt, which had actually started the process of opening the economy to private investment already in the mid-1970s under Anwar al-Sadat's *infitah* (opening) policy, adopted structural adjustment programmes in the 1990s (Cammatt et al. 2015: 49). By the mid-1990s, most Arab states in the southern Mediterranean had thus gradually shifted to a pro-market economic policy. While modifying the social contract based on the authoritarian bargain, the state gradually withdrew from the provision of basic social services, such as health and education, and assigned a greater role to the private sector. In purely macroeconomic terms, these reforms evinced some positive results from the early 2000s onwards, until the 2008 global financial crisis started hitting MENA economies: between 2004 and 2008, the MENA region recorded average GDP per capita growth of close to 4 per cent, as well as an overall reduction in absolute poverty (Galal et al. 2017: 66). Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan saw particularly strong increases in GDP per capita, amounting to an average of 5 per cent between 2003 and 2008 (Hanieh 2013: 73). However, in the absence of substantive political reforms during this period, the gradual privatization and liberalization of the economy resulted in a peculiar restructuring of economic and political power. Business people linked to political elites appropriated public sector assets and turned them into private monopolies, while property rights remained unchanged (Schumacher 2004; Heydemann 2004a; Guazzone and Pioppi 2009a; 2009b). While Arab regimes shifted their attention to urban elites, traditional constituencies such as industrial and agrarian workers, on whose support the authoritarian rulers of many Arab MENA states had historically relied, became politically marginalized. The phenomenon of crony capitalism accelerated in particular during the 2000s (Cammatt et al. 2015: 30).

Egypt under Hosni Mubarak and Tunisia under Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali were prime examples of this development. In Egypt, around thirty business people (for the most part, men) with high-level political connections, most of whom also occupied positions in the political structure, controlled around 500 firms in the mid-2000s (Diwan et al. 2014). By the end of the decade, these companies earned 60 per cent of the overall profit in the sectors they operated while only employing approximately one-tenth of the work force (Galal et al. 2017: 107). At the same time as subsidizing their cronies, the ruling regimes erected barriers such as mandatory government licenses to prevent opponents from accessing the lucrative business opportunities offered by privatization and finance reforms. In this way, tiny cliques of business and political elites profited from privatization and large development projects in key sectors of

the economy. These spanned from housing and construction to the oil and gas sectors, tourism, banking, mining, telecommunications, manufacturing, and agribusiness, as well the local distribution of international consumer brands (Henry and Springborg 2010).

As Ben Ali's extended family 'monopolized business opportunities and even expropriated the real estate and business holdings of wealthy elites' (Diwan et al. 2014: 3), Tunisia came to present a similar picture. In other words, the Tunisian president used economic liberalization reforms for the express purpose of redistributing profits and privileges to his family, that of his wife, and their clientelist networks, which would become immensely rich and powerful. When, in the wake of the 2011 uprisings, the assets of Ben Ali and his cronies were expropriated, their wealth was estimated at a staggering one-quarter of Tunisia's GDP. In 2010, the approximately 400 companies controlled by this clique of about a hundred individuals accounted for 21 per cent of all net private sector profits, despite employing barely 1 per cent of the work force (Galal et al. 2017: 107; also Heydemann 2004b).

While similar developments marked other authoritarian MENA countries, what is noteworthy is that in the years preceding the 2011 uprisings, the EU had praised Egypt and Tunisia as exemplary models of economic reform and good economic governance. Certainly, the Arab Gulf states had also started to finance neoliberal reforms in the Mediterranean Middle East before the upheavals; their involvement would increase massively after 2011 (Hanieh 2013; Khalifa Isaac 2014). However, Europe had been the largest source of financial and technical assistance to Tunisia prior to the Arab uprisings and a major provider of economic aid to Egypt pre-2011.¹⁰ The EU was also the biggest investor in Egypt and the first foreign investor in Tunisia, accounting for over 85 per cent of foreign direct investment in that country (European Commission 2019d: 159, 170). As well as providing loans, the Europeans had also been training the government officials and business elites of these states in the implementation of an EU-friendly, market- and export-oriented economic model through the various programmes and tools explored in the previous chapter. In fact, in their efforts to restructure the borderlands, the Europeans relied on these clientelist networks, which acted as conveyor belts for the European (and global) economic order.

¹⁰ Egypt is also the second largest non-NATO recipient of US military aid after Israel. According to the U.S. Department of State (2019), US military aid amounts to over 1 billion USD a year since 1980; US economic aid to Egypt adds another 750 million USD annually.

This observation applies, for instance, to the banking sector, which plays an important role in economic development. Since state-owned banks usually occupy an important position and newly founded private banks often belong to political cronies in MENA economies, access to bank credit is typically restricted to the regime's clientele. Banking sector reform was thus deemed essential to address this problem. Yet within the broader framework of financial sector reform under World Bank guidance, the banking sector regulation specifically promoted by the EU in Egypt before the uprisings only added fuel to the fire. Further strengthening the reach of the 'networks of privilege' (Heydemann 2004a) and the power of the 'predatory oligarchy' (Roccu 2015: 10), these regulations resulted in evermore biased access to finance, thereby contributing to increasing levels of inequality (Roccu 2018b: 51). Of course, the Egyptian government is just as responsible for this outcome as the international financial institutions and the EU (Herrera et al. 2012; Roccu 2018b). However, it must be noted that the privatization of major Egyptian banks paved the way for the takeover of the Bank of Alexandria, one of the four largest Egyptian banks, by the Italian Intesa-San Paolo, which acquired 80 per cent of the Egyptian bank's equity in 2006 (Roccu 2015). European companies also benefited from privatization in the Egyptian telecommunications sector, where Orange and Vodafone, for example, had maintained strong positions since the 1990s (Roccu 2015). The restructuring of ruling regime coalitions to the benefit of crony capitalists and foreign capital has similarly defined developments in Morocco, Lebanon, and Turkey in recent decades (Diwan et al. 2019).

In general, the EU-supported policies of privatization and opening up to foreign investments and ownership offered tempting opportunities to predominantly French, Spanish, Italian, and German conglomerates vying to invest in the MENA region. Between 2003 and 2008, they acquired newly privatized assets in the banking, public infrastructure, real estate, food and textile industries, targeting in particular Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt (Hanieh 2013: 42–43; 59). In other words, as EU-trained bureaucrats and elites in MENA states forged close links with foreign companies and institutions principally located in Europe (Cavatorta and Haugbølle 2012; Kandil 2012), European capital supported and profited from the clientelist networks that had emerged in MENA countries.

A process in which capital and political power accumulated in the hands of a few also took place in the Palestinian Territories. Although the conditions of Palestinian socio-economic development have been defined by persistent Israeli occupation and the extensive foreign aid provided by an international

community of donors, the accumulation of local and expatriate Palestinian, Israeli, and foreign capital ‘helped to consolidate a strata [sic] of political and economic elites in the West Bank tied into the political economy of neoliberal statebuilding itself’ (Haddad 2018: 263, also Hanieh 2013: ch. 5). As for Israel, the process of privatizing state-owned assets that started in the mid-1980s led to a situation in which some twenty companies, nearly all of them family businesses, controlled a majority of public firms and about half of the market share by 2009 (Doron 2010).

Syria reflected this broader neoliberal trend as well, although differed in some crucial aspects. Although the Syrian regime negotiated for years with the EU on a bilateral Association Agreement that was eventually signed in 2009 but never entered into force, the EU funded projects throughout this period in support of far-reaching reforms in a variety of sectors, including banking, administration, education, and infrastructure. While the Association Agreement provided for an unqualified opening of Syria’s economy, the new Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, who had come to power in 2000 after the death of his father, appeared to share—at least, to a certain extent—the EU’s faith in the utility of economic liberalization and neoliberal reforms (Dostal and Zorob 2009; Hinnebusch 2020). In the case of Syria, however, most of the foreign investment that started to flow into the country came from the Arab Gulf monarchies, in part because the EU–Syrian trade agreement was never implemented. European companies were thus unable to secure the same favourable market positions in Syria as in other states of the Mediterranean Middle East. However, the result of socio-economic restructuring was the same: the strengthening of crony capitalism centred around the Assad family and their friends. The majority of the foreign capital was ‘invested in real estate, hotels, and other tertiary sectors, encouraging conspicuous consumption for the rich, driving up property prices for the middle class, and generating little new employment’ (Hinnebusch 2020: 200).

Rising Inequalities and Unemployment

In recent decades, most states in the Mediterranean Middle East recorded growing inequalities within their societies. As the rise of crony capitalism occurred in parallel with a significant withdrawal of the state from the provision of basic services to their population, neoliberal restructuring under persistent authoritarian rule resulted in a massive reduction of public investments in services and infrastructure (Cammatt et al. 2015: 60–65; Galal et al.

2017: 100–101). MENA governments frequently cut public expenditures in order to compensate for the considerable loss of revenues resulting from the gradual reduction of tariffs on imported goods, such as those originating in the EU with respect to the bilateral trade agreements. The reduced spending on public services typically affected the poorer segments of society, while elites continued to enjoy luxury housing, first-rate medical services, and top-notch education for their offspring. The pervasive corruption at all levels of the political and social structure which would become so characteristic of many MENA states meant that the rich could pay bribes or use connections to high places, or *wasta*, to obtain better services and protection, while the have-nots were excluded.

The reduction in public spending also led to repeated cuts to public sector wages and pensions while the public sector nevertheless continued to be grossly inflated in most MENA countries, particularly in the Arab states. For example, at the end of the 2000s, the public administrations in Egypt and Tunisia employed around 20 to 25 per cent of the labour force, yet Egypt was spending only about 7 per cent of its GDP on the salaries of public officials, and Tunisia only one-tenth of its GDP (Galal et al. 2017: 101). Some countries in the region, particularly the lower-income economies, also further reduced their provision of basic social services as well as subsidies on basic foodstuffs. This even took place in Syria, where the ruling Baath party had drawn a large part of its (alleged) popular legitimacy from the provision of subsidized basic commodities and the support of poor rural constituencies (Hanieh 2013, ch. 6 and 7; Hinnebusch 2020: 200). However, public spending on the military and the internal security apparatus remained very high in most MENA states. For example, according to the database of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), in 2015 Lebanon spent an estimated 16.8 per cent of its government expenditures on defence, Israel's defence budget amounted to 14.6 per cent of its public spending, and Algeria spent 13.7 per cent of its public expenditures on defence. The figures are 12.8 per cent for Jordan and 10.5 per cent for Morocco respectively.¹¹ Robert Springborg (2020: 10, 20) notes that the entire MENA region (including the Arab peninsula, Iran, Sudan, and South Sudan according to his definition) records the triple of the global average of defence spending. Thus, by the time the Arab uprisings began, the 'inheritance of the past included an overstuffed and underpaid civil service, poor quality services—especially for the poor, an oversized and poor quality university system, large subsidies to the middle and upper classes,

¹¹ SIPRI's Military Expenditure Database is available at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>

[and] low levels of public investment in infrastructure' (Galal and Reiffers 2010: 102).

With poverty persisting or even increasing in the region (depending on how poverty is measured),¹² income inequality rose in most MENA states in the time period under consideration, particularly in Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia (Cammatt et al. 2015: 68). Labour market deregulation—an additional iron-clad principle of neoliberal restructuring—and the resulting decline in wages and working conditions further contributed to rising inequalities (Hanieh 2013: 58–61). While acknowledging the well-known scarcity of truly reliable data and the difficulties in assessing different types of inequality, Thomas Piketty and his colleagues estimate that the overall inequality level in the Middle East has thus far been widely underestimated. Based on a new set of data and a different methodology, the authors argue that income inequality in the Middle East (including the Gulf monarchies, Yemen, and Iran but excluding the Maghreb and Israel) is one of the highest in the world (Alvaredo et al. 2017; 2018: 131–137).¹³ According to the World Inequality Database (WID n.d.), the top 1 per cent of the population earned 26.4 per cent of the national income in the Middle East and North Africa in 2016.¹⁴ Moreover, almost 70 per cent of the national income went to the top 10 per cent of the population whereas the bottom 50 per cent earned a meagre 9.6 per cent of the national income (WID n.d.).

When it comes to single countries in the Mediterranean Middle East, the richest 10 per cent of Lebanon's population earned around 57 per cent of the national income and the bottom 50 per cent only 10.7 per cent in 2014. In the Palestinian Territories, around 51 per cent of the national income was held by the top 10 per cent of the population while the bottom 50 per cent only earned 13 per cent. Turkey has also witnessed an extremely uneven distribution of the national income, with the top 10 per cent of the population earning 54 per cent of the national income in 2016 and the bottom 50 per cent of the population only 15 per cent. Other MENA countries have not performed significantly better, with the top ten per cent holding 48.8 per cent of the national income in Morocco in 2016; 49 per cent in Egypt and Syria; and 41 per cent in Tunisia (WID n.d.). While Algeria is the only MENA country

¹² If the poverty line is drawn at USD 1.25 at purchasing power parity per day, the poverty rate in the Mediterranean Middle East is beyond 2 per cent of the population. By raising the poverty line to USD 2 per day, the share of poor people rises to over 10 per cent, or more. The use of specific poverty lines for each country takes the average proportion of poor people in the region up to over 15 per cent (Galal and Reiffers 2014: xi; Cammatt et al. 2015: 66)

¹³ The data refer to pre-tax income, which may be problematic, as the authors acknowledge.

¹⁴ This dataset includes the Maghreb, the Gulf States, and Turkey.

where income inequalities are not that glaring—the top 10 per cent earned about 37 per cent of the national income and the bottom 50 per cent around 21 per cent, over the last three decades inequalities have increased in most countries in the region or stabilized at extremely high levels (WID n.d.).

High levels of unemployment, particularly among young people, remain a major problem in most Arab states (Springborg 2020). In Egypt alone, where a fertility rate of 3.5 children per woman adds a staggering one million new citizens every six months to the population, an estimated 700,000 new jobs are needed each year for young Egyptians entering the labour market (Walsh 2020)—a colossal task. In Tunisia, the poster child of neoliberal development in the region, official figures put the unemployment rate at between 14 and 17 per cent before the 2011 revolution, although unofficial sources estimated these rates to be close to 22 per cent for the general population and over 40 per cent for Tunisia's youth (Murphy 2011: 300). Similarly, in Morocco, youth unemployment was estimated at 19 per cent on average in 2015 but reached almost 33 per cent in urban areas (Nations Unies, Commission économique pour l'Afrique 2015: 13). To a large extent, soaring unemployment rates are the product of high fertility rates and the consequent elevated levels of population growth, together with the inability of MENA economies to meet the rising demand for employment. Unsurprisingly, however, the opening up of domestic markets to competition with European industrial products over the last decades has only exacerbated this problem. As Stiglitz (2018: 8) has noted, the mantra that trade creates jobs is a 'little white lie', particularly in the short and medium term. Rising volumes of global trade have certainly contributed to the reduction of extreme poverty worldwide. But enhanced trade does not only produce winners. In national economies, it increases unemployment in those sectors where domestic production is replaced by competitive imports. Although it is expected that, over time, trade will stimulate production, thus creating new employment opportunities in sectors of the national economy that have become competitive, there is an urgent need for policies that address the negative social effects in the short- and medium term to mitigate the negative effects of trade liberalization.

In 2007, an EU-funded study on the sustainability of the Euro-Mediterranean trade agreements and the envisioned but unrealized Euro-Mediterranean free trade area reached precisely these conclusions. While they evaluated the overall effects of enhanced trade as beneficial for both sides, the authors also stressed that, with regard to employment in the 'southern Mediterranean', the 'net short term impact in the absence of effective mitigation is assessed to be *significantly negative*' (SIA-EMFTA Consortium

2007: 16; italics added). As regards poverty, the study's verdict is similarly gloomy: in the absence of mitigating policies, the short-term impact of industrial liberalization is deemed to be 'significantly adverse' (SIA-EMFTA: 17).

Hence all the EU-funded training activities in support of the adverse effects on the restructuring of MENA economies, aimed at increasing the competitiveness of small- and medium-sized enterprises, providing adequate vocational training, increasing employment, and so forth, had only a marginal effect, if any at all. In fact, it can be argued that these measures may have increased the attractiveness of cheap MENA workforce for labour-intensive employment in Europe's southern periphery without altering the fundamental pattern of trade relations between the two sides. In this context, the European Commission praised the presence of over 3000 EU companies in Tunisia employing around 327,000 persons in 2015 (European Commission 2019d: 170). These companies certainly benefit from Tunisia's far-reaching alignment of its trade-related rules and standards with those of the EU, as attested to by the European Commission (170). Obviously, they profit from the cheap labour force and the lower working and environmental standards there as well. Focusing on the production sites of European luxury brands in North Africa, and here especially in Tunisia and Morocco, an inquiry by the Italian investigative journalism programme *Report* (RAI 3) revealed in 2018 that the practices of these labour-intensive factories for extravagant garments did not respect the minimum standards to ensure the health and safety of their employees, let alone European environmental standards. For example, local employees were working with dangerous chemicals without any protective gear in the manual sandblasting process of denim garments. This procedure, which lends jeans a fashionable pre-worn look, is prohibited in Europe due to the high health risks associated with it (Report 2018). While these findings can certainly not be generalized, it is reasonable to conclude that the EU's various exercises in seeking to selectively export its economic rules and practices, such as through Twinning and TAIEX training exercises, depict economic development and employment as local capacity development. This assessment is, however, totally removed from the structural conditions prevailing in Europe–Middle East relations as well as in the MENA states themselves (İşleyen 2015: 686; also Serres 2016).

Regional Disparities

The rising inequalities in the Mediterranean Middle East have a strong geographical dimension. Peripheral regions with little political clout were

affected disproportionately by the state's slashing of public spending and the unequal distribution of benefits and wealth. Data suggest that living standards are the lowest and inequalities the highest in rural and marginalized areas throughout the Mediterranean Middle East. Importantly, in the time period between 2000 and 2010 alone, regional inequalities within MENA countries, with the exception of Israel, have massively increased, with less developed areas struggling to keep up with the metropolitan centres that dominate national economies (Petraikos et al. 2013). In turn, it is probably no coincidence that in some countries, specifically Tunisia and Syria, these marginalized areas corresponded to the locations where the Arab uprisings began (Sidi Bouzid in western Tunisia and Daraa in Syria) or where opposition to the regime has been fiercest (Homs, Idlib, and Aleppo in Syria; the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt) (Galal et al. 2017: 100–101).

It is significant in our context that regional disparities have tended to increase during periods of economic expansion and decrease during periods of slow or stagnant economic growth (Crescenzi and Petraikos 2016). This point reinforces the observation made earlier that increasing trade volumes and a greater mobility of capital per se are not able to create economic growth for all sectors and geographical areas within a national economy. From this vantage point, the form of EU–MENA trade relations that are in place are not helpful for the peripheral regions, which benefit far less from the growing integration of MENA states into the EU market than the region's economic cores. What is more, these processes have actually exerted enormous pressure on the productive base of disadvantaged areas (Crescenzi and Petraikos 2016: 587–588), leading to their further marginalization. In the absence of effective and precisely targeted supporting policies, the EU's trade policies towards its southern periphery have thus reinforced regional inequalities within MENA states.

The Emergence of Dual Agricultural Systems and Rural Poverty

Considering the scarcity of arable land and water in the region and constant population growth, agriculture is of strategic importance in the Middle East and North Africa. Although the share of this sector to national economies is relatively limited (less than 15 per cent on average), farming and food processing employ a high number of people in the region. In the low-income and middle-income economies, an average of 50 per cent of the total labour force

work in agriculture (Nin-Pratt et al. 2018: 9). Of equal significance is the fact that the agricultural sector is often the site of persistent poverty and geographical disparities within MENA states. In Egypt, for example, 34 per cent of Egyptians living in the rural area of Upper Egypt fall under the lower poverty line of \$1 per day (Cammett et al. 2015: 67). Of the four million Moroccans living on less than \$1.90 per day, 75 per cent are rural dwellers (Benamar 2020). In Tunisia, where overall poverty rates have fallen considerably in recent decades, poverty remains concentrated in the countryside. In Syria, a succession of droughts that began in 2002 had a devastating effect on the rural areas in the country's east, prompting migration to the cities of Aleppo, Homs, and Damascus (Benamar 2020). In this context, it is important to stress that in spite of a scarcity of available data, at a global level rural female-headed households are more likely to be poor than urban female-headed households, and the labour burden of rural women usually exceeds that of men as it includes a higher proportion of unpaid responsibilities related to collecting fuel and water and preparing food (FAO 2011: 16–17; 31). Furthermore, the region remains highly dependent on food imports. All Arab states of the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa record the greatest food deficit of all regions in the world in terms of important grains (Galal and Reiffers 2014: 28–29). Coupled to fluctuating, and in the past decades, often rising food prices on the international markets, together with changing climatic conditions, this dependency has a particular negative effect on populations living in poverty.

While continuing to subsidize and protect its own agricultural sector from fair competition from the south, the EU's gradual—if hesitant—trade liberalization of food trade included reductions in some seasonal restrictions and quotas previously applied to food imports from the Middle East and North Africa. From the mid-2000s onwards, Brussels was insistent that, in order to facilitate agricultural trade, MENA countries would have to eliminate various non-tariff barriers to trade, such as lower food standards and different regulations that were incompatible with EU legislation. Furthermore, European policymakers encouraged their counterparts in the Mediterranean Middle East to increase private investment in local agricultural businesses, privatize both agricultural state companies and farmland on a large scale, and engage in land reclamation schemes. Farmers and regulatory bodies in Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt received EU-funded training on how to modernize and privatize food production while aligning their food safety standards with European rules. National agricultural development strategies adopted in Morocco and Egypt from the mid-2000s onwards reflected these principles.

As a result, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt (as well as Israel) considerably increased their food exports to Europe between 2003 and 2015, with Morocco becoming the largest exporter of vegetables to the EU of all the MENA states considered here (European Commission 2019d: 158). However, the liberalization of trade in this sector and the EU's highly selective transfer of its rules and practices did not exactly foster sustainable agricultural development (Kourtelis 2018: 25–26). In fact, the region's large farmers exporting their produce and large (and usually well-connected) agribusiness profited most from the liberalization of agricultural trade. Indeed, only large landowners and investors could afford the costs of implementing reforms that would allow them to align their agricultural production with European sanitary and phytosanitary standards, purchase capital-intensive machinery, and adopt new technologies to increase agricultural output. Small farmers producing for the domestic market did not draw any benefits from European policies and were in many cases further marginalized.

While pushing for the production of specific agricultural products, such as olives and figs in Tunisia, Europe also encouraged the production of cash crops to secure foreign exchange and food crops specifically destined for international markets (Kourtelis 2015; 2018: 35)—chiefly, the European one. Off-season timetables and quotas thus ensure European consumers year-around access to fresh fruit and vegetables, together with more 'exotic' products such as dates and pistachios, without seriously competing with agricultural production from within the EU.

Europe's overall strategy, and the consequent outcomes of this strategy, are much in line with the traditional (and, in hindsight, often detrimental) prescriptions for agricultural reforms in developing countries advanced by the international financial institutions, particularly the IMF (Bush 2007). These Western-crafted strategies emphasize the need for high-value agricultural production and industrialization, and deem a growing number of people moving out of the agricultural sector and into other low-wage jobs to be a temporary but necessary evil in return for long-term economic benefit.

MENA states certainly face many disadvantages when it comes to food production, including poor environmental conditions and rapid population growth. These factors largely explain the region's high and ever-growing dependency on cereal imports—as mentioned earlier, the food import bill across the Middle East and North Africa is the largest in the world, with Egypt remaining the largest importer of wheat globally (Nin-Pratt et al. 2018: 21). While high food import dependency does not necessarily equal food

insecurity,¹⁵ it is important to note that the majority of the rural population in the Mediterranean Middle East has not benefited significantly from agricultural sector reform. Rural poverty has not been alleviated, with a number of governments in the region continuing to provide subsidies for basic food and to poor households.

While this outcome is as much a failure of past and present agricultural policies of MENA governments, Europe had its part to play in the emergence of a dual agricultural market in the Arab Mediterranean Middle East (Kourtelis 2015). In this dual system, the same crony capitalists and their political allies often succeeded in capturing both the export-oriented agribusiness and the licencing business for imports. This was conspicuously the case in Tunisia during the rule of Ben Ali, when the president's extended family and their associates controlled the production or import of sugar, grains, vegetable oil, tea, and coffee as well as turkey and chicken farming. In Egypt, where nearly 60 per cent of the population lived in rural areas in 2015 (Nin-Pratt et al. 2018: 16), and where fertile land is scarce, this path to development has led to private capital controlling land and water resources since the early 1990s. Local agro-industry owners are closely connected to the state and the military, as well as to powerful investors and ruling families in the Gulf (Bush 2007; Hanieh 2013: ch. 6; Henderson 2019). This development also prompted the introduction of environmentally unsustainable and harmful ways of farming and food production.

Importantly, Western agribusiness companies, including European ones, benefited considerably, if not exclusively, from the privatization drive in the MENA states. The introduction of EU phytosanitary standards was also to the advantage of large European food production conglomerates while in Morocco and Tunisia, European capital profited most notably from these developments. French agricultural entrepreneurs figure prominently among the owners or major shareholders of the more than 900 Tunisian agricultural companies that employ at least ten people. Morocco's privatization schemes similarly attracted French and Spanish farmers and allowed the expansion of European capital into the North African agricultural sector (Benamar 2020). As traditional food production for local populations and subsistence farming decreased, small farmers were the main losers in this process (Kourtelis 2015).

¹⁵ National food security does not simply depend on having sufficient locally produced food, but also on the affordability, availability, and quality and safety of food—which may also be imported (Nin-Pratt et al. 2018: 21).

It may come as no surprise, then, that small farmers played a prominent role in the 2011 revolution in Egypt (El Nour 2015).

Importantly, however, the 2007 EU-funded sustainability assessment study referred to earlier had actually anticipated the negative impact of the EU's agricultural policy vis-à-vis Europe's southern borderlands. Although the study anticipated the beneficial effects of the falling price of basic foodstuffs in MENA states, it also foresaw an 'adverse impact on poverty in rural areas' and a 'net negative effect on employment as production shifts between sectors' in the short term in the absence of appropriate mitigating policies (SIA-EMFTA 2007: 17). The study's long-term predictions were less clear-cut. However, decreases in MENA agricultural sector employment, migration from the countryside to the city, increases in rural and urban poverty, and 'further adverse effects on poverty' in some MENA states 'through increased vulnerability to food insecurity' (17) were still considered likely.

The EU's decision to launch a new programme for rural development in the 'southern neighbourhood' in 2012 was a clear recognition of at least some of the shortcomings of the agricultural development strategy it had promoted in its borderlands for the preceding fifteen years. Targeting the Arab 'neighbours', the EU's 'Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development' (ENPARD) set out to provide training and financial support to small farmers and cooperatives, with the aim of increasing their productivity, market access, and involvement in the decision-making process on agricultural development (European Commission 2012d). Implemented by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Montpellier (nd), the pilot phase of this programme for the 'southern Mediterranean' lasted from 2012 to 2017. Laudable as the programme may have been, it nevertheless continued to urge small farmers to adopt European best agricultural practices and food quality standards. In turn, however, these rules and standards were defined by consortia of large European retail food chains. The programme also encouraged farmers to grow specific crops destined for European markets if they wished to apply for EU funding (Kourtelis 2019: 68). As a result, most farmers, particularly subsistence farmers, had difficulties in competing for the programme's already meagre financial support. Indeed, compared to the around €60 billion in farm subsidies the EU paid out in 2019 in support of *European* farmers and rural communities (Gebrekidan et al. 2019), the budget allocated for the ENPARD programme—some €25 million for Tunisia, €36 million for Egypt, and €70 million for Morocco for an anticipated period of six years (2014–2020) (Kourtelis 2019: 70)—was ridiculously small.

Ironically, the EU's agricultural policy towards third states threatens to reproduce the same failures that have marked the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) *within* Europe. CAP subsidies, which amounted to around 36 per cent of the total EU budget in 2019, have benefited large European farmers and sustained environmentally damaging modes of production, contributing to global warming, soil erosion, land degradation, and the loss of biodiversity. Small farmers and environmentally friendly agricultural practices have been sidelined (Pe'er et al. 2020). The EU's agricultural subsidies system is also riddled with corruption, especially in the member states in Central and Eastern Europe, where it has enriched politicians, financed corrupt business dealings, and led to mafia-style land grabs by the well-connected and powerful (Gebrekidan et al. 2019). The specific political, economic, and environmental conditions that prevail in most MENA states, together with the importance of agriculture in the region, thus render even more problematic this specific aspect of the European attempt to export its order southwards.

Perhaps one of the few sensible steps undertaken by the EU in its agricultural trade with the MENA states was the decision to considerably increase the duty-free tariff rate quota for Tunisian olive oil exports to the EU in 2016 and 2017. Intended to support Tunisian farmers in the context of the country's fragile democratic transition, economic woes, and repeated terrorist attacks in the wake of the uprisings, they were ultimately adopted despite predictable opposition from European farmers.

Strengthening Authoritarian Rule

As we have seen, EU trade policies and the selective export of European rules and regulations to the southern borderlands did not contribute to sustainable economic development. Rather, these policies transformed Europe's southern borderlands into economic satellites of the European Union, producing low value-added manufactured goods to further enrich the European core, fill in the gaps in agricultural production that heavily subsidized European farmers could not provide, and function as reliable markets for high-quality industrial European goods (see also Kallioras and Pinna 2015). By seeking to create a favourable business environment in the borderlands that functions according to European rules and interests, EU policies thus reinforced the linkage of European business and capital with major economic actors intertwined with political power in the Mediterranean Middle East. The business elites and ruling classes of these states were happy to accept the European argument that

economic reform and closer cooperation with Europe would outweigh the heavy costs of structural adjustment in their country since they stood to profit most. The EU's selective expansion of the European economic order beyond the border went hand in hand with the growing power of crony capitalism and the omnipresent phenomenon of corruption in most MENA states. Indeed, the selective integration of MENA economies into the European market strengthened the power of these business elites, linked as they were to unaccountable political power. In this way, European investors and big businesses became interlinked with the crony capitalist system in the EU's southern periphery.

The neoliberal economic reforms supported by the EU and the international financial institutions also produced losers, of course. It was the majority of the population that would pay the costs of economic restructuring, particularly in authoritarian political settings. Crony capitalism, the retreat of the state from the provision of social services, rising inequalities, persistent or growing poverty, and regional disparities within countries led to rising dissatisfaction among populations in the EU's southern periphery, especially among the young, educated, and unemployed. Authoritarian rulers in MENA states reacted to the growing dissatisfaction by co-opting certain groups and increasing their repressive tactics (Henry and Springborg 2010). Indeed, authoritarian rule has proved remarkably robust in the Arab Middle East in recent decades, with growing levels of repression from the mid-2000s onwards (Bellin 2004; Heydemann 2007). With the exception of Tunisia, most Arab MENA states have become even more repressive after the Arab uprisings. For example, Human Rights Watch (2015) estimated that in 2015 over 40,000 people were imprisoned in Egypt's overcrowded jails on political grounds, without the slightest indication of fair judicial process, and with mistreatment, torture, and disappearances being commonplace. Turkey has also taken an illiberal turn in recent years, and the liberal space in Israel has been shrinking since the early 2000s as well (Rouhana and Sultany 2003; Pinto 2013; Del Sarto 2017b). According to the World Bank's Global Indicators of Regulatory Governance, which also measures the inclusion and consultation of citizens in decision-making processes, the quality of governance in the entire Middle East has been constantly deteriorating since it was first measured in 1996, making the region the worst-governed area in the world alongside sub-Saharan Africa (Saidi and Prasad 2018: 29–40; Springborg 2020: 28, 99).

Yet in Brussels and other European capitals, the spectre of Islamist parties winning democratic elections by capitalizing on growing opposition to the adverse effects of economic restructuring seemed to justify ongoing support

for the region's autocrats (Guazzone and Pioppi 2009b; Durac and Cavatorta 2009). In fact, as the late Rosemary Hollis (2012) rightly argued, the Europeans were not a friend of democratization in the Middle East in spite of their lofty rhetoric. Not only did Europe have a long history of pampering dictators and ignoring persistent human rights violations in the region (for example Youngs 2001; Pace 2009), its economic policies also relied on authoritarian rulers (Hinnebusch 2020), who were deemed necessary for the preservation of stability in the borderlands and the economic benefits of the EU and its members.

This is not to say that European policies *directly caused* the resilience or the reinforcement of authoritarianism and illiberalism in the MENA region. There are many domestic reasons for such developments, including the hijacking of the economic liberalization processes by ruling elites and the lack of interest in opposing the system by domestic groups who stood to gain from it (Murphy 2001; Hibou and Hulseley 2006; Haddad 2018). However, Europe's economic policies certainly facilitated the consolidation of authoritarian rule by supporting this deeply distorted economic reform process for decades—and by drawing economic benefits from it. Equally, Europe not only tolerated authoritarian rulers for the sake of stability but actually contributed to their personal enrichment and ever-growing power.

More than fifteen years ago, observers of Euro-Mediterranean relations anticipated these developments. As the Barcelona Process began to take shape, it was already apparent that, within the hub-and-spoke system created and reinforced by European trade policies, it was only economic elites with links to political power that would have the relevant financial and technical resources to withstand growing competition with Europe, as Tobias Schumacher (2004: 17) pointed out back then. It was similarly evident that the EU-sustained economic reforms would allow the rulers and their cronies to preserve and strengthen their power, mainly because they would compensate the influence they lost through the contraction of the public sector with their own private enterprises. Of course, authoritarian rulers would demand—and obtain—complete loyalty and unquestioning support from the new (and some old) economic elites that were permitted to retain their ever-increasing wealth and the enormous privileges that accompanied it (Kienle 1998; Schumacher 2004; Joffé 2007; 2009). In the absence of substantive investments in an effective social safety net in the developing MENA economies, the negative social impact of EU trade policies in the short and medium term was also anticipated (Martín 2004). It should therefore have been obvious that the growing economic discontent among large swathes of the Arab MENA

state populations who had increasing access to tertiary education (Galal et al. 2017) would not be met by the opening up of the political space. Instead, regimes responded with growing repression. Given the intrinsic link between the socio-economic implications of predatory neoliberal economic reforms and authoritarian resilience, and given the fact that popular protests had already occurred in the MENA region throughout the 2000s, the Arab uprisings that swept the region from the end of 2010 onwards should not have come as a total surprise (for example Armbrust 2011; Gause 2011; Teti and Gervasio 2011; Cavatorta and Haugbølle 2012; Cavatorta 2016). Seen in this light, arguments about the ‘unintended consequences’ of EU policies (Dandashly and Noutcheva 2019; Kourtelis 2019) seem rather hollow. While perhaps not planned or intended, these developments were entirely predictable, with the EU and the studies it funded in fact anticipating these.

Migration, Security, and Border Controls

The ways in which Europe has cooperated with MENA governments on security and migration issues, discussed at length in the previous chapter, represent an important further dimension in Europe’s contribution to the political and socio-economic restructuring of its borderlands. With particular regard to the Maghreb, which has functioned as the main ‘exit point’ of irregular migration to Europe via the Mediterranean, the policies of the EU and its single member states have further contributed to the consolidation of authoritarian rule. As discussed in the following sections, these policies have also dovetailed with the undermining of the rights of citizens, migrants, and refugees in the MENA region.

Once More: Sustaining or Strengthening Repressive Rule

A clear picture emerges from the analysis of European policies on migration, security, and border controls presented in the previous chapter: Europe required and relied upon the cooperation of the authoritarian regimes in its southern borderlands, particularly those in North Africa. At the same time, the conclusion of legally dubious agreements on migration and security along with the ethically questionable practices of cooperation directly benefited MENA governments. MENA officials received training in restrictive and unaccountable border control practices while regimes received advanced border

surveillance equipment from European states, together with the expertise required to operate it. Not only, then, can authoritarian regimes use these tools and knowledge to repress domestic opposition, the Europeans have conveyed the message to their MENA counterparts that serious violations of human rights and international law at Europe's fringes are acceptable, even worthy of reward. Authoritarian regimes in Europe's neighbourhood are thus compensated for remaining repressive, arbitrary, and unaccountable, or for becoming even more oppressive.

Underscoring the EU's contribution to the strengthening of the criminal justice systems in MENA states 'in their fight against smuggling and trafficking through capacity building for border controls' (European Commission 2015b: 13), Brussels cautiously praised the positive effects of EU assistance in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt. This assessment, however, is at odds with reality. Or perhaps it is a matter of how 'positive effects' are defined, and in whose benefit they accrue. In the years prior to the revolution, Tunisian cooperation on migration and security with the Europeans remained the prerogative of the Tunisian president, the Ministry of the Interior—notorious for being one of the regime's 'most autonomous, opaque and secretive ministries' (Kartas 2014: 395)—and the extensive security apparatus working under its aegis (Zardo and Cavatorta 2016). Tunis' wide-ranging cooperation with the Europeans on these issues thus entailed Europe's backing of Ben Ali's security apparatus as Europe proceeded to support the 'professional development' of its security and law enforcement officials. At the same time, the proactive involvement of the Tunisian authorities in migration and border control offered them a welcome opportunity to exert stronger coercive power and control over Tunisian society (Cassarino 2014: 105). For instance, under the banner of migration control, the Tunisian authorities under Ben Ali refused to issue or renew passports to certain Tunisian citizens, a disciplining practice used by the regime to intimidate and penalize domestic opponents (Cassarino 2014: 105). At the same time, by presenting itself as a bulwark in the fight against both irregular migration and jihadi terrorism, the Tunisian regime succeeded in considerably increasing its international legitimacy and credibility in European capitals (Cassarino 2014; 2018).

A similar observation applies to Morocco. As a reliable and much-lauded partner in combating irregular migration and jihadi terrorist networks alike, Europe conferred 'advanced status' to the country in 2008 and rewarded the regime with generous aid, equipment, and training. This 'advanced status', it is worth recalling, is a clear sign of EU recognition, reflecting the EU's intent to further strengthen cooperation with the Moroccan regime and to continue

supporting the country's economic and political reforms (European Parliament 2019). Incidentally, the monarchy's political reform process over the last two and half decades has failed to produce any truly accountable, let alone democratic, political structures. In other words, as Driss Maghraoui (2011: 680) has put it, Morocco's perpetual democratic transition has remained 'unspecific, vague, open-ended and endlessly subject to the will of the *makhzan*' (the monarchy and its inner circles of power). This long-standing pattern of EU engagement with Morocco did not change following the king's reaction to the popular protests in his country in 2011: top-down constitutional reform devoid of substantive change.

From a similar vantage point, the Algerian regime successfully presented the 'effective' management of the borders with its neighbours, Morocco and Libya, as an attempt to combat the trafficking of weapons and people across its borders. The Europeans, for their part, were eager to support this endeavour. However, Algeria's policies on border controls also further strengthened the role of the already economically and politically powerful military within the domestic political set-up of the country, as they are in charge of controlling the borders (Cassarino 2018: 403).

The situation is not noticeably different with regards to Egypt and Libya, both before and after the revolutions. Although Egypt presented less of a migration concern for Europe, the Egyptian regime has been a 'reliable' partner of the Europeans both under Mubarak and the far more repressive regime of Abd Fattah al-Sisi. Libya's Qaddafi, hardly a beacon of human rights and accountable governance, continued to be Italy's preferred 'partner' on migration control as long as he was alive, with the EU also courting the mercurial colonel since the mid-2000s. The arbitrary tactics and sheer corruption of the Libyan regime, regularly denounced by academics and human rights organizations, also included collusion between law enforcement agencies and various networks of small- and medium-sized smuggling organizations (Pastore et al. 2006; Di Bartolomeo et al. 2011). Qaddafi very quickly mastered the art of blackmailing the Europeans, who, for their part, turned a blind eye to and even encouraged the unlawful deportation of thousands of migrants and refugees back to Libya.¹⁶ The protests and subsequent infighting in Libya after 2011 led to a temporary suspension of Europe's cooperation with the country, but it soon resumed against the backdrop of soaring numbers of refugees and migrants trying to reach European shores via Libya. Since then,

¹⁶ Between 2006 and 2008 alone, 3,000 migrants were deported from the Italian island of Lampedusa back to Libya (Di Bartolomeo et al. 2011: 14).

the situation has been even more protracted, counterproductive, if not to say scandalous. Given that the Libyan government under Fayeze al-Serraj has been unable to control the borders of the area under its control, the various militias that de facto control Libya's coastline have become important beneficiaries of European funds in the fight against irregular migration and the trafficking of illicit goods. Many of these militias administer the detention centres where migrants and refugees, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, are held, and where beating, torture, rape, and extortion are the norm. Ironically, some of these armed groups are themselves involved in the lucrative business of trafficking human beings—and presumably, weapons as well (Médecins Sans Frontières 2019; Michael et al. 2019). In the context of the protracted Libyan civil war, paying off militias is certainly not a great recipe for the resolution of the conflict, let alone for the promotion of the respect for human rights and international law in Europe's borderlands.

As for Israel and the Palestinian Territories, the issue of migration has not been a major issue on Europe's agenda. Nonetheless, European involvement in the Palestinian Authority's security sector reform is worth mentioning at this stage. Indeed, EU support for Palestinian security sector reforms, provided through the EUPOL COPPS mission, has been ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst. While the last democratic Palestinian elections took place in 2006, the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority has displayed increasingly repressive tendencies towards the Palestinian population living under its control in the West Bank, as the European Commission (2015c: 2–3) has not failed to note.¹⁷ For all the talk on efficient policing and human rights, it is ironic that the EU-trained Palestinian civil police acted in a not-so-civil way when it broke up a demonstration against Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in 2018 (Hass and Houry 2018). While the Europeans cannot be held responsible for the continuation of Israel's military rule over and the relentless expansion of Israeli settlements into the West Bank, the impact of European policies have followed a similar pattern as in other parts of the borderlands: European policies have continued to cooperate with and grant legitimacy to their increasingly oppressive Palestinian counterparts. The EU has also steadily deepened its economic cooperation with Israel in spite of the aforementioned settlement expansion and human rights violations in the West Bank, and in spite of Israel's ongoing and precarious economic blockade of the Gaza Strip that began in 2007. However reluctantly, the

¹⁷ Although the EU and its members provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, the EU does not work with Hamas. For more on this, see ch. 6 of this volume.

Europeans have thus tolerated repeated deteriorations in the human security situation of the Palestinian population. Moreover, in the name of stability and the fight against terrorism in the area, and in consideration of Europe's economic and security interests vis-à-vis Israel, Europe has accepted EU engagement with the Palestinians on Israeli terms. *Nolens volens*, Europe has thus contributed to the persistent fragmentation of Palestinian space wherein the Palestinian Authority continues to exert limited control over barely 18 per cent of the West Bank, alongside the encroaching Israeli occupation (Bouris 2014; Khalil and Del Sarto 2015).

Security sector reform, generally speaking, is a potentially fraught undertaking, whether in the Palestinian Territories or in other states supported by the EU and other international actors, such as Tunisia and Lebanon. Such reform has a tendency to support and even strengthen existing—and often unaccountable and opaque—domestic power structures (Kartas 2014). This is particularly the case in the absence of meaningful reform in the governance of local security architectures.

In considering the effect of European–MENA border, security, and migration cooperation, Turkey has proved particularly instructive. Ankara initially accepted the EU's attempts to transpose its 'Integrated Border Management' system to the country, albeit rather reluctantly and only to a certain extent. Importantly, however, this attitude was limited to the period up to the outbreak of the civil war in neighbouring Syria in 2011. As the number of refugees seeking to enter the EU via Turkey continued to increase and the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) emerged in Iraq and Syria, Ankara was able to reinstate and reinforce its security-oriented approach to border control, wherein the military plays a major role. Along the way, the Europeans dropped their insistence on the establishment of 'open but secure' borders through effective, flexible, and preferably civilian practices (Okuy 2020). However, it is possible to interrogate the extent to which Ankara may have deliberately contributed to the sudden increase in migratory pressure on Europe via the Balkan route in August 2015 (Zaragoza Cristiani 2015). A similar observation applies to the Turkish role in fighting terrorism, with various media reports pointing to Turkish logistical support for ISIS in Syria. Further research might explore how the Turkish authorities have benefited from EU-funded training activities conducted under the banner of border and migration control, and how they have employed the border surveillance equipment obtained from the Europeans. For obvious reasons, such research remains impossible at the present time.

At this point, it should be noted that obscure and legally problematic deals with MENA states on borders and security have not been the sole prerogative

of the Europeans. The United States has been engaging in similar policies, which have probably had—and continue to have—a considerable impact on the region, given the superior economic and political power of the US. For Washington, a number of MENA countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Jordan have proved reliable partners in the fight against terrorism, with cooperation dating back to the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, if not before. In recent decades, various human rights organizations and numerous media outlets have reported on this collaboration, which has included so-called extraordinary rendition and the torture of suspected terrorists. The US has also been the central protagonist in training the Palestinian security forces and remains the main broker (or non-broker) in the Israeli–Palestinian arena. More broadly, a remarkable analysis of US *democracy promotion* programmes in the region found that the vast majority of grants, over 70 per cent, stood to benefit (repressive) Arab government agencies and their officials (Durac and Cavatorta 2009).

The Criminalization of Migration and the Undermining of Human Rights

Rendering migration a punishable offence has become a well-established trend in MENA states. During the 2000s, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya all passed new legislation penalizing the ‘illegal’ emigration and immigration of both nationals and foreigners and criminalizing those involved in ‘facilitating’ the movement of such people (Perrin 2005; 2009; Cassarino 2014; 2018; Paoletti and Pastore 2010; Paoletti 2011; Rocchini 2016; Cassarino and Del Sarto 2018). Morocco adopted such migration-related legislation in 2003, Tunisia in 2004 and 2006, Algeria in 2008, and Libya in 2007 and 2010. From the perspective of the MENA states themselves, these steps appeared somewhat irrational, given that for most of these states, migration increases remittances while lowering domestic unemployment and thus the potential for social and political tension.

The criminalization of migration, however, has undoubtedly served the purposes of incumbent authoritarian regimes. Rendering ‘illicit’ or ‘fraudulent’ *emigration* a punishable offence, in clear violation of international law, has functioned as a strong disciplining measure for the state. Indeed, while the right to control the entry of people is a key element of national sovereignty, the right to leave any country, including one’s own, is an international legal norm. This right ‘imposes on states the negative obligation of not obstructing the

departure of people from their territories and the positive obligation of issuing travel documents' (Rocchini 2016: 6). The severe and disproportional penalties for violating the law on 'illegal' exits in Morocco, pre-2011 Tunisia, and Algeria—typically, heavy fines and incarceration for up to one year, sometimes more—have clearly served to consolidate and strengthen the authoritarian control of MENA regimes over their populations.

The same consideration applies to the punishment of those facilitating the irregular entry and exit of nationals and foreigners, even when conducted on a voluntary basis and without remuneration. Thus, according to the 2003 Moroccan law and the 2004 Tunisian amendment, even the provision of humanitarian assistance to irregular migrants would constitute a punishable offence. Algeria's 2009 migration legislation differed slightly in that it defined the receipt of some kind of benefit for an act to be considered migrant trafficking. However, the Algerian law was similarly restrictive in that it increased sanctions on the irregular entry, circulation, stay, and exit of foreigners as well as any kind of facilitation. Similarly, an amendment to the Libyan migration-related laws of 2007 and 2010 introduced special taxes for foreign workers and established fines for different types of irregular migrants. Frequent police raids on foreign workers and migrant communities operated on the basis of these new provisions, which lacked any procedural transparency (Paoletti and Pastore 2010: 15). While restrictive and erratic domestic policies on migration had already been in place for several decades under Qaddafi, these more recent reforms of migration laws signalled an increasingly repressive approach to the transborder movement of people, as in other Maghrebi states.

In sum, then, the legislation passed in North African countries since the 2000s entailed a progressive curbing of the rights of nationals, whether by criminalizing the 'illicit' or 'fraudulent' exit from and entry into the territory of the state or by criminalizing the vaguely defined offence of 'illicit' human trafficking. The Ben Ali regime in Tunisia, for instance, used the law on migration to repress both migrants and the friends or family of migrants who had remained in the country, as any Tunisian citizen could be accused of having known of, or abetted, 'illegal' migration (Cassarino 2014: 105). In addition, such legislation undermined the rights of migrants and asylum seekers, with the latter being prevented from filing an asylum application in the country of destination. Not only did they entail a crescendo in the regimes' coercive power, these migration-related legislations were incompatible with international humanitarian law.

Of course, migration law was often formulated in response to specific domestic and foreign policy concerns. In Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, the

migration-related legislation of the 2000s amended the outdated, patchwork legislative frameworks of previous decades while also taking the presence of large undocumented migrant communities on their territory into account. In Morocco, the new migration laws also led to the regularization of over 18,000 undocumented foreigners by 2015. In pre-civil war Libya, Qaddafi was notorious for inviting workers to his resource-rich but labour-poor country in accordance with his changing foreign policy preferences. In this vein, in concomitance with the ‘African turn’ in his foreign policy in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Qaddafi encouraged labour migration from the Sahel and sub-Saharan Africa, and, once he had re-engaged with Arab countries, called on Egyptian workers to move to Libya (Paoletti and Pastore 2010: 9–10).

It may thus be difficult to establish the *direct* causal effects of European policies on the migratory policies of the states in Mediterranean Middle East. However, there is a curiously strong correlation between the growing restrictions stipulated by migration-related legislation in MENA states and the preferences and practices of the Europeans and other international actors. During the 2000s, the EU and its member states made trade concessions, aid, and political support increasingly conditional upon the Maghrebi states assuming (a degree of) responsibility in reducing unwanted migration to Europe (European Commission 2003b: 14; Perrin 2009: 23–24); major changes in the migration legislation and policies of these states occurred precisely in this period. And it is of course the wider context that matters. As we have seen, Europe has used both incentives and massive pressure to nudge their ‘Mediterranean partners’ into adopting policies and legislation that correspond with European preferences, not to mention training, regular dialogues, and persistent attempts to selectively transfer European rules and practices.

There is much evidence that, under Ben Ali, Tunisia was the poster child of ‘successful’ European migration policy transfer, as the country codified laws and practices through repeated interactions with the Europeans (Cassarino 2014). In a similar vein, the Italian authorities were reportedly satisfied that Libyan officials implemented migration policies according to their advice during Qaddafi’s rule. Italian pressure also seemingly contributed to ‘legitimising and further deepening pre-existing policing structures and motivations’ in Libya (Paoletti and Pastore 2010: 15). Europe’s pressures on single southern Mediterranean states only increased in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, as we have seen.

Governments in the Maghreb thus took it upon themselves to ensure that their citizens and third-country nationals were in possession of valid visas with which to enter the Schengen area (or a non-Schengen European country). In

these countries, Schengen visas—issued by European consular authorities but with the visa application procedure outsourced to private companies—became a legal condition for ‘regular’ exits to Europe. At the same time, the MENA states were progressively tasked with the sanctioning of people without such documents, and pressured by Europe into ‘readmitting’ people if they failed to prevent those ‘irregular’ exits. Together with the newly invented crime of ‘clandestine’ or ‘fraudulent’ exits, these laws and policies were surprisingly well designed for the externalization of Europe’s migration and border controls since the beginning of the 2000s (Perrin 2009: 30–32; Rocchini 2016: 7).

* * *

By examining the effects of European policies towards its southern periphery in the twenty years following the launch of the Barcelona Process, this chapter has cast light on a disconcerting state of affairs. Operating within a broader international system based on a neoliberal development ideology, European policies succeeded in integrating selected sectors of the MENA economies into the EU’s Internal Market, with MENA states adjusting their regulations to reflect European sectoral rules and practices. Yet when combined with the specific choices of MENA governments and serious pre-existing deficiencies in the MENA economies, Europe’s restructuring of the socio-economic order in its southern borderlands had strikingly egregious effects, and here particularly in the Arab states. European policies fed into and contributed to rising crony capitalism, deepening socio-economic inequalities, growing regional disparities, and the emergence of a dual economic system that also concerns the sensitive agricultural sector. EU economic policy, from which European companies profited considerably, prioritized and relied on ruling political elites and their cronies. Europe assisted repressive rulers in gaining additional power and in accumulating extraordinary levels of wealth—unless, and until, they were overthrown by popular revolts.

The impact of the EU’s economic policies towards Turkey and Israel is more difficult to assess. Within the lengthy EU accession process, Turkey, in many respects, became part of the European order. It is noteworthy, however, that crony capitalism, rising inequalities and, more recently, a decisively illiberal turn have marked developments in Turkey as well. Israel, on the other hand, aligned much of its legislation with European rules and standards (European Commission 2019d: 138–142) to the economic benefit of both sides. However, as Israel adopted neoliberal economic policies over three decades ago independently of European preferences, and considering Israel’s extensive trade relations with the US, it is difficult to claim that Europe was responsible for the

growing inequalities and the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few in that country.

Europe's cooperation with the region's repressive and illiberal regimes on security, migration, and border control is even more pernicious. The expansion of European borders southwards, which aim to reduce unwanted migration to Europe, fight terrorism, and provide security to EU citizens, has in fact rewarded MENA governments for adopting increasingly repressive and unaccountable policies vis-à-vis their citizens, foreign migrants, and refugees. European policies are certainly embedded in a broader Western-dominated consensus on migration governance in which the control of mobility plays a central role. However, single European states have been particularly active players. As a result, Europe's externalization of its migration and border control policies not only contributed to the further strengthening of authoritarian rule; these policies and practices also created "off-shore" black holes where European norms, standards, and regulations simply do not apply', as Luiza Bialasiewicz (2012: 861) has markedly put it.

One salient aspect of this discussion is the fact that MENA governments have not been exclusively passive recipients of European policies. Shifting the focus of attention to the actions and strategies of the states in the Mediterranean Middle East, the next chapter revisits the question of interdependence and leverage in Europe's relations with its southern borderlands.

6

Contestation, Leverage, and Interdependence

In Europe's attempts to restructure the socio-economic order in its borderlands, relations between the two sides have not simply been defined by Europe's export of its rules and practices. Rather, these relations have also comprised the actions, responses, and strategies of MENA states vis-à-vis European policies and preferences. This chapter therefore shifts the focus of attention to the agency of the states in the Mediterranean Middle East. From this perspective, it investigates two interconnected dimensions in Europe–Middle East relations: first, the wide range of actions and responses that MENA states adopt vis-à-vis European policies, and, second, the multifaceted interlinkages and complex power dynamics embedded in these relations. These considerations permit us to reconsider questions of dependence and interdependence in the relationship between the MENA states on the one hand and the European Union and its members on the other. As in the previous chapters, the discussion focuses predominantly on trade relations and cooperation on migration, borders, and security during the time period 1995–2015. However, where relevant, the discussion will also refer to examples from other policy fields as well as to more recent developments.

Circumventing and Resisting European Rules and Preferences

When confronted with Europe's constant attempts to expand the borders of its socio-economic order southwards, the states in the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa may theoretically respond in very different ways. They may, for instance, choose to accept whatever the Europeans suggest or impose, either because they are in a weaker bargaining position vis-à-vis the large trading bloc or because they accept the premise that the prescriptions for socio-economic restructuring are also beneficial to their country. In reality, no state in the Mediterranean Middle East has consistently adopted this response

to European policies across all policy fields. Rather, with regard to some issues, MENA governments have openly challenged or rejected European preferences and prescriptions, leading, in some cases, to a renegotiation of these rules. On other occasions, MENA governments have formally accepted European rules but then quietly altered them according to their domestic needs and preferences. In fact, while the rules and practices of cooperation with Europe have theoretically been non-negotiable, the Europeans have often tacitly tolerated, albeit to a limited extent, the decision of MENA governments to adapt these rules to their local context. In still other cases, the modification of European rules and practices by MENA states has affected the order within the European core itself. While the theory and practice of contestation in the context of Europe–Middle East relations has been discussed elsewhere (Del Sarto and Tholens 2020), some prominent patterns and examples are worth highlighting here.

In the realm of trade and regulatory issues concerning the EU's Internal Market, MENA governments have repeatedly engaged in the open contestation of European policies. Ever since the launch of the Barcelona Process, the states of the Mediterranean Middle East have criticized the EU demand that they open up their markets to European competition in industrial goods without obtaining the liberalization of trade in agricultural products in return, or at the very least a massive increase in European aid. Similarly, they have argued with and requested extensions from EU officials with regard to the timetable for tariff reductions on specific goods. In the late 1990s, for instance, Egypt waded into a trade dispute with the EU over Egyptian potato exports, Israel argued with the Europeans over the origin of its orange juice exports, and Morocco squabbled with the Europeans over tomatoes and fishing quotas (Del Sarto 2006: ch. 4, 5, and 6). During Syria's lengthy and eventually unsuccessful negotiations on the Euro–Mediterranean Association Agreement, Damascus similarly contested European demands for the liberalization of capital movements and disagreed with the transition period for the application of intellectual property rights, which, according to the Syrian negotiators, was far too short (Dostal and Zorob 2009). In sectors that may have been tangential to EU–Middle East trade relations, MENA governments also decided to adopt a different regulatory model than that promoted by the EU. This was the case, for example, in Morocco, which in the early 2000s decided to adopt a Latin American model for universal service obligations aimed at extending telecommunication services to remote locations (Wavre and Freyburg 2020).

In other cases, MENA governments have responded to European policy preferences by officially complying with EU rules which they have then

selectively and inconsistently applied. This attitude has certainly marked the response of Arab regimes to the EU's democracy and political reform programmes in the region (Malmvig 2014). However, the most glaring example of this lies in the way that the region's largely authoritarian states have captured the neoliberal economic restructuring process, discussed in the previous chapter. As we have seen, a selective and distorted application of Western-crafted market liberalization and privatization rules in Arab Mediterranean states resulted in the intensification of crony capitalism and corruption, rising inequality, and the strengthening and personal enrichment of authoritarian rulers. In the absence of meaningful political reform through which to implement the rule of law, judicial independence, the accountability of political rule, and respect for human rights, these neoliberal reforms may well have led to negative outcomes for MENA societies at large even if their governments had implemented them by the book. However, the modification of this set of rules and practices by authoritarian MENA regimes in line with their insatiable quest for power and wealth only made matters much worse.

EU-supported banking sector reform in Egypt, discussed in chapters 4 and 5, is a particularly illuminating example here. Egyptian political and economic elites effectively 'talked the talk' of structural reforms while exploiting their own position to implement these reforms to their advantage. While the Europeans tacitly accepted these profoundly distorted banking reforms, the rest of the population suffered the costs of an even more limited access to finance (Roccu 2020). Another example is the Moroccan programme for human development funded by the EU and the World Bank and launched in 2005 with the aim of improving socio-economic conditions in poor areas through new participatory mechanisms of local governance. Deviations from the original design led to unelected officials at the powerful Moroccan Ministry of Interior gaining increased power at the expense of local government and thence to the rearticulation and consolidation of centralized state power (Bergh 2012). EU-funded agricultural development programmes in several Arab Mediterranean states, also discussed in previous chapters, serve as an additional example of the 'localization' of European rules and practices according to domestic interests. Once again, while officially agreeing to the prescribed reform process, economic and political elites in MENA states successfully hijacked it for personal political and economic benefit—and at the expense of poor rural populations (Kourtellis 2015; 2018).

The reality of Europe–Middle East cooperation on migration, security, and border controls provides a plethora of additional examples of the tacit or explicit contestation practices that MENA states adopt vis-à-vis European

policies. As we have seen, the Arab states in Europe's southern borderlands, particularly those located in the Maghreb, have used cooperation on migration and border controls with the Europeans to strengthen their power over citizens and migrants from third countries. They have responded to European pressures to curb unwanted migration to the EU by criminalizing migration altogether, thereby strengthening their authoritarian rule to the general detriment of human rights and protections for refugees. Since 2011, in the face of growing European pressure, MENA governments have also formally agreed to sign cooperation agreements with the European Union on migration, the so-called Mobility Partnerships, but in practice have employed different tactics to delay their implementation, as is the case with Morocco and Tunisia (Limam and Del Sarto 2020). At the same time, the European preference for shifting the burden of hosting millions of Syrian refugees onto neighbouring states in the Middle East in exchange for providing financial assistance has prompted the governments of host countries such as Lebanon and Jordan to openly criticize European policies and demand greater support (Fakhoury 2020). Pointing to Europe's dubious policies on 'readmission', these governments responded with indignation to calls from Brussels to respect human rights standards in dealing with the thousands of Syrian refugees on their territory (Dionigi 2017).

Throughout their cooperation with Europe on security sector reform and counterterrorism, MENA governments have cherry-picked according to their interests as well. From the Maghreb countries to the Palestinian Territories and Lebanon, EU-funded security cooperation has been used to strengthen existing power structures while circumventing meaningful reform of the underlying domestic security architecture and governance (Bouris 2014; Kartas 2014; Zardo and Cavatorta 2016; Tholens 2017b). Human rights violations and a lack of accountability have continued. Similarly, in Turkey, an EU candidate country, various EU-funded 'Twinning' projects conducted between 2002 and 2009 sought to improve the human rights record of the Turkish police, but were utilized by local police forces to further their own objectives, which mainly involved improving working conditions. Actors within the Turkish police force have also employed cooperation with the Europeans to their advantage in the context of their competition with other elements of the security apparatus, such as the military (Bahçecik 2014). The effectiveness of these various European training and technical assistance projects, which aimed to address the widespread mistreatment and torture of suspects and prisoners detained in Turkey, was mixed at best.

Equally, in the daily practice of Europe–Middle East cooperation, MENA governments and their officials often try to renegotiate and thereby alter the

rules that the Europeans seek to export. In many cases, this occurs out of the public eye. For example, research on French–Moroccan cooperation on migration control has pointed to the role of Moroccan mid-ranking police officers in challenging the practices, underlying concepts, and statistics used by their French counterparts with the aim of altering modes of on-the-ground cooperation (El Qadim 2014). The study of EU–Turkey police cooperation mentioned earlier also demonstrated how Turkish local actors have sought to modify the concrete content of European rules and practices according to their own ideas and preferences (Bahçecik 2014). The Turkish coastguard has similarly tried to shape the framework of cooperation by engaging in an antagonistic relationship with its European counterparts, usually at the expense of migrants and refugees, whose situation became even more precarious (Karadağ 2019).

In considering Europe's attempts to strategically engineer the border controls at its outer fringes, Turkey's reactions and strategies stand out as particularly striking. Ankara's earlier-mentioned resistance to the EU's 'smart' and human rights-oriented model of border control—the so-called Integrated Border Management system—became especially explicit once the civil war in Syria had begun to unfold. What is remarkable is that in the context of the deteriorating security situation at Turkey's borders and as Europe became increasingly reliant on Ankara to stem the flow of refugees, Turkey succeeded in turning the tables on the Europeans. Implementing the 'smart' model of border control was no longer a precondition for Turkey's accession to the EU, as had previously been the case. Instead, Brussels came to accept Ankara's security-oriented approach to border control (Okçay 2020), in which civilian control and human rights play a subordinate role, if at all.

That Europe is reluctant to insist on political reform whenever Arab regimes in the Mediterranean Middle East invoke the threat of Islamist terrorism is itself an example of how Europe has gradually accepted the arguments and narratives put forward by its MENA counterparts (Gillespie and Whitehead 2002: 198). While political reform in the MENA region was never a European priority to begin with, it is interesting to note that, in the first years of the Barcelona Process, Arab governments had protested the European narrative that tended to equal Islamism (or even Islam) with terrorism. Yet authoritarian regimes very quickly learned to play the 'Islamism card' with the Europeans, claiming that it was only thanks to their uninterrupted reign that ferocious Islamist terrorists would not take over the Middle East, leading to instability and chaos that would eventually also engulf Europe. In a process that has been termed 'externalization-in-reverse' (Joffé 2008: 158), that is,

third states transferring their rules and practices to Europe, the Europeans gradually adopted this logic. This entailed that they continued to deal with ‘moderate’—but repressive—Arab regimes. As tumultuous scenes have unfolded in (parts of) the borderlands in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, Europe’s preference for stability over democratic reform has only grown stronger.

Of course, processes of contestation and the continuous renegotiation of norms, rules, and practices are defining features of politics and of social relations in general. It is therefore unsurprising that the states of the Mediterranean Middle East have also resisted and modified norms and rules advanced by other international actors, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. As in their confrontation with the Europeans, MENA governments have also attempted to seize on the opportunities offered by specific reforms promoted by these institutions to advance their interests (for example Bergh 2012). While scant attention is typically paid to the actions and strategies of non-Western states in the Western-dominated International Relations literature (Bilgin 2010)—an observation that applies to Europe–Middle East relations in equal measure (Fisher Onar and Nicolaïdis 2013; El Qadim 2014; Nicolaïdis 2015; Karadağ 2019; Del Sarto and Tholens 2020)—the interesting question is why recurrent episodes of contestation take place in asymmetrical power relationships.

Elaborating on previous studies of empire, but shifting the perspective to the territories at its fringes, Magali Gravier (2020) provides a compelling explanation here. The hybrid and commonly accepted implementation of European rules in its borderlands, which she terms *petits arrangements* (‘small arrangements’), allows peripheral states to engage with the wealthy European core by navigating between two extreme alternatives: at one end, a complete rejection of European rules and practices, which may be undesirable for political and economic reasons, and, at the other, the complete acceptance of these rules. The latter option would however demand far-reaching—and far too costly—processes of political and socio-economic transformation. For the European core, on the other hand, tolerating these *petits arrangements* is a reflection of imperial pragmatism: throughout history, empires have tolerated a considerable amount of autonomy in the borderlands in return for compliance, tribute, and military collaboration with the core (Tilly 1997: 3), as noted earlier. For Europe these accommodating arrangements at its fringes ‘may be the best possible deal to keep some form of influence in remote territories’ (Gravier 2020: 43). We should also add that the highly selective interpretation and application of rules and practices, which is typical of *both* Europe and the

Mediterranean Middle East, is acceptable to both sides as long as the economic and political elites on both shores of the Mediterranean continue to benefit from it.

However, the adoption of diluted versions of European norms and practices in the borderlands may not only negatively affect the societies in the Middle East in their entirety but, in the long run, also the order in the core itself. This would be a case of imperial overreach, which can be thought of ‘as overambitious attempts at social engineering in a culturally very different periphery’ (Hinnebusch 2020: 187). Such an overreach may result in ‘blowback’, whereby disorder in the periphery affects the core. For Raymond Hinnebusch (187), the Arab uprisings and their aftermath are a clear case of such dynamics. Europe’s attempts to export a neoliberal economic order to its southern periphery, combined with a diluted form of democratic governance, can be read as a policy of social engineering that has exceeded the powers of the EU and its member states. This imperial overreach played an important role in the socio-economic and hence political destabilization of MENA states, according to Hinnebusch. Yet the uprisings and subsequent civil wars in Europe’s borderlands posed the dual threats of terrorism and mass migration to Europe, with the destabilized neighbourhood becoming the site of ‘blowback’. From this vantage point, Europe’s adoption of restrictive immigration and counterterrorism policies—with their inherent human rights violations—together with the rise of right-wing, xenophobic, and anti-EU movements in Europe, are concrete manifestations of this ‘blowback’. Brexit is but one example in this context. Consequently, Europe’s prevailing liberal order is undermined, and the very survival of the EU as an empire of sorts is at stake (see also Mezzadra 2004).

Practices of contestation and resistance by MENA states vis-à-vis Europe’s selective extension of its borders, constant negotiation on prevailing rules and practices, and the resulting ‘hybrid order’ in the borderlands are a central aspect of Europe’s relations with its borderlands. This raises the question of what types of power dynamics are at play in this complex relationship, as discussed next.

Power Dynamics and Leverage

Within the hub-and-spoke system that European policies created through the partial integration of MENA economies into the EU’s Internal Market, power relations are clearly asymmetrical. Moreover, as we have seen, MENA governments perform the ‘dirty job’ of blocking unwanted migration to Europe

while assisting in Europe's counterterrorism efforts with dubious methods. By and large, these dynamics operate in Europe's favour—as well as to the benefit of elites in the MENA periphery. To state the obvious, however, countries such as Algeria and Libya that have at their disposal the natural resources on which Europe depends, have an important bargaining power vis-à-vis the European bloc. Algeria, for instance, is, after Russia and Norway, the EU's third-largest supplier of natural gas. These states are able to ignore and resist the demands of the much larger and economically much more powerful EU, precisely because securing oil and gas supply from these areas is such a vital concern to Europe (Darbouche 2008). European overtures towards Libya in the 2000s may similarly be explained in terms of markets, oil concessions, energy security, and arms sales, which empowered the Libyan regime (Zoubir 2009).

The decades-old reliance of European countries on MENA states as regards counterterrorism and security is also a good case in point. In this vein, Algeria and Morocco, for example, have become valuable assets for Europe. This had already been the case prior to the Arab uprisings, but Europe's dependence on these states increased as instability grew in the Maghreb and with the rise of Islamic State-related groups after 2011 (Hernando de Larramendi and Fernández-Molina 2015). Similarly, a number of states in Europe's southern periphery such as Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan have a relatively diversified set of economic and political relations with Europe, and thus a greater space of manoeuvre vis-à-vis the Europeans. The case is different for, say, small and resource-poor Tunisia, which is highly trade-dependent on Europe. Yet in this European 'neighbourhood', even materially less powerful states have demonstrated an ability to defend their positions and even impose their own demands on the materially stronger Europeans.

Morocco's relations with the European neighbour are a good example of these multiple dependencies and complex power dynamics. Morocco depends on the EU for its trade, but is also a key partner in European counterterrorism efforts and migration control and maintains excellent relations with the United States, including in the realm of security cooperation. Moreover, the kingdom is a major exporter of phosphates, on which European industry depends. In separate agreements, Morocco has granted specific fishing quotas to European vessels—particularly Spanish and French vessels—along its Atlantic coast. Thus while Morocco is materially less powerful than the European Union and its members in absolute terms, Rabat could still 'allow' itself to suspend all relations with the EU in February 2016 in protest at a ruling handed down by the European Court of Justice in December 2015. The court had rejected Morocco's territorial claims over the Western Sahara by

declaring an EU–Moroccan agreement on liberalized agricultural trade invalid because it included the Western Sahara in its territorial scope. The ruling was in line with international law, according to which Morocco’s rule over the Western Sahara is illegal. In practice, however, the court’s decision ran contrary to the reality of European–Moroccan relations, which had witnessed a gradual shift towards the Europeans’ tacit acceptance of Rabat’s claim over the disputed territory occupied by Morocco. Rabat resumed its dealings with the Europeans only in early 2019, after the European Parliament had approved a bilateral EU–Moroccan fisheries agreement. Incidentally, this agreement also included the Western Sahara in its territorial scope (a separate European Court of Justice ruling had equally declared this agreement as invalid). Driven by economic and security interests and prodded by France, one of Morocco’s key trading partners, the EU thus agreed to implement the disputed fisheries agreement in plain disregard of the ruling of its principal judicial authority.¹ The European fishing industry undoubtedly rejoiced: for a period of four years, the agreement allows around 130 vessels from EU member states to access the rich fishing grounds of Morocco and the Western Sahara, in exchange for the EU paying €208 million in compensation (European Commission 2019c).

Europe’s relations with Israel provide a further example of the multiple dependencies and complex power dynamics that define Europe’s relations with its southern borderlands. With Europe’s dark historical legacy still shaping relations, Israel is linked to the European bloc today through a complex web of economic, political, and cultural ties. Israel has by now aligned much of its trade-related legislation with European rules and standards (European Commission 2019d: 138–142), and commercial and institutional relations have progressively deepened in recent decades. In economic terms, Israel is not as important to the EU as the EU is to Israel, but it remains a compelling trading partner for the Europeans because of the country’s advanced bio-tech, information, and security/surveillance technology sectors. In short, Israel’s economic relations with the EU are beneficial for both sides (Tovias and Magen 2005; Tovias 2007; Pardo 2008; 2009). The country also maintains close relations with single member states, particularly Germany, and, more recently, the four Visegrád countries Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia (Pardo and Gordon 2018). Nevertheless, this does not

¹ Brussels explained this decision by pointing to the establishment of a consultation mechanism with all the populations concerned and the expected socio-economic benefit for all populations (European Commission 2019c).

mean that Israel accepts European policies and preferences deferentially. While a number of trade disputes marked the first decade of the Barcelona Process (Zemer and Pardo 2003), the EU's positions on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and its ambitions to play a substantive role in peace negotiations have repeatedly caused disagreements and major clashes (Pardo and Peters 2010; 2012; Del Sarto 2014; Pardo 2015). In this realm, Israel's privileged relations with the United States account in no small part for the country's large space of manoeuvre vis-à-vis the Europeans.

In fact, when the Palestinian dimension of Europe's relations with Israel is taken into consideration, a curious triangular relationship emerges (Del Sarto 2015). Certainly, the dynamics of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict have changed considerably in recent decades (Klein 2010): Suffice it to recall that, at the launch of the Barcelona Process, Israel and the then-newly created Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat had been engaged in the Oslo peace negotiations. Yet by the time EU and MENA representatives issued their joint declaration in November 1995 with the stated ambition of creating 'a zone of peace, stability, and prosperity' (Barcelona Declaration 1995), Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had been killed by an Israeli fundamentalist just a few weeks earlier; Israel's relations with its Arab neighbours would begin to deteriorate shortly afterwards. This is not the place to discuss the reasons for the demise of the Oslo Process. What is certain, however, is that the second Palestinian Intifada with its numerous terrorist attacks, Israel's continuous expansion of its settlements in and persistent domination over the Palestinian territories, and the separation between the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip and the West Bank where the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority rules over major urban centres, all contributed to considerably altering the parameters of Europe's engagement with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

By contrast to its agreements with Morocco and the Western Sahara, Brussels clarified that its trade agreement with Israel did not apply to the products originating in the Israeli settlements; this was also because, from a legal perspective, all of the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel are covered by the EU–Palestinian interim trade agreement of 1997. Palestinian trade volumes with the EU are ridiculously low, poorly diversified, and strongly unbalanced in favour of the Europeans (European Commission, DG Trade 2019c).² However, the EU and its single member states have

² In 2017, the EU's exports of goods to the Palestinian territories amounted to €300 million and its export of services to €100 million. Palestinian exports to the EU amounted to less than €100 million in goods and were almost non-existent in services.

remained the largest donors to the Palestinians since the start of the Oslo Process: for instance, varying between approximately €10 to €20 million a month, European aid supports the salaries and running costs of the Palestinian Authority. In addition, EU programmes train the Palestinian civil police as well as Palestinian judges, fund various programmes aimed at improving economic governance, the rule of law, and education, and support numerous civil society activities (for example Bulut Aymat 2010; Bouris 2014). The EU and its members also contribute substantially to the budget of the United Nations Refugee and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. While continuing to ostracize Hamas, Europe has also provided extensive humanitarian aid to Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip.³

What is striking is that Europe's cooperation with the Palestinians takes place within parameters set by Israel, which ultimately controls the West Bank and which, together with Egypt, has maintained a strict blockade on the Gaza Strip since 2007 (World Bank 2018). While clinging to the (arguably no longer relevant) 'two-state solution' model proposed for resolving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict,⁴ European policies have actually contributed to the preservation of the status quo. Yet, considering the ongoing nature of Israeli settlement expansion, the status quo is hardly a static one. Above all, Europe's policies, while often the target of Israeli criticism, are, in fact, in Israel's interest: they ensure the survival of an increasingly illiberal Palestinian regime which cooperates with Israel in fighting Hamas and, moreover, absolve the occupying power of the responsibility of taking care of the Palestinian population living under its control (Del Sarto 2019; see also Tocci 2009; Huber 2018).

Moving beyond the specificities of the Israeli case, our discussion so far has shown that migration and border controls represent the issues which lend MENA states the most leverage over the Europeans, as a growing body of literature has highlighted (Cassarino 2007; 2010, 2014; Durac and Cavatorta 2009; Lutterbeck 2009; Del Sarto 2010; Paoletti 2011; Hollis 2013; El Qadim 2014). Here the bargaining power of MENA states, particularly those in North Africa, has only strengthened in recent decades. Using migration as leverage is in no way a novel development, however. Morocco, for example, had already sought to obtain trade concessions from the Europeans in the

³ The EU joined Israel and the United States in boycotting Hamas until it renounces terrorism, recognizes Israel, and abides by previous agreements, that is, the Oslo Accords.

⁴ In addition to contradicting the realities of an unrelenting Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank, Israel's right-wing governments have long abandoned the two-state solution and have been discussing the implementation of a (partial) annexation of the West Bank instead.

mid-1990s by threatening to relax its border controls during negotiations on the Euro–Mediterranean Association Agreement. As the *Economist* (9 September 1995: 47–48) put it at the time, ‘give us a deal’, Morocco demanded, ‘or we will give you our people’. Over the years, additional MENA states, including Egypt and Tunisia, would discover—and exploit—their crucial role as Europe’s gatekeepers.

The master in playing the ‘immigration card’ vis-à-vis Europe was, undoubtedly, Libya’s Qaddafi. As we have seen, the late Libyan ruler extracted considerable support from Brussels and other European capitals (most notably Rome) for his role in preventing refugees and migrants mainly hailing from sub-Saharan Africa from reaching Europe (Paoletti 2011). Qaddafi’s ‘threat’ to ‘turn Europe black’ unless the EU paid Libya at least €5 billion a year to block unwanted migration of 2010 is probably the most (in)famous illustration of Qaddafi’s sense of power over the Europeans. Indeed, it was through such threats that Qaddafi obtained the suspension of the economic embargo while gaining international legitimacy (Perrin 2009), in addition to financial aid amounting to around €60 million for the period 2011–2013 (Paoletti and Pastore 2010; Zaragoza Cristiani 2016). Qaddafi would—albeit unsuccessfully—repeat his threat to ‘turn Europe black’ before the NATO campaign of 2011 that eventually led to his demise (Squires 2010).

More recently, Turkish President Erdoğan has become an equally skilful player in Europe’s immigration debacle. As unprecedented number of refugees and irregular migrants attempted to enter the European Union in 2015, triggering a deep political crisis among the member states and revealing the failures of a common asylum and migration governance, Turkey gained exceptional bargaining power over the Europeans. With the EU–Turkey deal of March 2016, in which Germany played a prominent behind-the-scenes role, Ankara succeeded in obtaining €6 billion from Brussels for blocking unwanted flows of (mainly Syrian) refugees and migrants to Europe (Okuy and Zaragoza Cristiani 2016). Europe’s concessions were not solely financial, however. In addition to reopening the stalled EU accession negotiations and the promise of visa liberalization for Turkish nationals traveling to the European Union, the ‘urgency’ of the refugee crisis in the summer of 2015 also prompted the European Commission to delay the publication of a critical document on the ‘progress’ of candidate country Turkey on its way to EU membership. Giving in to Erdoğan’s requests, the Commission did not release the report in mid-October as had previously been scheduled, but only after the Turkish parliamentary elections of 1 November 2015, in which Erdoğan’s AK party regained its majority. During the same period, the Europeans refrained from publicly

voicing criticism at Turkey's deteriorating record on human rights, the rule of law, and democracy in general. What was more, the Europeans remained conspicuously silent on Turkey's worsening relations with the Kurdish population, which coincided with Ankara's declared efforts to fight (Kurdish) terrorism within and across its borders (also Karadağ 2019: 7). Once the Turkish government had delegitimized the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) by accusing it of supporting terrorism, the Kurdish peace process was abandoned and armed conflict in the south-eastern regions resumed. Military actions in the region's predominantly Kurdish cities led to civilian fatalities and the displacement of Kurdish populations. Erdoğan's boast that he had the power to challenge the very existence of Europe's Schengen system of open borders whenever he wanted by putting 'refugees on buses' and opening its borders with Greece and Bulgaria (quoted in Okyay and Zaragoza Cristiani 2016: 59) had apparently made quite an impression on the Europeans.

Attempts by refugees and migrants to reach Europe via the Balkans and Turkey diminished in frequency after 2016. In the spring of 2020, Erdoğan sought to repeat his strategic move by opening the border to EU territory to Syrian refugees fleeing the embattled Syrian province of Idlib, as alluded to above. There were precedents to this, however. Since the signing of the 2016 EU refugee deal, Turkey had repeatedly threatened to relax border controls for refugees and migrants heading to the EU, stressing that the country was neither able nor willing to shoulder the burden of hosting millions of Syrian refugees on its own—by 2019, Turkey hosted over 3.6 million Syrian refugees. In this vein, the number of refugees and migrants entering EU territory via Turkey increased notably in 2019, by around 46 per cent over the previous year (Cook 2020). Meanwhile, Brussels remains unable to verify how (or, for that matter, if) Turkey has spent over €1 billion in European public funds on Syrian refugees since Ankara refuses to grant access to relevant documents (Nielsen 2018).

Finally, it should be noted that according to various reports in the media, Libyan militias, which are paid by Europe to control the borders, are engaging in a similar cat-and-mouse game with the Europeans, by strengthening or relaxing border controls according to their (financial) needs.

It is no small irony that on the issues of 'migration and mobility', defined as 'one of the main fields of cooperation', the EU has formulated a number of options for leverage vis-à-vis third countries (European Commission 2016: 8–9). These include visa policies, pilot projects for legal migration, training authorized migrants according to the needs of European labour markets, EU support for the transfer and reinvestment of migrant remittances in countries

of origin, and information exchange. In addition, the European Commission stated that technological development, ‘notably biometrics and digital identification, can act as a practical tool to bring migration management services together’ (8–9). The reality is, however, that Europe has exposed itself to a considerable degree of blackmailing power to MENA states when it comes to border and migration control. Given that Europe has co-opted MENA states in the management of its borderlands, this power is ‘the leverage of the gatekeeper’, as Okyay and Zaragoza Cristiani (2016) have concisely put it.

Based on our discussion of contestation, accommodation, and leverage thus far, what can be said about the form of interdependence that prevails in Europe–MENA relations?

Dependence and Interdependence Reconsidered

Our discussion of compliance, contestation, and leverage in Europe–MENA relations has brought a complex web of mutual dependencies to the fore. While it is safe to say that Europe and its southern borderlands are linked to each other through multilayered patterns of interdependence, how can we think about the nature of this relationship and the underlying dynamics of power? What is the broader picture of the interactions and mutual dependencies governing Europe and its southern borderlands?

Relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East exhibit two of the major features of complex interdependence, the influential concept formulated by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1987; 2011). The existence of multiple channels of contact, the first marker of complex interdependence, certainly applies to relations between Europe and its southern borderlands. As we have seen, formal and informal ties between government and business elites, including between border control authorities and security services, figure prominently in these relations. The existence of formal and informal contact at both the EU level and at the level of single EU member states adds a further dimension to the multiplicity of channels and contacts. While not the focus of this book, Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East are also linked to each other through various transnational networks of civil society organizations such as EuroMeSCo, EuroMed Rights, and FEMISE (see also Jünemann 2002).⁵ Societies and communities of people across Europe and

⁵ EuroMeSCo (the Euro–Mediterranean Study Commission) was founded in 1996 and is a network of research centres on politics and security in the Euro–Mediterranean area. EuroMed Rights (formerly

the Mediterranean Middle East are thus increasingly interconnected as well. The second characteristic of complex interdependence according to Keohane and Nye, namely the lack of the use of military force, is rather obvious in our case, if we consider the nature of the European Union and its history, together with the fact that the EU does not have an army. It is important to keep in mind here that Keohane and Nye originally advanced their concept in the late 1970s, meant as an ideal type of the global system, and with a major focus on the United States.⁶

The third feature of complex interdependence, that is, the absence of a clear hierarchy of issues in the relationship, is not present in our case. Trade relations and cooperation on migration, borders, and security are far more important than, say, Europe's promotion of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa, or cultural relations, for that matter. Incidentally, commercial ties and the realm of security and border controls are also two sectors marked by reversed patterns of dependence. Hence relations between Europe and its southern borderlands do not fully correspond to Keohane and Nye's ideal-type model of complex interdependence in the liberal tradition of International Relations theory. While the real world never corresponds to sophisticated theoretical models, as the authors underline themselves (Keohane and Nye 1987: 731), the existence of a distinct hierarchy of issue areas and patterns of dependence across different sectors would indicate that a particular type of interdependence is at stake in Europe's relations with the Mediterranean Middle East. What, then, are the main characteristics of this complex relationship?

To begin with, in light of the nature of trade relations between the EU and MENA states and their relevance in the interaction between the two regions, the broader picture of Europe–MENA relations is certainly one of relational inequality. Indeed, as we have seen, specialization in different types of products and the clear division of labour characterize strongly vertical trade relations, with most states in the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa relying on Europe for large quantities of important goods, investments, aid, and export markets. Conversely, Europe could theoretically look beyond

the Euro–Mediterranean Human Rights Network or EMHRN) is a network representing eighty human rights organizations and institutions in over thirty countries that was created in 1997. FEMISE (Forum Euroméditerranéen des Instituts de Sciences Économiques, or Euro–Mediterranean Forum of Institutes of Economic Sciences) was established in 2005 and is a network of more than a hundred economic research institutes.

⁶ In this specific historical and geographical context, the concept represented a major challenge to the dominant realist world view of global politics, in which military and economic power were the main determinants of foreign policy behaviour.

the MENA states for the far smaller quantities of goods it acquires from them without incurring enormous costs, perhaps with the exception of natural gas. With the omission of Israel and, to some extent, Turkey, this type of Europe–MENA interaction qualifies as dependence, or dependency (Caporaso 1978: 22).⁷ Importantly, this asymmetry, which is inherently a relationship of dominance, is a structural condition in the interaction between both sides. It is structural because it is anchored in a long history of economic and political asymmetries that produced durable and stable patterns of interaction over time, leading to a set of significant distortions. The strong linkages between the economies and elites of the MENA and European states, the southward expansion of European capital, the fragmented nature of MENA economies, their insufficient technological development and innovation, and the growing gap between elites and populations in these states, are all examples of such distortions. In this type of structural dependence, ‘economic productive activity and the structure of social relations [in dependent states] are largely reflections of processes elsewhere in the world’ (Duvall and Freeman 1981: 109)—including, in our case, those in Europe. As a consequence of the selective and asymmetrical integration of MENA economies into the European (and global) economic system, the range of policy options available to MENA governments is restricted. By and large, structural dependence demands their compliance with European, and more broadly Western, preferences and prescriptions.

Second, while it may be difficult—if not impossible—for MENA states to adopt policy choices that plainly run counter to European preferences, consensus is an important aspect of their interaction with Europe. Johan Galtung’s observation that the ‘centres in the peripheries’ share the interests, values, and perceptions of the centres in the core within relationships of structural dependency (Galtung 1971: 83) strongly resonates in our case. This affinity between elites in both Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East, particularly those in the Maghreb, often has a cultural dimension as well, rooted in colonial history. Consensus-based compliance, however, can also be thought of as a function and an outcome of structural dependence: it is precisely this condition that tends to shape the preferences of elites in peripheral states (Moon

⁷ In the literature, the terms ‘dependence’ and ‘dependency’ are at times used as synonyms, and at others to denote qualitatively different concepts embedded in distinct theoretical traditions. Without going into detail or referring to the rich literature on this topic—including the body of literature of dependency (or *dependencia*) theory that was prominent in the late 1960s and 1970s and that focused on the lack of development in Latin America—I use the two terms interchangeably when denoting a structural condition. For a good discussion of relevant terms and their conceptual underpinnings see Duvall 1978.

1985: 333). In other words, elites in the periphery are themselves deeply enmeshed in the web of structural asymmetry and dependence and may thus be quite satisfied with the existing economic order and 'their share of the pie' (Fagen 1978: 295).

Third, various forms of resistance are taking place within the broader framework of compliance and consensus exhibited by the MENA states, as illustrated earlier. Contestation and a distorted application of European (and more broadly Western) rules and practices in MENA states, and the Europeans' tacit acceptance of these strategies and responses, are typical patterns of core-periphery relations, as we have seen. Importantly, these practices of contestation, renegotiation, and accommodation shape the interaction between the European bloc and the Mediterranean Middle East, resulting in a hybrid order in the borderlands.

Finally, power relations vary according to different issue areas. In the sphere of migration and border controls, the patterns of Europe-Middle East interaction that characterize commercial ties between the two regions are inverted. As Europe has actively shaped MENA states as their southern borderlands and become dependent on it for the management of its migration policy, MENA governments often use their bargaining power to obtain concessions in other areas. Leverage and issue linkage, however, still take place within the broader context of a profoundly asymmetrical relationship. In this sense, the materially far more powerful EU and its members employ a combination of incentives and disincentives—to ensure the compliance of MENA governments with their preferences, with varying degrees of success. Moreover, Galtung's observation that, in a relationship of structural dependency, there is a perceived disharmony of interests between the peripheries in peripheral states and the peripheries of the core is illuminating in our context (Galtung 1971). The perceived 'threat' of mass migration and the significant rise of xenophobia and right-wing populism in Europe of recent years is a clear indication of this perceived divergence of interests, which also prevents any type of solidarity between the peripheries (or the disenfranchised masses) on both sides of the Mediterranean. Ironically, perhaps, it is precisely the construction of the 'threat' of immigration in European countries that provides MENA states with such bargaining power and forms the basis of Europe's dependence on its borderlands.

The patterns of dependency in Europe-Middle East relations thus differ from one other when we disaggregate them on a sector-by-sector basis. But what is more important is the distinction between *structural conditions* and the *behavioural dimension* of the interaction between states and regions (Caporaso 1978). The leverage acquired by MENA states on migration and

border controls, together with the varying strategies of resistance and contestation, clearly shows that even within structurally asymmetrical relationships, states and governments do have choices and a certain amount of room for manoeuvre. Consistent with a liberal view of International Relations, which focuses on states' behaviour and bargaining dynamics, it has been emphasized that being the stronger side in an asymmetrical relationship is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to exercise influence over the weaker side (Keohane and Nye 1987: 734). Indeed, the fact that the Europeans are less dependent on MENA states does not mean that they can exercise their influence as they please. The weaker MENA states may have strong preferences on an issue such as trade or financial aid and thus make concessions in another such as migration control. In the same way, Europe will not exercise all of its power on one issue, say, judicial reform in Arab MENA states, if this requires concessions in another realm, such as security cooperation. As highlighted in this chapter, this kind of negotiation, together with various practices of contestation and accommodation, forms an important dimension in the relationship between Europe and its southern borderlands.

* * *

When we shift our focus to the strategies and responses of the states in the Mediterranean Middle East vis-à-vis Europe's preferences and prescriptions, we gain a far more comprehensive understanding of their relationship. Various practices of resistance to European rules adopted by MENA states figure predominantly here. The contestation of European rules may result in either their 'localization' according to domestic interests to which Europe tacitly acquiesces or in continuous negotiation over their meaning and scope. Such negotiation may also impact the rules that Europe originally intended to export, thus shaping the order in the borderlands, and, in some cases, the order within the European core itself. At the same time, Europe's shaping of its southern borderlands and the co-optation of MENA states in the management of migration, borders, and security policies, has given MENA states—particularly the North African states and Turkey—considerable bargaining power over Europe. This leverage and the resulting practice of issue linkage prompt us to qualify the idea of unidirectional power relations in the interaction between Europe and its southern borderlands. A focus on the agency of MENA states thus throws into relief a complex picture of interaction with different dimensions and vectors of power. This interaction, however, continues to be defined by—and occurs within—the deeply ingrained structural

dependency of the MENA states on Europe. This finding is fully consistent with the core–periphery perspective on Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East that underpins a borderlands approach to these relations. At the same time, this perspective also casts light on the intrinsically hybrid nature of the borderlands, in which rules and practices are constantly contested and renegotiated, and hence ambiguous.

Conclusions and Outlook

This book has proposed an alternative, sobering understanding of the relationship between the European Union and its member states—or ‘Europe’—and the countries in the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa, Europe’s ‘southern neighbours’. In defiance of the overly simplistic notions of European ‘normative power’ and ‘Fortress Europe’ alike, this study has suggested that Europe can be thought of as a kind of empire in relation to its southern borderlands. Through this prism, the book has examined relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East in the twenty-year period between 1995 and 2015 by focusing on the two most important dimensions of their interaction: trade relations on the one hand and migration, border, and security cooperation on the other. In the period under consideration, relations between the two sides progressively expanded, deepened, and institutionalized following the start of the Barcelona Process in November 1995, with the Europeans recurrently stressing the need for shared prosperity and democratic reforms in the ‘southern neighbourhood’. Exactly twenty years later, a major revision of European policy towards the region would take place, coinciding with the peak in the number of refugees seeking to reach Europe due to the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Libya. From that moment on, European policy and rhetoric adopted a markedly pragmatic and security-oriented approach, an approach which also emerged in response to the growing number of terrorist attacks in the Middle East and Europe and the rise of the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Yet despite the rhetoric and the various policy reformulations that have taken place in the interim, the basic features of Europe’s engagement with its southern neighbours have remained unaltered. European policies are based on continuous attempts to make neighbouring Middle Eastern and North African states adopt EU or EU-compatible rules and regulations, integrate these countries into parts of the EU’s Internal Market, and tie them to European border control and counter-terrorism policies. Using a borderlands approach to study the interaction between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East allows us to shift our attention to the dimensions of these complex and partly ambiguous relations that are often overlooked. This approach begins by thinking of the European

Union and its members as an economically powerful and empire-like entity with disaggregated internal and external borders, which continuously seeks to expand its order to neighbouring regions. In addressing states that have no—or, in the case of Turkey, highly qualified—prospects for EU membership, these policies create borderlands: areas that are connected to the European core through shared rules and practices but still lie beyond it. Governments in these borderlands are substantially involved in the implementation of European policies. Within a relationship that remains asymmetrical, hybrid and ambiguous norms and rules define the order in these peripheral regions. Notwithstanding any normative discourse, the transfer of European rules and practices to these states is in reality a cost-efficient means of pursuing Europe's economic and security interests, for which the stability of the periphery remains key. By considering how an interest-driven strategy towards the near abroad intertwines with an allegedly normative set of practices and principles, the author of this book has proposed to think of the European polity as a 'normative empire'.

Adopting such a perspective to study Europe's relations with the Mediterranean Middle East may be provocative and, at first sight, counter-intuitive. However, it captures precisely the nature of these relations. First, it accounts for the long colonial history that linked these parts of the Middle East to Europe and laid the foundations for a profoundly distorted set of economic relations. Equally, this perspective allows us to trace the specific mode of Europe's engagement with these areas to the beginning of the European integration process, with the colonial attitudes of single member states, mainly the former colonial powers, progressively morphing into the common enterprise of the European bloc. Imperial or quasi-imperial policies towards North Africa and the Mediterranean Middle East thus form an integral part of Europe's political DNA. Second, for all of the EU's talk of partnership, a borderlands approach acknowledges upfront the unequal power relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East. As Europe has created a vertical hub-and-spoke type of relationship by trading market access for security and stability, most MENA states have remained structurally dependent on Europe, albeit to varying degrees. In this system, MENA and European economic and political elites share an interest in maintaining a stable order. Third, thinking of Europe–MENA relations in these terms resolves the apparent contradiction between the EU's normative discourse and its interest-driven policies. The EU's perception of its normative superiority is certainly linked to its history and *raison d'être*, but it translates into a paternalistic civilizing mission vis-à-vis third states. Even if Europe's

conspicuously orientalist attitude towards the Middle East has diminished since Edward Said's (1979) analysis, the critique nevertheless remains valid. A borderlands approach thus also allows us to distinguish between Europe's ambitions to diffuse liberal norms on the world stage and the technocratic reality of transferring regulations pertaining to trade, efficient economic governance, and administrative practice to the periphery. Finally, the actions and strategies of MENA governments vis-à-vis European prescriptions contribute to the hybrid order in the borderlands, with the contestation and negotiation of European rules and their selective and often distorted application figuring prominently. The agency of MENA states is thus properly accounted for.

What are the main findings of this book? First, the study has shown that relentless efforts to expand various functional and territorial borders to the southern periphery are the essence of European policies, irrespective of the specific contractual relations in place with single MENA states. This book has provided numerous examples of how these policies work in practice: Europe's attempts to impose its preferences and engineer socio-economic change in its borderlands rely on a plethora of formal and informal agreements, numerous projects and programmes, and various training activities on a wide range of issues. The EU's financial and technical assistance in support of the implementation of the prescribed reform process in MENA states is an integral part of Europe's *modus operandi*.

In the trade sphere, the gradual transfer of European rules and regulations has integrated MENA economies into select sectors of the EU's Internal Market, thereby seeking to create an environment that is favourable to (European) business. While the borders of European capital have expanded southwards in this process, agricultural products—a sector in which MENA states have a comparative advantage—continue to be largely excluded from the so-called free trade regime. Overall, this process appears to be driven by EU institutions, large European companies, single EU member states, and MENA elites, with a focus on those aspects that best fit their shared commercial interests. These policies have undoubtedly brought Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East nearer to one other, with Maghreb economies aligning themselves with Europe's economic interests particularly closely.

European policies on migration, security, and border controls follow a similar script, although the role played by single European states is far more pronounced here. The Maghreb features predominantly in these areas, too. By co-opting the governments and law enforcement agencies of MENA states with the help of mostly informal, often shady agreements and various

incentives and pressures, Europe has attempted to turn the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa into its southern buffer zone. In this rather opaque process of externalizing European border controls, aimed at preventing unwanted migration to Europe, the Europeans have exported a highly selective set of rules of practices. At the same time, they have willingly ceded responsibility for respecting international refugee law and human rights to a number of MENA states with dismal human rights records. A similar consideration applies to the cooperation on security and counterterrorism between single EU member states and their MENA counterparts. Here, again, European security concerns drive the agenda—and appear to justify pernicious means and outcomes.

A second set of findings revolves around the impact of European policies in the time span under consideration. Assessing impact here is not without difficulty: In particular, the EU's trade policies and prescribed regulatory reforms cannot be completely isolated from the actions of other international actors with similar neoliberal economic preferences. This is even more the case as commercial relations between Europe and its borderlands are deeply embedded in the global capitalist economic system, with the Europeans playing a prominent role in the process of integrating its borderlands into this system. A second factor is the limited nature of the existing literature, with the exception of migration studies, in the fields of economic relations and border policy. Indeed, the question of post-facto policy impact has not been the focus of attention of much of the political economy literature, and the generally secretive nature of security and border policies often coincides with a lack of reliable data. A third problematic aspect is that the ramifications of European policies are also dependent on the choices and strategies of the MENA governments themselves, in addition to the extant socio-economic conditions in individual states. Given that Europe remains the largest trading partner of all the states in its southern periphery and the largest provider of foreign aid in most cases, it is nevertheless possible to establish a strong correlation, if not a causal link, between European policies and specific developments in the MENA region. What is of interest here are not quantitative measurements of micro-processes, but the larger picture of Europe–Middle East relations.

And this larger picture is neither positive nor encouraging. During the twenty years examined in this book, European policies have certainly not created an 'area of peace, democracy, and shared prosperity', the Barcelona Declaration's solemnly declared objective of 1995. Rather, Europe's attempts to restructure the political and socio-economic order in the borderlands have stood to the detriment of the societies of the Mediterranean Middle East. Both

the EU's trade policies and the modalities of Europe's cooperation on migration, borders, and security with single MENA governments have played a significant role in producing this outcome.

Reflecting the divergence in economic conditions as well as the relative willingness and ability of MENA states to deepen economic ties with their European neighbours, the integration of MENA economies into the EU's Internal Market occurred at different paces and to varying degrees of scope and intensity. But although the overall volume of traded goods has increased over time, commercial relations have continued to be asymmetrical. With the exception of the natural gas-exporting countries in the Mediterranean Middle East, Europe has consistently recorded a trade surplus with all the MENA states. Excluding Israel, and, to a certain extent, Turkey, the division of labour and specialization in different types of products that typify core-periphery relations still mark Europe's commercial exchange with its borderlands. The developing Arab states in Europe's southern neighbourhood have thus remained trapped in a peripheral economic position vis-à-vis the more advanced European core. At the same time, these are the same countries where authoritarian regimes have succeeded in hijacking the neoliberal restructuring process. The absence of any noteworthy European incentives for meaningful political reform that would have established the rule of law and rendered political rule accountable is significant. As a result, crony capitalism and corruption have intensified massively, socio-economic and regional inequalities have increased, and a dual economic system, including in the vital agricultural sector, has emerged in these states.

It would be easy to claim that Europe is not to blame for this outcome. Other external players, most notably the United States and the international financial institutions, have promoted similar policies. Moreover, it could be argued that many—and perhaps most—responsibilities lie with the autocratic regimes in the Mediterranean Middle East. Yet as long as commercial ties with the Europeans remain most relevant for the region, European trade policies have clearly prioritized and relied on the ruling political elites in the region and their cronies for the sake of Europe's economic benefit and political stability. As European companies have profited from these developments, MENA elites have become the conveyor belt of the European (and global) neoliberal economic order. European policies have thus directly fed into deteriorating socio-economic conditions for large swathes of the population in these states, which have paid the price of profoundly distorted economic development. The Europeans could and should have known better: from the late 1990s onwards, scholars and observers of Euro-Mediterranean relations—many of

them working within EU-funded projects and networks—had anticipated the negative effects of the EU-prescribed reform process that coincided with the liberalization of trade in industrial goods. What is more, an EU-funded impact assessment study of 2007 had warned of the adverse effects of these policies as well, particularly in the absence of targeted measures to create jobs, alleviate poverty, and improve education. The EU repeatedly adjusted its policies over the years, but these changes were generally too little and too late.

The EU's trade policies have had important political consequences as well. The Europeans have de facto tolerated and partly contributed to the accumulation of power and private wealth by the repressive rulers of the MENA region. From this vantage point, the Arab uprisings should not have come as a surprise to anyone. However, in the wake of the Arab revolutions, Europe did still not change substantially its *modus operandi*. To the contrary, it proposed even deeper integration into the Internal Market through 'Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements' according to EU rules, from which MENA states—and especially their societies—are unlikely to draw substantial benefit. The promotion of meaningful political reforms has remained a rhetorical device.

Turkey and Israel are outliers here. Turkey, the seemingly eternal EU candidate country, has become part of the European economic order in many ways. Following the 1995 completion of the customs union in industrial goods, and as a result of the lengthy (and by now suspended) EU accession process, Turkey has over time adopted a vast array of EU-compatible trade rules and regulations. Links between European and Turkish business elites have grown deeper. Since Turkey is the EU's sixth-largest trading partner at present, commercial relations between both sides are thus substantive, with stronger diversification and the gradual closing of Turkey's trade deficit more recently marking relations. This does not alter the fact that Turkey, as a non-EU member, has no say in the Brussels decision-making process. As with the rest of Europe's southern neighbourhood, crony capitalism and social inequality have increased in Turkey as well, reinforcing the impression that the neighbourhood has become the conveyor belt of an unchecked and EU-promoted neoliberal economic order. Moreover, as the rule of law and respect for human rights continue to retreat in Turkey, the questions could be asked as to whether and to what extent the EU's selective rule transfer, in combination with the endless dangling of the EU membership carrot, may have contributed to the country's illiberal turn. The protracted nature of EU accession negotiations, in which Ankara has been treated as the junior partner, coupled with the EU's preferential treatment for eastern European (and thus 'Christian')

candidate countries, which overtook Turkey in the accession queue, may well have informed Turkey's adoption of revisionist policies, which have sought to reverse the country's perceived denial of its international role by the Europeans (Fisher Onar 2013).

Following Israel's alignment of much of its legislation with European rules and standards, the country's economy is also well integrated into the EU's Internal Market. In these rather diversified commercial ties, trade in services and advanced high-tech products figure prominently. Given that Israel shifted to a neoliberal economic model over three decades ago independently of European preferences and maintains such extensive trade ties with the US, it would be difficult to ascribe to Europe responsibility for the country's growing social inequalities and the concentration of economic power in the hands of a small wealthy elite. However, when we consider the Palestinian aspect of Europe's relations with that area, it becomes evident that European policies have responded to Israel's prerogatives while pursuing shared business and security interests. Europe's engagement with Israel and the Palestinians has not contributed to the economic development of the Palestinian Territories, which remain economically dependent on Israel. Rather, European policies have kept the Palestinians dependent on foreign aid, of which the Europeans are the largest providers, while relieving Israel of its obligations as the occupying power.

The book's findings on European cooperation with MENA states on migration, security, and border controls are further proof of Europe's pronounced self-interest in its dealings with the borderlands, in plain disregard of the liberal norms it pretends to uphold. The collaboration of single European states with the authoritarian regimes in North Africa has been most intense here, with disturbing consequences. Europe has been expanding its borders for unwanted people southwards with the overall aim of reducing unwanted migration to Europe, fighting terrorism, and providing security to EU citizens. It has engaged in joint patrols of the Mediterranean coastline with these states while delegating specific border control duties to them. In this process, the Europeans have tacitly accepted the increasingly repressive policies adopted by MENA governments towards both their citizens and foreign migrants and refugees. In fact, in its endeavour to prevent irregular migration and terrorism on European soil, Europe has rewarded these states with financial, political, technical, and material support—the latter including sales and donations of patrol boats and sophisticated surveillance equipment. While controlling mobility has become a central element in the broader Western consensus on migration governance, Europe, and particularly single EU member states, have

been particularly active players. As a result, Europe's externalization of its migration and border controls, together with security cooperation, have further contributed to the strengthening of authoritarian rule in the southern neighbourhood. While the European arms industry has profited considerably from the securitization of Europe's external borders (see for example Akkerman 2020), Europe's selective export of its rules and practices southwards has also watered down or even suspended the norms of human rights and refugee protection at Europe's fringes, as we have seen.

A third set of findings revolves around the type of power relations and dependencies that underpin the interaction between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East. The nature of trade relations between the two sides and their development over time clearly point to a broader picture of structural dependency. While limiting the choices of MENA governments, this structural asymmetry also conditions the preferences of MENA elites, which in practice stand to benefit from their position in the system. Within this framework, however, MENA states have some room for manoeuvre, evidenced by their resistance to and contestation of European rules. In accordance with the conceptualization of Europe as an empire of sorts, the Europeans often accept a distorted application of their rules in the borderlands as long as it allows them to pursue their interests and exert a degree of influence. While the dynamics of rule contestation, renegotiation, and accommodation serve the aim of reaching the best possible deal for both sides, it is striking that both Europe and MENA states engage with rules and norms in a highly selective way, resulting in the hybrid order observed in the borderlands. Moreover, our discussion has evidenced the importance of issue linkage and reversed power relations on specific issues. Above all in the realm of migration control and security, Europe has become dependent on MENA states, particularly those in North Africa and, more recently, Turkey. With the perceived threat of mass migration dominating the political agenda in most EU member states, opening the border to unwanted migrants and refugees—or, at the very least, threatening to do so—has become a powerful and rewarding strategy for whoever controls the outward movement of people in the region, be it states or militias (as in the case of Libya). Situated as they are within a broader framework of structural dependency, power relations between Europe and its southern borderlands are thus far more complex, variegated, and multidirectional than most studies account for.

When read together, the findings of this book allow for a number of final considerations. The first general conclusion regards the often problematic academic study of Europe's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbours and

the generally limited contribution of International Relations theory to this endeavour. This book has adopted some conceptual eclecticism: no single International Relations tradition proves useful in providing a comprehensive account of these relations, which comprise diverse and complex fields of cooperation between equally complex political actors and regions. Realism and neorealism may account for European interests driving Europe's policies as well as for the distribution of material power in Europe–Middle East relations. However, these approaches are incapable of accounting for the role that European identity construction plays in underpinning its policies, an identity which in turn is deeply intertwined with European interests. Equally, these theories cannot account for the social construction of borders and the threat of immigration. However, these constructions are significant: most notably, the ever-growing importance assigned to the 'migration threat' and border controls in most European states is the basis of, and nurtures, Europe's dependency on materially weaker states in the periphery. In similar fashion, dependency theory addresses deeply engrained structural features in unequal north–south relationships, which apply to our case. However, this approach ignores the room for manoeuvre and bargaining power demonstrated by the materially weaker states in Europe's southern borderlands, and is therefore blind to the resulting practices that define the interaction between both sides. Conversely, the liberal tradition of interdependence and bargaining pays insufficient attention to structural inequality in the global system. More generally, since most Western International Relations approaches were developed in the context of prolonged US hegemony after the Second World War, they fail to account for the specificities of the European Union and its policies. They often conveniently ignore the implications of structural dependence and generally pay insufficient attention to the agency of materially weaker states. Lastly, as neoliberal economic theory assumed hegemonic status, such theory fails to seriously question the underlying assumptions and adverse implications of neoliberalism's predatory variant in advanced economies and developing countries alike.

In what could be termed realist constructivism, this study has combined realist and constructivist tenets in its conceptualization of the relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East. At the same time, it has treated structurally unequal power relations as a starting point but also accounted for the agency of MENA states, multidirectional power relations, and the presence of hybrid orders in the borderlands. The study has thus highlighted that negotiations over the scope and meaning of rules as well as continuous processes of social construction take place within limits imposed

by structural conditions, which may, of course, also change over time. This book thus lends its voice to the call by a growing number of scholars to transcend the dogmatism, narrow views, and Western-centric tendencies of traditional International Relations theory (for example Acharya 2014; Bilgin and Ling 2017). However, it also invites the European studies literature to be more critical in its evaluation of European policies. Although a growing number of scholars have criticized the literature's Eurocentric and self-congratulatory approach (for example Zielonka 2001a; 2006; Bialasiewicz 2012; Cebeci 2012; 2018; Fisher Onar and Nicolaïdis 2013; Nicolaïdis 2015; Keuleers et al. 2016; Keukeleire and Lecocq 2018), the mainstream literature has remained preoccupied with the EU's positive normative influence in the 'neighbourhood'. Yet some twenty-five years after the start of the Barcelona Process, with the adverse developments in Europe's southern periphery in plain sight, the fixation on Europe's solemn declarations and (undoubtedly) good intentions is plainly anachronistic.

A second general consideration regards the extent to which the specific dynamics that mark the relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East are applicable to developments in other parts of the world. Are these interactions a *sui generis* phenomenon or is the transformation of the southern periphery into Europe's borderlands a local manifestation of a much broader phenomenon? There is no clear-cut answer to this question. For one, the EU and its members have treated the neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe—Europe's eastern borderlands—in a similar fashion. Indeed, European policies towards its eastern neighbours are equally characterized by rule expansion and the attempted co-optation of governments in border control duties and migration management (Schumacher, Marchetti, and Demmelhuber 2018). We may posit that European policies have had a similar impact on the socio-economic and political order in these states. A major difference, however, is that some of these countries face the realistic prospect of EU membership, at least in the longer term. An analysis of these ties through a borderlands lens and the comparison of the findings would certainly be an interesting academic exercise.

Beyond Europe, there is no doubt that trade and globalization, along with technological innovations and the growing demand for cooperative frameworks to address complex issues, have transformed the nature of state borders in our times (for example Rosenau 1980; Perkmann and Sum 2002; Fawcett and Serrano 2005; Bach 2017). Considering the emergence of increasingly interdependent border regions and widespread patterns of cross-border

governance, some basic features of Europe's relations with its borderlands may be observable elsewhere as well. However, with its internal political set-up comprising single member states but also supranational institutions and laws, the absence of a unified military power, territorial instability, and disaggregated borders, the European polity is a very specific case. There is a clear link between the way in which Europe interacts with its borderlands and the particular nature of the EU and its members; 'normative empire Europe' does what it does because it is what it is. It is possible, nevertheless, to compare Europe's relations with its borderlands to the interaction between bordering states or regions in other parts of the world, provided that a number of equivalent features are given. Based on our discussion, these should include asymmetrical trade relations that are embedded in the global capitalist system, in addition to significant differences in wealth and economic development between bordering states or regions—factors that almost inevitably produce migratory flows from poorer to richer areas. While relations between the United States and Mexico, or between China and its neighbours may qualify for such a comparison (see for example Foot 2016; Martinez 2016), a deeper investigation of these and other cases through a borderlands prism may prove a productive site for further research.

Finally, what are the implications of this analysis for current and future relations between Europe and the Mediterranean Middle East? Where do we go from here? It is worth stressing that it is perfectly legitimate for a political entity such as the European Union and its member states to define its interests and adopt policies to achieve them—ideally for the benefit of its citizens. After all, this is the nature of politics and International Relations. Equally, as much as collective amnesia and denial are essential ingredients in Europe's strategy for dealing with its colonial legacy (Nicolaidis 2015), this feature characterizes many nations around the world when it comes to inglorious periods in their past. But while the EU's so-called Mediterranean policies were never meant to primarily address sustainable development and democratization in the neighbourhood, as noted some fifteen years ago (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005), the EU's pretention that its policies are 'normative' and 'different' has remained difficult to dislodge. Unsurprisingly, these claims have raised expectations while fomenting endless accusations that Europe is inconsistent, if not to say hypocritical. This state of affairs could be avoided were Europe to either adapt its policies to its narrative, which would be the ideal scenario, or at least begin aligning its narrative with its actions. Given the EU's current shift towards security-oriented policies and discourses, the latter would appear to be closer to reality.

In fact, while the geopolitical and economic considerations of the EU and its single members have dominated European policy for decades, they have clearly supplanted other considerations such as human rights or democratic reforms in recent years. Examples abound. EU funding for surveillance, intelligence, and border controls has massively increased in recent years (Youngs and Gutman 2015), reflecting the Europeans' double concern with migration and terrorism (which are in fact uncorrelated). In the same vein, Europe has maintained good relations with al-Sisi's repressive regime because of Egypt's important strategic location, the instability in neighbouring Libya and the Sahel, the discovery of large offshore natural gas fields, and potential benefits for European business. Italy's oil and gas company, ENI, which discovered these gas fields in 2015, has continued its operations in Egypt undaunted. Moreover, despite the Egyptian authorities' failure to cooperate with Italian prosecutors in investigating the murder of the Italian doctoral student Giulio Regeni, whose body was found in the outskirts of Cairo in 2016, Rome approved the sale of two naval frigates as part of a €9 billion arms sale to Egypt in June 2020 (De Marchi and Tecce 2020). France has significantly increased its arms exports to Egypt, too; these exports include personal surveillance and crowd control technologies that have been strongly criticized by human rights organizations (Irish and Louet 2018). Meanwhile, in June 2015, the German multinational company Siemens was awarded its largest order to date for the construction of power plants in Egypt, with the German government subsequently promising €500 million in loans in exchange for Cairo's cooperation on migration control (Deutsche Wirtschaftsnachrichten 2017). The same state of affairs characterizes Europe's relations with Algeria's regime, which has demonstrated continued reluctance to reform. Through its position as one of the main exporters of natural gas to Europe and by portraying itself as an 'island of stability' in a chaotic neighbourhood it shares with Libya and the Sahel, Algeria retains a privileged relationship with the Europeans, irrespective of its lamentable human rights record (Amnesty International 2019; also Bennati 2019: 82–84). To this list may be added: the accords on migration control that Italy and Malta signed, in 2017 and 2020 respectively, with the Libyan al-Serraj government; the contracts of British pharmaceutical and oil service companies in Algeria; the energy and business interests of major Italian, French, and British companies in Libya; Germany's recent hydrogen production deal with Morocco; and the list goes on. The Europeans no longer even declare the promotion of democracy and human rights in the neighbourhood to be one of their foreign policy objectives.

Certainly, Europe may also be forced to adopt far less ambitious policies vis-à-vis its southern borderlands because of its diminishing power of attraction, prompted by the 2008–2009 financial crisis and the internal divisions that culminated in Britain’s tortuous separation from the EU. Moreover, although the United States have been retreating from the Middle East in recent years, they continue to be a key player in all matters security. To date, energy interests, Israel’s security, and the stability of the region have remained Washington’s primary concerns, and this is unlikely to change. No less relevant, a number of other players have significantly increased their presence and influence in the Mediterranean Middle East in recent years. These include China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. Their support for specific regimes, parties, or factions in the region is rarely tied to any request for economic or political reform, with Riyadh and Abu Dhabi financing the counterrevolution and the restoration of authoritarian rule in the region since the 2011 uprisings.

Europe’s reduced influence and power of attraction, however, do not imply that the Europeans have the luxury to disengage from their southern neighbourhood. Whatever happens in that region is bound to impact on Europe, as most clearly evidenced by the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. Thus, instead of superficial policy revisions that result in ‘more of the same’—or, if EU funding is reduced, ‘less of the same’ (Bicchi 2014; Bennati 2019)—Europe must radically rethink its priorities and policies vis-à-vis the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa. Such reflection must start with the acknowledgement that trade policies are never only about economics; they are inseparable from politics. When it comes to the Arab states in Europe’s periphery, this book has shown that recent European trade policy, based on a neoliberal model of development which primarily stands to benefit the EU, has resoundingly failed to provide prosperity, dignity, and employment for ever-growing sections of MENA societies. Yet the model has proved stubbornly persistent: a highly technical 350-page interim report of an EU-funded study that sought to evaluate the impact of the EU’s trade agreements with six Arab MENA countries, published in March 2020, still relies on the same narrow conceptual framework. While it vaguely establishes that access to some markets has improved across different sectors for some of the MENA countries under consideration (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon) over time, the study finds that the competitiveness of these economies appears to have stagnated or even worsened over time. The social impact of the trade agreements, which the report suggests merits further study, is deemed to be moderate for MENA economies, but the overall benefits for European

exporters are (unsurprisingly) confirmed (European Commission 2020b). Such assessments cannot be the way ahead. Moreover, it must be acknowledged that neoliberal economic systems are perfectly compatible with authoritarianism. In fact, they often mutually reinforce one another. Yet continued support for repressive regimes that plainly ignore worsening socio-economic conditions in large parts of their societies in the name of (Europe's) stability and security cannot be in Europe's interest in the long term. As evidenced by the Arab uprisings, this type of 'stability' will, in the absence of meaningful political reforms, sooner or later come to an end, possibly as the result of violent unrest. Any meaningful stability in Europe's periphery—a legitimate objective for European and Middle Eastern societies alike—needs to be based on genuinely sustainable development. To repeat here the propositions that have been formulated in the specialized literature for decades, what is needed are fairer terms of trade and a greater focus on measures that mitigate the adverse effects of neoliberal reforms, or the abandoning of the neoliberal paradigm of economic development altogether. Equally essential is greatly increased aid for developing countries, tied to respect for the rule of law and human rights.

A courageous long-term strategy on migration, borders, and counterterrorism is also urgently needed. Working in these realms with authoritarian regimes and unreliable 'partner states', such as Turkey, is short-sighted for the reasons stated above. Not only does it reveal Europe's normative hypocrisy, it also hands a considerable degree of blackmailing power to these states. Moreover, what needs to be recognized is that persistent poverty, conflict, and climate change in the Global South will inevitably result in greater migratory pressures. Rather than reward MENA governments for becoming more repressive and spending billions of euros on 'border wars' (Mezzadra 2004; Balibar 2009) at Europe's fringes, European interests could be better served if these monies were not only spent on addressing the causes of migration but also on providing refugees and migrants with adequate living conditions and opportunities in Europe.

The final word regards the governments of the Mediterranean Middle East and North Africa, Europe's southern neighbours. As much as there is a real material basis for accusing the Europeans of neo-imperial policies, not to mention duplicity, this book has shown that these refrains have also served MENA governments, Israel included, as a convenient scapegoat for their own human rights violations and abject failure to govern responsibly. This applies to their profiteering from neoliberal reforms, and, for the Arab states—with the exception of Tunisia—their stubborn desire to preserve strict control in

plain disregard of the needs and aspirations of their citizens. For the region's authoritarian regimes, the observation concerning the unsustainable nature of repression in combination with worsening socio-economic conditions for the majority of their populations applies in equal measure. The main causes of the Arab uprisings in 2011—a lack of economic opportunity, rampant corruption, rising inequalities, and repression—remain patently unaddressed. In many MENA states, the socio-economic and political conditions have actually deteriorated. Given that more popular revolts may just be a matter of time, meaningful, gradual reform undoubtedly represents a better long-term strategy than ever-increasing oppression. Moreover, with regard to the unequal power relations that MENA states repeatedly lament in their dealings with Europe, the failure to confront European preferences as a group of states, or as a region, is largely their responsibility as well. Considering the dismal history of successful regional cooperation in the Middle East in recent decades and the persistence of various conflicts in the region, a change of strategy is highly unlikely, however. Finally, while this book has highlighted the agency of MENA states, the explicit or tacit contestation of European preferences may not be sufficient to change the rules of the game. Presenting the Europeans with constructive counterproposals and strategies, as Tunisian scholars have been recommending to their government with regard to migration policy (for example Limam 2020), is certainly the better approach.

At the time of completing this book, and as the world is facing the devastating economic and social implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be unrealistic to expect drastic alterations to the modalities of engagement between Europe and its southern borderlands. However, as in all times of crisis, this moment also presents an opportunity to change things for the better.

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