

## EUROPE AND THE ARAB SPRING: TWO CASE STUDIES

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### Abstract

This study will portray an assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean relations from a unique perspective: two countries from the MENA<sup>84</sup> region will be examined through the lenses of Europe, with which we will try to develop a fair evaluation of the EU's role in the Arab Spring. The main goal will be to gain insight into the EU's foreign policy making through the close examination of the European Neighborhood Policy<sup>85</sup> (ENP), which plays a key role in the EU's reactions to the Arab uprisings. The ENP's core documents (Action Plans and Progress Reports) will be examined to discover the EU's policy agendas regarding the MENA region and especially the two case study countries.

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**Keywords:** Arab Spring, MENA region, European Union, Egypt, Jordan

### Introduction

As the “Arab Spring” covers several different events, we will have to pick and select some individual cases and follow them closely while trying to make sense of the “whole”. The main question here will be the connection of these events to the ENP and how they affect the future prospects of Euro-Med relations. This is why only the introductory part of the case study will deal with the revolutionary events and their roots in political-economic causes, while the focus will be largely on the EU’s response and future prospects of engagement. As the concept of the “Arab Spring” signifies a heterogeneous set of events, it would be misleading to choose only one representative case to properly track all the related issues. On the other hand, exploring all the states and events involved in this huge arena would be a far more ambitious plan than the current work could afford. A usable compromise can be done if we select two representative cases, which cover some of the most striking differences in these events and therefore show a good representation of the whole.

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<sup>84</sup> Middle East and North Africa region

<sup>85</sup> Detailed information on the ENP is accessible at: [www.enpi-info.eu](http://www.enpi-info.eu)

The two selected case studies here -Egypt and Jordan- can give an appropriate representation as they cover both demographically and politically most of the appearing differences in the MENA. Egypt represents the revolutions, while Jordan had only constitutional reforms. The demographics of Egypt make it the dominant regional player, while Jordan is more marginal. These two case studies will have a dualist structure: the first half of each will contain an introduction to the given country's political turmoil and the economic reasons behind it and the second half will contain an analysis of the countries connections with Europe. This latter part will focus mainly on the ENP and answer the questions what the ENP intended to achieve in the given country and what it managed to achieve until now.

### **Jordan: a “slow boiling” society in the shadow of economic challenges**

While Jordan is considered widely as one of the most stable countries in the MENA, having a reasonable working political structure (monarchy), the events of the Arab Spring did not leave it untouched either. The series of ongoing protests in Jordan began on January 2011 and resulted in the firing of the cabinet ministers of the government. In its early phase, protests in Jordan were initially against unemployment, inflation, corruption along with demanding for real constitutional monarchy and electoral reforms. The protestors' demands then escalated to a call for the resignation of King Abdullah II and for the end of the Hashemite monarchy rule during the latest protests.

Amongst the main causes of the protests are corruption, inflation, low salaries, unemployment, restricted freedoms and ethnic tensions (with Palestinian refugees), while they also gained inspiration from other regional protests, mainly from the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. As the economic roots of the protests (demographic boom and GDP stagnation) are widely known amongst academics, the everyday consequences of these root problems as inflation, low salaries and unemployment are not needed to be explained much deeper. It's enough to remind ourselves the fact that Jordan's GDP growth (while flourishing in the previous years) fell dramatically after the financial crisis of 2007-2008 started. This radical decrease in GDP growth led to a rising government debt, which ought to be counteracted by the subsidy cuts announced by Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour. These subsidy cuts (together with the gas supply disruptions from the politically unstable Egypt) caused the price of gas (a main burden on the budgets of low-income families) rise by 54% and also serious food and electricity price hikes. This angered a public already suffering from high unemployment, poverty and inflation.

As public pressure grew on the government to ease cutbacks and engage in job creation, the government quickly reversed some its fiscal tightening measures by increasing subsidies on energy and basic food goods, hoping that a loosening of the cutbacks might be sufficient to avoid unrest. However, by then protests already assumed a political edge and beyond the economic reforms, the political system of King Abdullah's monarchy became itself a target of criticism. The main popular demands included the urgent need of tracking state-corruption along with demands for a real constitutional monarchy and electoral reforms. The king therefore needed to act on the political front as well, and ordered his newly created government to “undertake quick and tangible steps for real political reforms.”<sup>86</sup>

In March 2011, the king established a National Dialogue Committee (NDC) to draft new electoral and political laws and in April he created the Royal Committee for Constitutional Reforms (RCCR) to look at amending the constitution. The king appointed the members of both bodies and the Muslim Brotherhood (the main opposition organization) refused to participate, demanding the formation of a government led by the parliamentary majority before reform could advance. In general, political demands now aim to strengthen parliamentarism and decrease the king's power, which need is acknowledged by the king but he upholds that the process would take several years before it could be implemented.

The other central focus of reform efforts appears to be a campaign against corruption and a number of senior level figures have been already arrested on this charge. However, insiders claim that the anti-corruption committee has not been given a powerful mandate and has been barred from prosecuting certain high-level figures. Meanwhile, street protestors seem to be unsatisfied, with demonstrators in early 2012 calling for the “real thieves” to be brought to justice.<sup>87</sup> Concluding on the general economic and political atmosphere in Jordan, we can state that although King Abdullah seems to be handling effectively the popular unrest in the country, the fragility of the situation is undeniable. Since the unrest began, the kingdom has been led by three different governments, highlighting the Hashemite monarchy's longstanding policy of defusing popular pressure through government changes, but also putting some light on the scale of the country's ongoing political crises. The slow-motion reform agenda of the king might or might not withstand political unrest on the short term, but in a country drowning in debt, corruption and economic stagnation, the long-term prospects of the regime are quite black. After the short introduction of Jordan's slowly boiling society,

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86 See: Political and economic problems fuel Jordan protests, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20357743>

87 See: Jordan's corruption puzzle by Christina Satkowski, [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/05/16/jordans\\_corruption\\_puzzle](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/05/16/jordans_corruption_puzzle)

our focus has to turn to Europe and ask what the EU can do in this situation through its foreign policy tools and the ENP to motivate progress. To gain some insight to the EU's intentions, we have to analyze the main document expressing explicitly these intentions, the Jordanian Action Plan. Then we have to answer the question how successfully these “Actions” were carried out by analyzing Progress Reports and other EC communications dealing with Jordan's “performance” and contrast it to the AP's original directives. The Jordanian Action Plan contains a list which sets out the eleven main objectives that the EU wishes to see being implemented by the Jordanian regime:<sup>88</sup>

- Take forward a national dialogue on democracy and political life within the framework of the national political development plan.
- Continue to develop an independent and impartial judiciary. Further reinforcing of the administrative and judiciary capacity.
- Take steps to develop further the freedom of the media and freedom of expression
- Further promote equal treatment of women, by preparing a plan to increase women's participation in political and economic life.
- Strengthen political dialogue and co-operation on issues of international and regional interest including the Middle East Peace Process and the fight against terrorism.
- Take measures to improve business conditions to enhance growth and increase investment in Jordan.
- Enhance Jordan's export potential by: further liberalization of trade, in goods and agriculture, simplifying and upgrading customs legislation and procedures, improving industrial standards and modernization of the sanitary and phytosanitary systems.
- Take steps to prepare for a progressive liberalization of trade in services.
- Effective management of migratory flows and facilitation of movement of persons in conformity with the acquis, in particular examine the scope for visa facilitation for short stay for some categories of persons to be defined jointly.
- Implement the Jordanian Sustainable Development Strategy, and implement the government's strategy to reduce poverty
- Develop the transport, energy and information society sectors and networks through sector liberalization, investment in infrastructures and interconnection with EU networks.

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88 Source: Jordanian Action Plan [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/action\\_plans/jordan\\_enp\\_ap\\_final\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/action_plans/jordan_enp_ap_final_en.pdf)

- Strengthen cooperation in science and technology

As we see these eleven points cover several important factors, but here we will focus only on the two most important ones: the political sector (points 1-5) and the economic sector (points 6-8). We already saw that exactly these are the two main sectors in which the lack of progress is causing turmoils in the Jordanian society right now. But what is the opinion of the EU on the progress that Jordan has made? Running through the latest (2012) Progress Report that the EU created about Jordan, it seems that the EU is quite satisfied with the country's overall performance. This is really surprising in the light of the ongoing protests that the regime experiences at home. Touching political and economic issues, the EU admits the difficulties that the regime is facing, but also gives credit for the shallow political reform agenda that we just criticized before:<sup>89</sup>

“2011 was a politically and economically challenging year for Jordan: three successive governments in nine months, a worsening economic outlook, increasing unemployment, a deepening budget deficit, the decline of foreign investments and increasing energy supply costs all add up to a volatile picture. In contrast to other countries in the region, protesters in Jordan did not call for regime change but rather for reform of the existing political system. Demonstrations initially focused solely on economic claims but gradually developed a more political agenda. Calls for greater political participation, government accountability and transparency have featured as often in the protesters’ declarations as calls for increased job opportunities. Despite the difficult context, Jordan made an important quality leap in its political reform process through the adoption in September of far-reaching constitutional amendments. The latter address a number of priorities agreed in the framework of the new EU-Jordan ENP Action Plan negotiated in 2010, in particular the establishment of an independent electoral commission, greater accountability of the government, the empowerment of political parties through the revision of legislation and the prohibition of torture. In other cases, the amendments go beyond Jordan’s ENP Action Plan commitments, i.e. the establishment of the Constitutional Court, limitation of the government’s ability to enact provisional (temporary) law and new, more restrictive, rules on the dissolution of the Parliament.”

We see that the political reforms implemented by the country even “go beyond Jordan’s ENP Action Plan commitments”, therefore the country deserves the best “mark” the

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<sup>89</sup> Source: Jordanian Progress Report 2012,  
[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012\\_enp\\_pack/progress\\_report\\_jordan\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_jordan_en.pdf)

EU can give for the progress. Here we have to come up with a realist interpretation of the EU's behavior: autocratic stability serves the EU's security interests better than a possible revolution. This could be the main reason why the EU welcomes these shallow reforms so enthusiastically. The good performance is also honored with some extra money. In a document issued nearly a year later (2013), we see that Jordan already got its deserved extra amount of financial support in the form of an EUR 70 million “envelope”. Another interesting observation from this text is that we witness the real “micro-physics” of the ENP: Jordan is entitled to 70 million, but gets only 30 million now and the remaining 40 million is “linked to” further progress:<sup>90</sup>

“King Abdullah II, partly in response to the winds of change blowing over the region in connection with the Arab Spring, initiated a broad process of political and economic reforms, including increased parliamentary control and oversight of the government as well as a new electoral law which, though not uncontroversial, ensured a broadly representative parliament via the recent elections that were seen by observers to be in line with democratic standards. In line with its commitment to support the reform processes in the Southern Mediterranean countries, the EU provided to Jordan an additional allocation of €70 million from SPRING. This was announced by HR/VP Ashton during the first meeting of the EU-Jordan Task Force held in February 2012, in effect doubling the amount of money available to Jordan from the EU's Neighborhood program for 2012. The additional financial envelope is made available in two tranches of 30 and 40 million, with the second tranche linked to progress achieved in terms of democratic reform. SPRING funding is used to support the electoral process, to assist in reforming the justice system, to support efforts targeting public financial management, education and social security, and to help develop the private sector and foster job creation.”

This linking is necessary, but the effectiveness of this “conditionality” can be questionable as the overall EU assessment of political progress is far too optimistic, which can make the Jordanian regime feel comfortable with the shallow reform agenda they performed. However, on the economic front the EU seems to be much more pessimistic. Jordan managed to come out from the economic crisis of 2010, just to get hit by the Arab Spring and fall back again to recession in 2011. This weak performance is identified by the

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90 Source: EU's response to the Arab Spring: State-of-Play after Two Years (2013), [http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/es/article\\_13134\\_es.htm](http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/es/article_13134_es.htm)

EU not only as the effect of the revolts but also as the effect of the weak and outdated economic governance:<sup>91</sup>

“Following a period of modest growth and gradual recovery from the global financial crisis throughout 2010, the Jordanian economy was affected by the Arab Spring events and the conflict in neighboring Syria, notably through the external sector and the fiscal-policy response to domestic social pressures. The emergency fiscal measures adopted by the government in early 2011 could possibly interrupt progress towards fiscal consolidation, while delaying reforms in the public subsidy system. At the same time, the development and modernization of the tax system remains a challenge and a major objective of the public finance management reform program supported by the EU.”

The economic liberalization and modernization process lags behind the EU's expectations and this contrasts the perceived “good performance” of the country on the political front. We can partially agree with this assessment but also notice that these liberalization reforms are also in the interest of the EU itself and the “conditionality” here reflects the EU's economic expansion plans (FDI and trade expansion) at least as much as it advocates for genuine domestic economic progress.

Concluding on the current Jordanian “state of affairs”, we can identify the stagnation-corruption-repression triangle as the main set of challenges confronting Jordanians today. Unfortunately, stagnation comes mainly from external economic factors like the current financial crisis and the demography-boom therefore it's less manageable domestically. On the other hand, the other two factors, corruption and repression are inherent to the domestic political system of Jordan, therefore more changeable. King Abdullah manages to maintain social peace by promising reforms in all the three mentioned areas, but this peace is really fragile and needs to be upheld by a faster and deeper reform agenda than the currently existing one. The EU comes into the picture here, because its neighborhood policy advocates exactly for these reform steps. Jordan's case shows therefore a unique constellation, where the interests of the people, the EU and even the king fall into the same basket. This basket contains political and economic reforms already outlined in the ENP Action Plans as “priorities of action”, and now being enforced by popular pressure. Although Jordan's reform agenda should be original and domestic-born, the EU has now several opportunities to intervene into the process by implementing its “more-for-more” directive. Still, instead of

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91 Source: Jordanian Progress Report 2012,  
[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012\\_enp\\_pack/progress\\_report\\_jordan\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_jordan_en.pdf)

pushing for more reforms, the EU seems to be already satisfied with the reached progress of the regime and offers extra funds for the government to continue its reform agenda. In our opinion this approach reflects a shallow understanding of what is happening in Jordan and a far too optimistic interpretation of the political reforms. In the economic sector the EU's assessment seems to be much more realistic and identifies the right external and also internal reasons of the country's economic decline.

### **Egypt: the dominant MENA player with ongoing political turbulence**

As the Egyptian Revolution was widely reported by media outlets and the series of events are well-known amongst IR academics, here we do not intend to give a detailed explanation of the revolt itself. Our focus -again- will be on the exploration of the root causes of the popular dissent and the possible European policies that could give decent answers to them. However, first a very short introduction of the political events seems to be necessary.

The Egyptian Revolution of 2011 took place following a popular uprising that began on 25 January 2011. It was mainly a campaign of non-violent civil resistance, which featured a series of demonstrations, marches, acts of civil disobedience and labor strikes. Millions of protesters from a variety of socioeconomic and religious backgrounds demanded the overthrow of the regime of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Despite being predominantly peaceful in nature, the revolution was not without violent clashes between security forces and protesters with hundreds of people killed and thousands injured. Protests took place in Cairo, Alexandria, and in other cities in Egypt. The demands of Egyptian protesters were focused on legal and political issues including police brutality, state of emergency laws, lack of free elections and freedom of speech, corruption, and economic issues including high unemployment, food price inflation and low wages. The core aims of the protesters were the end of the Hosni Mubarak regime and the establishment of a non-military government. On 11 February, following weeks of determining popular protest and pressure, Mubarak resigned from office.<sup>92</sup>

Shortly after Mubarak's resignation, the interim governing group of army leaders (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, SCAF) headed by effective head of state Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, announced that the constitution would be suspended, both houses of parliament dissolved and that the military would rule for six months until elections could be held. The prior cabinet, including Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik, would continue to serve as a caretaker government until a new one is formed. Although the military played a positive role

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<sup>92</sup> Source and more details on the revolution: Egypt Revolution 2011: A Complete Guide To The Unrest, Huffington Post, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/30/egypt-revolution-2011\\_n\\_816026.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/30/egypt-revolution-2011_n_816026.html)



in the revolution itself, by delaying the elections and the power transition to civilian leaders the SCAF lost most of its popular support and by the end of 2011 several protests turned up against the military rule. EU and US officials also urged SCAF leaders to speed up the transition and hold free elections as soon as possible. Finally, on 24 June 2012 after the first free elections in Egypt, it was announced by the State Election Commission that Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi had won the presidential election. On 30 June, Morsi was inaugurated as the first democratically elected President of Egypt.

The reputation of the current ruling Morsi government is contradictory. Morsi, as a politician associated with the Muslim Brotherhood was expected to turn Egypt onto a more Islam-based development trajectory with a domestic law system based on sharia and with an anti-western and anti-Israel foreign policy direction. However, most of these fears had no bases as Morsi himself declared that the new Egypt will be built on civilian bases and he seeks to influence the drafting of a new constitution that protects civil rights, yet is enshrined in Islamic law. Also the foreign policy he pursues shows signs of “Islamic pragmatism”, as he maintained good relations with the Gulf states and also reconciled with Iran, but at the same time he greeted Israel, the US and the EU as Egypt’s friends as well. As conclusions on Egypt’s recent democratic transitions we can gather a few important elements shaping the country’s development trajectory for the close future and identify some important factors that should inform the EU about the prospects of the ENP in the most powerful southern partner. These factors are:

- The balance of power in Egypt between the Mubarak-era officers, the SCAF, the liberal opposition and the Muslim Brotherhood is sliding to favor the later.
- President Morsi manages to expel his SCAF and old-era rivals from power one-by-one, and tries to solidify his power by cutting back on further protest movements.
- His domestic policies are only “moderately religious”, meaning that while he openly turns the country into an Islamic democracy, he balances this process by political pragmatism.
- His foreign policy can also be described best as “pragmatic Islamism”, meaning that while he establishes good relations with other Muslim states (including Iran), he does not turn his back on his European and American allies either. The case of Israel is more sensitive, especially with the recent incidents in both Cairo and Gaza, but open hostility against the Jewish state is not on his agenda, indeed he tries to keep good relations.

If we ask what the EU can do in this political context through its foreign policy tools and the ENP to ensure the best possible outcomes for EU-Egypt relations, we can gather

some general observations as answers. As in Egypt's case (in opposition with Jordan's) the political freedoms became (at least officially) guaranteed after the revolution but economic problems stayed or even deepened, this circle of issues for Egypt will be more economy-centered. Even before the revolution, Egypt's economic problems were dire: "Figures from the Central Bank of Egypt for early 2011 show the country's total external debt at \$35 billion, its highest level in more than five years. In terms of GDP per capita, Egypt has the lowest level in the region and this level stagnated in the last few years. According to the World Food Program, 19.6 percent of the population of Egypt lives below the lower poverty line. During the revolution, tourism –a main income source- suffered a 20% backdrop."<sup>93</sup>

The revitalization of the country's economy stays mainly a domestic issue, but EU-MENA economic interdependencies suggest that a lot depends on the „northern neighbor's" positive attitude. The financial crisis -similarly to Jordan- broke the development path of the GDP growth and the economic effects of the revolution deepened the crisis even further. But what did the EU expect from Egypt and how was this communicated? What "Actions" were requested from the Egyptian side in exchange for the much needed economic contribution from the EU? To get the answers, we have to turn to the Egyptian Action Plan. The list of prescribed actions regarding the political and economic sectors is the following:<sup>94</sup>

- Enhance political dialogue and co-operation, based on shared values
- Enhance the effectiveness of the institutions entrusted with strengthening democracy and the rule of law and consolidate the independent and effective administration of justice.
- Promote the protection of human rights in all its aspects
- Increase economic integration with the EU
- Improving macroeconomic governance, reforming the financial sector, strengthening the role of the private sector, enhancing the business climate
- Boost industrial development and enterprise capabilities and competitiveness through improved skills, better access to finance, promotion of new technologies
- Deepen and enhance the existing economic dialogue and identify areas suitable for gradual regulatory upgrading and approximation with EU technical legislation
- Proceed in reforming the tax system, improving public finance management
- Promote south-south trade, through encouraging FDI participation in regional projects

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93 Source: Egypt Revolution 2011: A Complete Guide To The Unrest, Huffington Post Online

94 Source: *Egyptian Action Plan*, [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/action\\_plans/egypt\\_enp\\_ap\\_final\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/action_plans/egypt_enp_ap_final_en.pdf)

- Strengthen cooperation on poverty reduction through employment and social development.

As we expected, here the economic sector gets the majority of action points (4-10), while the political sectors get only the first three. Improving economic governance and financial management and opening up for trade, FDI and a deeper economic integration with the EU can be identified as the key issue areas that the EU was concerned with at the time this AP was issued. This is quite contradictory again (as was in the case of Jordan), because the AP was written during the Mubarak-era, when political reforms would have been at least as important as the economic ones. This is again a sign of the EU's pragmatic approach and a hidden support for autocratic stability.

But autocratic stability did not last long after the AP was issued and the latest Progress Report was issued already after the revolution (in 2012). This report is quite the opposite of what we saw in the case of Jordan. Both the political and economic issues are seen by the EU as negative developments and the Egyptian transition seems to be more problematic for the EU than the Jordanian non-transitional:<sup>95</sup>

“During the transition period the military’s respect for basic human rights and democratic standards has not been satisfactory. Police and military personnel who resorted to excessive use of force during the demonstrations, notably against women, have yet to be investigated. Thousands of activists were arbitrarily detained. Military courts were used to try activists and bloggers. Reports of the use of torture and degrading treatment in detention and prison have continued.”

Not only the democratic standards were found unsatisfactory, but the economic performance of the interim government also didn't meet the EU's expectations. The interim government seems like it's not a partner in economic cooperation and if we would like to be very provocative, we could say that the EU seems to be contrasting this performance to “the good old Mubarak-era days”. Of course, this is an exaggeration but in our opinion the text is highly contradictory:<sup>96</sup>

“Ongoing political and economic uncertainty meant that progress on the structural reforms outlined in Egypt's Action Plan was limited. On the positive side, the work to overcome technical barriers to exports advanced when Egypt became an associate member in the European cooperation for accreditation, the process for creating a

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<sup>95</sup> Source: Egyptian Progress Report 2012,  
[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012\\_enp\\_pack/progress\\_report\\_egypt\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/docs/2012_enp_pack/progress_report_egypt_en.pdf)

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

business was simplified and a competition authority was set up. Following the 2011 events the need for thorough social and economic reform has become more evident than ever. The interim authorities have been unable to engage in achieving long-term objectives. This is something that they prefer to leave to a democratically elected government when it takes office. For this reason, few advances were made during the reporting period, although some progress was registered on health reform including further rolling out of the Egyptian ‘family health model’. No progress was achieved on trade-related issues or on market and regulatory reform. The EU adopted on 14 December negotiating directives for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). However, the interim Egyptian authorities are not ready to engage, given their limited mandate. Similarly, they have declined the offer made by the EU to start a dialogue on Mobility, Migration and Security, in order to conclude a Mobility Partnership.”

This means that the EU did not recognize that Egypt had more important domestic issues to handle during the transition than the EU's Action Plan and if we contrast this analysis to Jordan's, who -despite being still autocratic- got the best possible comments, we will have some serious concerns about the EU's values and assessment criteria. However, a year later (in 2013) things have turned upside-down. The EU seems to have accepted the transition and seeks close cooperation with the first elected president of Egypt. This new assessment is the exact opposite of the Progress Report issued just a year earlier and gives credit for the country's new president for democratization and also for the EU for supporting this process, which is a bit ironic in the light of the above cited document:<sup>97</sup>

“Since the first protests erupted in Tahrir square two years ago, the EU has consistently supported the movement for democracy and human rights in Egypt, calling for a peaceful and inclusive transition. A succession of high-level visits to Egypt has been made to underline and highlight this support, by inter alia. European Commission President Barroso and European Council President Van Rompuy, by HR/VP Ashton and Commissioner for Neighborhood Policy Füle. One of the first foreign visits undertaken by the newly-elected President Morsi of Egypt was in Brussels which resulted in agreement to resume bilateral contacts through the structures of the EU-Egypt Association Agreement and a restart of negotiations on a new ENP Action Plan. At the invitation of the government, the EEAS sent two

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<sup>97</sup> Source: EU's response to the Arab Spring: State-of-Play after Two Years (2013), [http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/es/article\\_13134\\_es.htm](http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/es/article_13134_es.htm)

electoral experts to assess the conduct of the Presidential elections in May-June 2012. The technical mission concluded that the elections had been fair and were held in a peaceful environment. Ahead of the parliamentary elections planned for the first semester of 2013, the EU has reiterated its offer to deploy, upon invitation of the Egyptian authorities, a fully-fledged EU Election Observation Mission (EOM). ”

And if there was so much political progress and reiteration between the EU and Egypt, then the promised economic help should be delivered as well. The offer seems to be quite impressive: from different sources Egypt will get altogether more than EUR 1 billion in financial assistance and development loans:<sup>98</sup>

“In terms of financial support for the transition, the EU has already made available €449 million for the period 2011-2013. Furthermore, the EU, together with EIB and EBRD pledged an additional financial package of €5 billion during the EU-Egypt Task Force in November 2012. The €750 million EU contribution was composed of €90 million of assistance from the SPRING program to support socioeconomic reform measures, €63 million from the Neighborhood Investment Facility and subject to the endorsement of an IMF arrangement, the EU may provide up-to €500 million Macro-Financial Assistance to Egypt with up-to €50 million in grants and up-to €450 million in concessional loans. The additional SPRING funds of €90 million are earmarked for supporting, in partnership with other donors (World Bank and African Development Bank) the government’s socioeconomic programs. In the framework of the Task Force, the EU and Egypt agreed to jointly explore how to deepen trade and investment relations, including. The possible negotiation of a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement (DCFTA).”

We can absolutely agree with this final assessment, and welcome the decision which provides this extensive rebuilding assistance for Egypt. However, we have to remind ourselves that the EU “made up its mind” again a bit late and in the value confrontation between the short term stability and the long term democratization at first it chose the wrong option.

Concluding on Egypt’s current political and economic state of affairs and the prospects of an effective working ENP in this country, we can summarize our findings in a few core observations. President Morsi as a “pragmatic Islamist” can be wisely engaged with the EU, best through economic incentives. Debt relief and immediate monetary help for

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

economic revitalization could definitely help the EU to play an important and positive role in Egypt's transition and in the light of the most recent EU communications we can expect the Union to offer this much needed help. With this action the EU coordinates its economic leverage well and makes it even more "embedded" in Egypt's future. The original ENP action plan designed for Egypt was mainly concerned with economic issues and this area keeps playing the central role between the two actors. However, the political arena became much more significant during the revolutions and despite its initial aversions to the transition process, the EU later learned to engage wisely the new Egyptian leadership. This doesn't mean that the EU gained more significance in the country, but now the relations are seemingly "back to normal" and even have the potential to develop to be a well-working pragmatic partnership.

### **Conclusions: The EU's role in two contrasting cases during the Arab Spring**

The short introduction of the EU's role in Egypt's political transition and Jordan's non-transition during the Arab Spring shows us that in both cases the EU preferred first the status quo, and chose to support autocratic stability rather than the volatile transition process. The contrasting first EU-assessments of the processes in the two countries definitely support this interpretation. However, later the EU accepted that autocratic stability is gone in the case of Egypt and offered economic assistance, while continued to support the shallow reform agenda in the case of Jordan. The main conclusive findings could be summarized as follows: Both of the examined two countries suffer from economic stagnation (which was one of the core societal problems triggering the Arab Spring), and to overcome the economic problems both countries (and the whole MENA) would need external economic help. This help could be provided by the EU (once its crisis is over) in the form of a closer economic cooperation based on enhanced trade and investment activities and a reformed post-Arab Spring agenda for the ENP.

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