CHAPTER 7

Dimension II: Means

In order to analyse means, the second dimension of the three-dimensional normative power framework, it is essential to dive deeper into the reactions of the EU and the US in the context of the Tahrir Revolution and its aftermath. Through unearthing the soft, economic and military power means utilised by the actors during the Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath, the normativity of their actions can be examined. This analytical process will also allow for the simultaneous construction of a historical narrative of European and American behaviour during the period under scrutiny. Such a narrative will not only provide the proper contextualisation of the actions (and inactions) of the EU and the US; it will also aid in the eventual analysis of the final dimension of paradoxes.

7.1 The Soft Power Means of the European Union

Of the three soft power means introduced in Section 4.3.1, attraction is the most difficult to assess. It is inextricably tied to the innate properties of the power wielder and the perceptions of significant others (Lukes 2007, 86). What makes this particular facet of soft power even more confusing is its dependence on everything a normative power does: on the norms it promotes, the methods it uses to advance those norms and the extent to which its actions exhibit inconsistencies that are discernible from the outside.¹ However, attraction has been conceptualised as the inactive dimension of soft power precisely because its efficacy ultimately depends on the subject of power. In the context of the January 25th Revolution, the attractiveness of the EU – and later on the US – can be assessed by looking at the views and reactions of the subjects of normative power, i.e. the Egyptian leadership and the wider populace. Such an assessment can be carried out by studying selected media reports, government statements and opinion polls concerning Egyptian perceptions of the Union.

Starting at the top echelons of Egypt's government, it was to be expected that the old Egyptian leadership prior to the ouster of Mubarak viewed any foreign calls for the upholding of normative principles as intervention in the

¹ In his earlier work Nye (2004, 6) seems to almost equate attractiveness with the whole concept of soft power.
country’s internal affairs. As a matter of fact, this situation persisted even in the aftermath of the Revolution. The Egyptian foreign minister Mohamed Kamel Amr made it plain to the EU at several points that any alien intervention in Egypt’s democratic transition would be viewed as ‘worthless’ and ‘undesirable’. Such reactions can be interpreted as evidence that the EU’s model and the norms it promotes were not accepted by the Egyptian government at face value. Moreover, judging by interviews conducted by Dworkin et al. (2011, 5), even those liberal political forces closest to the European Union in terms of their ‘vision of politics’ remained wary of outside forces seeking to influence the Egyptian domestic scene in the aftermath of the revolution.

As for the views of the Egyptian public, in the absence of one-on-one interviews, the best available approximation can be found in opinion polls (cf. Nye 2004, 6). This exercise in charting the populace’s perceptions is especially important, as the Union has pledged in its ENP review to foster “a stronger partnership with the people of the region”, while the Egyptian authorities would likely become more susceptible to swings in public opinion in the aftermath of the Revolution (Cook 2012, 303–304; Behr 2012, 85). In two prominent polls that were conducted in post-Mubarak Egypt and contained information on the EU, the results were mixed. According to the findings of the Pew Research Centre’s Global Attitudes Project, 55 per cent of the Egyptians interviewed held an unfavourable view of the European Union in 2010. In the spring of 2011, after the Revolution, the corresponding figure was 62 per cent, and perceptions had improved only slightly in early 2012, when the survey returned an unfavourable rating of 60 per cent. Another survey, conducted by Globescan for the BBC World Service, reported that 20 per cent of Egyptian respondents had a ‘mainly unfavourable’ view of the EU at the end of 2009. The respective figure was 22 per cent in December 2010, roughly a month before Mubarak’s fall, and rose to 25 per cent at the end of 2011. These surveys indicate that the

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2 See, e.g. Reuters (3.2.2011), CNN (7.2.2011), Guardian (10.2.2011a).
5 Pew Research Center (2012a). The surveys were conducted by interviewing 1000 Egyptians between April 12 and May 3, 2010, March 24 and April 7, 2011 and March 19 and April 12, 2012, respectively (Pew Research Center 2010; 2011; 2012b).
6 BBC World Service (2010; 2011; 2012). The Pew and BBC polls are not directly comparable because they utilised a different question set. The Pew poll asks the respondents if they hold a ‘very favourable’, ‘somewhat favourable’, ‘somewhat unfavourable’ or ‘very unfavourable’ view of the EU. The BBC poll asks the respondents if they think the influence of the EU is ‘mainly negative’ or ‘mainly positive’, also granting the possibility of replying ‘depends’ or ‘neither/neutral’. (Pew Research Center 2012c; BBC World Service 2012.)