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**SIZE MATTERS:
THE EFFECT OF REMITTANCES ON THE EU RETURN RATE OF ILLEGAL MIGRANTS**

Mikkel MEYER CHRISTENSEN

Supervisor: Wolfgang Wessels

Abstract

This thesis deals with EU Return and Readmission Agreements (EURAs) between the EU and Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon in the period 2010 to 2016. Despite sustained efforts, there is currently no EURA concluded at the EU level with any of these countries. The aim of this thesis was to discover whether third countries were motivated by remittances in their decision to conclude and implement EURAs. Using statistical analysis, interviews and relevant documents, we find that it is plausible to conclude that remittances play a role when third countries decide whether to cooperate with the EU in this field. Using neoliberal institutionalist theory and interviews, we find a clear evidence of both the EU and third countries acting rationally based on economic incentives. Our two-level game theory analysis underlines the importance of the national level parliaments and voters in defining the international position of the third countries. The EU and MS are motivated by a political wish to increase the return of illegal migrants. On the other side, the third countries remain partly motivated by a domestic wish to avoid excessive regulation of migration to Europe. In conclusion, the thesis finds that the research question has been substantiated because we find it is possible to explain many aspects of third countries' cooperation with the EU using rational choice theory. The hypothesis was confirmed: Through triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data, we have presented sufficient indications of the fact that remittances are an important indicator of third country cooperation in this area.